



## **A Pragmatic Analysis of Flouting Gricean Maxims in Televised Conversational Interaction**

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Received : 10 /6 /2024 Accepted:13/7/2024 Published:15/9 /2024

### **Abstract**

Conversation is an essential part of our daily life. We can communicate our ideas, wills, feelings, emotions, and many other aspects of our lives through conversation. Conversation, in this sense, is a systematic and highly organized activity. People, in conversation, are often clear and operative in their talk. However, sometimes they are not so. This paper addresses the problem of non-observing Grice's maxims in conversation, particularly the problem of flouting them. It aims to determine whether the four maxims are fully observed or maybe flouted in the televised conversations. The study tries to answer the question of what maxims are flouted in such conversation and whether this phenomenon is cross-cultural or not. The study adopts Grice's (1975) Model, which explains the cooperative principle and its maxims. A qualitative approach has been followed in this study. The data of the study are extracts of a televised conversation between Bashar Assad, Syria's president, and the German journalist Todenhöfer,

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as well as between Scott and Biden, collected from the website. Finally, the study concludes that all the Grice's maxims are flouted in the televised conversational interactions. However, this flouting of a given maxim depends on the nature of the journalist's questions and the purpose of the talk. The results also show that flouting the maxims is a cross-cultural phenomenon. Accordingly, the question of the study has been answered. This would theoretically and practically add to the growing body of literature studying cross-cultural pragmatics.

**Keywords:** Gricean Maxims, Cross-Cultural, Flouting the Maxims.

## تحليل تداولي لخرق مبادئ كرايس في التفاعل الحوارى المتلفز

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### المستخلص

المحادثة هي جزء أساسي من حياتنا اليومية. يمكننا من خلالها نقل أفكارنا ورغباتنا ومشاعرنا والعديد من جوانب حياتنا الأخرى. المحادثة، بهذا المعنى، هي نشاط منظم ومنظم بشكل كبير. الناس في المحادثة غالباً ما يكونون واضحين وفعالين في حديثهم. ومع ذلك، في بعض الأحيان لا يكونون كذلك. تتناول هذه الورقة مشكلة عدم مراعاة القواعد كرايس في المحادثة، وخصوصاً مشكلة خرق هذه القواعد. تهدف إلى تحديد ما إذا كانت القواعد الأربعة يُلتزم بها بالكامل أو ربما تُخرق في المحادثات المتلفزة. تحاول الدراسة الإجابة على سؤال ما هي القواعد التي تُخرق في هذه المحادثة وهل هذه الظاهرة عابرة للثقافات. تتبنى الدراسة نموذج غرايس (1975) الذي يشرح مبدأ التعاون وقواعده. تم اتباع نهج نوعي في هذه الدراسة. تتضمن بيانات الدراسة مقتطفات من محادثة بين بشار الأسد، رئيس سوريا، والصحفي الألماني تودينهوفر، وسكوت وبايدن التي جُمعت من موقع الإنترنت. وأخيراً، توصلت الدراسة إلى أن جميع قواعد غرايس تُخرق في تفاعلات المحادثة المتلفزة؛ ومع ذلك، يعتمد خرق قاعدة معينة على طبيعة أسئلة الصحفي والغرض من الحديث. كما أظهرت النتائج أن خرق القواعد هو ظاهرة عبر الثقافات. وهكذا، تمت الإجابة على سؤال الدراسة. وهذا ذو إضافة عملية ونظرية لمجال البحث المتعلق بدراسة التداولية عبر الثقافات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** مبادئ كرايس، عبر الثقافات، خرق المبادئ

## **1. Introduction**

In this part of the paper, the problem, aim, questions, model, data, and the limits of the study are presented.

### **1.1 The Problem of the Study**

Generally speaking, Grice's cooperative principle maxims (quality, quantity, relation, and manner) are observed when conversational interactions occur. However, these maxims may be intentionally neglected. Therefore, a maxim can be fully observed, violated, flouted, or opted out. Consequently, an implied meaning is conveyed through non-observing the maxims. Based on this fact, the present study attempts to address the problem of non-observing the Gricean maxims in televised conversational interaction.

### **1.2 Aims of the Study**

The study aims to pragmatically analyze samples of televised interaction. Therefore, it investigates whether Grice's maxims are fully observed or flouted in the televised conversational interactions. Moreover, it aims to find out if flouting the maxims is cross-culturally valid assumption or not.

### **1.3 Questions of the Study**

This paper addresses the following questions:

1. What are the flouted maxims in the televised conversational interactions?
2. Do cultural differences have any bearing on flouting the maxims?

## 1.4 Data of the Study

The data of this study is a televised conversation between Bashar Assad and Todenhöfer concerning the Syrian state and the political crisis in this country, and Biden and Scott concerning the issue of inflation. It is taken from the internet website.

The interviews are available on these links: (<https://www.dw.com/en/its-not-about-retaliation-its-about-defense/a-16083648>).

President Joe Biden: The 2022-60 Minutes Interview - CBS News:

(<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/president-joe-biden-60-minutes-interview-transcript-2022-09-18/> ).

