

## **Gricean Analysis of Comments of Male and Female Facebook Users on Financial Assistance Request of Zainab Ado Bayero**

Sadiq Aliyu Waziri

Anas Musa Ismail

Abdulrahman Shu'aibu

Abubakar Usman Abubakar

### **Abstract**

*Several researchers have studied male and female language use from a Gricean perspective. However, a gap remains regarding how males and females react to news items on social media. This research aims to provide a comparative and contrastive Gricean analysis of male and female comments on the news article titled Money Gov Yusuf Gave Us Not Enough: Bayero's Daughter Returns to Public for Funds. The study analyzes selected comments to identify instances of non-observance of the Cooperative Principle maxims, highlighting similarities and differences between male and female commenters from a Gricean standpoint. Twelve comments, six from males and six from females, are selected using judgmental and stratified random sampling techniques. The results indicate that all 12 commenters fail to observe at least one maxim, with six commenters violating more than one simultaneously. In contrast, the findings reveal that all female commenters opt out of the maxim of quantity as a result of their use of sarcasm, while only one male commenter does the same. The research concludes that non-observance of maxims is common among both male and female commenters; however, the manner of this non-observance differs between the two groups, with female commenters employing sarcasm and opting out of the maxim of quantity more frequently than their male counterparts.*

**Keywords:** Cooperative Principle, Maxim and Non-Observance

### **1.0 Introduction**

This paper offers a comparative and contrastive analysis of male and female comments on news articles on Facebook, utilizing Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) as the theoretical framework.

The Cooperative Principle, proposed by Grice (1975), posits that for effective conversation to occur, interlocutors must contribute appropriately to the discussion by providing only what is necessary at each stage of the conversation, without straying from the topic. Grice further establishes four maxims—quantity, quality, relation, and manner—that interlocutors should follow to facilitate effective communication. These maxims have been widely studied and are used to examine various conversational issues, as noted by Frederking (1996).

Several linguists have explored how males and females use language, with some researchers conducting comparative and contrastive studies of the linguistic behaviors of the two genders. Rundquist (1991) investigates the relationship between speaker gender and indirectness, analyzing conversations among seven families to determine how males and females may be indirect by flouting Grice's maxims. The study reveals that fathers (males) are more likely to be indirect by violating the maxims compared to mothers (females) in conversations with both children and adults. Additionally, Bahadori and Bagherzade (2016), as cited in Qassemi et al. (2018), examine how Persian male and female speakers utilize the maxim of quantity in different contexts to conclude their conversations. Their findings indicate that Iranian women tend to use the maxim of quantity more in formal settings, while men employ it more frequently in informal contexts.

Furthermore, Rashid (2020) studies selected male and female political interviews through the lens of Grice's Cooperative Principle. The study examines the flouting of Grice's maxims in Muir's interview with Clinton and Spiegel's interview with Merkel, finding that the maxims were flouted 18 times in the former and 16 times in the latter. This indicates that females flout the maxims more than males do. Moreover, Farooq et al. (2024) conduct a comparative analysis of male and female politeness strategies on Facebook, utilizing Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory. The researchers selected comments from male

and female Facebook users using a purposive sampling technique, revealing that females employ positive politeness strategies more frequently than their male counterparts.

Thus, considering the research conducted by Rundquist (1991), Bahadori and Bagherzade (2016) in Qassem et al. (2018), and Rashid (2020) on male and female language use, there is a need to apply such studies to Facebook and social media in general. Farooq et al. (2024) present a similar study from the perspective of politeness strategies. Consequently, this research aims to compare and contrast male and female comments on a selected piece of news using Grice's Cooperative Principle maxims.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

Grice's Cooperative Principle is a theory which has attracted the interest of several linguists. Tsojan and Jonah (2015) for instance, study some advertisement billboards in Jos metropolis, using Grice's maxims of Cooperative Principle. The study finds out that the billboard writers in trying to observe a maxim, they end up violating another maxim which is a clear example of clash. This study is similar to this current study for using the same theoretical framework of Cooperative Principle. However, the two studies are dissimilar with Tsojan and Jonah (2015) analyzing billboards while this current study analyzes comments on a piece of news on Facebook. Again, Tsojan and Jonah (2015) fail to take types of non-observance of the maxims into cognizance while this study does.

Meanwhile, Qassemi et al. (2018) use the maxims to study reports published in the Tehran Times. The research's focus is to reveal the violation and adoption of the maxims by the reporters. The study concludes that the maxims of quality and manner are the most frequently violated. The research and this current study use the same Cooperative Principle as their framework. However, the subjects of

analyses differ and this current study aims to take the genders of the participants into consideration.

