

Presence and Violation of Grice's Conversational Maxims

Abstract

This study investigates the presence and violation of Grice's conversational maxims in EFL classroom interactions at the University Level. Utilizing qualitative methods, the research examines how both teachers and learners adhere to or deviate from

the principles of Quantity, Quality, Manner, and Relevance during classroom discourse. Data were collected through video recordings of classroom interactions, which were transcribed and analyzed to identify instances of maxim observance and violation. The findings reveal that while there is generally a good adherence to Grice's maxims, notable violations were observed, particularly with respect to the Maxim of Quantity, Quality, and Relevance. Violations were often linked to insufficient or irrelevant information and inaccuracies in responses. The study highlights the implications of these findings for EFL pedagogy, suggesting that a greater emphasis on the principles of effective communication could enhance educational interactions. The results underscore the need for educators to address conversational maxim violations to improve teaching and learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Grice's Maxims, EFL Classroom Interaction, Maxim Violation, Qualitative Research*

المشاركة والاخلال في الاقوال المأثورة لجرايس خلال التفاعلات الصفية للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على
المستوى الجامعي

Presence and Violation of Grice's Conversational Maxims in Iraqi EFL Classroom Interaction at the University Level

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الخلاصة.

تبحث هذه الدراسة في المشاركة والاخلال في الاقوال المأثورة لجرايس خلال التفاعلات الصفية للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على المستوى الجامعي. باستخدام الأساليب النوعية. يدرس البحث كيفية التزام كل من المعلمين والمتعلمين بالمبادئ الكمية والنوعية والطريقة الملائمة أثناء الحوار الصفي أو الانحراف عنها. تم جمع البيانات من خلال تسجيلات الفيديو للتفاعلات في الصفوف الدراسية، والتي تم نسخها وتحليلها لتحديد حالات الالتزام بهذه الاقوال او تركها. تكشف النتائج أنه على الرغم من وجود مشاركة جيد عمومًا بأقوال جرايس، فقد لوحظت انتهاكات ملحوظة، لا سيما فيما يتعلق بمبدأ الكمية والنوعية والملائمة. وكثيراً ما كانت الانتهاكات مرتبطة بعدم كفاية المعلومات أو عدم أهميتها وعدم الدقة في الردود. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على آثار هذه النتائج على تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مما يشير إلى أن التركيز بشكل أكبر على مبادئ التواصل الفعال يمكن أن يعزز التفاعلات التعليمية. تؤكد النتائج على حاجة المعلمين إلى معالجة انتهاكات قواعد المحادثة لتحسين نتائج التدريس والتعلم.

1. Introduction

The capacity of teachers and students to communicate efficiently is very relevant in providing excellent learning opportunities. Humans are social creatures, and in order to participate in society, they depend on communication and interaction. However, ineffective interaction is frequent in the fields of teaching and learning. Based on a 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) poll, Iraq's educational quality came in at 72nd among 77 nations. In the context of teaching and learning, interaction implies a reciprocal process where a connection between teachers and learners is developed to attain shared objectives (Najihah et al., 2023). Consequently, in the field of education, cooperative discourse is essential to guarantee good communication.

Language use in communication calls for careful attention to a fundamental element. As Grice (1975) points out, the principle of language usage stresses the value of collaboration in discourse. Speakers aim to be succinct, focused on the current issue, clear, readily comprehensible, relevant to the situation, and free from errors (Firda & Hidayat, 2021). In the maxims of the cooperative principle, these principles are summarized. Previous studies have investigated several facets of cooperative principles in communication in great detail. In the

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Jordanian stand-up comedy performance, Al-Sawaeer et al. (2022) looked at comedians' flouting of maxims. Using Grice's cooperative principles theory, Zheng and Wang (2019) investigated how literal meaning in novels could have consequences. Ye (2022) and Dong et al. (2022) concentrated on cinematic characters violating maxims. The interaction between teachers and learners was one of the topics covered by Widiaasri et al.'s (2019) investigation into the use of cooperative principles in the teaching and learning process.

