

Raising Translation Students' Pragmatic Awareness and Translation Performance through the Analysis of Grice's Maxim Flouting in Political Speeches: Obama as an Example.

رفع مستوى الوعي العملي وأداء الترجمة لدى طلاب الترجمة من خلال تحليل انتهاكات قواعد غرايس في الخطابات السياسية: أوباما كمثال

Dr. Fatima Adel Arar (فاطمة عرار*)

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The aim of this study is to explore the potential educational importance of integrating communication theory into EFL undergraduate translation courses learning program to enhance students' pragmatic awareness, thereby enabling them to acquire the ability to pay appropriate attention to contextual factors during the translation of written texts. This principle is known as the Cooperative Principle (CP), and it holds that mundane conversation takes place among people who follow four maxims of conversation: quantity, quality, relation, and manner (Grice, 1989). The number of participants was ten undergraduate English foreign language (EFL) learners, studying translation at one of the private universities in Lebanon, who were assigned texts and speeches that Barack Obama, a previous United States president, had given to publicize him, and/or flout the maxims of the CP concerning their proper use for the sake of making the speeches more persuasive and attractive. This experiment was based on a mixed-method, pre-experimental research design that employed a one-group pretest-posttest followed by a focus group discussion of the qualitative approach. The students were required to translate excerpts from speeches rendering the maxims before and after the intervention of analytical exercises using Obama's speeches and interviews based on Grice's CP to identify the flouted maxims and consequently explore the implied meaning. The findings showed a significant development in pragmatic consciousness in students' posttests as well

* She holds a PhD from the Lebanese University, Higher Institute for Doctoral Studies in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences - Department of English Language. Email: ararafatima639@gmail.com

حاصلة على الدكتوراه من الجامعة اللبنانية المعهد العالي للدكتوراه الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية. قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

as their competence in working with contexts rich in obscurity and treasures of cultural allusions in translation.

Keywords: Cooperative Principle, flouting maxims, Obama's speeches, pragmatic awareness, translation

الملخص

الخطابات أكثر إقناعًا وجاذبية. استندت هذه التجربة إلى تصميم بحثي شبه تجريبي ذي منهجية مختلطة، استخدم اختبارًا قبليًا وبعديًا لمجموعة واحدة، تلاه نقاش جماعي مركز حول المنهج النوعي. طُلب من الطلاب ترجمة تصور قبل وبعد تطبيق تمارين تحليلية باستخدام خطابات ومقابلات أوباما، استنادًا إلى مبدأ التعاون لغرايس، وذلك لتحديد المبادئ التي تم تجاهلها واستكشاف المعنى الضمني. أظهرت النتائج تطورًا ملحوظًا في الوعي البراغماتي لدى الطلاب في الاختبارات اللاحقة، بالإضافة إلى كفاءتهم في التعامل مع سياقات غنية بالغموض والإشارات الثقافية في الترجمة. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** مبدأ التعاون، تجاهل المبادئ، خطابات أوباما، الوعي البراغماتي

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف الأهمية التعليمية المحتملة لدمج نظرية التواصل في برنامج تعلم الترجمة لطلاب البكالوريوس، وذلك لتعزيز الوعي العملي لدى الطلاب، مما يُمكنهم من اكتساب القدرة على إيلاء الاهتمام المناسب للعوامل السياقية أثناء ترجمة النصوص المكتوبة. يُعرف هذا المبدأ بمبدأ التعاون، وينص على أن المحادثات اليومية تجري بين أشخاص يتبعون أربعة قواعد أساسية في الحوار: الكمية، والنوعية، والعلاقة، والأسلوب (غرايس، 1989). شارك في الدراسة عشرة أشخاص، طُلب منهم قراءة نصوص وخطابات ألقاها باراك أوباما، الرئيس السابق للولايات المتحدة، للترويج لنفسه، أو تجاوز قواعد استخدامها الصحيح لجعل

Introduction

It is becoming widely acknowledged that the development of pragmatic competence is an essential part of translator education, especially for students who work with texts that are complex in terms of culture, ideology, or rhetoric. The ability to decipher communicative intent, contextual cues, and the implicit meanings that

emerge in discourse is now necessary for translation, which is no longer seen as a simple process of language substitution (Hatim & Mason, 1997). In this context, communication theory—more especially, Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle (CP)—offers a useful teaching tool for increasing students' awareness of how meaning is created and communicated

beyond the literal level. It is possible to analyze speakers' intentions, persuasive strategies, and deliberate transgressions of communicative norms by using the four conversational maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner.

