

Non-observance of Gricean Maxims by Native and Non-native English Speakers: A Pragmatic Analysis of Tennis Press Conferences

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Abstract

The cooperative principle (CP), proposed by Grice (1975), has been studied in various contexts or with different variables, such as interview or gender. These studies examine how and why the CP is not followed. The CP is a normative framework for human discourse, consisting of four maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Besides the four maxims, Grice also proposes a number of ways that speakers can fail a maxim: flout, violate, infringe, opt out, and face a clash, which Thomas (1995) refers to as non-observance of the maxims. Nonetheless, among the five approaches, only flouting is widely researched. In addition, limited research explores the relationship between non-observance of the maxims and speakers' native or non-native status, a possible contributor to adhering to or disobeying the maxims. To investigate non-observance of the maxims in relation to native and non-native speaker status, we collect the interview transcripts from multiple tennis press conferences as the data source and employ the quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze and compare the differences between native English speakers (NS) and non-native English speakers (NNS). The research questions we address involve: (1) Which non-observance of the maxim and way of non-observance occurs the most in the NS and NNS groups? (2) Is there a significant difference in the number of non-observance of the maxims and ways of non-observance between the NS and NNS groups? (3) What typical linguistic features of non-observance of the maxims are involved in the NS and NNS groups? It is found that the manner maxim is failed the most by both the NS and NNS groups, and both groups infringe a maxim most frequently. The inferential analysis suggests significantly more frequent non-observance of the relation and manner maxims in the NNS group. By comparison, non-observance of the quality maxim is notably more prevalent in the NS group. In terms of the way of non-observance, the NNS group faces a clash significantly more often. Among the four maxims, 'excessive information,' 'limited information,' 'hedge,' and 'prolixity' are the most common linguistic features. These results reveal the most prominent types, approaches, and linguistic features of non-observance of the maxims in the interview context. Furthermore, the findings suggest that native and non-native speaker status may be associated with non-observance of the maxims.

Keywords: cooperative principle, non-observance of the maxims, press conferences, interviews, native and non-native speakers

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