

Original Research Article

Presentation of Public Speeches in the Framework of Gricean Maxims: A Case Study of Kakamega County

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Article History

Received: 12.02.2023

Accepted: 25.03.2023

Published: 09.04.2023

Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

Quick Response Code



Abstract: Public speaking has continually become authentic without which communication can take place among the people of any society, and therefore there is a need to scrutinize whether or not they conform to Gricean maxims or violate them. Grice's principle of 1975 gives the conventions by which a successful speech can be uttered. The key objective of the study is to analyse the type of speeches that conform to Gricean maxims and the maxim which is susceptible to violation. The types of speeches include persuasive, informative, and ritualistic. Descriptive research design was adopted and the target population was people of Kakamega County. Convenience sampling technique was applied to gather the speeches from the church, funerals, marriage ceremonies, learning institutions, media platforms, graduation ceremonies, and seminars. Secondary sources of data include speeches from the president and the governor. The research instruments included audio-tape recording, oral interview and observation until saturation stage was attained. Data was analysed in the table and textual form. It was found that ritualistic speeches flouted the maxim of quantity and manner. Persuasive speeches mostly violated three maxims. Most of the informative speeches conformed to all maxims. It therefore, recommends that ritualistic speeches are specific and mostly written and should not take more than 5 minutes. Persuasive speeches mostly flout the maxim of quality, quantity, and manner because some are informal and figurative. Informative speeches are formal and time-bound, therefore, conform to the maxims. Since Gricean principles could not account for political speeches, relevance theory was applicable to cover the deficit.

Keywords: Audience, flouting, infringement, maxims, lectern and violation.

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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Zeoli (2023) finds that speaking is the art of passing information from the utterer to the hearer orally. A good speaker focuses on the speech, practice, audience, confidence, and creation of suspense for the listener (Zeoli, 2023). This is quite enriching, though there is a need to investigate whether or not such speeches conform to Gricean maxims for effective communication.

A speech is a formal or informal talk delivered to the audience (Indeed Editorial Team, 2020). They categorised the speeches as informative, entertaining, persuasive, demonstrative, oratorical, debate, special occasion speech, motivational speech, impromptu, farewell, explanatory, eulogy, and speech tips such as knowing the audience, event, venue, topic, information balance, and sources. The current study groups the

speeches into three – informative, persuasive, and ritualistic/special occasions.

Boyenga, (2023) describes the 4 types or modes of speech delivery as impromptu (unplanned), extemporaneous (planned with guide notes), manuscript (written speech and premeditated) and memorized (practised). It is therefore necessary to study how the 4 maxims of Grice are followed or neglected to communicate effectively. We can conclude that a speech is the most means of passing information to the audience orally and it can be written, memorised or referred to the bulletin board. It is interesting because the speaker can manipulate it depending on the situation and type of audience.

Jachowicz *et al.*, (2022) explained that public speaking is the art of conveying the information to the audience orally with the intention of informing,

motivating, celebrating, entertaining and persuading. This description entails the types of speeches that exists. There is need then to establish the applicability of Gricean principles as the standard convention on which the speech is delivered to the audience effectively:

The maxims that Grice (1975) discussed are as follows: Quantity – make your contribution as informative as is required. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. Quality – do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack evidence. Relation – be relevant. Manner – avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief and orderly (Hossain, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous study analysed how students conversed using Gricean maxims and found that in order to preserve their relationship, four maxims were violated more than they were observed (Hidayati *et al.*, 2018). The current study, therefore, intends to scrutinize the category of speeches that observes Gricean maxims and the maxim that is highly susceptible to violation during public speaking.

Hamad and Muhammed (2009) accounted for Grecean 4 maxims in political speeches and advocated that if the quality maxim is violated, the rest of the maxims are subject to be violation because language is dynamic. The current study then investigates the type of speeches that conform to the four maxims and the maxim which is susceptible to violation.

Kimenye (2022) categorised political speeches as persuasive and informative by examining the role of language in communication and interpretation of the intentions based on the criteria of collection of political speeches of the former president of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta and the former Prime Minister Raila Odinga. Since the study did not explain whether such speeches conform to Gricean maxims or not, the current study intends to venture into such area.

Special occasion speeches include introduction (of a visitor), presentation (of a prize), acceptance (vote of thanks), dedication, toast (appreciation), eulogies, praise, lament, consolation, farewell, commencement (in graduation ceremony), after dinner speech, motivational, heroic speech, spiritual, religious, and success speech (Barton & Tucker, 2021). Since previous studies have highlighted persuasive and informative speeches, this study has elaborated on special occasion speeches, which are also called ritualistic. Such speeches mainly take a maximum of five minutes. The study at hand now investigates whether ritualistic speeches abide by or flout Gricean maxims.

