

CONVERSATIONAL MAXIMS VIOLATIONS IN THE TONIGHT'S SHOW

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the types of violation of the conversational maxims in The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. The method used was descriptive qualitative, with data collection through observation and audiovisual, social media, and digital materials. Data were obtained from five videos of The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. The analysis was conducted through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The results showed 85 data conversational maxim violations. Violations of the quantity maxim 35 data, followed by violations of the quality maxim 6 data, violations of the relation maxim 18 data, and violations of the manner maxim 26 data. In conclusion, violation of quantity maxim emerged as the most dominant violated maxim, indicating that speakers often provided either insufficient or excessive information during the interactions. These patterns show that variations in the amount and clarity of information are a natural part of spontaneous talk show communication and contribute to the overall flow of the conversation rather than signaling communicative breakdown.

Keywords: *Conversational Maxims, Violations, Pragmatics, The Tonight Show, Descriptive Qualitative.*

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in human interaction because it allows people to express thoughts, emotions, and social relationships. Altun (2023) explains that language shapes how individuals perceive themselves and interact with others, showing that meaning in communication is influenced by social context. In linguistics, verbal communication becomes essential because spoken language enables speakers to convey intentions in real time. Ying (2019) states that verbal communication is a fundamental social skill that supports mutual understanding. Since spoken interaction often goes beyond literal expressions, interpreting utterances requires contextual awareness, which is the central concern of pragmatics. Pragmatics examines how speakers produce and understand meaning in actual situations based on context, shared knowledge, and inference (Grundy, 2019).

Within pragmatics, Grice's Cooperative Principle provides a framework for understanding how communication is expected to operate effectively. Grice (1975) introduces four conversational maxims quantity, quality, relation, and manner which guide cooperative

interaction. Levinson (1983) emphasizes that interpreting an utterance involves inferring the speaker's intention rather than decoding literal meaning, suggesting that violations of these maxims are part of natural communication. Zidane (2017) further notes that pragmatic deviation caused by violating conversational norms produce infelicitous or creative effects. Such phenomena frequently appear in spontaneous conversations, including those occurring in media settings such as talk shows. In these settings, speakers often provide too much or too little information, shift topics, or respond indirectly, creating opportunities for conversational maxim violations.

The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon is known for its humorous, improvised, and fast-paced communication style, making it a rich source of natural spoken interaction. Guests frequently respond unexpectedly or indirectly, offering authentic examples of conversational maxim violations. Therefore, this research aims to identify the types of violation of the conversational maxims in The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. The findings are expected to contribute to pragmatic studies, particularly in understanding how conversational principles operate in spontaneous spoken interactions within digital media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics concerns how speakers and listeners interpret meaning based on context rather than literal expression (Yule, 1996). Within this field, Grice (1975) introduced the cooperative principle, which explains that communication is guided by four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These maxims outline expectations that speakers will provide information that is sufficient, truthful, relevant, and clear. In spontaneous interaction, however, speakers may intentionally or unintentionally violate these maxims, resulting in utterances that appear indirect, ambiguous, irrelevant, or insufficient. These violations serve as the theoretical basis for identifying and classifying conversational data in this study.

Previous studies have shown that conversational maxim violations appear across various media contexts. Susanto (2021) found that the maxim of relation was frequently violated in Ellen's comedic segments, while Muannasah (2022) reported that the maxim of quantity dominated the dialogue in the Aladdin movie. While these studies provide useful insights, research specifically examining conversational maxim violations in modern American talk shows remains limited. Therefore, this study focuses on identifying and analyzing maxim violations to contribute to pragmatic research in spontaneous spoken interaction.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method, which Seixas (2022) defines as an approach used to describe and interpret linguistic phenomena in their natural context. The data collection techniques followed Creswell and Creswell's (2023) categorization, consisting of observation and audiovisual, social media, and digital materials. The data were obtained from five videos of The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon uploaded on official YouTube channel. The video data were then transcribed to facilitate the identification process. Each maxim violation was subsequently identified and categorized based on the four types of conversational maxims proposed by Grice (1975). The researcher served as the primary instrument, responsible, collecting, interpreting, and classifying the data. The researcher functioned as the primary instrument, responsible for observing the data, interpreting each utterance, and classifying the maxim violations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 85 maxim violations were analyzed from five videos published on the show's official YouTube channel. The four types of conversational maxim violations identified are summarized in the table below:

Maxim	Violations
Quantity	35
Quality	6
Relation	18
Manner	26
Total	85

The data show that violations of the maxim of quantity emerged as the most dominant, followed by violations of the maxims of manner and relation. The maxim of quality

appeared least frequently among the four types. This pattern reflects differences in how often each maxim type was violated.

Maxim of quantity is violated when a speaker provides less or more information than the conversational context requires. In the example below, the speaker fails to give sufficient information:

Jimmy: "What can you tell us about the seventh season?"

Sam: "Seventh season, yeah. Seventh season, part B. Huge cliffhanger at the end. There's something for fans."

Sam's answer consists of repeated and fragmented phrases that do not meaningfully address the question, illustrating insufficient contribution and a clear violation of the maxim of quantity.

Maxim of quality is violated when a speaker provides false information or statements lacking factual support. This is demonstrated in the following exchange:

Gabriel: "People know about stone walls."

Jimmy: "Well, they don't exist. Stone walls don't exist."

Jimmy's claim contradicts an obvious fact and presents information that is not true, making it a direct violation of the maxim of quality.

Maxim of relation expects speakers to make relevant contributions. A violation occurs when the response shifts away from the topic or introduces unrelated information, as seen below:

Jimmy: "The dolls exist."

Gabriel: "And the government would never hurt you."

Gabriel's response does not connect with Jimmy's statement and abruptly introduces an unrelated idea. The lack of relevance marks a clear violation of the maxim of relation.

Maxim of manner is violated when a speaker expresses information in a way that is unclear, ambiguous, or disorganized. The following example illustrates how a response becomes difficult to interpret due to its irregular delivery:

Jimmy: "Is that true?"

Gabriel: "Yeah, but not... I think that can kind of get misconstrued into the world of like... I do it because I want to say I can do it... and it's really not about that... to me it's about like audience immersion... I don't want the audiences watching the show... and then right as I'm about to get hit... cut to my back... it's a lie..."

Gabriel's response is disjointed, rambling, and filled with incomplete ideas, making it unclear and difficult to follow. The ambiguity and lack of structure demonstrate a violation of the maxim of manner.

Overall, the dominance of quantity maxim violations shows that speakers in this talk-show setting often provide contributions that are either more or less informative than the interaction requires. This pattern aligns with previous findings on conversational flexibility in entertainment-based discourse (Susanto, 2021; Muannasah, 2022). The spontaneous and performance-oriented nature of a YouTube talk show encourages unscripted responses, which naturally produce flexible pragmatic choices and lead to frequent violations of conversational maxims

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that all four conversational maxims proposed by Grice (1975) appeared in the five videos of *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. Violations of the maxim of quantity were the most frequently observed, followed by violations of the maxims of manner and relation, while quality was identified as the least violated. These findings indicate that spontaneous talk-show interactions often involve contributions that are overly brief, overly detailed, unclear, or shifted from the original topic due to the fast-paced and improvisational nature of the conversation. This study contributes to the understanding of how pragmatic theory is applied in digital media settings, particularly in naturally occurring spoken interactions within entertainment platforms.

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