Instances when teachers and learners broke cooperative principles were emphasized by Wahyudi et al. (2020), which had a detrimental effect on the learning and teaching process. Pishghadam (2021) underlined the need for cultural matters for many civilizations. In order to examine Chinese university learners' English language proficiency in the light of cooperative principles, Zhao (2019) administered a thirteen-week action research project. Based on a survey of the literature, McConachy (2019) spoke about second language learning as an intercultural effort. Further investigated by Revita et al. (2021) were cooperative contacts among middle-aged women preparing for a wedding ceremony.

It is as important to look at cases of maxim compliance to acquire a thorough knowledge of cooperative principles, even if earlier studies have mostly concentrated on the transgression of maxims. Thus, rather than concentrating only on one factor, this study intends to examine violation and adherence of maxims. Moreover, this paper explores two important issues in the domain of EFL. This study will be based on the notions put forward by Grice (1975) about cooperative principles and Hymes (1974) about the speaking framework. By looking at the interaction between teachers and learners in the teaching and learning process at the University Level, this research intends to close the present discrepancy in the literature.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Presence of Conversational Maxims in EFL Classroom

Throughout the learning and teaching process, the interaction between teacher and learners is crucial. The objective of the teaching process cannot be met when neither party can effectively communicate. The collaboration between the teacher and the learners determines the effectiveness of a classroom interaction. Analyzing their utterances from the standpoint of

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cooperative principles helps one to observe the quality of their communication. Maxims are the main focus of the study of cooperative principles. This research sought maxims utilized throughout the learning and teaching process (Li, 2015; Liu, 2017; Menjura, 2017; Widyasari et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2013), thesis guidance (Astuti et al., 2019) and thesis exam, (Muhassin, 2019).

One of the criteria used to analyze oral interaction in the classroom is the cooperative principle, which gauges how well the teacher and learners work together. Li (2015) thinks that the application of cooperative principles in classroom discourse results in a dynamic, harmonic environment. Good interaction between teachers and learners helps to spot and resolve teaching and learning issues right away. Through cooperative learning, learners also may enhance their interests, confidence, ideas, knowledge, skills, and confidence. When learners can collaborate in having communication with the instructor, using excellent cooperative principles benefits in improving their speech communication skills.

Selecting a suitable method way strategy should be taken into account by teachers in motivating learners to cooperate in the process of classroom interaction, based on Liu (2017) who analyzed the learning context by using the concepts of cooperation while learning and teaching in the classroom and the relation of working principles between learners and teachers. That is, the harmonic environment between teachers and learners in the classroom may be reached whenever the teachers can use the main principle of cooperative principles and grab the attention of the learners. Moreover, if the teacher works with the learners throughout the classroom interaction, the learning result could become better.

The results of Widyasari et al. (2019) reveal that the usage of cooperative principles in the class environment occurs depending on formality of learning and teaching context. Quantity maxim, quality maxim, relevance maxim, and manner maxim are the most important cooperative principles found in classroom interaction between teachers and learners. This circumstance shows that teachers and learners effectively collaborate in interaction and connect with each other in presenting and comprehending the content. They also assert that using cooperative principles in an Asian setting makes the teaching process more successful and efficient. The importance of cooperative principles in ELT classroom interaction is supported by this study,

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which is consistent with Liu (2017). The interaction runs well because the teachers may help the learners by contemplating the teaching approach that motivates their active participation in class discussions. The cooperative behavior of learners during classroom interaction also demonstrates how important it is to comprehend and use communication principles in order to develop good communication.

The problem of the way teachers and learners violate the communication maxims was also investigated. Menjura (2017), for example, emphasizes how language classroom communication is done. In a foreign language environment, the interactions in the language classroom are not simple. In order to aid learners in learning a language, the instructor should use appropriate strategies. The study also reveals that in classroom interaction, the teacher and learners typically disregard quality and manners maxims. Because English is a foreign language, this breach occurs because people often speak their native tongue when they have communication difficulties. Apart from that, they believe that graduating from university requires English.

Following Menjura (2017), Muhassin (2019) looked at the kinds of maxim violations in thesis examinations and the maxim of communication most disrupted by learners. According to this study, the learners on the thesis test breach maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner most of which are maxims of knowledge. The infractions occur in false information, excessive knowledge, pointless data, and unclear material. With 13 utterances, this research found that quantity maxims were most broken with five utterances (38.47%), followed by four utterances (30.77%), of connection maxim. Concurrently, quality and manner maxims were the third position of most violated maxims with two utterances (15.36%) among the learners.

