

International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies

ISSN: 2308-5460



Grice's Cooperative Principles in News Reports of *Tehran Times*- A Descriptive-Analytical Study

[PP: 66-74]

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ABSTRACT

Since in modern day most of the information is conveyed through written communication, and media play a significant role in the conveyance of hot issues of the day, the language of the news has attracted the attention of both media researchers and linguists for decades. This descriptive-analytical study aimed to compare the adoption and violation of Grice's (1975) cooperative principles (CPs) in news reports published in *Tehran Times* and identify which of these four CPs (quality, quantity, manner, and relation) has been violated most and which of them has been violated least. In this regard, 120 news stories were selected randomly from the newspaper *Tehran Times*, in which the adoption and violation of these CPs were studied by two independent raters. Ten reports were selected from whatever published in the 12 months. Results revealed that maxim of quality was violated most, and its highest amount among five news categories was related to social news. Also, findings showed that maxim of relation was violated least, and the lowest amount among five news categories was related to cultural news, that the second highest violated maxim was the maxim of quality, and that in total maxims in the economic and social news were profoundly violated compared to the other three news categories. Findings of this study can be used by EFL learners and teachers as well as report writers in multimedia.

Keywords: *Grice's Cooperative Principles, Tehran Times, Media Research, News Reports, Maxims*

ARTICLE INFO	The paper received on	Reviewed on	Accepted after revisions on
	14/01/2018	23/02/2018	23/04/2018

Suggested citation:

Qassemi, M., Ziabari, R. & Kheirabadi. R. (2018). Grice's Cooperative Principles in News Reports of *Tehran Times*- A Descriptive-Analytical Study. *International Journal of English Language & Translation Studies*, 6(1),66-74.

1. Introduction

Sometimes, we know how to start and end a conversation with others; however, few people can illustrate what is indispensable to have a conversation going smoothly. Grice (1975) noticed that language is an innovative and flexible system that makes communication possible, but for the communication to be both possible and successful, it should enjoy specific characteristics. He (1975) suggested that in a commonplace discussion, both speakers and hearers share a set of CPs. The CP itself is defined as follows, "make your conversation contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975, p. 45). This connotes that speakers do not have to convey data that speakers can assume that hearers already know.

Grice's (1975) CPs consisting of the quality, quantity, manner, and relation maxim are amongst the most essential principles in the pragmatics (Brown, 1989; Davies, 2008; Mukaro, Mugari, & Dhumukwa, 2013; Yule, 2013). Since in pragmatics, the chief purpose of communication is considered to be the interchange of data. People usually collaborate with each other to express their meanings and implicit connotation of their statements. Consequently, all things being identical, conversations are cooperative endeavors which are based on a standard ground and track a communal determination. Grice's (1975) work on CPs led to the emergence of pragmatics as a separate discipline within linguistics (e.g., Darighgoftar & Ghaffari, 2012; Hadi, 2013; Jia, 2008; Yunxiu, 2012; etc.)

In his *Logic and Conversation*, Grice (1975) analyzed cooperation as involving four maxims. He held that speakers should give enough and not too much information if they want to follow the maxim of quantity, that they are genuine and sincere, speaking truth or facts if they want to follow the maxim of quality, that utterances are relative to the context of the speech if they want to follow the maxim of relation, and that speakers try to present meaning clearly and concisely, avoiding ambiguity if they want to follow the maxim of manner. His CPs are based on the assumption that language users implicitly agree to collaborate by making their contributions to the conversation as is compulsory by the current stage of the talk or the direction towards which it goes.

In fact, CP is meant to designate what indeed occurs in a discussion. That is, while speaking, we commonly have something like CP and its maxims in mind to guide and lead us, though subconsciously. Speakers try to utter things which are accurate, relevant, as well as informative enough in a transparent manner. Hearers will on the other hand attempt to deduce what is said to them in this way. Sometimes, a speaker will usually be aware of the possible implicatures of his speech, and if he does not want the hearer to interpret it in some specific way, s/he will make it plainly clear that s/he does not mean that specific implicature (Channell, 2000).

Grice's theory of CP is essentially the theory about the way in which people make use of language to have better communication. Pan (2012a, p. 3) stated that Grice formalized "his observation in this way, say, when we talk we try to be cooperative," and additionally elevated this idea into the so-called CP. By his proposal, speakers try to send an unambiguous message "within the context of any particular conversation, and hearers assume that speakers are doing this. The principle involves both parties knowing and using the rules of conversation which Grice called maxims."