Barton and Tucker (2023) further highlighted the methods of speech delivery as impromptu, manuscript speaking (reading), extemporaneous (planned by use of short notes), and memorised speeches. The current study intends to analyse the method of speech delivery that best suits a particular speech category in line with Gricean maxims.

In this case, Habwe (2010) has analysed political speeches more than other linguistic scholars in Kenya and established that the manner of presentation should be dialogue for immediate response. Such study was scrutinized and found that political speeches automatically breach the maxim of quality, quantity and manner. Not relatively so dialogue is the way of attracting attention of the audience. All persuasive speeches should be dialogical for immediate response.

Chepkemoi (2023) found that Churchill in his comedies and other comedians flout the 4 maxims in their utterances to create humour and attention of the multitude. As comedians flout the maxims, they employed strategies such as irony, satire, stereotypes and hyperbole to enhance humour creation (Chepkemoi, *et al.*, 2023)

From this assumption, all maxims are violated for intended message to reach the audience. This therefore implies that Gricean maxims are not applicable to all aspects of conversations. The current research sought to determine whether all speeches conform or breach those maxims. It was found out that a significant number of persuasive speeches violate the maxim of quality, quantity and manner in order to communicate effectively.

The study concurs with the previous one that since most maxims are violated, relevance theory by Wilson and Sperber (1995/2002) is sufficient to fill the gaps.

Rehn (2016) recommended that because no one can recall more than three ideas at a time, the keynote speaker should take an average of 20 minutes but if it is 45 minutes it should be broken into smaller units to meet the demands of concentration span. He noted that optimal attention span is 20 minutes. This paved the way for the current study which found that most of the informative speeches abided by that rule. It is exemption to ritualistic speeches which take shorter than 5 minutes. Persuasive speeches should conform to 20 minutes rule.

Jena & Tan (2015) caution that public speakers should not misuse their hands because they communicate more than words and reinforce the verbal message. From this study they also cautioned the speakers to desist from using a lectern to communicate because it destructs the attention of the audience.

The current study found that lecterns are very common in most of the occasions because they give courage to the speaker and make him or her to make good use of hands. For example, the second president of Kenya, Daniel Moi, used a stick (fimbo ya Nyayo) as a lectern and so do chiefs and other administrators in their barazas. Other speakers hold a pen, a notebook or a phone. The current research advocates that lecterns should be relevant to the speech to aid communication.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design because it is within the qualitative paradigm and it is a scientific method that involves observing and describing the behaviour of subject without influencing it in any way (Kimenye, 2022). The target population includes people of Kakakemga county in the various social gatherings where speeches are delivered. Speeches were sampled from church services, funerals, weddings, graduation, learning institutions, seminars, and media platforms until saturation stage was attained. Data collection techniques were direct observation, audio tape recording, oral interview and downloading data. Collected data was analysed in tables and textual form.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that there are three categories of speeches:

Informative

It is an official speech delivered to enlighten, enrich, and educate the audience on how to improve their lives. It includes lecture presentations, sermons, oratories, keynote addresses, motivational, and clinics. It is normally factual and scientific.

Informative speeches are formal and meant to conform to all maxims by giving all necessary facts based on evidence in the correct manner. The lecture takes 3 hours in most universities observed in Kenya. Such should be broken into breaks.

An oratory speech is delivered by one speaker to the multitude based on a particular culture. Among

the Luhya speaking communities, it is after burial ceremony of a famous elderly person in the community of Tachoni and Bukusu dialects of Luhya speaking communities. People are enriched about cultural expectation, history of the community, short comings and achievements of the dead and his generation.

Keynote address is presented by the enlightened and experienced fellows in a particular profession. Before the commencement of the official ceremony or seminars, there is an official introductory speech to alert members the expectations of the meeting and how it will benefit them by the end.

Motivational speech is presented by an expert in a particular field to enlighten the audience by opening up their perception of opportunities, challenging them to see the opportunities they have in the face of challenges at hand. Mostly in learning institutions and seminars. The speaker attempts to use all means to attract attention of the possible audience. The speaker tunes the language to the level of the audience and code switching is common.

Clinics are seminars to inform people about their expectations by training them in a specific area. It is also called a workshop.

Persuasive

It is mainly informal to convince the audience to follow your manner of reasoning. It involves all political speeches, negotiations in marriage, and debates.

Ritualistic

It is also called special occasion speeches. In many times they are habitual and written. If the speaker does not deviate from the norms, it takes a maximum of 5 minutes. They include introductory, vote of thanks, presentation, dedication, eulogy, consolation, farewell, commencement, valediction, benediction, dinner party talk, housewarming talk, wedding, and graveside (burial) speeches. The dominant speeches include eulogy, graveside reading, sermon, and political speeches.