However, Ayunon (2018) explores Facebook posts trying to find out the participants' violation of the maxims. It is discovered that the maxims are frequently violated as a result of the participants' use of humour and sarcasm. This research and the current study are similar for using the same theory and working on the same social media platform. Notwithstanding, the two studies differ with Ayunon (2018) analyzing posts while this current research uses comments in its analysis.

Similarly, Waziri, S. A. (2023) uses Grice's theory to study Facebook. However, the researcher's interest is on comments on newspaper headlines. The aim of the research is to find out whether or not commenters read the contents of the news before commenting. The research finally establishes that the analysis of maxims of Cooperative Principle can be used to identify readers and non-readers of contents of news on Facebook. The research is similar to this current study for using the same theory and operating on comments on news items on Facebook. Nonetheless, this current research differs for seeking to establish that male and female commenters may differ in how they react to the pieces of news.

Furthermore, Umar and Jamil (2024) study Hausa proverbs from selected Hausa literary texts, attempting to find out how the proverbs in the contexts they are used violate the maxims of Cooperative Principle and how such violation can lead to generation of conversational implicature. The study finds out that particularly particularized conversational implicature can be inferred from Hausa proverbs in context as a result of maxims violation. The study is similar to the current study in theoretical framework but dissimilar from the current study for operating on Hausa proverbs in Hausa literary texts which differs from this study's aim of analyzing comments on Facebook. Again, the research take into account generalized and

particularized implicatures which are not at the centre of this current study.

Moreover, Uba and Yusuf (2024) study Grice's maxims in Nigerian newspapers' cartoons. The research focuses on examining violation of the maxims and the implications of such violation. It is established by the research that cartoonists fail to observe the maxims deliberately to address social, political and cultural issues. This research uses the same theoretical framework as the current research. However, the two differ with this current research's focus on gender differences.

In essence, this research attempts to depart from previous research's focus on Grice's Cooperative Principle to set a precedence by studying comments on pieces of news on Facebook, looking at how male and female commenters are similar and dissimilar in the light of the said theory.

### **3.0 Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

This segment of the paper explains the theory adopted while conducting the research. Also, the segment explains the methods adopted by the researcher in data collection, presentation and analysis.

#### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts Grice's four maxims, as established by Grice (1975). The theory posits that interlocutors adhere to these maxims to ensure successful communication. However, Grice also notes that interlocutors sometimes do not comply with these maxims. This non-compliance is referred to as non-observance or non-fulfillment and can manifest as violation, flouting, opting out, clash, or suspension. Consequently, this paper aims to identify the maxims that selected commenters do not comply with and to analyze how such non-compliance occurs.

### **The Four Maxims**

As reported above, Grice (1975) proposes four maxims which interlocutors abide by for an effective conversation to happen. They are as follows:

Maxim of Quantity: this proposes that interlocutors should make their conversational contributions as informative as required. It should not be more nor less than what is required.

Maxim of Quality: this proposes that interlocutors should say only what they believe to be true and what they have adequate knowledge of.

Maxim of Relation (Relevance): this proposes that interlocutors should be relevant and not go outside the topic of the conversation.

Maxim of Manner: this proposes that interlocutors should be perspicuous and avoid being ambiguous, obscured and not orderly.

### **The Non-Observance Types**

As stated above, these four maxims may sometimes not be observed by the interlocutors. The observance can in form of the following:

Flouting: Andresen (2013) opines that flouting of a maxim happens when a speaker decides to ignore a maxim or more by adding a meaning to the literal meaning. Wales (2001) sees hyperbole and metaphor as some of the ways, especially maxim of quality, is flouted.

Violation: Rizkiani (2013) states that violation of a maxim happens when a speaker intentionally ignores a maxim to misinform his listener. Andresen (2013) agrees and postulates that violation of a maxim is when the maxim is deviated deliberately to mislead one's audience.

Clash: Grice (1989) explains that clash happens when one maxim demands the infringement of another maxim. He states that there is a difference between not cooperating and inability to cooperate with the maxims.

Infringement: this happens when a speaker fails to observe a maxim not having any intention to misinform or mislead. According to Mooney (2003), infringement can be observed in speeches of people learning a language. Andresen (2013) adds that infringement can also be observed in the speeches of people with language impairment.

Opting Out: Mooney (2003) and Andresen (2013) see opting out as a situation where a speaker is unwilling to cooperate with a maxim or more. Rizkiani (2013) however, believes that opting out happens when a speaker cannot respond in a way that is expected of him/her, giving the example of a speaker who lacks the knowledge of the topic.

Suspension: this happens when a speaker ignores a maxim or more conditioned by cultural or communal norms. Andresen (2013) believes that it is a case of suspension when a speaker withholds a piece of information for confidentiality.