## 1.5 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to one aspect of non-observing the maxims: flouting. It is also limited to the pragmatic aspect with no reference to the discourse analysis techniques, such as holding the floor and giving the floor strategy. Moreover, it is limited to some selected fragments of Bashar Assad and Todenhöfer, Biden and Scott conversation, which do not observe the maxims, particularly, flouting the maxim.

## 2. Theoretical Background

A sufficient theoretical background, which helps to establish conceptual clarity, is needed to explain some basic theoretical concepts and ideas regarding the cooperative principle. In addition, this theoretical part helps to provide the base on which the data analysis is conducted.

## 2.1 The Cooperative Principle

Conversations are not merely a collection of unrelated statements mixed randomly. Actually, they are governed by principles (Cruse, 2000, p.355). When people communicate, Grice (1975) anticipates them to observe certain norms, which he refers to as principles. According to him, adhering to these norms can lead to meaningful conversations. He supports his argument by referring to the cooperative principle, which states that when individuals interact, they adhere to the principle of cooperation (Yule, p. 38). The cooperative principle is a theoretical framework that describes how individuals effectively interpret the implied meaning in interactions between individuals by adhering to universal principles (Cutting, 2002, p.34). It enables an individual in a conversation to engage with the other participants, if they are intending to cooperate. Moreover, it limits and makes clear what people can say in order to take part in interactions (Widdowson, 2007, p.56).

Grice formulates the cooperative principle as follows: “Make your conversational contribution such is required at the stage in which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (Grice, 1975: 45).” In other words, speakers seek to make important and constructive contributions to the dialogue. As a result, listeners assume that their conversing companions are doing the same thing. The cooperative principle is compared to grammatical rules by Cook (1989, p. 29-30). According to him, people subconsciously adhere to the cooperative principle while communicating, as they adhere to grammar rules. Put simply, individuals possess knowledge of both the cooperative principle and the rules of grammar; however they are unable to effectively articulate both simultaneously

during speech. Plag, Braun, Lappe, and Schramm (2007, p. 200) argue that the cooperative principle effectively addresses two issues. Initially how many listeners identify that speakers are aiming to convey a pragmatic message? Additionally, how do listeners determine when it is appropriate to make the inferences? Quantity, quality, relation, and manner are the four maxims that make up the cooperative principle. These four maxims are not rules that communicators must follow, despite Grice's use of the imperative form. Rather, they are guidelines to follow to communicate meaning "coherent" and efficiently. Simply put, Grice is discussing what individuals require in order to properly understand the contributions of each other when he says, "cooperation between speakers and hearers" (Thomas, 1995, 62).

## **2.2 Non-observances**

When a maxim is overlooked, the term "broken" is used to describe it. People seek implicature if speakers breach a maxim given that they perceive the cooperative principle to be in operation. Maxim non-observance is usual in interactions, and it is frequently done intentionally to provoke humor or mitigate hostility. Four strategies for conveying emotive meaning were identified by Grice (Grundy, 1995, 80).

### **2.2.1 Flouting of a Maxim**

If a speaker overlooks a maxim, it is not with the intention of misleading the listeners. On the contrary, the speaker pushes the listeners to contemplate the conversational implicature or the hidden meaning of the discourse that may not be easily observed from the words being spoken. Consequently, if a speaker deliberately discarded a maxim, it might be with the intention of effectively conveying the intended meaning (Thomas, 1995, p.

65). Thus, by adhering to the cooperative principle, the listener will comprehend the intended meaning and supplement any gaps with contextual information. To put it differently, implicatures result from breaking the maxims. Nevertheless, this strategy can only be employed in three specific cases: (a) when the listener is able to infer that the speaker is overlooking maxims, (b) when the speaker believes that maxims will be overlooked, and (c) when the speaker is not attempting to deceive the hearer (Cruse, 2000, p. 360). Listeners have a tough time with flouting because they have to decipher its implicit meaning, as Plag et al. (2007, p. 205) state. The act of continuing a discussion while giving the impression of being uncooperative is called flouting, according to Chapman (2000, p. 135). It is up to listeners to figure out what is being contributed to the current discourse. Or, said another way, in order for a speaker to communicate, the listeners has to deduce that the speaker is using a maxim. As an alternative definition, Paltridge (2006, 205-6) states that flouting occurs when speakers purposefully violate the cooperative principle on the assumption that their listeners are already aware of it.

### **2.2.1.1 Flouting the Maxim of Quantity**

According to Cutting (2002, p. 37), humans break the quantity maxim when they provide too much or too little information, as in:

*A: So, how do I appear?*

*B: Those are some nice shoes you've gotten there.*

B flouts the quantity maxim in this exchange by failing to give the information sought by A. When A asks B for her opinion on her look, she expects a response that covers her entire appearance. Then B says something that is not quite sufficient.