The use of cooperative principles at the university level was the subject of research by Astuti et al. (2019) and Tan et al. (2013). The use of cooperative principles to improve learners' listening comprehension was the main topic. The study is to enable the learners to effectively determine the communicative goal of the speakers. According to the study, college learners found pragmatic theory helpful for listening comprehension. This research also recommended English university teachers giving their learners the pertinent pragmatistic understanding of cooperative principles and the principle of relevance. Moreover, the instructor using the

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linguistic theory may help the university English learners reach their learning objectives. Astuti et al. (2019) tallied violated and complied maxims of the thesis direction. From 87 conversations data with a quality maxim, 55 data (63%) belong to complying quality maxim and 32 data (36.9%) violate the quality maxim according to the result. Furthermore, included in the violation of the quality maxim are writing, technique, and materials.

In order to improve communication in the classroom, cooperative principles have regularly been presented in previous research on cooperative interaction in ELT classroom interaction. When teachers expounded on particular strategies in the teaching process, the research also showed that EFL learners could interact successfully. This condition suggests that one can isolate the use of cooperative principles in the classroom from other conceptions of approaches. The research also showed that teachers should take into account the learning environment, scenario, and appropriate tactics in encouraging learners to collaborate in communication while creating harmonious classroom interaction. The violating maxims generated by EFL learners also showed that the teachers studied more in relation to the use of cooperative principles in the classrooms.

2.2. Absence of Conversational Maxims in EFL Classroom

Apart from evaluating observance maxims in EFL Classrooms discourse, several studies also exposed non-observance maxims there. Non-observance maxim is the result of non-rule following by individuals. For a variety of reasons—including not stating the truth as the speaker did not want to offend the listener's emotions or convey anything funny—or lack of the ability to communicate clearly—they neglected the dictum. Stated differently, hidden meaning—that is, what speakers sought to convey—is not the same as what speakers stated. There are five: flouting, violating, infringing, choosing not to apply a maxim, and suspending a maxim. Research on non-observance maxim have been conducted (Agung, 2016; Arofah & Mubarok, 2021; Hutahaean et al., 2020; Kurniadi, 2021; Nurcholis et al., 2020; Sulviana, 2020; Yatun, 2019).

Agung (2016) concentrated on breaking learners' answers to TEFL class questions directed against their teachers. The findings reveal that learners violated the maxim of quantity, quality, and manner when they answered the questions of the teachers. In teacher-learner

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interactions, Arofah and Mubarak (2021) discovered flouting the relation maxim. Apart from quantity, Yatun (2019) also said that breaching the maxim of relevance also occurs in discussion by means of infringement. She conducted the observation once, hence there is no generalizing in terms of finding.

Wahyudi et al. (2020), then, discovered four impacts during teacher-learner discourse in the class; the class is raucous and noisy, the instructor gets ignored, and the learners rush at the teacher's knowledge without understanding it. The notion about the consequences of flouting or discovering from prior study, however, was not stated by the researcher. The ideal notion of the impact of flouting in the classroom discussion is therefore unknown to and understood by the readers. Hidayati et al. (2021) conducted another research in which they examined the maxim and the breach between teachers and learners throughout the learning and teaching process. They produced varied findings, and it is discovered that the classroom has primarily experienced violated maxim of manner and maxim of amount. Although the above mentioned descriptive qualitative research approach is employed, sadly it only shows the statistics on the number of utterances and percentage of the maxim, violation, and flouting without thoroughly discussing and analyzing the reasons and recommendations of its conclusion.

Hutahaean et al. (2020) revealed that the eighth-grade junior high learner broke the most relevant maxim. In findings and discussion, the researchers did not show the whole conversational sample, however; simply the answer or violation reaction was mentioned. The readers lack the whole discourse and realize that the given sample was suitable and accurate. Moreover, an in-depth investigation conducted by Nurcholis et al. (2020) not only revealed the deviation of the proposal seminar of the English Education Study Program, but also thoroughly described the cause behind the learners' flouting of the maxim. With a proportion of 42.85% and detected 21 times, the most prevailing maxim that escaped learners was one of quantity.