### **3.2 Methodology**

This paper uses a piece of news shares by the Daily Trust newspaper on their Facebook timeline on 24th August, 2024. The headline reads: "Money Gov Yusuf Gave Us not Enough," Bayero's daughter returns to public for funds. This particular piece of news is selected for its recency at the time of conducting this research and its generation of both male and female commenters.

However, the 12 comments sampled and analyzed in this research are selected, firstly, using non-probability, judgemental sampling technique. This is a technique with which a researcher selects the samples because what is required cannot be obtained in the other options. In this research only users found to be either male or female with their comments written in English Language were selected. Commenters whose genders could not be deciphered from their profiles or their comments written in either pidgin English, emojis and Nigerian languages were left out.

Secondly, the comments were selected using probability, stratified random sampling method. The 761 comments are stratified into two groups: male and female. Then, six comments were selected randomly from each stratum. Six comments are selected from each stratum, following there are only 12 female commenters whose comments are in English Language. Therefore to suit the aim of the research, only six comments were selected and analyzed from each stratum.

Having stated that, in the data presentation section, the summary of the piece of news is presented followed by the comments selected. The comments are presented in two groups: male and female comments. Each comment is analyzed following its presentation. Following the data presentation and analysis, a segment presents a discourse on how the two strata of male and female comments are similar and different from each other.

#### **4.0 Data Presentation and Analyses**

##### **The Headline and Lead:**

##### **The Headline: 'Money Gov Yusuf Gave Us not Enough', Bayero's daughter returns to public for funds**

The piece of news reports Zainab Ado Bayero's interview with the *Premium Times* about her, mother, and brother's current condition. She stated that they have been struggling, moving from one apartment or hotel to another since the death of her father, Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero as they were not given anything from the treasure that he left. She told the newspaper that she sought for Kano Governor's help sometime in June, 2024 when they were about to be evicted from their apartment, failing to settle their rent. The Governor sent his representative to settle the bill. Zainab added that they are now back in the same situation. She stated that the Governor told them of his plan to buy them a house in Kano. However, they told the Governor that they didn't want a house in Kano but in Lagos which may cost around 150 million Naira.

### **The Selected Comments on the News Item**

This segment of the paper presents the selected comments. The comments are presented in two segments: male comments and female comments. Furthermore, a segment presents the comparative and contrastive analyses of the selected comments.

#### **Male Comments**

**Ahmad Auwal Indabo II:** *Ask your brothers. Aminu and Nasiru Bayero, but if can advise the governor, I will detect him to assist them because her father ADO BAYERO loot the kano funds through time of emirship. He diverted the huge amount of money, he's multimillionaire without single BUSINESS.*

The above commenter fails to comply with the maxim of quality which states that speakers should only say what they know to be true and have adequate knowledge of. The allegations that the former emir looted public funds and was a millionaire without having any business have not been backed by any evidences. Obviously, this is a clear case of both infringement and opting out. Firstly, it is infringement, looking at the commenter's misuse of tenses. The first sentence "Ado Bayero loot the Kano fund..." is in simple present tense while the next "He diverted the huge..." is in simple past tense whereas both the first and second sentences are pointing at an event which may have taken place in the past. Secondly, its opting out, looking at the fact that the commenter lacks the knowledge of the topic.

**Musa Aliyu II:** *Relocate to Kano, you'll find it more easier. Government treasury is not meant for royal family alone.*

This commenter, in his first statement, opts out of maxim of quality because there is no evidence provided that Zainab will find an easier life in Kano. She may find life harder in Kano, not necessarily financially.

**Mohammed Musa:** *See this senseless citizen of our country.*

This is another example of opting out of a maxim. However, this opting out can be looked at from the angle of maxim of quality and maxim of quantity. One, the commenter's claim that Zainab is senseless has no basis; two, the commenter does not give the needed opinion on the matter of the commenter, so opts out of maxim of quantity.

**Muh'd Jamil Mjb:** *Ok, you mean you can come over and beg for privilege apart from the one you are enjoying. Let help goes to where it is needed.*

The commenter claims that Zainab does not need any help, a claim that contradicts what is contained in the news. Thus, the commenter opts out of maxim of quality. Again, the commenter may be lacking the knowledge of the content. Either way, the commenter opts out of the maxim.

**Vincente Nyam:** *Is money ever enough? If you want leave or not but government is keenly watching for when is time.*

Except in the question that he asks, this commenter's comment infringes the maxim of manner. It is clear the commenter lacks the command of the language he is writing in. It is difficult deciphering the point he is trying to make.