Yule (1996, p. 35) gives the following example of two women discussing the taste of the burger they are having as an example of flouting this maxim:

*“A hamburger is a hamburger.”*

The woman thus disobeys the quantity maxim as she provides too little information. On the other hand, the listener can infer that the speaker is trying to convey a cooperation principle-based message. Therefore, she implies that she violated the quantity maxim by failing to observe it. Simply, when asked about the hamburger, B subtly suggests that judging it is worthless because hamburgers in general are tasty. A second inference is that she holds no positive or negative opinion. To illustrate the quantity maxim breaking, Griffiths (2006, 136-7) provides the following example:

*“A: Are you from the United States of America”*

*“B: No, and then silence.”*

In this instance, B's “no” response is insufficient to answer the question. As a result, she flouts the quantity principle. However, A can infer B's intended meaning, assuming B adheres to the cooperative principle. In fact, A can deduce the inference, which is that B does not wish to reveal her origins. As a result, by breaking the quantity maxim, B indicates that she has no intention of telling her residency to A. The previous examples of flouting quantity all involve providing far less information than is required. However, the quantity maxim can be flouted when more information is offered than is required. Consider the following situation:

*A. Can you tell me what you did?*



*B. With an overabundance of patience. An extensive collection of completely uninteresting details*

This conversation takes place between a mother and her daughter. In this case, the girl flouts the quantity maxim by providing excessive information. As a result, an inference can be drawn that the mother is overly concerned about her daughter's well-being (Cruse, 2000, p. 361).

### **2.2.1.2 Flouting the Maxim of Quality**

There are many ways to break the principles of quality. For instance, it may be employed to show that something is exaggerated, as in this instance:

*-I'm starving*

*-The drink is really expensive.*

In this case, people do not have the intention for their words to be interpreted in a literal manner. For example, in the utterance "I'm starving," the speaker's sole intention is to convey that she is feeling extremely hungry (Widdowson, 2007, p. 60).

It's also possible for speakers to break the quality maxim by using metaphors like "My house is a refrigerator in January" or "My brother is a pig." The first sentence makes it sound like the speaker is in a refrigerator and says, "My house is pretty cold in January." In the same way, irony is a way of breaking the quality rule. In irony, the speaker says something good while suggesting something bad (Cutting, 2002, p. 38). Not only that, but joking is a way to break the quality rule. In conversation, on the other hand, people say something bad while saying something nice. As an example:

*“You're nasty, cruel, and stingy. How you can only give me one kiss.” (2002, Cutting, p. 38)*

While breaking the quality maxim, speakers express their statements with the intention of not being interpreted literally, while also avoiding any intention to deceive the listeners (Cruse, 2000, p.360). Indeed, individuals primarily break this principle in order to generate irony or humor.

### **2.2.1.3 Flouting the Maxim of Relation**

Speakers who do not follow the relation principle try to say more than what they say. That is, speakers expect listeners to be able to figure out the right meaning throughout the words they use by relating them to those they have heard previously. Accordingly, in order to grasp that which is being said, listeners have to make up words that are not related (Cutting 2002, p. 39). Below is an example from Cruse (2000, p. 361).

*A: “I say, did you hear about Mary’s...”*

*B: “Yes, well, it rained the whole time we were there.”*

It can be concluded from Gricean analysis that B's speech is absolutely unrelated to A's. A is discussing a friend named Mary, and B is summarizing her day. This is because she notices Mary approaching them but not A. As a result, B implicates the phrase "Look, Mary is coming."

Plag et al. (2007, p. 203) use the following example to show how people flout the relation maxim.

*A: “Do you know what time it is? I’ve left my watch at home, and we’re going to have a meeting at eight-thirty.”*

*B: “The church bells are ringing.”*

A: *“Great, half an hour left.”*

What is clear from this interaction is that what A and B are saying have no bearing on each other. On the other hand, A's response demonstrates that she is not perplexed or bewildered. On the contrary, she says, "Great, half an hour left," implying that she understands the speech and has no difficulty inferring its meaning, even though B's remark appears to be irrelevant on the surface.

#### **2.2.1.4 Flouting the Maxim of Manner**

People often break the maxim of manners to leave someone out. This means that two people break the maxim when they do not want someone else to understand what they are saying. Because of this, they make messages that are not explicit (Cutting 2002, p. 39). This kind of disobedience is shown in the next conversation.

A: *“I’ll look after Samantha for you, don’t worry, we’ll have a lovely time. Won’t we, Sam?”*

B: *“Great, but if you don’t mind, you don’t post here any post prandicle concoctions involving super cooled oxide of hydrogen. It usually gives rise to convulsive nausea.”*

Due to her desire to keep the conversation's content hidden from Sam, B uses ambiguous language when he says 'her,' 'after prandial concoctions,' and 'super cooled oxide of hydrogen, convulsive sickness' (Cruse, 2000, p. 361)

Another example provided by Chapman (2000, p. 129) demonstrates how people actually flout this maxim and how implicatures are formed as a result of this flouting:

*-“I found your lecture unhelpful.”*

- *"I found your lecture not helpful."*

The speaker flouts the third sub-maxim of manner, which specifies that one should be "short." The speaker implies in the first utterance that the lesson is not entirely beneficial.

