

APPLICATION of Gricean Maxims of Conversation Involving Tourism Professionals Southern Mindanao: A Multi-Modal Qualitative ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by persistent communication challenges in the tourism sector, particularly those arising from language barriers. This study analyzed how tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao adhered to or violated Grice's maxims-quantity, quality, relation, and manner-during interactions with tourists by utilizing a multimodal qualitative approach and interviews with licensed tourism professionals across key tourist sites in Southern Mindanao. Data collection captured verbal and nonverbal communication, allowing for a comprehensive analysis through the lens of Gricean Maxims. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns of maxim adherence and violation. Results revealed that tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao actively apply the Gricean Maxims of Conversation when engaging with foreign and local tourists. They also exhibited several breaches of the Gricean Maxims, which affected their communication's clarity, trustworthiness, relevance, and effectiveness. The study concludes that targeted training in pragmatic communication and language skills is essential for tourism professionals to enhance service quality. The findings offer actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders aiming to strengthen communication competencies in the tourism sector.

KEYWORDS: *Gricean maxims of conversation, tourism professionals, linguistic challenges, multimodal qualitative analysis, Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most dynamic and fast-growing sectors in the global economy. It connects people, promotes cultural exchange, and stimulates economic growth in many regions. However, behind the vibrant images of exotic destinations and bustling attractions lies a persistent and often overlooked problem and it is a communication barrier. Effective communication is at the

heart of the tourism industry. Whether it's a hotel receptionist assisting a guest, a tour guide leading a group, or a travel agent planning a client's itinerary, clear and cooperative communication builds trust and satisfaction. However, when Grice's Maxims of Conversation a set of principles that promote meaningful dialogue are violated, it can lead to confusion, dissatisfaction, and even safety issues in tourism settings. To bridge the gap and ensure effective communication, it is crucial for those working in the tourism business to become familiar with English conversational habits. In this regard, Katan (2020) underscored the need for tourism professionals to rely on combinations of techniques such as the usage of visual aids, facial expressions, gestures, and translation applications can help mitigate the problem, these diminish the quality of the conversation.

In a study examining communication strategies in a French tourist office, it was observed that tourism professionals sometimes provided excessive information to tourists. While aiming to be helpful, this overcommunication can overwhelm tourists, leading to confusion rather than clarity. For instance, offering detailed historical facts about every monument without considering the tourist's interest level can be seen as a violation of the Maxim of Quantity, where more information is given than necessary (Mauranen, 2006).

In Indonesia, local guides are struggling to explain the collections and exhibits at the Museum Kasejarah Jakarta to foreign guests. Specifically, some Jakartan guides' poor grasp of English results in a lack of clarity when describing cultural context, monuments, customs, and travel advice meant to enhance the visitors' experiences (Sri et. al, 2021). This is also observed in other Asian countries, like Hongkong, in the context of tourism, providing inaccurate information can have serious consequences. For example, a tourist guide might claim that a certain attraction is open on a public holiday when it is not, leading to disappointed visitors (Schneider, 2016).

In the Philippines, tourism professionals encountered serious communication breakdowns when working with non-native English speakers. These breakdowns were ascribed to a lack of resources, time constraints on processing information, perceived language competency gaps in the tour guides, and reported communication gaps in their interlocutors. To address these communication problems, the study conducted by Giye and Cuilan (2023) in Sagada, Mountain Province, stressed the necessity for both verbal and nonverbal tactics, such as accomplishment and compensatory, avoidance and reduction, and interactional methods. The study's conclusions are in line with the more

universal challenges that tour guides and other tourism industry workers encounter when attempting to interact with international visitors. Furthermore, the study of Bayangan and Lambenicio (2022) presented the same problem.