Statement of the Problem

To produce accurate and culturally appropriate translations, research on English foreign language (EFL) translator education increasingly emphasizes the significance of pragmatic competence and contextual awareness. Understanding communicative intent, ideological motivations, and subtle interpersonal meanings embedded in discourse are all necessary for translation, which goes beyond simple language substitution (Biel, 2018; Hatim & Mason, 1997). The ability to decipher contextual meanings, social norms, and speaker intention beyond a text's surface structure is known as pragmatic competence (Baker, 2018; Yule, 2020). Hence, translators who lack these inferential abilities might run the risk of distorting the original message.

Communication is not attributed to what is explicitly said but to what is implied or not said (Grice, 1975). In this realm, Su (2021) accentuated the importance of pragmatics, which

focuses on understanding the contextual and functional utterances. However, many undergraduate translation programs continue to put a strong emphasis on literal equivalency or grammatical accuracy, leaving students ill-prepared to recognize the nuanced layers of meaning encoded in texts, despite the significance of discourse-level interpretation in translation (Azzan & Sakale, 2025). Because political speeches often use implicature, ambiguity, symbolism, and strategic maxim flouting to influence public opinion, an educational intervention of these speeches in pragmatics will be well-suited to enhance translation students' manipulation of implicatures (Hadi & Mat Isa, 2023). Hence, translation students can develop their pragmatic competence by studying Barack Obama's speeches, which are renowned for their rhetorical sophistication and use of narrative framing, metaphors, and persuasive implicatures (Charteris-Black, 2014; Edwards, 2009).

Research questions

Relying on the stated problem, two research questions are formulated:

1. *Does instruction grounded in Grice's Cooperative Principle, using selected political speeches by Barack Obama, result in a*

statistically significant improvement in EFL undergraduate translation students' ability to identify conversational implicatures and instances of maxim flouting?

2. *How do EFL undergraduate translation students conceptualize and evaluate their learning experience of applying Grice's Cooperative Principle when translating Barack Obama's political speeches?*

Hypotheses

Trying to answer the aforementioned research questions, two hypotheses are formulated:

H1: There is a statistically significant improvement in EFL undergraduate translation students' posttest scores compared to their pretest scores in identifying conversational implicatures and instances of maxim flouting following instructions based on Grice's Cooperative Principle using Barack Obama's political speeches as an intervention.

H2: EFL undergraduate translation students will report increased pragmatic awareness, improved sensitivity to implicit meaning, and greater confidence in translating complex discourse after learning and applying Grice's Cooperative Principle through Barack Obama's speeches.

Significance of the Study

Therefore, the present study aims to explore the educational impact of integrating Grice's pragmatics of CP into EFL undergraduate translation curriculum, specifically that it looks into whether guided analytical exercises based on the CP can guide students to become more proficient at identifying contextual meanings in political discourse. That is to say, the current study investigates the extent to which students' pragmatic consciousness develops when exposed to training using Obama's speeches and interviews.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework for comprehending how meaning is negotiated in communication is provided by the Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1989). Grice proposed that participants in a conversation typically operate under an implicit assumption of cooperation. This assumption allows hearers to infer speaker meaning. The CP was studied through four conversational maxims. These maxims guide how utterances are normally interpreted.