### **2.2.2 Violating the Maxims**

When people violate a maxim, they attempt to mislead their listeners as opposed to flouting it. Speakers act like they are cooperating; nevertheless, their actual objective is to get listeners to draw a wrong conclusion (Thomas, 1995, p. 72). Davis (1998, p. 16) says that breaking a maxim is quietly deceiving because the speaker deceives people by providing them too little information, saying something that is not true or making statements which are not relevant or clear. This is possible because listeners generally assume that the speaker is cooperating with them. One way that maxims are broken is shown by Cutting (2002, p.40):

*"Husband: How much did that dress cost, darling?"*

*"Wife: Less than the last one."*

*Or: "Thirty-five pound."*

*Or: "I know, let's go out tonight."*

*Or: "A tiny fraction of my salary, though probably a bigger fraction of the salary of the woman sold it to me."*

It can be concluded from the preceding discussion that the wife violates the quantity maxim in her initial response; she is not as informed as is required. The wife breaks the quality maxim in her second response by lying. In her third response, she breaks the relational rule by changing the subject and saying something

unrelated to her husband's. The wife breaks the manner rule with her final response, which is ambiguous.

### **2.2.3 Opting out the Maxims**

The third technique of failing to meet a maxim is to opt-out. Speakers do not infer anything when they opt out of a maxim; the words say exactly what they mean. Speakers are inclined to cooperate and offer more information when opting out of a maxim. Speakers opt not to follow the maxim and express their displeasure with it (Thomas, 1995, p.74). Cutting (2002, p. 41) provides an example of opting out of maxims in the following:

*“I’m afraid I can’t give you that information.”*

In this scenario, the speaker expresses explicitly that he or she is unwilling to participate.

### **2.3 Implicature**

Kempeson (1979, p. 217) defines implicature as the speaker's assumption that the hearer would make an assumption that goes beyond the literal meaning of a sentence. Listeners must actively search for implicature across various conversational interactions, wherein the implied meaning of the spoken words is not directly expressed but rather implied for the listeners to deduce. Put simply, individuals do not completely cooperate in certain circumstances, but they persist in operating based on the same assumptions about communication. In certain situations, individuals may deliberately flout any of the of Grice's four maxims, preferring to be "uninformative," "evasive," "irrelevant," or "obscure." Nevertheless, they persist in producing meaningful speech, or, in other words, speech that are understood and interpreted as meaningful by the listener. Grice has introduced the

concept of "implicature" to characterize this phenomenon. This latter is, in fact, utilized to refer to what is implied as opposed to what the speakers say (Davis, 1998, p. 7-8). Thus, it is necessary upon the speakers to effectively communicate a logical and meaningful message. Indeed, the maxims primarily focus on the conduct of speakers rather than that of listeners.

Furthermore, the cooperative principle and the four maxims encourage listeners to participate in forecasting meaning. In some exchanges, speakers imply meaning when speaking, and it is up to the listeners to deduce what those implied meanings are. This is possible if the cooperation principle is assumed (Livenson, 1983, p. 109). Davis (1998, p.5) defines implicature as "The act of conveying something by expressing something else."

There are two sorts of implicatures, according to Grice. In fact, there is a difference between what is spoken and what is implied. Grice uses both conversational and conventional implicatures to place them. The assumption behind a conversational implicature is that listeners expect that speakers are cooperative. Therefore, people can draw conclusions about what someone is implying. Grice (1975) says it this way: "What is conversationally implicated is what one must presume a speaker thinks to maintain the assumption that he is following the cooperative principle (and possibly some other conversational maxims)." What is said defines what is implied. The hearer decides what is implied by what is being said, as well as the context and other aspects of the speech. Also, for verbal implicature to happen, the person speaking must believe that the people listening can understand the implicature (Levinson, 1983, p.152).

In the words of Grice: “The presence of conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaced by an argument, the implicature (if present at all) will not count as conversational implicature; it will be a conventional implicature (Grice, 1975).” There are two requirements for conversational implicature, according to Cruse (2000). For example, it stems from flouting the cooperative principle or maxims. Second, it is dependent on the situation. To illustrate how implicatures are formed, consider the following discussion from Davis (1998, p. 5):

*A: “I’ve just run out of petrol.”*

*B: “There’s a garage just around the corner.”*

What can be deduced from this interaction is that B implies that there is petrol in the garage. B, on the other hand, is less cooperative if he knows the garage is closed or out of gasoline. In any case, an implicature is created in both circumstances. Conversely, conventional implicature is not relevant to the cooperative principle, its maxims, and practically everything to do with specific words in discussions (Grundy, 1995, p. 81-2). For example, English people employ the words 'but,' 'therefore,' 'manage,' and 'yet' in sentences like:

*- “He is smart but not at all boring.”*

Depending on how you interpret 'but,' the implication is that most intelligent people are boring. The implicature 'but' emphasizes the contrast between what comes before and after it. The following is how the difference between conversational and conventional implicatures is described and clarified.