This study addresses a significant research gap by conducting an in-depth multimodal qualitative analysis of tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao using interviews and observations. The multimodal approach allows for capturing both verbal responses and nonverbal communication behaviors as they relate to applying Grice's maxims. This study is distinctive and original from Giye and Cuilan's (2023) research because it offers a thorough and in-depth investigation of the communication dynamics between international tourists and tourism professionals in a particular geographic location. The research's focus on the specific circumstances of Southern Mindanao guarantees that the conclusions are adapted to the special opportunities and problems that exist in this area, which helps to build focused and efficient communication plans for travel industry experts. Additionally, the study's emphasis on communication hurdles is in line with the larger context of tackling language barriers in the travel and tourism industry, as this is a frequent problem for visitors from abroad. The study's findings may be used to improve the quality of interactions between foreign visitors and local service providers by helping the Department of Tourism to create training programs and communication techniques that work for the tourism industry.

Furthermore, the communication dynamics between foreign tourists and tourist professionals in Southern Mindanao can also provide valuable insights for students across several industries and sectors. Students can benefit from this by honing their language abilities and cultural sensitivity, two things that are crucial for success in embodying 21st-Century skills. With its emphasis on the Grice Maxims theory, the study can give students a framework for comprehending and evaluating communication patterns that they can use in a variety of settings.

Finally, this study is intended to be shared broadly to benefit a wider audience by submitting them to academic journals and conferences in the fields of linguistics, tourism, and communication, offering professional development workshops on the maxims to different groups to improve industry communication skills, and sharing key findings with public tourism publications and mass media outlets to reach consumers as well as the general hospitality and service sectors. Maximizing the impact through diverse dissemination through

consumer platforms, training, and scholarships is one of the goals of this undertaking.

Research Questions

Following the Gricean Maxims of Conversation, this paper aims to explore the occurrence of the maxims forwarded by Grice in the conversation between foreign tourists and tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao. Specifically, it aims to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What Gricean Maxims are applied by the tourism professionals in conversing with foreign and local tourist.
2. How do the tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao apply the Gricean Maxims of Conversation when conversing with foreign and local tourists?
3. How do these tourism professionals violate the Gricean Maxims?
4. What are the linguistic challenges faced by these tourism professionals in connection with the Gricean Maxims?
5. How do these tourism professionals navigate these challenges?

METHODS

The methodology of this study is grounded in a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing multi-modal analysis to deeply investigate the application and violations of Grice Maxims of Conversation in the communication practices of tourism professionals when interacting with both foreign and local tourists. Recognizing that communication in tourism is inherently multi-modal-encompassing not just spoken language but also non-verbal cues such as gestures, posture, gaze and spatial arrangements-the study adopted an emergent and inductive approach. Data collection was conducted in the natural environments of the participants, who were selected based on their extensive experience (at least five years) in the tourism industry and their willingness to participate in in-depth interviews and recorded interactions. The research materials included eight video recordings of real-life conversations, direct observations, and semi-structured interviews, all of which captured both verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication.

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained all necessary permissions and adhered strictly to ethical guidelines, including the Data Privacy Law, ensuring informed consent, data security, and participant confidentiality. The data collection process was multi-modal, incorporating interviews that explored experiences with Grice's conversational maxims (quantity, quality,

relevance, and manner), observations of actual interactions and detailed audio/video recordings to capture the nuances of both spoken and embodied communication. The analysis involved content analysis to identify adherence to or violations of Gricean maxims within the recorded conversations, using a categorization matrix for systematic coding. Additionally, thematic analysis was applied to the interview data to uncover recurring themes related to communication challenges and strategies. Triangulation of data from interviews, observations, and recordings enhanced the validity and comprehensiveness of the findings.

