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## Non-Observance of Grice's Conversational Maxims in Persian Discourse of Humor and its Role in Text Comprehension: A Mixed-Methods Study

Morteza Amirshuibani<sup>1\*</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

\*m.amirshuibani@um.ac.ir

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### Abstract

Grice's conversational maxims have been one of the impactful pragmatic theories up to now. The goal of this study was to measure the comprehension ability of native Persian speakers in terms of Persian humor based on Grice's non-observed conversational maxims. Moreover, this study intended to find Grice's non-observed conversational maxims which bring difficulty for native Persian speakers to comprehend Persian discourse of humor. Using a mixed-methods design, 300 participants were selected from different age groups and genders. They were 129 females and 171 males whose age varied from 19 to 37. In the last phase of the study, 8 students were selected based upon their willingness and availability take part in the qualitative phase of this research and reflected upon and shared their experiences for the purposes of the research. Results showed that among four Grice's non-observed conversational maxims, manner (.64) has the highest mean score which is the easiest maxim and relevance (.46) has the lowest mean score which is the most difficult maxim. Results of the qualitative data also confirm the quantitative results. It was found that in Persian Humor Comprehension Test, manner was the easiest maxim and relevance was the most difficult maxim. The humor test in this study can be used for measuring those non-native speakers' ability in comprehending Persian humor. On the other hand, it can evaluate their ability linguistically in terms of Grice's conversational maxims.

### Keywords

Persian humor comprehension test, Grice conversational maxims, text comprehension, mixed-methods study, Persian discourse

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### Introduction

Studies on pragmatics may be traced back to Rome and Greece. The current use of pragmatics has been under the influence of the American pragmatism. When individuals comprehend how language is used in communication and real world, they can understand and interpret the language.

According to Mey (1993), pragmatics is "not the science of language in its own right, or the science of language as seen studied by the linguists, or the science of language as the expression of our desire to play schoolmarm, but the science of language as it is used by real, live people, for their own purposes and within their limitation and affordance" (p.5).

Levinson (1983) stated that *modern pragmatics* was proposed by Morris (1938) and it was related to the study of sign. Morris differentiates three separate components, as: "(a) Syntactic, that is the study of the formal relation of signs to one another, (b) Semantics, that is the study of the formal relation of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable, (c) Pragmatics, that is the study of the relation of signs to interprets" (Levinson 1983: 1).

Later, Leech (1983) introduced general pragmatics as a linguistics meaning study. Leech (1983) also argued "one cannot really understand the nature of the language itself unless he understands pragmatic, how language is used in communication" (p.21).

Mey (1993) also regards pragmatics as the study of human language uses' condition, which has a link with the society context. According to Levinson (1983), pragmatics puts emphasis on the study of how utterances have meaning based on the context or situation. The significance of pragmatic is completely clear. In interpreting or comprehending any utterance, linguists always need to rely on pragmatics. It is obvious that in interpreting the language, pragmatics should be taken into account.

Grice (1975) proposed the cooperative principle to clarify the way individuals can interpret and comprehend the conversation. The cooperative principle is divided into four maxims called conversational maxims. According to Grice, these maxims should be obeyed in order to achieve efficient communication. The quantity maxim shows the amount of contribution in a conversation. The quality

maxim indicates valid and truthful contribution in a conversation. Grice (cited in Thomas 1995: 63) suggests a conversation is expected to be original and show the truth of facts. The relevance maxim shows that the speakers' contribution should be relevant to the conversation. Grice (cited in Thomas 1995: 63) believes that speakers should "be relevant" and talk about the things which are related to the conversation topic. Finally, the manner maxim indicates that speakers should present the meaning orderly, precisely, in a clear way, and avoid ambiguity.

According to Thomas (1995) people might break a maxim since they are unable to speak in a clear way or since they intentionally tell a lie. The non-observance maxim types can be classified into five as follows:

### Flouting a Maxim

Flouting a maxim is when a speaker not with the purpose of misleading or deceiving breaks a maxim. The speaker may arouse the addressee to search for a meaning different from the represented meaning. This extra meaning is called "conversational implicature" and the process through which it is made is called 'flouting a maxim' (Thomas, 1995).