English news can be regarded as a type of written conversation, in which reporters play the role of the speakers, while the readers are the addressees (hearers). Henceforth, to become more in effect, reporters are believed intentionally not to obey a rule, law, or custom the four maxims of cooperative principle. Consequently, English news should be reported more clearly (manner), truthfully (quality), give

enough amount of information (quantity), and directly address target consumers (relation). However, to find out a piece of English news which follows all maxims is not an easy task.

At times, reporters or the publishing organization do violate the maxims of CP. For instance, reporters are more used to vagueness (about economic and political reports) and lack of quantity (in sports news) to skillfully and technically present existing matters or social issues in front of readers. Additionally, readers are also permitted to comprehend or appreciate the news item from their perspectives. Therefore, using vague language, lack of data, or lack of precision, news becomes more reasonable in the eye of reporters and their organization. Consequently, the collaboration of speakers and hearers involved in a conversation (here, writers and readers) is just the outset to make sense of what is uttered. If the speaker (reporter) aims at misleading the hearers (readers), or the speaker (reporter) does not have enough amount of information or simply does not want to continue conversation, Grice's CP can also serve as "an attempt to explain how communication succeeds in the face of violation of the maxims (Jiang, 2000, p. 43). Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh (2012, p. 1) stated that "the criteria by which the news editors and journalists decide about the newsworthiness of an event or story, widely known as news values, have been one interesting aspect of news production process especially for critical discourse analysts."

Vagueness is an intrinsic distinguishing feature of a language and is unavoidable in communication because not any natural language is capable of making a sufficiently accurate statement of anything. It is believed that a statement is vague where there exist possible states of things concerning which it is intrinsically indefinite and that all language is more or less vague. Channell (2000) argued that types of vague language include vague additives, vague words, and vague implicature. By the linguistic features of news, vague language can be categorized into three types, namely, hedges, vague words, and vague implicature. Hedges are the core of the vague language. Hedges are defined as a word or phrase "whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy.

There exist certain kinds of terminologies speakers use to spot that they may be at risk of not fully obeying the



principles. Yule (2000, p. 38) called these kinds of expressions as “hedges”. For example: “*I am not sure if this is right...*” or “*As far as I know...*” to respect the maxim of quality and many of us may use this cliché expression “*So, to cut a long story short,...*” to respect the quality maxim in the communication process. Many of such phrases and sentences can be seen in news stories as well:

To sum up,

There are no more details about this news ... (Quantity maxim)

The official sources announced that ...

No one takes the responsibility of this report ...

It is heard that ... (Quality maxim)

On this subject, we interview ... (Relation maxim)

To clarify the news I talk to ... (Manner maxim)

The chief determination of this investigation was to scrutinize the cases of adoption and violation of Grice’s maxims in a corpus consisting of 120 news reports (taken from the last series of newspaper *Tehran Times*) to determine which type of maxims are adopted most and which was violated and which of them was adopted least.

As mentioned before, the discourse of the English news in Iranian context has not been investigated as it deserves. In this regard, the present study can be noteworthy in that it is among the first attempts aiming at paving the ways for analysis of the English news in Iranian context in light of Grice’s CPs. Another point which adds to the importance of this research is that it is done in English news which is not the official language of Iran but attracted the attention of many people especially the youth and students.

2. Literature Review

There are some studies dealing with CP in different written or spoken communication which sought to explore the extent to which writers (speakers) adopted or violated the CP. A few are presented here as examples to which the researcher stuck (Dale & Ryde, 1996; Halaman, 2010; Hamidi, 2009; Lee, 2010; Lumsden, 2008; Warner, 2001; Wharton, 2002; Zor, 2006), some research studies were found to do a comparative study on application of Grice maxims in different news types (Keshvardoost, 2014).

In another study, Pratiwi (2008) explored the non-observance of Grice’s CPs

in the movie entitled ‘*Before Sunset.*’ Findings indicated that there were four maxims disobeyed in scene one and two. Their dishonest response caused the implicit connotations that the speakers used mostly. When the speaker disobeyed CPs, the listeners still got the communication behind the utterances, so that mostly conversation still worked well. Zhu (2009) investigated CPs in oral English teaching and concluded that CPs could neatly illustrate what is literary meaning and its implication in a communication. Applying CPs in spoken English teaching can be conducive to developing student’s communicative competence which is viewed as the eventual objective of oral English teaching.