The nature of the norms involved distinguishes conversational and conventional implicatures at the sentence level. It's a matter of semantics in both cases. The implication of contrast is not part of the meaning of "but." The meaning of "some" does not include the non-universal implication (Davis, 1998, p. 157). The contexts, as well as understanding the cooperation principle and the four maxims, are not the only requirements for developing implicatures; there is also the requirement that interlocutors have shared background knowledge (Levinson, 1983, p.152).

## **2.4 Previous Studies**

Flouting Grice's maxims has been studied by many researchers. They dealt with this issue from different perspectives. For example, Ayasrah, Awwad and Ayasrah (2019) studied this phenomenon in the Arab leader's conversations. Moreover, Amalyasari and widiyanah (2019) studied how multicultural students behave with these maxims. They found that students usually flout the maxims and sometimes use hedges to mark for their listeners they have breached a maxim. A study done by Nuzulia (2020) investigated flouting the maxims in Trump's speech. She found that Trump frequently flouts the maxims particularly the maxim of quantity. Studies dealt with this phenomenon also extended to daily life interactions, in this regard, Al-Shboul (2022) investigated how Grice's maxims are flouted by Jordian speakers in their daily interactions. He found that people frequently flout the maxims. Investigating Grice's maxims flouting also extended to include written interactions such as novels and plays. For example, Fitri and Qadriani (2016) and Zaid (2021) studied flouting the maxims in literary works. Fitri and Qadriani (2016) studied flouting the maxims in



Divergent Novel. The study concluded that authors flout the Gricean maxims to achieve literary ends such as when they want the characters to show, panic, emphasis, etc. a similar study done by Xue and Hei (2017) to study humour in plays. These studies found that playwrights use flouting and breaking the maxims to create humorous effects. Still many other studies share these studies, mentioned above, in the same objectives. However, the present study emphasizes that flouting the maxims is a cross-cultural pragmatic phenomenon.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data Collection and Description**

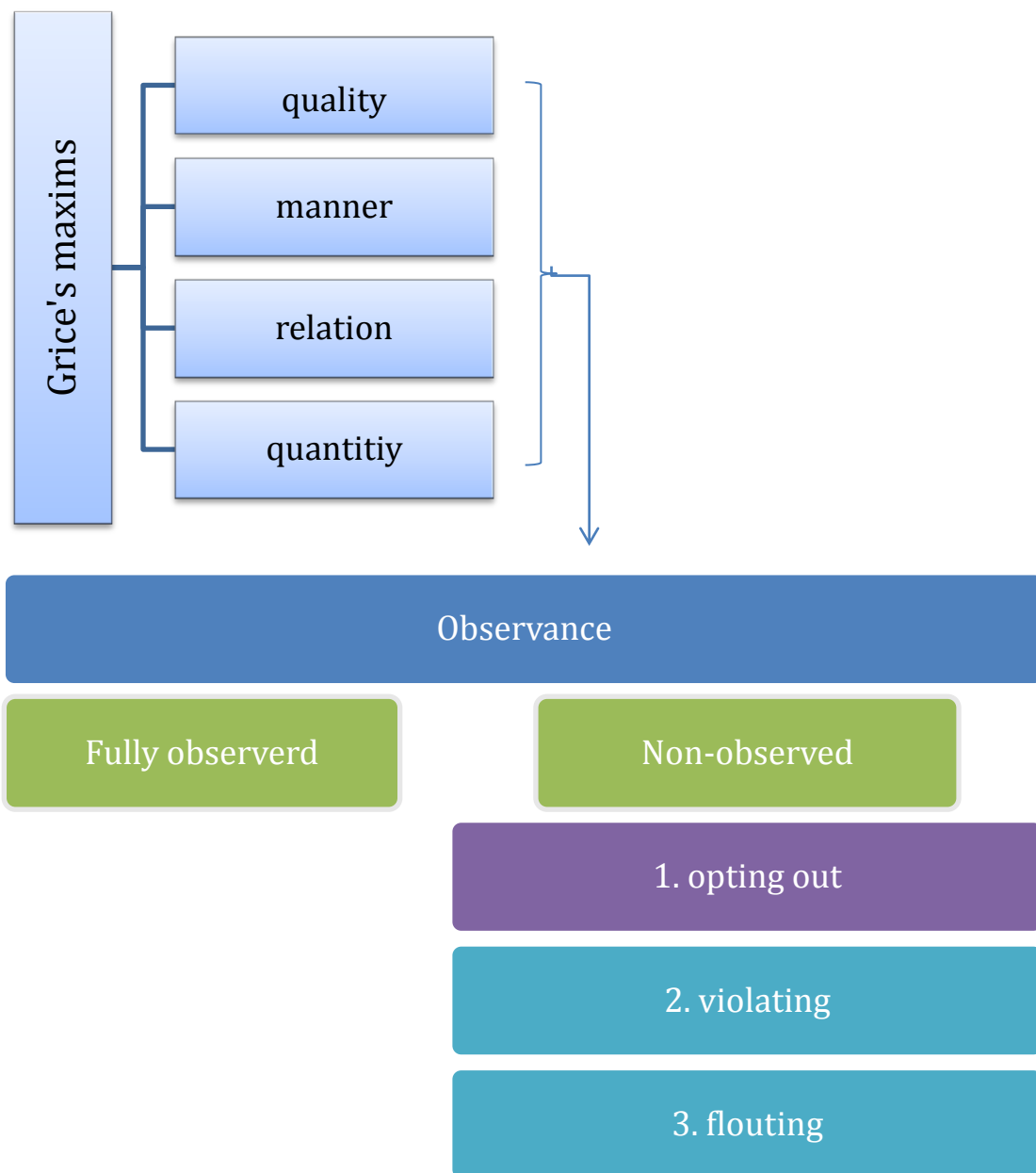
Data is an essential phase in any study since it helps researchers to understand the phenomenon under investigation and get more insights about it. Therefore, televised interviews of political figures of different cultures were collected from the internet to be analysed. These televised conversations were interviews between Bashar Assad and Todenhöfer. They were discussing the political crisis of the Syrian conflict and how it may be treated. The second interview is between Joe Biden, USA president, and Pelley Scott. They were discussing the economical inflation problem.