- 1- Maxim of Quantity, which provides as much information as necessary, no more, no less. Flouting this maxim leads to understatement or

- overstatement, often generating implicature.
- 2- Maxim of Quality, which highlights the fact that one should say what they believe to be right and undeniable. Flouting this maxim often produces irony or sarcasm.
 - 3- Maxim of Relation: it accentuates the idea of relevance; that is to say, speakers should be relevant to the ongoing discourse. Flouting this maxim is an apparent irrelevance which triggers inferential reasoning.
 - 4- Maxim of Manner: discourse should be clear, brief, and orderly to avoid ambiguity. Deliberate obscurity when flouting this maxim often signals strategic ambiguity (Grice, 1989).

Intentional transgressions of Grice's maxims result in implicatures that subtly convey meaning. These maxims aid students in identifying persuasive cues, rhetorical devices, and speaker bias in translation studies (Hatim & Mason, 1997).

Translation is made more difficult by symbolism, figurative language, and conceptual metaphors, especially in political texts (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Newmark, 1988). Political discourse, including Obama's rhetoric, often relies heavily on these rhetorical devices (Charteris-Black, 2014; Edwards, 2009). This literature

collectively suggests the pedagogical value of integrating pragmatics into translation programs.

Pragmatics and translation training

Translation competence models, particularly those developed by PACTE (2011) and the European Commission (2017), conceptualize translation as a complex, multidimensional activity rather than a purely linguistic one. These models argue that successful translation depends on the interaction of several sub-competences (e.g., linguistic, instrumental, strategic, and pragmatic).

A key development in these frameworks is the recognition of pragmatic awareness as a crucial sub-competence. Pragmatic awareness involves the translator's ability to interpret meaning beyond literal language, taking into account contextual factors such as the communicative situation, the intended audience, institutional norms, and ideological constraints. Translation is therefore seen as an act of context-sensitive meaning construction, not mere text transfer.

Both PACTE and the European Commission emphasize the translator's role as an intercultural mediator. Rather than functioning as a neutral language

converter, the translator actively negotiates meaning between cultures, ensuring that the target text fulfills its intended function within a specific social and institutional context. In this realm, Al-Eryani (2020) shows that students who are not trained in pragmatics frequently translate texts accurately in terms of language but poorly in terms of communication.

Hence, Grice's CP is still fundamental to educational pragmatics; its ability to explain implicature, presupposition, and indirect meaning makes it relevant to translation. Explicit pragmatics instruction was highlighted by Canbolat *et al.* (2021) since it improves students' inferencing skills and sensitivity to discourse manipulation, especially in persuasive and political texts.

Related studies

Flouting conversational maxims was utilized by different researchers, aiming at manipulating the rhetorical effect this flout has on the speeches, such as Setyadji *et al.* (2025), in addition to Hamza and Nordin (2024). Setyadji *et al.* used a talk-show program as an example of how flouting Grice's maxims gives a sense of humor and consequently entertains audiences. The Tonight Show by Jimmy Fallon featuring Anne Hathaway was the

sample that Setyadji *et al.* used. In that episode some examples were supplied to show the maxims flouted and the rhetorical effect they deliver. The methodology used in this study was qualitative by transcribing the video and focusing on the instances where the maxims were flouted, and the occurrence of flouting for every maxim was identified, reflecting on the effect they entailed. In this realm, Hamza and Nordin (2024) used Donald Trump's political interview with the CNN News channel, with the reporter Cooper in 2016 before winning the election, as a sample to study Grice's maxims flouting. The researchers used a qualitative design to analyze Donald Trump's discourse. In this study, a number of viewers identified the sentences where he flouted the maxims, insisting on giving vague answers to avoid embarrassment or violent answers.

The current study was conducted within the parameters provided by these two aforementioned studies. Relying on Creswell's (2014) recommendation of triangulating data to achieve reliability and credibility, the current study manipulated a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative design. And since Barak Obama was very well known for his eloquence in speeches (Toplin, 2008), excerpts from his

speeches and interviews were chosen to be used as an intervention to enhance translation students' comprehension of pragmatic awareness grounded in flouting Grice's maxims of CP theory.