Sulviana (2020) also discovered the maximum sample violation in the EFL Classroom of Islam Makassar. The research did not, however, detail the proportion of every violated dictum. This study omitted to investigate the cause of the violated maxim. The debate only rewrites the kind of maxims and sample of conversation without providing specific facts, hence it is not

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supported by relevant past studies. Although the last study was conducted in social and marketing environments, this one took place in a classroom.

Classroom interaction is the interchange of ideas between teacher-studies or learner-studies that involves classroom activities like turn-taking, questioning and replying, negotiation, and feedback-giving. Because of contextual and prior knowledge of the speakers and hearers, non-observance maxims specifically breaching, flouting, and infringing of maxims usually occur in classroom interaction. Most researchers, according to past studies, only concentrate on exposing the types and proportion of observance and non-observance maxims in the classroom. The crucial element, therefore, is to understand why the non-observance occurs; thus, the instructor will be able to pick the correct approach, medium, or learning tool.

3. Methodology

Since teaching and learning activities took place in a classroom with a naturalistic setting, this study was intended to be a qualitative one. The research was intended to examine and clarify the presence and absence of the Gricean maxim in conversational implicature as represented in the teacher's speech and learner interaction in the classroom throughout the teaching and learning process. Teachers and learners from at the University Level served as the study's subjects. Two teachers—one male and one female—with varying teaching backgrounds were the main participants. Recruited from two courses, the secondary participants were fifty learners—twenty men, and thirty women— sophomore and senior.

I gathered the data in this project using the observation and documentation approach. Documentation is written data with the true, legitimate, or formal form of what one may use to finish the information. The actions are: (1) I videotaped the EFL classroom interaction, including instructor and learner utterances. I produced data transcription from the video recorded into the written form by transcribing the dialogues or utterances done by the teacher and learners, (2); I listened to the recording again to confirm the correctness of the data by replaying the video, Following Grice's maxim, I arranged the data; (5) I created codes based on the four maxims between in line and flout that fit the goals of the research, the dialogues or utterances including the maxims of cooperative principle, (6) I entered the information into the data sheets including the situational background. (7) I categorized the data in line with the theory of Cooperative

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Principle of Maxims; (8) I developed a description of the cooperative principle of maxims from the data acquired by means of conversation type of the maxim.

Following my examination of the data in terms of themes connected to the study goals, the data were presented according to data analysis findings, therefore concluding the research. The outcome itself revealed the violation and presence of the Quality maxim, the Quantity maxim, the Manner maxim, and the relevance maxim in EFL classroom interaction between English teacher and learners and will answer the contribution of this study to EFL.

4. Result

The results of this study are given in line with the research problem statement. With an eye toward both observed and non-observed maxims, Grice's idea of the Cooperative Principle helped the data be examined. Drawn from classroom interactions, this sample shows the Maxim of Quality being observed.

4.1. Observance of Maxim of Quality

The following dialogue occurred between a teacher and a learner during an EFL classroom interaction, where the maxim of quality was observed:

- 1 T: Did you do the exercise?
- 2 L: I didn't know how to do it.

In this exchange, the learner responded truthfully, admitting that they had not completed the exercise because they did not know how to do it. The learner's response was direct and accurate, aligning with what they genuinely believed to be true. By providing a truthful answer and avoiding any exaggeration or falsehood, the learner successfully observed the Maxim of Quality, which requires speakers to contribute information that is accurate and truthful. There was no hidden meaning or implication beyond the literal interpretation of the statement, reflecting a clear adherence to this maxim.

Observance of Maxim of Quantity

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The following dialogue, taken from an EFL classroom interaction, demonstrates the observance of the Maxim of Quantity:

- 1 T: When do you submit the article, Ali?
- 2 L: On Friday.

In this example, the learner provides a clear and concise response by stating the due date for submitting the article. The learner gives just the right amount of information needed to answer the teacher's question—no more, no less. This demonstrates an adherence to the Maxim of Quantity, which requires speakers to contribute only as much information as is necessary to be informative without overwhelming the listener with irrelevant or excessive details. This is a clear instance of maintaining the balance of information in classroom interactions.