Application of Grice's Maxim's in Public Speaking

Type of Speech	Maxim Abides ✓ Flouts ✗			
	Quality	Quantity	Relation	Manner
Informative				
Lecture	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sermon	✓	✗	✓	✗
Oratory	✓	✓	✓	✓
Key note address	✓	✓	✓	✓
Motivational	✓	✓	✓	✓
Church seminar	✓	✓	✓	✓
Persuasive				✗

Political	X	X	✓	X
Marriage negotiation	X	X	✓	X
Student debate	✓	X	✓	✓
Presidential speech	✓	X	✓	✓
Ritualistic				
Vote of thanks	✓	✓	✓	X
Introductory	✓	✓	✓	✓
Presentation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dedicatory	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eulogy	X	✓	✓	X
Initiation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Consolation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Farewell	✓	✓	✓	✓
Commencement	✓	✓	✓	✓
Valediction	✓	✓	✓	✓
Benediction	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dinner party	✓	✓	✓	✓
House warming	✓	✓	✓	X
Wedding	✓	✓	✓	X
Graveside speeches	✓	X	✓	X

From the above table, it is imperative that the speech category which conforms to all maxims is informative with the exception of sermons that violate the maxim of quantity by preaching through repetition of same information and maxim of manner is violated by being verbose and ambiguous. Sometimes the sermon spills into persuasive speech, especially during crusades and outreaches. Oral interviews to the congregation revealed that an ideal sermon in the church setting should take a maximum of 30 minutes while outside the church or public sermon in either crusade or Funeral service should take a maximum of 15 minutes to retain attention of the congregation. Most of the audience preferred Catholics and Friends Quakers service because the sermon mostly observed all Gricean maxims.

All informative speeches should conform to the four maxims and value the concentration spun of the audience by breaking their talks into manageable units for audience consumption. Even though the presenters of sermons asserted that their sermons are spiritually guided, they should conform to the four maxims more especially that of quantity and manner.

The manner maxim was also violated by the preachers who present their sermons while pocketing that implies the vice of pride and arrogance. Preaching while poorly groomed is an indicator that God is poor hence the public cannot be convinced or converted to follow God or worship him.

The manner maxim was also flouted when the preacher used mockery and negligence to other religious groups.

Although the sermon is grouped under informative speeches, it spills into persuasive speeches because it involves convincing people to follow your point of view.

The maxim which has not been flouted is that of relation because speakers delivered their speeches within the topics required.

Persuasive speeches violate at least each maxim except that of relation. None of the persuasive speeches observed the quantity maxim. In presentations, there are exceptions in persuasive speech where the maxims are subject to infringement to communicate effectively. It is therefore imperative that only maxim of relation can govern a political speech.

In political speeches, the politicians are compelled to use figurative language to show politeness, create rapport and closeness to the target audience. As it happens so, the metaphors and euphemisms break the maxim of quality by making contributions more than expected by use of many words. Maxim of manner is violated when the politicians use local language and translate it to both English and Kiswahili, making it prolixity. If the speaker fails to break such conventions, his or her motive will fall into oblivion.

Politicians used political propaganda to gain sympathy and mercy from the natives to convince them, hence violating the manner maxim. For instance, in example one, one politician informed the voters that his opponent had been removed from the race and if he advances, he would not be sworn in due to lack of academic credentials. This shows violation of the

maxim of quality. He won elections! The end justifies the means.

During persuasive speeches, especially political and marriage negotiation ones, the speeches tend to violate the maxim of quality, quantity, and manner in order to communicate their message accurately. To entice the hearers, the politicians use propaganda to violate the maxim of quality, hence winning the multitude. They enrich their language with figures of speech such as metaphors, idioms, euphemisms, and flashbacks to arrest the mind of listeners hence flouting the maxim of quality and manner. They keep circumlocuting to create suspense, thereby violating the manner maxim.

The nature of persuasive speeches licenses them to violate the maxims for politeness and seeking the attention of the audience. If they observe the maxims fully, their accomplishments will be null and void. The maxim which has been flouted the most is that of manner due to lack of exposure and expertise in the speech.

Ritualistic speeches have violated the manner maxim more than others. This implies that they should be spoken by specialists and not laymen. If possible they can be memorised or read on the script.

Ritualistic speeches are mostly violated by some religious leaders by extension of graveside service to longer period instead of 5 minutes. Eulogy should take less than 5 minutes but not to be extended because of emotional status of audience. In a nutshell, special occasion speeches or ritualistic speeches should mostly take 3 minutes but a maximum of 5 minutes.

