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Original Research

Investigating the Principles of Grice in the Qur'an: the Conversation between Moses (pbuh) and Pharaoh

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Introduction

The present research is an effort to examine the theoretical framework of Grice's Cooperative Principle based on Quranic verses. The theoretical framework of the study is Grice's Cooperative Principle, which consists of four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. All dialogic verses between Moses (AS) and Pharaoh in the Quran constitute the data for this research. Since these dialogues are scattered throughout the Quranic text, after gathering the relevant dialogic verses (which total 78 verses: *Al-Mu'minun*, 47; *Al-Dukhan*, 18-21; *Ghafir*, 23-24; *Yunus*, 75-82; *Ash-Shu'ara*, 16-40; *Adh-Dhariyat*, 39; *An-Naml*, 13; *Az-Zukhruf*, 46-47; *Taha*, 47-66; *Ibrahim*, 5; *Al-A'raf*, 104-116; *Al-Qasas*, 36-37), reconstructing the narrative based on sources (e.g., sacred texts, prophetic storybooks, etc.) is essential for a more precise analysis. Reconstructing the narrative significantly aids in understanding the story's progression and, accordingly, deriving a more accurate interpretation of the implied meanings intended by the speakers (dialogue participants).

The goal of this study is to examine these Quranic dialogues through the lens of Grice's principles, to elucidate the application or non-application of these maxims in light of contextual circumstances, and to extract the induced implied meanings. Therefore, the methodology adopted in this research will be descriptive-analytical. The data have been meticulously selected from Quranic verses.

Research background

Since Grice's Cooperative Principles are recognized as foundational rules for all human communication, they have been widely applied across various fields to evaluate adherence to these principles. Some scholars have applied this theory to non-religious texts, while others have focused on religious texts. Although numerous studies have adopted this approach in non-religious contexts across disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, political science, psychology, and literature (which are beyond the scope of this research), the author's review indicates that only a limited number of studies have focused on the Quran. Examples of such Quranic studies include:

1. **Peymani (1997)** analyzed implicit meanings in Quranic dialogues. He compiled a list of Quranic conversations and used Grice's Cooperative Principles and Leech's Politeness Principle to examine secondary meanings in these dialogues. Peymani concluded that violations of Grice's maxims in Quranic dialogues most frequently occur in the **Quantity Maxim** and least frequently in the **Manner Maxim**.
2. **Saeidi (2012)**, in an article titled "*A Linguistic Study of Verse Coherence Based on Grice's Cooperative Principle*", attempted to provide linguistic and rhetorical justifications for apparent incoherence in Quranic verses. He argued that one way to convey implicit meaning is through deliberate "incoherence" or deviation from relevance. However, as **Rajabi (2018)** critiques, Saeidi's conclusions lack coherence and fail to comprehensively capture the unique characteristics of Quranic dialogues, as his analysis relies on scattered narrative and non-narrative verses primarily used as examples to explain Grice's theory—examples that could apply to any narrative text.
3. **Rajabi (2018)**, in a study titled "*Analysis of Dialogues in Surah Yusuf (AS) in the Quran Based on Grice's Theory*", examined the conversations in the story of Yusuf (AS) using Grice's conversational maxims through a descriptive-analytical method. He explored how adherence to or violations of these principles shape meaning and character development. By analyzing 84 dialogic verses, Rajabi identified 71 instances of maxim violations by one or both speakers. The **Quantity Maxim** was violated most frequently (35 instances), followed by **Quality** (17), **Manner** (10), and **Relation** (8). He concluded that the semantic depth of the narrative and readers' mental imagery of the characters heavily depend on deliberate, contextually motivated violations of conversational norms.
4. **Habibollahi et al. (2016)**, in their study "*Interpretive Differences in Similar Quranic Verses Based on Violations of Grice's Cooperative Principles*", extracted conversational implicatures in linguistically similar verses by analyzing deviations from Grice's maxims

(Quantity, Relation, and Manner). They demonstrated that such violations lead to distinct interpretations and highlight nuanced semantic differences.

5. **Majid & Abdullah (2019)** examined adherence to and violations of Grice's principles in select Quranic dialogues. They demonstrated the presence or absence of these principles in Quranic verses and emphasized that Quranic dialogues exemplify a rich, contextually grounded language that mirrors everyday human interactions.

Key Distinctions of the Current Study:

- Previous studies, such as Saeidi's, analyzed verses without considering contextual or situational factors. In contrast, this study reconstructs the narrative context. To achieve this, scattered dialogues across the Quran were compiled and reconstructed using exegetical sources, prophetic narratives, and the Torah (as complementary puzzle pieces).
- This research focuses on dialogues between **Moses (AS)** and **Pharaoh**, highlighting their **power asymmetry** as a critical factor influencing conversational dynamics.
- Unlike prior works, this study systematically examines how Grice's maxims are strategically violated or adhered to in light of reconstructed contexts, speaker intentions, and socio-political power relations.