#### **3.2 Research Strategy**

The current study applies a qualitative research methodology. It attempts to describe the case where the interlocutors flout Grice's maxims. The qualitative approach, rooted in the constructivism paradigm, is adopted to conduct studies that deal with descriptive textual information (McMillan and Weyers, 2007, p. 123).

### **3.3 Model of Analysis**

This study adopts Grice's (1975) model of the cooperative principle. This model deals with conversation as being governed and controlled by principles or norms and all that is said or communicated, between the interlocutors, is relevant to the talk's purpose rather than being random wording. According to the model, these maxims may be non-observed in some situations to achieve certain implied meanings.



**Figure 3.1 The Model of Analysis depending on Grice's (1975)**

### 3.4 Procedures of the Study

1. Collecting the data by searching in the website.
2. Reading the transcript of the conversation.
3. Pointing out the situations where there is a case of flouting the maxims.
4. Numbering the instances taken to be analyzed.
5. Explaining how the speaker is flouting the maxim.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

In this section, the data analysis is presented. First, the utterances of the interlocutors are presented as extracts then followed by a remark on the contextual and pragmatic aspects of these utterances.

#### 3.5.1 Flouting of the Maxim of Relation

##### Extract 1

*Todenhöfer: "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?"*

*Bashar Assad: "The president shouldn't run away from the 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."*

The extract above shows how Assad flouted the relevance maxim. Todenhöfer implied in his query that Assad's quick

stepping down would bring peace and an end to the country's violence. It's worth noting that the question posed to Assad was not about the presidential election but his resignation as president. Assad, on the other hand, said that the Syrian people, not the president, will decide a leader's fate through elections. According to the principle of relevance, Assad should respond by saying whether or not he will resign immediately. However, it is clear from the passage that he purposefully made his response unrelated to the topic. He avoids answering about withdrawing from power and putting an end to the violence. Instead, he shifted the conversation to how the Syrian people could elect a president through a presumably fair presidential election. Because Todenhöfer's question implied that Assad was responsible for the demonstrations in Syria, it can be argued that he broke the relevance principle. Instead of agreeing or disagreeing with the claim, Assad shifted the focus of the conversation by stating that the Syrian people had the power to choose who would lead the country. Assad, at the same time, flouts the maxim of quantity as he provides more information than the question requires. The question is a yes/no question which requires either the assertion or rejection of what is being said. Assad flouted these two maxims to avoid giving a clear cut answer since he is speaking to the public opinion the thing that requires providing a 'diplomatic' answer that leaves things unresolved.

## **Extract 2**

*SCOTT: "Mr. President, as you know, last Tuesday the annual inflation rate came in at 8.3%. The stock market nosedived. People are shocked by their grocery bills. What can you do better and faster?"*

**BIDEN:** “Well, first of all, let's put this in perspective. Inflation rate month to month was just.. just an inch, hardly at all.”

Biden completely flouts the maxim of relevance in this extract. This is demonstrated by the fact that he answered the question with a response that was not directly relevant to the question, which is a clear breaking of the maxim of relevance. Joe Biden provided an answer that was irrelevant to the question posed by the interviewer, which was "what can you do better and faster" in reference to the yearly inflation rate. He stated that the inflation rate had hardly increased by an inch from one month to the next. Given that admitting that there is an issue with the slight increase in the rate of inflation could pose a threat to his public image, he makes an attempt to convey a message that there is no problem with the slight increase in the rate of inflation.

### **3.5.2 Flouting of the Maxim of Quality**

#### **Extract 3**

**Todenhöfer:** “I’ve been to some of the demonstrations, even in Homs, in peaceful demonstrations. Isn’t it legitimate that people demand more freedom, more democracy and less power in the hands of one family, less power in the hands of secret services?”