Observance of Maxim of Manner

The following dialogue illustrates the observance of the Maxim of Manner, which focuses on clarity and orderliness in communication:

- 1 T: the abbreviated of the coordinative conjunctions is?
- 2 Ls: Fanboys
- 3 T: And the one used in negative format is?
- 4 Ls: Nor

In this exchange, the teacher asked the learners for concise and specific information about the abbreviation for coordinating conjunctions. The learners responded clearly and succinctly, following the teacher's prompts in an orderly manner. Their answers were brief, avoiding unnecessary complexity or ambiguity. This demonstrates adherence to the Maxim of Manner, as the communication was clear, well-structured, and free from confusion, contributing to an effective and organized classroom interaction.

Observance of Maxim of Relevance

The following dialogue demonstrates the observance of the Maxim of Relevance in an EFL classroom interaction:

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- 1 T: right, they are also a part of coordinative conjunctions
and "they" refers to?
- 2 Ls: or, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

In this exchange, the teacher had just finished a lesson on coordinating conjunctions. To review the concept, the teacher asked the learners to clarify what the word "they" referred to in the previous sentence. The learners responded appropriately by listing the coordinating conjunctions: "or, and, nor, but, or, yet, so." Their response was directly related to the teacher's question, making it relevant to the ongoing discussion. Therefore, this interaction exemplifies the observance of the Maxim of Relevance, as the learners provided a pertinent answer that contributed meaningfully to the topic at hand.

4.2. Non-Observance of Maxim

In typical communication, participants are expected to contribute in a way that aligns with the context to ensure smooth interaction. However, there are instances where the contributions made by speakers seem irrelevant or insufficient, which disrupts the cooperative flow of the conversation. According to Grice's Cooperative Principle, speakers are required to provide as much information as necessary to meet the conversational needs of their partners. While most classroom conversations between teachers and learners follow this principle, some instances of flouting the Maxim of Quantity were observed, though these cases were limited. Since the interaction between teachers and learners is spontaneous, occasional violations of this maxim do occur, making it a dominant aspect in this context.

Violating Maxim of Quality

The Maxim of Quality requires speakers to provide truthful information, with statements based on sufficient evidence. In the classroom conversations analyzed, violations of this maxim were rare, as most speakers aimed to be logical and accurate. However, there were instances where speakers provided illogical, unreasonable, or untrue responses. In everyday speech, it is not uncommon to encounter responses that fail to meet the expected level of truthfulness or relevance. The following dialogue exemplifies a violation of the Maxim of Quality in an interaction between a teacher and a learner:

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- 1 T: What does jomlaton morakabaton (compound sentence) mean in English?
- 2 Ls: Mr., sorry, eh.. teacher, can I change my seat?

The learner's response, "Mr., sorry, eh... teacher, can I change my seat?" is unrelated to the teacher's question and does not provide the correct answer. Instead of addressing the question about the meaning of a compound sentence in English, the learner shifts the conversation to an unrelated request. This deviation from the expected truthful response constitutes a violation of the Maxim of Quality, as the learner fails to provide a relevant or accurate contribution to the topic at hand.

Violating Maxim of Quantity

The following example illustrates a violation of the Maxim of Quantity in an interaction between a teacher and a learner:

- 1 T: Is there anyone who still have a problem with the compounds?
- 2 L: don't?

In this exchange, the teacher asked the learners a question to assess their understanding of the lesson on compounds. However, the learner responded with the incomplete and unclear answer, "Don't," instead of providing a full response that addressed the teacher's question. This response offered significantly less information than what was expected, leaving the teacher without the necessary insight into the learner's understanding. As a result, the dialogue demonstrates a violation of the Maxim of Quantity, as the learner failed to contribute enough information to maintain an effective and informative exchange.

Violating Maxim of Relevance

The following example illustrates a violation of the Maxim of Relevance in an interaction between a teacher and a learner:

- 1 T: Well, how was the practice?
- 2 L: sir, it's hot in here.