Pavličková (2011) tried to offer an insight of the way in which language operates in the legal setting. He analyzed the language of the law which is based on the study of acts and bills (legislative texts), and contracts, agreements, last wills and testaments, affidavits and other deeds (legal documents). In the article, he focused on pragmatics of the language of the law, particularly on the problems of transmission, status and quality of messages in the legal setting, and the nature of the language of law, the relationships which exist between law and language, as well as examined legal communication in light of Grice’s CP and looked for causes that violate these CPs.

Pan (2012a) aimed at probing into the linguistic basis involved in the process of language humor from the perspective of Grice’s CP and intended to reveal the relation between creation of humor and violation of cooperative principle, and then give critical comments on Grice’s cooperative principle, which mainly focuses on limitations Grice’s cooperative principle. Verbal humor as a genre of linguistics interaction often emerges in daily conversation. Pan (2012b) aimed to analyze certain samples selected from some English newspapers using Grice’s CP to determine that vague language can effectively stand out the accurateness of the English newspapers. Subsequently, findings revealed that vague language helps and reinforces the imaginative properties of news items which cannot be directly expressed by the precise number or exhaustive information in English newspapers.

Keshvardoost (2014) in a descriptive study aimed to compare the adoption and violation of Grice’s CPs in sport and political news in American media and

identify which of the four principles were violated most and which least. In this regard, she selected 100 news stories randomly from American Newspapers and News Agencies and the adoption, and violation of these maxims was studied in those stories. The findings revealed that Grice's CPs were more adopted in political news compared to sports news and among these maxims, the principle of manner was most violated in both sports and political news. According to the results, the principle of quality was most adopted in sports news, and the principle of relation was most adopted in political news.

Sobhani and Saghebi (2014) aimed at examining new ways of comprehension of the speakers' non-cooperative attitudes and violation of CPs in real Iranian psychological consulting session. The database consisted of recorded conversations between a male psychotherapist and his patients during therapy sessions. After analyzing their language using conversational implicature and the occurrences of the violation of CPs, they found that the acknowledgment of conversational implicature is indispensable for comprehension of speakers' non-cooperative attitudes and their violation of one or more CPs. Furthermore, they concluded that the message people intend to deliver is not wholly contained within the words they use, but it also hinged upon the way in which hearers interpret the message considering context and implicated meaning. Finally, findings showed instances when the purpose was to miscommunicate within this sophisticated social context intentionally.

Tajabadi, Dowlatabadi, and Mehri (2014) in a study entitled 'Grice's cooperative maxims in oral arguments: The case of dispute settlement councils in Iran' concentrated on the application of Grice's CPs in oral arguments with the intention of figuring out what cooperative maxims are more frequently observed and what is more frequently violated by Persian speakers engaged in oral disputes in Iranian Dispute Settlement Council. To this end, they recorded, transcribed, and analyzed three council meetings in Isfahan branch. Their findings showed that quantity and relation were the two maxims more frequently violated during the disputes, and the maxim of 'quality' and 'manner' were the ones most followed.

Recently, Li (2015), in a research on the observance and non-observance of CP in English advertisements, expanded its

appropriate scope by connecting it with various English advertisements. Based on the observance and non-observance of CP, the author scrutinized a large number of English advertisements and concluded that it is a foremost characteristic of advertising language to produce implicatures by intentionally not obeying the maxims of CP. Li believed that advertising, as the essential part of the social language, has directly affected people's daily lives and work through many ways, and uses all kinds of techniques to entice the consumers' attention.

Thakur (2017, p. 1) "strongly believes in Black's (2006) remark that Grician Maxims of conversational cooperation have a considerable degree of relevance for the processing of literary discourse on the innermost level of character-to-character interactions." Hence, he aimed to prove the way in which analytical dimension of literary studies can be expanded by involving Grice's (1975) pragmatic stylistic theory of CPs and discovers the way in which the fictional discourses could be better comprehended by reconstructing inferential chains of interpretation along with numerous issues of inferences in the dialogic discourses of the characters from Vikram Seth's magnum opus *A Suitable Boy*. He believed that CP contributes to contextualization of the text, provides interpretative possibilities that elucidate the way in which people draw inferences from conversation, and hints to interpretations of how direct and indirect discourses are worked in literary works of fiction. He (2017, p. 1) found that the real value and richness of CPs lie not in obeying them but in breaching them and that the "major motivation for violating the requirements of these maxims are related to characters' socio-cultural concerns such as politeness, tact, social power, and taboos and also to the inter-personal factors like various cross-purposes, attitudes, personal tensions, conflicts, etc."