**Bashar Assad:** “Let’s correct the question first to have the correct answer. We don’t have power in the hand of a family. In Syria, we have the state, we have institutions, maybe not the ideal institutions, but we don’t have a family to run the country. We have a state. This is the first fault. Now, we can answer the first part. Of course, they have the right, they have the legitimate right whether they are demonstrators or not. Not only demonstrators ask for freedom. Actually, the majority of the people ask for reforms, political reforms, not freedom. We have freedom but not

*the ideal freedom. But the reform, let's say, to have more participation in the power, in the government, in everything else in their country. This is legitimate. But the majority is not in the demonstrations. We have people who have demonstrated and who have not, but this is legitimate."*

When Todenhöfer questioned Assad on the people's right to demand freedom and democracy from one family, Assad's response contained a quality maxim flouting. "We don't have authority in the hands of a family," Assad was quoted as saying, denying the one family power. We have a state in Syria, and we have institutions if not perfect institutions, but not one and only one family to govern the country." Syria has been dominated by the power of Assad's family, a country whereas the other people are the majority. Assad's family is Syria's ruling class, with major responsibilities in the military and administration, as well as at the top of business. They have been Syria's governing class since the Al-Assad family came to power in the early 1960s. They have been in control for five decades. As a result, Assad's denial in this dialogue demonstrated that he flouted the quality maxim. He attempted to convince the journalist and the audience that the Assad's family did not hold influence. Alternatively, he stated that Syria's primary issue was that it lacked the ideal power institutions to govern the country.

#### **Extract 4**

*SCOTT: "You're not arguing that 8.3% is good news."*

*BIDEN: "No, I'm not saying it is good news. But it was 8.2% or ... 8.2% before. I mean, it's not.. you're ac.. we act.. make it sound like all of a sudden, my god, it went to 8.2% It's been"*

When Joe Biden asserted that the increase did not come as a surprise to the American people, he was demonstrating a flouting of the maxim of quality by making a statement that is not true. This is not the case, as Joe Biden is aware that the American people are shocked by the increase. He is making an effort to convey the message that the growth is expected, that it is not a cause for fear, and that it does not necessarily have to be a problem for him. He is attempting to minimize the problem of inflation and to absorb the rage and fear of the American people through flouting the quality maxim. The fact that Biden stutters and uses language that is incomplete in order to avoid providing a clear answer to the question is an obvious example of how he broke the maxim of manner.

### **3.5.3 The Flouting of the Maxim of Manner**

#### **Extract 5**

*Todenhöfer: “You think you still have a majority behind your back?”*

*Bashar Assad: “If I have—if I don’t have support in the public, how could I stay in this position? The United States is against me, so how could I stay in this position? The answer is that I still have public support. How much, what 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.”*

In this fragment, Todenhöfer asks Assad a direct question about whether he believes he has widespread support among his people. Assad's response, however, flouts the basic principle of manners by being unclear and lengthy. Therefore, it can be inferred that Assad's reply was ambiguous due to his lack of concrete evidence to support his claims on the matter. Assad



broke the maxim of manner in his speech as he refused to admit his limited acceptance provided by the minority. Instead, he simply stated that he had public support, but despite the plain question, he did not indicate whether this support was in the majority or minority. Assad, moreover, flouts the maxim of quality because he claims that he has a wide public support, while, a look at the political map of Syria, would, in fact, reveal that the almost the whole country is demonstrating against his regime. Therefore, he provide an answer to which he lacks evidence.

### **Extract 6**

*SCOTT: "It's the highest inflation rate, Mr. President in 40 years."*

*BIDEN: "I got that. But guess what we are: We're in a position where, for the last several months, it hasn't spiked. It has just barely.. it's been basically even. And in the meantime, we created all these jobs and prices.. have.. have gone up, but they've come down for energy. The fact is that we've created 10 million new jobs. We're in since we came to office. We're in a situation where the the unemployment rate is about 3.7%. One of the lowest in history. We're in a situation where manufacturing is coming back to the United States in a big way. And look down the road, we have mas.. massive investments being made in computer chips and.. and employment. So, I.. Look, this is a process. This is a process."*

In this extract, Biden flouts the quantity and manner maxim at the same time. The interviewer asks him if he agrees that this is the highest rate of inflation. However, he provides more information than is required and then he extends his speech to talk

about unemployment and investments. This seemingly unclear and not orderly presented answer flouts the maxim of manner. Biden capitalizes on flouting the maxim of manner to convey an implied message that he has done a lot of good improvements during his ruling period. Doing so, he hopes that this would mitigate the sense of anger in the public opinion and better presents his public image.