**Anya Augustine:** *Liability set of people, that is why all of you is claiming false one Nigeria.*

It is not clear who the commenter refers to as "liability set of people" and who is "all of you". Therefore, the comment infringes the maxim of manner. Again, the commenter infringes the maxim of quality for making a claim which lacks evidence.

#### **Female Comments**

**Zainab Nasir Ahamd:** *I hope they are not going to give her money from the taxpayer's money. She should go and hustle abeg.*

This commenter appears to be sarcastic implying that Zainab is begging the governor to give her money from public funds or the

governor gives money from the public funds. Also, the second statement clashes with what is contained in the piece of news because Zainab states that they hustle to get a job and get her brother back to school. The two statements opt out of maxim of quantity.

**Meenerh Farouq:** *Rich people and their wahala always feeling entitled. So she cannot get a job like every other person in Nigeria? Should the presidency and government of kano put them on pay roll too because her father was an emir?*

This commenter disregards the maxim of quality by claiming that rich people always feel entitled. Furthermore, the assertion that everyone else in Nigeria gets a job violates the maxims of quality and quantity, as it lacks supporting evidence. Zainab expresses a desire to find meaningful work in her content. Finally, the comment appears sarcastic, implying that Zainab, her mother, and brother should be on payroll simply because their father was an emir, which also disregards the maxim of quantity.

**Fateemah Esbee:** *Let her ask her brother the emir. She just want to tell people her mother is a concubine.*

This commenter fails to observe the maxim of quality by stating what she does not have evidence of. No where is it stated in the piece of news that Zainab wants to reveal to people that her mother is a concubine. The commenter appears to be sarcastic which is a clear opting out of maxim of quality and quantity (by not giving the required information) as well.

**Hadiza Hussaini Muhammad:** *She went assumed new value contrary to our norms and values and shamelessly making a claim that she's late Emir's daughter. Well, come back to kano and indeed come up with a convincing evidence that you're a biological daughter of late Emirs daughter or go to Gov. Sanwaolu for assitannce. Better still, didn't she get anything from the unquantifiable wealth bequeath by the late Emir.*

This commenter appears to have infringed maxim of quality and manner because she appears to be making unclear claims without any evidence. There is also an element of sarcasm, insinuating that Zainab is making false claim that she is the late emir's daughter, that she should ask Sanwaolu for assistance and asking her if she didn't inherit anything from the wealth left by the late emir. All of this opts out of maxim of quantity by not giving the required information and giving what is not required.

**Fatima Abdu:** *Are you people even sure she is the late Emirs daughter?*

This commenter opts out of maxim of quantity for appearing to be unwilling to give the required information and lacking the knowledge of the topic. Notwithstanding, the commenter seems sarcastic, posing this question, which is in line with opting out of maxim of quantity.

**Ummu Qaseem Nata'alah:** *This girl has turned to a professional begger.*

This commenter flouts the maxim of quality for intentionally exaggerating Zainab's seeking for help to a level of professional begging. Wales (2010) asserts that hyperbole can be looked at as flouting of a maxim of quality. Again, the statement appears of be sarcastic, stating that Zainab is a professional but in something bad (begging).

### **5.0 Findings and Discussion**

Comparatively, all the male and female selected commenters fail to observe at least one maxim. The analyses show that cases of infringement of maxim of quality occurred twice whereas cases of infringement of maxim of manner occurred three times. Also, there are cases of opting out of maxim of quantity and quality six times each. Also, a case of flouting of maxim of quality occurred only once. The cases outnumber the commenters because there are cases of commenters failing to fulfill more than one maxim at once. Moreover, throughout the analyses of the comments, cases of other types of non-

observance of maxims which include violation, clash and suspension of maxims did not occur.

The analyses also show that, even though opting out is recurrent amongs both male and female commenters, female commenters appear to have opted out of maxim of quantity more than their male counterparts. Five female commenters opted out of maxim of quantity while only one male commenter is found to have opted out of the same maxim. Again, it is found out that "sarcasm" is a recurrent trait amongst all the female commenters while the same trait is lacking in the male commenters.

### **6.0 Conclusion**

In summary, this research aimed to provide a Gricean analysis of male and female comments on a selected piece of news. The main objective was to identify similarities and differences in their reactions from a Gricean perspective. Twelve comments six from males and six from females were selected and analyzed using Grice's Cooperative Principle. The analysis revealed that failure to adhere to the maxims of the Cooperative Principle is a common feature among the selected comments on Facebook. However, the study found that male and female commenters differ in how they disregard these maxims. Female commenters often employed sarcasm, opting out of the maxim of quantity, whereas their male counterparts did not exhibit the same tendency and therefore adhered to this maxim.

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