For example:

*"Rachel: Wow! How are you?!"*

*Ross: Good-good, I'm-I'm married. (Shows her his ring)." (Thomas 1995: 65)*

In this conversation, at one pole, it can be seen that Ross' answer flouts the quantity maxim. He gave some unnecessary extra information to Rachel's question, which was irrelevant to the question. At the other, it seems he also flouts the relevance maxim.

### Violating a Maxim

According to Grice (1975), violation occurs when a speaker intentionally breaks or forgoes to observe a maxim in a conversation to make the addressee misunderstood. If a maxim is violated, the speaker is liable to misguide. For example, if a person is not a doctor, but he says that he is a doctor, he violates the maxim of quality – in other words he is lying.

## Literature Review

Because there have been no studies in the area of developing a comprehension test which attempts to measure humor understanding by Persian speakers, some recent research on

### Infringing a Maxim

Infringing a maxim occurs when a speaker breaks a maxim with no purpose of creating an implicature and with no purpose of misguiding. Put it another way, the speaker's lack of ability to give his or intention causes violating a maxim (Thomas, 1995). For instance, he does not want no money (double negative).

### Opting out a Maxim

Opting out a maxim occurs when a speaker is reluctant to cooperate in such a way that the maxim necessitates. Therefore, the speaker intentionally opts out a maxim to obey the rules (Thomas 1995: 74). As an example, *the minister is asked a question about the speech he gave in the parliament:*

*'Well, to be honest, I can't tell you this matter as it was told me in confidence'.*

The minister, in this example, opts out the quantity maxim to keep confidentiality. He informs vividly that the maxim cannot be observed.

### Suspending a Maxim

Suspending a maxim occurs when a speaker hides the truth due to the cultural code (Thomas 1995). This kind of non-observance scarcely happens. As an example, in India: Saying a late person's name may draw evil spirits out and cause bad luck.

This study at one pole, analyzed Persian humor linguistically in terms of Grice's conversational maxims; at the other, it measures native Persian speakers' humor comprehension.

To reach these goals, the researchers formulated the following research questions:

Q1. Do any of Grice's non-observed conversational maxims bring about difficulty for native Persian speakers in comprehending Persian discourse of humor?

Q2: What is the perception of native Persian speakers about Grice's non-observed conversational maxims in discourse of humor?

humor and Grice' conversational maxims are presented. Chadafi (2014) examined the flouts of Grice's maxims in "1001 Jokes". Chadafi's investigation (1) described kinds of Grice's conversational maxims floated in "1001 Jokes", (2) described the implicature detected in "1001

Jokes”, and (3) described the maxim floats leading to funny jokes in “1001 Jokes”. The writer employed a descriptive qualitative approach to each of the findings. In data collection, the researcher used documentation, and in data analysis, the researcher referred to Grice’s cooperative principles.

By analyzing 30 data, Chadafi reported that 70% of the data float quality maxim, 13.33% float manner maxim, 10% of the data float quantity maxim, 3.33% float relevance maxim, and 3.33% float all maxims. According to Chadafi, scalar implicature showed opposite meanings between utterances, generalized implicature illustrated it is not required for utterances utilized in "1001 jokes" to have a specific context to show humorous meaning, specified implicature showed utterances must have a specific context in order to have humorous meaning, and the utterances having a degree of meaning are described by scalar implicature. Finally, the writer concluded that

### Significance of the Study

Humor is a universal concept which indeed exists in people's everyday life and it could not get apart from life; therefore, it seems significant in linguistic studies. To the authors' knowledge, there is a dearth of research on the comprehension of Persian humor on the basis of Grice's conversational maxims. This study aimed to integrate applied linguistics and pure linguistics. At the one hand, it linguistically analyzed humor in terms of Grice's conversational maxims; at the other hand, it measured native Persian speakers' humor comprehension. Knowledge of vocabulary and grammar is sometimes not adequate for native speakers to comprehend humor in their mother tongue. Therefore, a pragmatic view can be highlighted here. Also, the mixed-methods approach of this study can make it significant.

incongruity of the word and relief are two important aspects that make the floats cause funny jokes. The researcher also discovered the degree of fun increases by the float of all maxims.

Qadir and Juma (2018) analyzed the characters' humorous conversations in "Shaw's Major Barbara" in terms of Grice's conversational maxims. The results illustrated that maxim of quantity was the frequent maxim non-observed to create humor.