Fang and Xin (2017) argued that in all the language communication activities, there is a tactic understanding between speakers and hearers to attain a definite objective; and both sides should put up with the principle. They studied the CPs in *Nirvana in Fire* which was released in 2015. It revolves around a young man Lin Shu who is devoted to revenging for his father and Chi Yan Army. They mainly used the theory of CPs and implicature to analyze the



dialogue in Nirvana in Fire. After analyzing the selected examples, the character, the plot, and the theme could be better understood. Due to the limitation of the material and the competence of the author, the selected examples were mainly classical examples, and they analyzed maxims of violating CPs to help readers better understand the characteristics of the characters and the development of the plot.

Zebua, Rukmini, and Saleh (2017) in a pragmatic study aimed at investigating the violation and flouting of CPs used by male and female participants in the Ellen DegeneresTalkshow. They differentiated between violation and flouting of maxims. They argued that violation occurs when the maxims are deliberately manipulated in such a way that the speaker misleads the interlocutor, in contrast the flouting occurs when individuals intentionally do not apply the maxims to persuade their listeners to derive the hidden meaning behind what is said. To collect data, they used the descriptive qualitatives to the utterances of 16 guest stars which is divided into 8 males and 8 females. The data for this research is taken from six episodes in the newest edition in 2016. Results revealed that male participants mostly did the flouting than violation. From the overall of violation and flouting, quantity maxim is dominantly flouted by male participants. Male participants mostly used exaggerated statement to convey their opinion which is too strong and appears worse than what it really is. They gave more explanations in order to satisfy the audience and to confirm the real information toward the negative thinking of audience at the previous time while the female participants dominantly violate the maxim of relevance. And finally, female participants tended to sidestep talking about something by changing the topic of conversation and not giving well responses to the partner.

In a recently published research, Igwedibia (2018) sought to determine the degree to which CPs could be applied to the reading of the selected poems of Lorde. He also aimed to discover the extent to which Lorde's selected poems obey or disobey these maxims. Findings showed that Audre Lorde in some of her poems violated the maxims as well as adhered to them both in the same breath.

Although there are a number of studies considering the violation of maxims and CPs in different genres and from various

perspectives especially in recent years, desired attention was not paid to the news reports published in Iranian newspapers published in the English language taking into account the vast number of language learners and potential English newspaper readers. Hence, this study endeavored to answer the following research questions:

What type of news among all news adopted the Grice maxims more and which of Grice's CPs are violated most and which of them are violated least in corpus consisting of 120 news columns released in Tehran Times? And which of the four Gricean maxims was violated most and which was violated least in news reports publish in Tehran Times during one year?

3. Methodology

The corpus was selected from the latest daily news published in 2017. To have a homogenous corpus, 10 news columns from newspapers published in each month were selected. To have a reliable data, the corpus was analyzed by two independent raters. In the selection of news columns, care was taken to incorporate only news columns with a length of 150 to 500 words. Additionally, in the selection of news columns, researchers tried to have an almost a homogenous number of columns in the categories of social, sports, economic, political, and cultural news. Corpus analysis did this descriptive-analytic research study, the results were obtained using this formula:

$$Pi=(Fi/Ni).100$$

Where **Pi** is relative frequency, **Fi** is absolute frequency, and **Ni** is the total frequency of data. The data was selected randomly from Tehran Times Newspaper, and after that, the adoption and violation of Grice CPs were tested in this corpus. This study was based on Grice's CPs which described the way in which people interact with each other (Grice, 1975, 1989, 2001).

The detailed four underlying maxims are as follows:

Quantity: a contribution should be as informative as is required for the conversation proceed. It should be neither too little, nor too much.

1) Make your contribution as informative as is required.

2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: speakers should be truthful. They should not say what they think is false or make statements for which they have no evidence.

1) Do not say what you believe to be false.

2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: speakers' contributions should relate clearly to the purpose of the exchange.