### **3.5.4 Flouting the maxim of quantity**

#### **Extract 7**

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

*Bashar 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 is people who support the government, and a large part of the others are innocent people who have been killed by different groups in Syria.”*

Assad said, “If you want to know who killed, you first have to know who has been killed.” flouts the quantity maxim. “You can't tell who the culprits are unless you know who the victims are. The majority of the victims you're referring to are government supporters.” Instead of providing a straightforward response, Assad attempted to manipulate the topic by offering an exaggerated remark. Rather than disclosing the identities of those who were responsible, he provided an extensive account of the victims, asserting that they consisted of both government loyalists

and innocent individuals. Assad's use of this data may serve as an attempt to convince people that he is not responsible for the murders. Furthermore, Assad's remark, "How can you be a criminal and a victim at the same time?" is considered rhetorical. This question was not posed to elicit a response from the listener. In reality, it's possible that Assad posed that question to persuade the people that he wasn't the one responsible for all of the murders. Assad makes use of flouting the quantity maxim to convey a message to the public opinion that he is not responsible about the killing, at least in his own view which he believes to be true.

### **Extract 8**

**SCOTT:** "Is the economy going worse before it gets better?"

**BIDEN:** "No. I don't think so. We hope we can have what they say, a soft landing, a transition to a place where we don't lose the gains that I ran to make in the first place for middle-class folks, being able to generate good-paying jobs and- expansion. And at the same time.. make sure that we ..we are.. are able to continue to grow."

Biden flouts the maxim of quantity since he supplies more information than is required, talking extensively about the jobs and the need to increase payment. Since Biden flouts the quantity maxim in this extract, it can be assumed that he tries to convey a message. He tries to show that he is making economical improvements and planning for better economic growth in the future.

## **4. Discussion**

In analyzing televised conversational interactions of Bashar Assad and Joe Biden, it becomes evident that flouting Grice's

maxims is a common pragmatic strategy. This section discusses how and why these maxims are flouted. It sheds light on the communicative intentions and implications behind these deviations from conversational maxims.

Concerning the maxim of relation, which states that responses should be relevant to the purpose of conversation, is notably flouted by both Assad and Biden. For instance, in Extract 1, Assad avoids directly addressing whether he would step down to bring peace to Syria, instead emphasizing that the decision should lie with the Syrian people through elections. This deliberate irrelevance serves to shift the focus from his potential resignation to the legitimacy of his leadership, thereby deflecting a potentially damaging admission. Similarly, in Extract 2, Biden's response to a question about what can be done better and faster to address inflation by discussing the minor month-to-month changes in the inflation rate diverts the conversation away from the broader economic concern. This flouting is used to minimize the perceived severity of the issue and manage public perception by focusing on a less alarming aspect.

Regarding the maxim of quality, which emphasizes truthfulness and evidence in conversation, is flouted when speakers provide information that is misleading. Assad's denial of his family's dominance in Syria (Extract 3) exemplifies this, as he attempts to present the governance of Syria as institutional rather than autocratic. This strategy is aimed at countering criticisms of nepotism and autocracy, thus protecting his regime's image. In Extract 4, Biden's minimization of the inflation rate's impact flouts the maxim of quality by implying that the slight increase is not significant, even though public sentiment suggests otherwise. This approach aims to downplay economic concerns and reassure

the audience, attempting to absorb public dissatisfaction and maintain a favorable image.

With regard to the maxim of manner, which requires clarity and brevity, is often flouted through vague or convoluted responses. Assad's lengthy and indirect answer to whether he has majority support (Extract 5) illustrates this flouting. By being unclear and verbose, he avoids admitting potentially limited support and instead creates an impression of legitimacy through public backing. In Extract 6, Biden's rambling response about job creation and manufacturing growth, when asked about inflation, similarly lacks orderliness and clarity. This flouting serves to shift focus from the negative topic of inflation to positive economic achievements, thereby enhancing his public image.

Shifting to the maxim of quantity, which calls for providing the right amount of information, is flouted when speakers give more or less information than necessary. Assad's detailed account of the victims of the Syrian conflict instead of directly addressing who is responsible for the killings (Extract 7) exemplifies this flouting. By over-explaining, he diverts attention from his regime's potential culpability and reframes the narrative to portray the government as a victim. In Extract 8, Biden's extensive elaboration on economic plans and job creation, when asked about the economic outlook, provides more information than required. This strategy aims to highlight his administration's efforts and successes, thereby mitigating any immediate concerns about economic deterioration.

## **5. Conclusion**

It can be concluded that both Bashar Assad and Biden flout all the maxims of the cooperative principle. In doing so, they try

to convey implied messages to the world or their country's people. Assad, for example, attempts to convey a public image of himself that he behaves legally and is ready to end the disorder and violence in his country. Moreover, they sometimes flout the maxim of manner in hope that they avoid giving a clear and absolute answer to the journalists' questions. Some other times, they flout the maxim of quantity to provide more information and details to avoid answering the questions by one short clear answer which may, if answered briefly, affect their public image, position and even influence the public's opinion towards them. So, they try to flout all the maxims as a strategy to keep them on the safe side and to clarify misconceptions, as they believe. Furthermore, cross-cultural differences showed no influence on flouting the maxims. That is flouting the maxim is a cross-cultural pragmatic phenomenon, at least in English and Arabic. This result answers question number one in the first part. Moreover, Bashar Assad and Biden flout the maxims when the situation demands to do so. Depending on the analysis, they flouted all the maxims. This result answers the second question. These results contribute theoretically to the growing body of cross-cultural pragmatics.

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