Amianna and Putranti (2017) analyzed humorous situations in a comedy entitled "How I Met Your Mother”, based on flouting and violating the conversational maxims. According to the results, violations and flouts tended to create humor in this comedy. The researchers found 14 violations of quantity maxim, 1 violation of quality maxim, 2 violations of relevance maxim, and 2 violations of manner maxim. The authors did not mention the number of flouts in this comedy.

### Methodology

#### Participants

The participants were 300 native Persian speakers from different age groups and genders. They were 129 females and 171 males whose age varied from 19 to 22 ( $M=25.67$ ,  $SD=7.11$ ). Eight native Persian speakers were chosen for the qualitative phase.

#### Instruments

This study utilized a Persian Humor Comprehension Test (PHCT) (Amirsheibani et al. 2000). Reliability of this test was calculated with Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20) analyses and turned to be .93.

Since the research examined the types of non-observance of Grice’s maxims and described the variations of maxims which were not observed in Persian humor discourse, the jokes

from popular humor sources were selected. Therefore, the Persian source of the data was the book *MollaNasraddin in Tehran* by KazemLahiji (2009) and ZarooeeNasrabad (1997; 2006). It seems that in humor and jokes the speaker fails to observe a maxim not with the intention of misleading or deceiving the addressee. In fact, the speaker makes the hearer look for a meaning which is different from the expressed meaning. In other words, in humor the maxims are often flouted and the humor normally relies on maxim flouts (Dynel 2008). On the other hand, According to Freud (1960), a famous philosopher and psychologist who pioneered the study on humor, jokes can be classified into two main types: tendentious and non-tendentious ones. The former has a character of hostility concerning derogatory, ridicule and aggression whereas the latter, which is void of hostility, is more playful, not aggressive or “innocent” in his term. As a result, at one pole, the selected humorous texts are the samples of the flout of the Grice maxims; at the other, the humorous texts were non-tendentious, playful on words and Persian structure without targeting any particular social group of people.

**Procedure**

First, the researcher obtained the consent forms from the participants and their instructors hence expressing their agreement to participate in the present study by signing the consent forms. Then, using text analysis, the selected Persian items were analyzed and non-observance of Grice’s maxims was determined by two experts

in the pragmatic field. The tests were gathered through face-to-face communication and email. The researcher explained any ambiguous item for the participants. Next, the researcher analyzed which non-observance maxims were more difficult to comprehend by Persian speakers.

Finally, 8 EFL learners were chosen for the qualitative phase. The number of participants in the qualitative phase was limited in order to generate thick descriptions and to allow for in-depth analysis of the individual participants’ data. The students were selected based upon their willingness and availability to participate in the qualitative phase of the study and reflected upon and shared their experiences for the purposes of the research. The participants were asked to think aloud while doing the test.

**Data Analysis**

**Quantitative Phase**

Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the frequency and percentage of the overall population in Grice’s non-observed conversational maxims. In this phase of the study 300 students participated.

To find the most difficult maxim from the viewpoint of Persian speakers, the descriptive statistics of the four maxims in Persian Humor Comprehension Test (PHCT) were analyzed. Table 1 shows the ranking of the sub-constructs of Persian Humor Comprehension Test from the most difficult to the easiest according to the participants’ perceptions.

**Table 1.** Ranking of the Sub-Constructs of Persian Humor Comprehension Test

Sub-Constructs	Number of participant	Mean
Relevance	300	.46
Quality	300	.53
Quantity	300	.60
Manner	300	.64

Results showed that among four non-observed conversational maxims, Manner (.64) which is the easiest maxim has the highest mean score and relevance (.46) has the lowest mean score which is the most difficult maxim.

The results of the descriptive analysis for different non-observed conversational maxims are presented in this section. Maxim of Quantity was measured through seven questions (Q) in the test. The responses are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.**Frequencies (F) and Percentages of the items of Quantity in PHCT

	True		False	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Q6</b>	241	80.33	59	19.66
<b>Q14</b>	141	47	159	53
<b>Q18</b>	211	70.33	89	29.66
<b>Q19</b>	203	67.66	97	33.33
<b>Q22</b>	268	89.33	32	10.66
<b>Q24</b>	185	61.66	115	38.33
<b>Q28</b>	194	64.66	106	35.33

As table 2 indicated, most of the participants selected wrong items for question 14. Therefore, Question 14 (f=159, p=53%) can be regarded as the most difficult item. Moreover, the majority of the participants selected correct items for Question 22 (f=268, p=89.33%).