1) That is to say; participants should speak out something to be relevant to the topic.

Manner: speakers' contributions should be perspicuous.

1) Avoid obscurity of expression.

2) Avoid ambiguity.

3) Be brief.

4) Be orderly.

(Grice, 1975, p. 47)

4. Data Analysis and Results

In this section, the data based on the corpus extracted from the news columns which were checked and counted one by one are presented. Due to a large amount of data and lack of space in this section, only a few examples are presented here (one sample from each type of news). Some samples of the violation of Grice's CPs in the newspaper Tehran Times in 2017 which are included as data collection corpus among all reports published in that year are presented in Appendix A.

Considering this report and taking into account the belief of non-state statisticians about the rate of inflation in Iran, it can be concluded that the report violated the maxim of quality in providing readers with correct information on the inflation rate. Since some highly qualified non-state statisticians hold that the inflation can be calculated through different formulas, and the reporter just stuck the statement by one official without regarding the ambiguity of such an inflation rate. It is believed that in case of inflation rate officials almost always try to show a small picture of the whole reality by taking into consideration only part of what is necessary to consider.

Table 1: Violation of Grice Maxims in Sports News

Cooperative Principle	Percentage of Violation
Relation	10.23
Quantity	15.43
Quality	12.82
Manner	11.36

As can be understood from Table 1, the maxim of quantity was violated most in sports news, and relation maxim was violated least.

Table 2: Violation of Grice Maxims in Political News

Cooperative Principle	Percentage of Violation
Relation	11.92
Quantity	15.12

Quality	25.34
Manner	21.34

Based on Table 2, it can be understood that quality maxim was violated most and the maxim of relation was violated least among all.

Table 3: Violation of Grice Maxims in Economic News

Cooperative Principle	Percentage of Violation
Relation	12.11
Quantity	15.39
Quality	34.21
Manner	33.30

According to Table 3, it is easily understandable that the maxim of manner was mostly violated and the maxim of relation was violated least.

Table 4: Violation of Grice Maxims in Social News

Cooperative Principle	Percentage of Violation
Relation	11.53
Quantity	9.39
Quality	35.91
Manner	34.67

As data in Table 4 shows, the maxim of quality and manner were violated highly, and the two maxims (relation and quantity) were violated less.

Table 5: Violation of Grice Maxims in Cultural News

Cooperative Principle	Percentage of Violation
Relation	9.28
Quantity	20.12
Quality	35.37
Manner	12.90

As data in Table 5 shows, the maxim of quality was highly violated, and the maxim of relation was violated least.

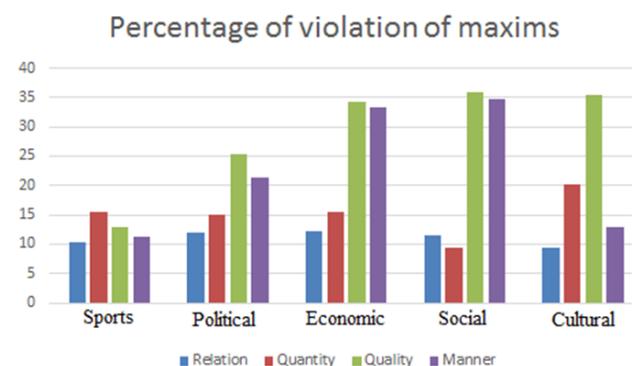


Figure 1: Percentage of violation of maxims in news columns

Results revealed that maxim of quality was violated most, and its highest amount among five categories of news was related to social news, that maxim of relation was violated least, and the lowest amount among



five categories of news was related to cultural news, that the second highest violated maxim was the maxim of quality, and that in total maxims in economic and social news were highly violated compared to the other three categories of news. Based on Figure 1, it can be concluded that the maxims of manner and quality were violated more than the other two, and maxims of relation and quantity were violated less (except for the maxim of quantity in sports news).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In a study conducted by Keshvardoust (2014), the results revealed that the Grice's CPs were more adopted in political news compared to sports news and among these maxims, the maxim of manner was most violated in both sports and political news. By the results, the maxim of quality was most adopted in sports news, and the principle of relation was most adopted in political news. The findings of this study are partly in line with her findings; however, there are some differences in the results of these two research studies.