Methodology

Design of the Study

This study looked at how integrating Grice's CP in the pedagogical aspects affected the pragmatic awareness of EFL translation students using a mixed-method of one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design. While a qualitative focus group investigated students' perceptions of their learning progress, the quantitative component tracked changes in translation performance after being exposed to Grice's CP using Barack Obama's speeches and interviews as an intervention to enhance undergraduate translation students' pragmatics' awareness of speeches and interviews.

participants

Ten EFL undergraduate translation learners who were selected from a private university in Lebanon by convenience sampling, as identified by Creswell (2014), were the participants of the current study. Although none of them had received formal pragmatics training, they were all proficient in intermediate to upper-intermediate

English. A number of Barack Obama's political speeches and interviews were chosen, and worksheets on maxim analysis, translation assignments requiring pragmatic and inferential rendering, and discussion starters made up the materials.

Data collection instruments

Pre-post-test

The pre-post-tests are assessment tools for measuring learners' performance before and after a specific treatment to evaluate the effectiveness of that treatment or to tally any change in students' acquirement level (Creswell, 2014). Relying on this claim, the current study utilized pre- and posttests in translating specific excerpts before and after the intervention of studying the flouted maxims in Barack Obama's speeches and interviews. Thus, there were three stages to the process. Learners received the general instructions of studying Grice's CP of flouting the four maxims: quality, quantity, manner, and relevance. A pre-test was conducted by asking students to translate excerpt rich in flouted maxims (Appendix A). The pretest was followed by the intervention of using Barack Obama's speeches and interviews as an example to identify how politicians flout maxims of Grice's CP to convey

messages indirectly and to avoid embarrassment. Based on these instructions, learners used the skills of flouting CP maxims to translate a new excerpt in the posttest (Appendix B). At the end, a comparison between the pre and post-test's results was identified and calculated.

The Intervention Process

The intervention started by supplying the EFL translation undergraduate learners with general dialogues between two people talking about different topics, trying to identify the flouted maxim in Grice's CP. To enhance those learners' pragmatic awareness in analyzing implicatures and interpreting figurative language, excerpts from Barak Obama's speeches and interviews were played using the classroom projector. Students were assigned into two groups to identify what maxims were flouted by Obama trying to convey indirect messages. Students were also asked to name what figurative language was used by Obama and why; learners' answers were discussed, analyzed and compared. As an assignment, learners were asked to find speeches where interlocutors flout the maxims of CP, this task was presented by learners and discussed in class. This intervention was followed by a posttest which

asks for translating new excerpt rich in flouted maxims of Grice's CP that tests learners' understanding of the intended messages and consequently their pragmatic awareness.

Focus group

To obtain an in-depth examination of the new intervention of implementing political speeches as a tool to enhance translation students' implicature analysis and pragmatic awareness, a qualitative research method is encouraged in addition to the quantitative one (Creswell, 2014). One of the qualitative approach procedures is the focus group interview, which is used to enrich the researcher's data through open discussions (Denscombe, 2007). Hence, following the post-test, a 45-minute focus group discussion was held to collect qualitative insights. The participants were divided into two focus group discussions to allow them to express their ideas freely and to tell whether the implementation of political interviews, especially Obama, helped them in identifying the flouted maxims or not. These discussions asked students, as well, if they think that the implementation of Obama's speeches to study the flouted maxims enhanced their pragmatic awareness by handling

ambiguity while translating or not. Relying on Eliot (2005)'s form of questions, the researcher conducted the focus group questions (Appendix C), whose answers were categorized under thematic headings, trying to obtain positive or negative attitudes that students had towards the intervention of political speeches and interviews using Grice's CP maxims as a foundation. Thematic coding of discussion transcripts was used by the researcher, to analyze the data, as will be shown in the results section.

Ethical guidelines

Restricting to the guidelines settled by the British Educational Research Association [BERA] (2018), the pre-posttest was anonymous, as well as the focus group interview, which was documented using an alphabetical

order. Furthermore, the participants were informed about the purpose of the research in addition to its results, which might entail a positive impact on the students' pragmatic awareness as well as their translation manipulation, and to make sure that participants are not negatively impacted by the study.