Therefore, it can be regarded as the easiest question in quantity maxim.

Maxim of Manner was measured through seven questions in the test. The responses are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.**Frequencies and Percentages of the items of Manner in PHCT

	True		False	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Q1</b>	253	84.33	47	15.66
<b>Q5</b>	266	88.66	34	11.33
<b>Q9</b>	132	44	168	56
<b>Q10</b>	215	71.66	85	28.33
<b>Q11</b>	259	86.33	41	13.66
<b>Q12</b>	199	66.33	101	33.66
<b>Q15</b>	187	62.33	113	37.66

As table 3 indicated, most of the participants selected wrong items for question 9. Therefore, Question 9 (f=168, p=56%) is the most difficult item. Moreover, the majority of the participants selected the correct item for Question 5 (f=266,

p=88.66%). Therefore, it is the easiest question in manner maxim.

Maxim of Quality was measured through seven questions in the test. The responses are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Frequencies and Percentages of the items of Quality in PHCT

	True		False	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Q3</b>	155	51.66	145	48.33
<b>Q7</b>	162	54	138	46
<b>Q17</b>	167	55.66	133	44.33
<b>Q20</b>	140	46.66	160	53.33
<b>Q21</b>	159	53	141	47
<b>Q23</b>	211	70.33	89	29.66
<b>Q27</b>	157	52.33	143	47.66

As Table 4 indicated, most of the participants selected wrong items for question 20. Therefore, Question 20 (f=160, p=53.33%) is the most difficult item. Moreover, the majority of the participants selected correct item for

Question 23 (f=211, p=70.33%). Therefore, it is the easiest question in quality maxim. Maxim of Relevance was measured through six questions in the test. The responses are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Frequencies and Percentages of the items of Relevance in PHCT

	True		False	
	F	%	F	%
<b>Q2</b>	125	41.66	175	58.33
<b>Q4</b>	142	47.33	158	52.66
<b>Q8</b>	171	57	129	43
<b>Q13</b>	135	45	165	55
<b>Q16</b>	149	49.66	151	50.33
<b>Q26</b>	154	51.33	146	48.66

As Table 5 indicated, most of the participants selected wrong items for question 2. Therefore, Question 2 (f=175, p=58.33%) is the most difficult item. Moreover, the majority of the

participants selected correct item for Question 8 (f=171, p=57). Therefore, it is the easiest question in relevance maxim.

**Qualitative Phase**

To collect qualitative data, explanatory design was utilized. The data collection procedures in this design involve first collecting quantitative data, analyzing the data, and using the results to inform the follow-up qualitative data collection. Thus, sampling occurs at two points in this design: in the quantitative phase and in the qualitative phase. In this design, the quantitative and qualitative data collections are related to

each other and not independent. A focus is placed on the initial quantitative data collection with a smaller focus on the qualitative phase (Creswell & Clark 2011).

In order to answer the second research question, think-aloud method was used. In this method, participants are asked to speak aloud what is in their mind as they complete a task. Previous studies have claimed this method has a sound theoretical linchpin and provides the researcher with valid data about participants thinking (Ericsson & Simon 1993). In this part, students'

think aloud responses are presented for eight items of Persian test:

(1)

گفتگوی بچه و لک لک در یک روز بارانی:  
- لک لک ناز قندی، / یه چیز ی بگم نخندی: / تو این  
هوای تاریک / دالون تنگ و باریک / وقتی که می پریدی / تو  
زهره رو ندیدی؟

- عجب بلایی بچه، / از کجا می آیی بچه / نمیبینی  
خوابه جوجه م، / حالش خرابه جوجه م / از بس که خورده  
غوره، / تب داره مثل کوره / تو این بارون شرشر، / هوا سیا  
زمین تر / تو ابر پاره پاره، / زهره چی کار داره / زهره خاتم  
خوابیده، / هیچکی اونو ندیده

کدام گزینه صحیح است؟

- الف) پاسخ لک لک به بچه بیشتر از مقدار لازم است  
ب) پاسخ لک لک به بچه دوپهلو است  
ج) پاسخ لک لک به سؤال بچه بی ارتباط است  
د) لک لک پاسخ درستی نداده است

[English Translation]:

1)

A conversation between a stork and a child on a rainy day:

Child: Dear stork; I have a question but don't laugh at me: "When you were flying in this darkness, haven't you seen Zohreh?"