The benediction is the speech delivered by the spiritual leader to bless or grace any occasion. Graveside speech is delivered before burial begins just for formality by the spiritual leader or traditional leader if the religion is not involved. Valedictory speech is delivered by a valedictorian during graduation ceremony in the University or college to express how life had been and express gratitude for the occasion. House warming party speech is delivered by those who come to celebrate the ordination of the new house. It is mostly to appreciate the owners of the new house and wish the inhabitants peace and prosperity. Dinner party speeches are specifically for Thanksgiving to those who presented the food. Commencement speech highlights how life is going on in a particular institution. Introduction speech is presented to welcome the new speaker, possibly the preacher or a motivational speaker to make the audience listen to him or her talk. It is done by giving a brief history or biography or any achievement which is applicable to the occasion. The same is applicable to installation of the new leader, king, pastor or priest and the new administrator.

However, it should not be overdone to go beyond 3 minutes.

Eulogy is giving the speech about your experience with the dead, achievements, regrets, how he or she influenced your life and what you accomplished together. It should be brief and orderly so that you do not flout the maxim of quality, quantity and manner because some of the listeners have the knowledge of what you are talking about.

Vote of thanks should not go beyond 3 minutes because of the tiredness and overwhelmed audience after the occasion. It should mention all parties involved in accordance with the protocol.

A farewell speech is delivered when parting ways, perhaps one of the group members is going on a transfer to a new place. It evokes the memories of your life together and the achievements.

The mode of delivery of informative speech should be extemporaneous due to its formality, that of ritualistic speech to be memorised or manuscript (read) to save time. Persuasive speeches can be delivered extemporaneously or based on an assessment of the audience or impromptu.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study found that there exists three categories of speeches, including persuasive, informative, and ritualistic. Informative speeches being formal, highly conforms to Gricean maxims except for church sermons that are prolonged and repeated to flout the maxim of quantity and manner. Persuasive speeches are rather informal and therefore violate the maxims of quantity, quality, and manner. Politicians adopt propaganda and figurative language to communicate their ideas politely and effectively to their audience. They tend to circumlocute to avoid being offensive to their listeners but to convince them to change their manner of perception. The same trend is with marriage and negotiation for face-saving.

Ritualistic speeches are in concordial agreement with maxims except for eulogies, graveside speeches, and vote of thanks that break the maxims of quantity, quality, and manner as a result of novice presenters. They are brief and documented and therefore need for it to conform to Gricean maxims.

The maxim which was observed entirely is that of relation. The maxim which is mostly violated is that of manner. It is as a result of lack of professionalism. It is followed by that of quantity where people are verbose. The mode of speech delivery was extemporaneous for the informative and ritualistic speeches, hence orderly. Most of the persuasive speeches were delivered either by memorisation or

impromptu and consequently violating most of the maxims.

Script-reading was rarely used, yet it is most applicable to ritualistic speeches to avoid flouting the maxim of manner and quantity.

A good public speaker should be well dressed to suit the occasion, project voice correctly, and use non-verbal cues but avoid chewing ball gums or engaging the mouth unnecessarily, mouth biting, fidgeting, pocketing, pleonasm or periphrasis and vulgarity to avoid distortion of the audience. In whatever the case, the speech is primarily for communication from the speaker to the target audience. Therefore, it is found that Gricean maxims are violated unnecessarily due to lack of exposure to the occasion at hand. Persuasive speeches, mostly political speeches are meant to flout the maxims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Persuasive speeches take longer time and have no timeframe. This, therefore, suggests that speakers, especially in political and marriage negotiation speeches, should strive to be polite by using figurative language and applying humour enriched with propaganda to capture the attention of the audience. Politicians should master the art of speaking the native language of their area of jurisdiction or code-switch for identity and establishing a rapport.

Sermons should be factual, relevant and take not more than 15 minutes in public places and a maximum of 30 minutes in church settings. The scripture should be quoted from the holy book with correct interpretation to suit the social, mental, and psychological status of the congregation. Bear in mind that they already have what you are preaching about.

Ritualistic speeches are habitual and therefore, should be done by an expert to observe all the maxims because all people already know them. They should not take more than 5 minutes and, if possible, to be read or memorised from the script. You should express the mood of either jolly or melancholy depending on the occasion at hand. Do not forget to employ tonal variation, facial expression, body shift, and diction. Benediction and prayer should not exceed 3 minutes in the public gatherings.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

In public speaking or conversation, people tend to pass information from one party to the other. The study sought to determine whether or not Gricean maxims are applicable in day-to-day speeches successfully without being violated. According to Grice

(1975) all the conversations should conform to Gricean maxims which stresses on being informative, truthful, relevant and well mannered. The study will ascertain whether speeches which are not in conformity with maxims will be conducted for effective communication.

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