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In this exchange, the teacher asked the learner about their experience with the practice session, expecting a relevant response that would address the question. However, the learner's reply, "Sir, it's hot in here," is unrelated to the teacher's inquiry and does not contribute to the topic of discussion. This deviation from the expected response constitutes a violation of the Maxim of Relevance, which requires speakers to provide information that is directly related to the conversation. By shifting the focus to the classroom environment instead of addressing the teacher's question, the learner fails to observe this maxim.

Violating Maxim of Manner

The Maxim of Manner requires speakers to communicate clearly and directly, avoiding vagueness and ambiguity. Speakers should provide information in a manner that is brief, coherent, and easily understandable. However, violations of this maxim often occur when responses are ambiguous or unclear. Effective communication involves adherence to the principle of cooperation, where speakers should strive to be as clear and straightforward as possible. Despite the principle's intent, there are instances where speakers' utterances may seem indirect or confusing, thus violating the Maxim of Manner. The following example demonstrates a violation of the Maxim of Manner in an interaction between a teacher and a learner:

- 1 S: and the sentence is a compound one?
- 2 T: you know, you certainly make a series of sentences, at different occasions, and in a
- 3 certain order

In this exchange, the teacher's response is vague and indirect. Rather than providing a clear definition or explanation of a compound sentence, the teacher's reply is ambiguous, making it difficult for the learner to understand the concept. The response does not directly address the learner's query, thereby violating the Maxim of Manner. This maxim requires that answers be straightforward and unambiguous, facilitating better comprehension and effective communication.

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5. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the observance and violation of Grice's conversational maxims in the context of EFL classroom interactions at the University Level. The findings revealed both adherence to and deviations from Grice's maxims, offering insights into the quality of communication between teachers and learners.

The study found that adherence to Grice's maxims—Quantity, Quality, Manner, and Relevance—was generally observed in classroom interactions. For instance, the Maxim of Quantity was observed when learners provided concise and relevant responses to teachers' questions, offering the exact amount of information needed without excess (Grice, 1975). Similarly, instances of the Maxim of Quality were noted when learners answered questions truthfully and accurately, reflecting a commitment to providing information that was both reliable and evidence-based (Widyasari et al. 2019). These observations align with previous research indicating that clear and relevant communication is crucial for effective teaching and learning (Liu, 2017). The Maxim of Manner was also observed, as learners and teachers typically communicated in a direct and organized manner, avoiding unnecessary complexity and ambiguity (Muhassin, 2019). This is consistent with findings from other studies that emphasize the importance of clarity in educational settings to facilitate better understanding and engagement (Liu, 2017).

Despite generally adhering to Grice's principles, the study identified several instances of maxim violations. The Maxim of Quantity was occasionally flouted when learners provided incomplete or insufficient responses, which impacted the effectiveness of communication. This finding supports earlier research that highlights how insufficient information can hinder educational interactions and impede learning outcomes (Yatun, 2019). Violations of the Maxim of Quality were less frequent but notable. For example, when learners provided responses that were irrelevant or misleading, it reflected a deviation from the expectation of truthful and evidence-based communication (Liu, 2017). Such violations can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication, underscoring the need for teachers to address and correct misinformation promptly.

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The Maxim of Relevance was often breached when learners gave responses that were unrelated to the questions asked, such as shifting the topic to unrelated issues. This supports previous findings that emphasize the importance of staying on topic to maintain coherent and relevant dialogue in educational settings (Grice, 1975). The frequent occurrence of such violations suggests a need for greater focus on ensuring that responses directly address the topic of discussion.

6. Conclusion

These findings have several implications for EFL pedagogy. Firstly, the ability to adhere to Grice's maxims is crucial for effective communication and learning. Educators should be mindful of these principles and work to promote their observance in classroom interactions. Training and professional development programs for teachers could include strategies for encouraging adherence to these conversational norms (Segal et al, 2016). Furthermore, addressing the reasons behind the violations of these maxims could enhance communication. For example, providing explicit feedback and engaging in reflective practices may help learners understand the importance of providing relevant and complete answers (Dawson et al., 2021). Additionally, incorporating activities that focus on the practical application of Grice's maxims could improve learners' conversational skills and overall language proficiency.

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