Stork: You're so naughty, child. Where do you come from, sweetie? You haven't seen that it's rainy here; we have big grey clouds and my chick is asleep and sick and has a fever, because he has eaten so many unripe grapes. On such a rainy day, Zohreh might be sleeping right now too. Nobody has seen her.

Choose the correct statement:

- A) Stork's reply to the child is more than needed;  
B) Stork's reply to the child is ambiguous;  
C) Stork's reply is not related to the child's question;  
D) The stork did not answer correctly.

Razieh age: 28  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] The stork's answer to the child is more informative than is required. Maybe the stork intentionally did it because of the rhythm of the poem. I would be confused if I were the child.

Ensieh age: 22  
answered incorrectly

[Reading the item aloud] I think the stork's answer is irrelevant to the child's question because the child asks the stork whether she has seen Zohreh or not. But the stork is nagging and her answer is irrelevant.

Mohammad age: 25  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] The stork finally answered the child. I think the answer is more informative than is required.

Danial age: 23  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] I think in order to say nobody has seen Zohreh, the stork answered in such a way that it is much more informative than is required. So option "a" is correct.

(2)

پرویز شاپور: سایه چهار نژاد یک رنگ است.  
این جمله مفهوم برابری انسانها را:  
الف) با ایهام نشان داده است  
ب) بطور مستقیم بیان کرده است  
ج) باکمگویی بیان کرده است  
د) باز یاده گویی بیان کرده است

[English Translation]:

2)

ParvizShapoor: The shadows of four races have the same colour.

This sentence expresses human equality with:

- A) ambivalence
- B) an explicit statement
- C) laconic style
- D) an overlong answer

**Razieh age: 28**  
answered incorrectly

*[Reading the item aloud] I think this item is a kind of ambivalence. Maybe it wants to show racism. In my idea, in order to say that the nature of all human beings is the same, the example of shadow is used by the writer. This example makes the reader think deeply.*

**Ensieh age: 22**  
answered correctly

*[Reading the item aloud] It seems some parts of the sentence are not omitted. Let me go over the options. It is not ambivalence. It's not direct. It's not excessive. I think option "c" is correct. He shows the equality of human beings by laconic style.*

**Mohammad age: 25**  
answered correctly

*[Reading the item aloud] He intends to say all human being are equal. He says it by laconic style.*

**Danial age: 23**  
answered incorrectly

*[Reading the item aloud] I think the sentence is ambiguous, a kind of pun. So choice "a" is correct.*

[English Translation]:

3)

**One day, a neighbour came and asked for Mulla's donkey. Mulla said "My donkey is not here". Then the donkey started to bray. The neighbour said "You told me that there is no donkey, so who is braying?!" Mulla got angry and said: "You are an incredulous and witless person; you don't believe me as an elder, but you believe a braying of a donkey.**

**Which statement is correct?**

- A) Mulla's justification is a lie;
- B) Mulla's reply has two meanings;
- C) Mulla's explanation was short;
- D) Mulla's reply is not related to the subject.

**Razieh age: 28**  
answered correctly

*[Reading the item aloud] Because of a word "justify" in option "a", I choose this option.*

**Ensieh age: 22**  
answered incorrectly

*[Reading the item aloud] Let me go over the options. I think his answer is irrelevant.*

**Mohammad age: 25**  
answered correctly

*[Reading the item aloud] The donkey is there because he hears the sound of the donkey. So he gave a justification which is a lie.*

**Danial age: 23**  
answered correctly

*[Reading the item aloud] He wanted to justify his lie. So he told a lie intentionally.*

(3)

روزی همسایه اش آمد الاغ وی را خواست. ملا گفت الان اینجا نیست. در این بین صدای عرعر خر بلند شد همسایه گفت شما می گوید خر در منزل نیست. پس این صدای عرعر چیست؟ ملا غضبناک شد و گفت: آدم دیر باور و کم ادراکی هستی. گفتار مرا با این ریش سفید باور نمیکنی اما عرعر خر را تصدیق میکنی!