Results and Analysis

The pre-posttest assessed the changes in two criteria when translating: identification of implicature and handling ambiguity. The researcher evaluated the student's test, pre and post, using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 to 5, corresponding to very weak, weak, average, good, and very good, respectively. As table (1) shows, the posttest demonstrated enhancement in the two criteria.

Table (1): Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Translation Performance

Assessment Criteria	Mean of Pretest Performance	Number of Participants	Mean of Posttest Performance	Number of Participants
Identification of implicature	2.30	10	4.10	10
Handling ambiguity	2	10	3.90	10

To identify whether this enhancement is significant or not, a paired-samples t-test of SPSS software was applied with the two criteria, identification of implicature and handling ambiguity, as the dependent variable.

Table (2): Paired-Samples t-Test Results for Pragmatic Criteria (N = 10)

Assessment Criterion	M_pre	M_post	T	Df	p
Identification of Implicature	2.30	4.10	6.12	9	.0002
Handling Ambiguity	2	3.90	5.48	9	.0004

As shown in Table 2, descriptive statistics indicate remarkable increase in students' performance on both pragmatic criteria: Identifying Implicature and Handling Ambiguity. This enhancement was identified after the instructions grounded in Grice's CP. The mean scores for Identifying Conversational Implicature increased from 2.30 in the pretest to 4.10 in the posttest, while performance in Handling Ambiguity improved from 2.00 to 3.90. The P value is $0.0002 < 0.05$ for the first criterion and $0.0004 < 0.05$ for the second, which means that the enhancement was significant. These results confirm that the Grice-based instructional intervention led to substantial and statistically significant enhancement in pragmatic translation competence and in identifying implicatures while translating. Hence, these results show that the first hypothesis is proved.

Qualitative Results from Focus Group Discussion

To triangulate data, a focus group interview was applied at the end of the intervention and after the post-test directly, trying to evaluate students' attitude and perception towards the implementation of Obama's speeches and interviews in the Grice-based instructions trying to enhance their

pragmatic awareness. Two focus groups were conducted; each was out of five students. The focus groups' questions focused on students' attitudes towards using political speeches based on Grice's CP as an intervention to enhance their pragmatic awareness especially in handling ambiguity as well as identifying implicatures while translating. The students' answers had been thematically categorized and documented into headings, which were analyzed later by the researcher. Two main themes emerged from a thematic analysis of focus group data: the first one is heightened pragmatic awareness by identifying implicatures, since students showed a positive attitude towards recognizing conversational behavior and stated their ability to understand implicatures and consequently to translate what is implied, not stated. The second theme, emerged from the students' focus group discussions, was the students' enhanced confidence in decision-making and handling ambiguity while translating, especially after recognizing how irony might be manipulated in translation after using Grice's CP. Hence, these results support the validation of the second hypothesis.

Discussion

These results are further interpreted in light of current research on

pragmatic competence and translator training, especially that the current study is the practical intervention of Alwanza's (2017) and Sequeiros's (2002) theoretical pragmatic inference to boost translation outcomes, highlighting the need to teach translators to analyze pragmatic cues, such as implicature and presupposition. Therefore, the current study is the instructional and practical intervention that was recommended by Alwanza and Sequeiro after their theoretical study of developing pragmatic awareness aimed at enhancing the translation process.

Regarding the statistical results of the current study, which demonstrated a strong positive correlation between pragmatic competence and implicature comprehension, these results align with Rababah *et al.* (2024) and Taguchi (2011), who stated that learners with lower pragmatic awareness typically score low, while increased pragmatic knowledge correlates with marked improvement. Furthermore, the statistical results showed correlational evidence that ambiguity interpretation correlates with advanced inferential and discourse-level pragmatic ability, which aligns with Schauer (2009) and Yamanaka (2003).