Simin, Bahadori, and Bagherzade (2016) aimed to examine the use of maxim of quantity by Persian speakers from both genders in dissimilar contexts to close their conversations. Results displayed that Iranian male and female speakers employed the maxim of quantity differently in dissimilar contexts regarding the formality features. Findings also exposed that male speaker's used more maxim of quantity in informal contexts whereas female speakers used more maxim of quantity in formal contexts to end their conversations. Our findings in this study, irrespective of gender, are in line with their findings because maxims were violated in different percentages in the news in different topics (sports, cultural, social, economic, and political news).

Additionally, the findings of this study are in line with the findings of Darighoftar & Ghaffari, 2012 who concluded that the differentiating element in violating maxims is different homeopathic characters, not gender differences. The findings of this study are partly in line with the findings of Jia (2008), Yunxiu (2012), Hadi (2013), Sobhani and Saghebi (2014), and Tajabadi, Dowlatabadi, and Mehri (2014), to name a few.

Having analyzed the corpus about English news in Tehran Times, this study concentrated on the CPs and discovered the way in which reporters and the organization

published news based on the CPs and its maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner proposed by Grice (1975). From the examples of the news, it can be understood that the reporters do not always want to express their persuasive force by the literal meanings of language. Sometimes, they try to make use of words (e.g., implicit, vague, etc.) to attract reader's interest and inspiration by somehow fabricating, manipulating, showing one side while hiding other, interpreting the news for some party and against other, etc.

6. Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

In this experimental research, due to wanted or unwanted limitations imposed on the researchers, only 120 reports were included. Therefore, it is suggested that interested researchers include a larger number of reports and investigate the violation of maxims in them. Additionally, the researchers only included the reports from one newspaper. Hence, to obviate this limitation, other researchers can include data from different newspapers and compare and contrast the news released in them. Moreover, in this study, the corpus included the reports in one year. It seems that extending the time span would provide a more reliable data on the violation of maxims in newspaper reports. Last but not least, it should be noticed that this study focused on the written news released in a newspaper. To provide a better picture of the violation of Gricean maxims, further research should take into account both oral and written reports and compare and contrast the data if necessary.

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Appendix:

Here are some samples of the violation of Grice CPs in the newspaper Tehran Times in 2017 which are included as data collection corpus among all reports published in that year.

In another report, published in Tehran Times, January 31, 2017, in the politics section, the inflated salaries to be returned to the treasury was included as follows:

"Davud Mohammadi, the head of Article 90 Committee of the Majlis, said on Monday the inflated salaries have been returned to the treasury, Khorasan newspaper reported. Adel Azar, the Supreme Audit Court, also said on Tuesday that 233 billion rials (around 6 million dollars) have been returned to the treasury. He also said 87 suits have been filed against those receiving inflated salaries. The cases are under investigation by the court, he added"

In this report, the maxim of quantity was violated because the necessary information about the number of inflated salaries, the number of people who were under investigation, the organizations whose officials misused the budget for their advantage, the years during which it took place, the officials who are investigating the suspects, etc. was intentionally or unintentionally not included.

In another report, published in Tehran Times, February 28, 2017, in the culture section, the collection of posters to be put on display in an exhibition was included as follows:

"A collection of posters created by a group of students from the Tehran Fine Arts School for some films by legendary filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami will be put on display in an exhibition, which is scheduled to open on Friday at the school.

Posters for "Homework," "The Wind Will Carry Us," "Close Up," "Taste of Cherry," "Where Is the Friend's Home?" and several other films have been selected for the exhibition titled "Our Homework." The weeklong exhibit has been organized to pay tribute to Kiarostami."

In this report, the maxim of quantity was violated because the reporter did provide a vague picture of what happened in reality. The readers will not be able to understand the number, age, qualifications, degree, field, mastery, etc. of students and the place of exhibition.

In another report, which was published in Tehran Times, March 31, 2017, in the economics section, the inflation rate was included as follows:

"The Statistical Center of Iran announced that the inflation rate in rural areas stood at 9.3 percent during the past Iranian calendar year of 1395 (which ended on March 20), Mehr news agency reported. Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has put the country's inflation rate at nine percent in 1395, IRNA previously reported. Iran, accordingly, could manage to experience a single-digit inflation rate after 26 years in 1395. The inflation rate in the last month of the past Iranian calendar year, Esfand, (February 19- March 20), stood at 11.9 percent." ...