RESULTS

The analysis of tourism professionals' interactions with both local and foreign tourists revealed that the Gricean Maxims were frequently and actively applied in their communication. The maxim of quality, which emphasizes truthfulness and accuracy, was observed 14 times, with participants consistently providing reliable and fact-based information. This approach helped build trust with tourists, as professionals often supported their statements with evidence or clarification. The maxim of quantity appeared 15 times, indicating that professionals were careful to provide just the right amount of information-neither too much nor too little-ensuring that tourists received clear, sufficient answers to their questions. They also encouraged further inquiries to guarantee understanding. The maxim of relation, focusing on relevance, was noted six times; professionals tailored their responses to the specific concerns of tourists, maintaining topicality and adapting their communication style as needed for different audiences. Lastly, the maxim of manner was evident in 13 instances, with professionals striving for clarity and directness, using familiar terms and avoiding ambiguity, especially when addressing foreign visitors.

Tourism professionals upheld the maxim of quality by prioritizing fact-checking, transparency, and proactive updates, while also politely correcting misinformation and emphasizing safety to build trust with visitors. For the maxim of quantity, they provided sufficient and tailored information, often utilizing social media and proactively clarifying details to ensure tourists receive just the right amount of guidance without being overwhelmed. The maxim of relation was observed as tourism professionals consistently stayed on topic, contextualized information to suit cultural backgrounds, shared relevant insights, and gently redirected conversations as needed to maintain relevance. In terms of manner, they used clear and simple language, avoided ambiguity, and delivered

concise, orderly responses, often supplementing their speech with non-verbal aids and adapting their communication style to the needs of their audience.

The Gricean Maxims were also violated by tourism professionals during their interactions with both local and foreign tourists, as observed in recorded conversations. Violations of the maxim of quality involved providing inaccurate, biased, exaggerated, incomplete, or unverified information, which undermined the credibility and trustworthiness of their communication. For the maxim of quantity, professionals sometimes gave either too much information-overwhelming tourists with unnecessary details-or too little, resulting in incomplete guidance and potential confusion. Breaches of the relation maxim were seen when professionals introduced irrelevant anecdotes, promotional content, or tangential remarks, detracting from the main topic and possibly confusing or distracting visitors. Lastly, violations of the manner maxim included unclear or ambiguous language, communication breakdowns due to language barriers, and disorganized or poorly structured responses.

Several key linguistic challenges faced by tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao emerged. First, professionals often encountered information imbalance, struggling with information gaps and determining the appropriate amount of detail to provide to tourists. Second, cultural awareness and audience understanding were significant challenges, as professionals must navigate issues of privacy, personality and nationality differences, and the need to adapt communication styles to diverse cultural backgrounds. Third, language barriers and ambiguity were prevalent, with professionals and tourists alike experiencing misinterpretation, limited language proficiency, accent and pronunciation difficulties, and a reluctance to ask clarifying questions. Fourth, poor vocabulary and confusion can hinder effective communication, making it difficult for professionals to express needs clearly and leading to misunderstandings of specific terms; this sometimes results in a greater reliance on non-verbal communication. Fifth, cultural viewpoints play a crucial role, as professionals must be sensitive to varying cultural priorities, taboos, expectations, and communication styles, all of which require a high degree of cultural sensitivity. Finally, misinformation-whether unintentional or intentional-poses a challenge, with variations in how information is perceived and responded to by both professionals and tourists.

In addition, several key themes also emerged regarding how tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao navigated communication challenges when

interacting with tourists. One major approach involved using descriptive language, referencing landmarks, and providing contextualized examples or analogies to clarify or explain requests, often supplemented by visual aids to enhance understanding. Professionals also focused on clarifying or simplifying messages by asking clarifying questions, relying on interpreters when necessary, and using nonverbal cues such as hand gestures, pointing, and facial expressions to bridge communication gaps. They demonstrated openness to correction, readily accepting feedback and offering explanations for any corrections made, which fosters mutual understanding and trust.