The current study participants made significant enhancement in

understanding maxim flouting, which implies guided analytical practice can effectively teach political implicature that aligns with Yamanaka (2003), who accentuated that understanding violations enables learners to interpret implied political meaning, which is frequently realized through selective information and strategic relevance.

Pedagogical Implications

The current study results have significant ramifications for EFL undergraduate translation programs. First, rather than being treated as an add-on subject, pragmatics should be introduced early as a fundamental analytical tool. Second, in order to expose students to the complexity of real-world communication, authentic political discourse should be methodically incorporated. This aligns with Zheng's (2024) recommendation that pragmatic training—especially when explicit—is central to improving translation competence.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The current study's limitations stem from its small sample size and absence of a control group, despite its contributions. To validate results, future studies should use quasi-experimental designs with larger

cohorts of experimental and control groups. Since we are in the era of technology, future research may also examine the integration of pragmatics with corpus tools and AI-assisted translation. The results of the current study revealed how important it is to use Grice's theory of CP as a basis to understand speeches and interviews aiming at a general enhancement of the pragmatic awareness of undergraduate translation students and, consequently, the development of their translation process. So, a replication of the current study could be applied to different students and with different circumstances and situations. Furthermore, the same study could be applied with a larger number of participants and with further results; that is to say, the results might study the percentages of every flouted maxim -quality, quantity, relevance, and manner- on its own.

Conclusion

The results of this study show that incorporating Grice's CP pragmatics

into EFL undergraduate translation programs can greatly improve students' comprehension and rendering of the rhetorical, symbolic, and contextual aspects of any discourse. The ability to recognize maxim flouting, deduce speaker intent, and generate translations that conveyed both explicit and implicit meanings improved among the participants. Additionally, the current study participants reported feeling more comfortable dealing with irony, ambiguity, and culturally embedded allusions.

These findings bolster the claim that pragmatic competence is necessary for excellent translation, particularly in discourse where meaning is frequently implied. The study emphasizes the need for discourse-oriented approaches to be incorporated into EFL translation curricula and the pedagogical value of structured instruction in Grice's analysis. The results point to significant advantages for translator training and demand more studies with larger participant groups and comparative instructional models.

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Appendices

(Appendix A) Pre-test.

Translate the following text into Arabic and identify the flouted maxims.

We built something tremendous- believe me, absolutely tremendous. People come up to me, strong people, the best people, and they say, “Sir, no one has ever seen anything like it.” And you know what? They are right, they are totally right.

Now, some say the road ahead is difficult. Difficult? That is a small word. It is like calling the ocean a puddle- okay? We are talking about something huge, something nobody understand better than me.

And the critics-oh, the critics- they talk and talk, words floating around like balloons with no strings. But we don’t listen to that noise. Noise is just noise. We focus on winning, because winning is everything, and everything is what we do best.

(Appendix B) post-test.

Translate the following text into Arabic and identify the flouted maxims.

My friends, the nation is a great ship- yes, a vast and noble vessel- sailing across choppy waters toward a horizon that, admittedly, is sometimes a bit---well, foggy. But fog, as we know, is simply cloud that has lost its way.

Now, if I may, let me say this: progress is not merely progress; it is, in fact, the very essence of moving forward- which, when you think about it, is what progress truly is, and that, I believe, is something worth considering. Of course, there are those who argue otherwise- though precisely what they argue is not entirely clear- but let us not dwell on such trifles. What matters is what we are, unquestionably, moving- whether briskly or, occasionally, with the leisurely determination of a Sunday afternoon stroll.

(Appendix C) Focus Group Questions.

- 1- What are the four maxims of CP’s theory?
- 2- How are these maxims flouted? And why?
- 3- Do you remember any of the flouted maxims in Obama’s speeches and interviews?
- 4- Do you think that studying Obama’s speeches as an example on flouting CP maxims enhanced your general understanding of those maxims?
- 5- Do you think studying these flouted maxims in Obama’s speeches and interviews enhanced your translation performance or not?
- 6- What suggestions do you recommend to enhance your pragmatic awareness in translation especially when the meaning is intended, not stated directly?