Research method

The methodology adopted in this research is descriptive-analytical, delving deeper into the Principles of Grice, violation of principles of Grice, Discourse analysis.

Result

This study aims to investigate the application and non-application of Grice's Cooperative Principles in Quranic dialogues as the Islamic Holy Scripture. To this end, it examines the conversations between Moses (AS) and Pharaoh in the Quran. All dialogic verses between Moses (AS) and Pharaoh, as the research data (after narrative reconstruction), have been analyzed based on these principles. According to the Quranic evidence presented in the analysis section, it is concluded that adherence to and violation of Grice's Cooperative Principle and its maxims are clearly observable in Quranic dialogues in general and in the dialogues between Moses (AS) and Pharaoh in particular.

Another distinction lies in Grice's belief that these principles are essential for ideal discourse, where omitting any of them does not harm communication but instead creates humor, metaphor, mockery, exaggeration, deliberate ambiguity, or intentional semantic obscurity. However, in the

Quran, deviations from these principles in Pharaoh's speech serve to protect his personal interests, while in Moses' (AS) speech, they aim to promote monotheism and safeguard collective interests. The motivation behind these violations in Pharaoh's discourse is primarily to undermine Moses (AS) and incite his followers to challenge him. This implicitly suggests that Pharaoh feared losing public trust, especially among enslaved communities like the Israelites, and the destabilization of his monarchy. In contrast, Moses' (AS) violations are motivated by advocating monotheism, influencing the audience, and persuading them to recognize the truth and accept his message. It also implies that Moses (AS) was concerned for all people in general and the Israelites in particular. Thus, the motivation for violating Grice's principles varies depending on the speaker and their objectives.

According to this study, violations of the **Quantity Maxim** are frequently observed during the explanation of prophetic missions. For instance, Moses (AS) viewed his presence before Pharaoh as an opportunity to propagate his religious views, such as when he addressed the gathering of sorcerers and people. By violating the Quantity Maxim, he sought to seize this opportunity. Meanwhile, Pharaoh deliberately used fewer words to avoid any perception of equality with Moses (AS). Interestingly, as Moses (AS) gained strength (through miracles and Pharaoh's decline), he spoke less, shifting the "balance of quantity" toward Pharaoh's side.

As God's prophet, Moses (AS) was tasked with delivering the divine message to Pharaoh and his people, which included calls to monotheism, rejection of oppression and corruption, and emphasis on God's power. Consequently, he often elaborated in his speech to convey the gravity of his message, which might appear as a violation of the Quantity Maxim. In contrast, Pharaoh, as an arrogant tyrant, responded dismissively and curtly, focusing on denial and mockery. His brevity reflects his refusal to acknowledge the truth.

Moses (AS), as a leader and prophet, needed to counter Pharaoh's challenges with strong reasoning and repetition, requiring detailed explanations to influence Pharaoh's mindset. Conversely, Pharaoh's position of power and rejection of truth led him to use brief, hollow responses. This disparity in speech volume and intent creates the perception that Moses (AS) violated the Quantity Maxim more frequently. Additionally, the psychological pressure of confronting a tyrant compelled Moses (AS) to elaborate further to maximize his impact. Ultimately, the violation of the Quantity Maxim in their dialogues stems from the need to convey divine messages, strategic communication, and situational pressures.

While conciseness aligns with the **Manner Maxim**, the Quran's extreme brevity may justify deviations from the Quantity Maxim. For example:

1. The Quran is inherently concise.

2. Conciseness aligns with the Manner Maxim.
3. Excessive conciseness violates the Quantity Maxim.
4. The Quran's conciseness justifies such violations, as it remains effective despite deviating from the Quantity Maxim.

The study adopts a **descriptive-analytical methodology**. Analysis of these Quranic dialogues (like other dialogic texts) reveals both adherence to and violations of Grice's principles.

Key Conclusions:

1. Grice's four principles are observable in Moses (AS) and Pharaoh's Quranic dialogues and can be applied to systematically analyze Quranic conversations.
2. Each principle plays a role in Quranic discourse, with some verses simultaneously adhering to and violating multiple principles. Further detailed analysis is needed to determine the dominant principles in specific contexts.

True faith in the Quran and its teachings encourages believers to implement its commandments, fostering a peaceful society. Applying effective communication methods prevents misunderstandings and aids in interpreting religious and dialogic texts.

Keywords

Quranic dialogues, Moses and Pharaoh. Grice, Principles of Grice, violation of principles of Grice, Discourse analysis.