DISCUSSION

Tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao consistently applied Grice's (1975) conversational maxims-Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner-when interacting with both local and foreign tourists. The maxim of Quantity was most frequently observed, with professionals providing sufficient but not excessive information and encouraging further questions, aligning with Grice's (1975) guideline to be as informative as required. Quality was also highly prioritized, as professionals offered accurate, fact-checked information, building trust and credibility (Grice, 1975; Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010). The maxim of Manner was evident in their use of clear, simple language, especially when addressing language barriers, supporting Korre's (2024) emphasis on clarity in cross-cultural communication. Although the maxim of Relation was applied less often, this reflected the direct and concise nature of service interactions, not a lack of relevance (Amirsheiban, 2020; Purnami, 2021). The overall pattern highlights a strong commitment to cooperative, clear, and informative communication, with the prominence of the Quantity maxim reflecting the service industry's focus on customer satisfaction and trust (Abdulateef, 2023; Hanidar, 2018).

Furthermore, they prioritized fact-checking and transparency (Quality), provided sufficient and tailored information (Quantity), ensured relevance and cultural contextualization (Relation), and used clear, concise language while avoiding ambiguity (Manner), as outlined in Table 4. This adherence to the Gricean Maxims built trust, enhanced visitor satisfaction, and fostered positive exchanges, reflecting the importance of linguistic clarity and politeness in tourism (Grice, 1975; Korre, 2024). The prominence of the Quantity maxim aligns with findings by Abdulateef (2023) and Hanidar (2018), who emphasized the need for informative and efficient communication in service settings. These practices demonstrate that effective communication in tourism relies not only on

language accuracy but also on cultural sensitivity and clarity, as supported by contemporary research.

Tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao at times violated Grice's conversational maxims, negatively affecting communication with tourists. Violations of the Maxim of Quality included providing inaccurate, biased, exaggerated, or incomplete information, which undermined trust and confused visitors (Grice, 1975; Hanidar, 2018; Fiveable, 2024). The Maxim of Quantity was breached when professionals gave either too much or too little information, leading to tourist confusion, frustration, and missed opportunities (Sarasua, 2022; Zahra, 2023). Relation maxim violations occurred when irrelevant, tangential, or promotional content was introduced, disrupting the flow and focus of conversations (Zafitri, 2023; Zahra, 2023). Lastly, the Maxim of Manner was often violated through vague, ambiguous, or disorganized explanations, sometimes worsened by language barriers or overreliance on nonverbal cues, which hindered tourists' understanding (Xiaoquin, 2017). These findings highlight the importance of clear, relevant, and accurate communication in tourism, as recommended by Grice (1975) and supported by subsequent research.

Tourism professionals in Southern Mindanao frequently experienced and contributed to violations of Grice's (1975) conversational maxims during interactions with tourists, often due to linguistic and cultural challenges. Violations of the Maxim of Quantity occurred when either too much or too little information was provided, leading to misunderstandings and inefficiencies (Elshaer et al., 2024; Tavares, 2022). The Maxim of Manner was often breached through unclear, ambiguous, or disorganized communication, frequently exacerbated by language barriers, poor vocabulary, and accent differences (Velavan, 2023; Fathy, 2021; Laba & Narlianti, 2024). Relation maxim violations arose when responses were irrelevant due to cultural misunderstandings or limited language skills (Timothy, 2020; Dimitrova, 2016). These violations highlight the complex interplay of language proficiency, cultural expectations, and information management in tourism communication, emphasizing the need for adaptive strategies and cultural sensitivity to maintain service quality and guest satisfaction (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Cuza, 2015).

Their way of navigating communication challenges were through a blend of adaptive strategies grounded in Grice's Maxims of Conversation (1975) and Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) communication strategies. Key themes include

the use of descriptive language, analogies, and visual aids to clarify requests (Maxims of Relation and Manner), proactive questioning and message simplification to avoid misunderstandings (Maxims of Quantity and Manner), and reliance on nonverbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions to bridge language barriers. These approaches are essential for effective, inclusive, and culturally sensitive communication, enhancing trust and visitor satisfaction (Zou, 2020; Atienza, 2022; Martinez, 2018; Sak, 2024). The ability to handle corrections diplomatically and with empathy further supports positive tourist experiences and fosters mutual understanding (Lu, 2018; Pantopolous, 2023; Bayram, 2024).

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