کدام گزینه صحیح است؟

الف) ملا توجیهی کرده است که دروغ است

ب) پاسخ ملا دو معنی دارد

ج) ملا کم توضیح داده است

د) پاسخ ملا به موضوع مرتبط نیست

(4)

ملا به دهی رسید خیلی گرسنه بود. از خانه صدای فریاد و شیون شنید. آنجا رفت کسی مرده بود. ملا گفت اگر غذای مناسبی به من بدهید مرده شما را زنده خواهم کرد. کسان مرده با عجله ماحضری که در خانه داشتند برای او آورد. ملا غذای کاملی خورده همینکه سیر گشت گفت: مرا

به بالین مرده بپرید. چون آنجا رفت و مرده را دید پرسید این شخص چکاره بود؟ گفتند: جولا. پرسید چرا زودتر نگفتید؟ هر کس دیگر بود می توانستم زنده اش نمایم اما بیچاره مرده چون جولاست دیگر زنده نخواهد گشت. در مورد قسمتی که زیر آن خط کشیده شده، کدام گزینه صحیح است؟

الف) پاسخ طولانی و قابل فهم نبود  
ب) ملا به دروغ ادعا کرده که می تواند مرده را زنده کند  
ج) ملا جواب بی ربطی داده بود  
د) ملا مبهم پاسخ داده بود

[English Translation]:

4)

Mulla arrived in a village, being so hungry. Whimper and crying could be heard from one of the houses. Someone was dead in that house. He said that if they give him a good food; he will make the dead person come alive. They brought him food; so he ate enough and then he asked what did this person do in his life? They said that he was a weaver. Then Mulla said: "Why didn't you tell me about this before? I could make everyone else come alive, but I can't do anything for this dead person because of his job."

Which statement is true about the underlined part?

- A) The answer was long and incomprehensible;
- B) Mulla has lied about the power of making the dead person come alive;
- C) Mulla's answer was not related;
- D) Mulla's answer was equivocal.

Razieh age: 28  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] Mulla made a false claim about resuscitating the dead. It doesn't relate to the real world. So the second question is better than other choices.

Ensieh age: 22  
answered incorrectly

[Reading the item aloud] The answer is not irrelevant. It's not too long. I think it's a vague answer.

Mohammad age: 25  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] Well. Resuscitating the dead is a false claim. So choice "b" is better.

Danial age: 23  
answered incorrectly

[Reading the item aloud] I think his answer is vague.

5)

رسالت- بینندگان ویدئو در معرض خطر بیماری صرع قرار می گیرند.  
سروش- تحقیقات نشان داده اکثر کسانی که آنتن های ماهواره بر فراز آپارتمان خود نصب کرده اند، سرطان گرفته اند.

شاغلام- آهای مردم ... دست نزنید! جیزه ...!  
الف) شاغلام توضیح کافی نداده است.  
ب) شاغلام پیام را به درستی تفسیر کرده است.  
ج) پاسخ شاغلام دو معنی دارد.  
د) پاسخ شاغلام نامرتب است.

[English Translation]:

5)

Resalat News: "Video watchers have a higher risk of epilepsy."

Sorush News: "The researches have shown that most of the people who have satellite dishes on their apartment's roof have got cancer."

Shagholam: "Oops! People please don't touch these kinds of things."

- A) Shagholam did not explain enough;
- B) Shagholam has interpreted the message in a right way;
- C) Shagolam's reply has two meanings;
- D) Shagholam's reply is not related.

**Razieh age: 28**  
answered incorrectly

[Reading the item aloud] I think either choice "b" or "c" is correct. Maybe it has two meanings. I think it has two meanings. Or maybe it's an irony.

**Ensieh age: 22** answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] His answer is very irrelevant because they are talking about satellite dish dangers.

**Mohammad age: 25**  
answered incorrectly

[Reading the item aloud] I think Shagholam has interpreted the message correctly because he said it's bad for you.

**Danial age: 23**  
answered incorrectly

[Reading the item aloud] I think he answered vaguely. His answer has two meanings.

now?" They said: "Yes." He answered: "With the airplane!"

Which statement is true about the underlined word?

- A) The answer is short and incomprehensible;
- B) He lied;
- C) The answer is not related;
- D) The answer is vague.

**Razieh age: 28**  
answered incorrectly

[Reading the item aloud] Let's go over the options. It's not a lie. It's not irrelevant either. I think it's vague implying another point.

**Ensieh age: 22** answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] I think his answer is irrelevant because the question was about his dignity.

**Mohammad age: 25**  
answered incorrectly

[Reading the item aloud] I think the answer is brief and incomprehensible.

**Danial age: 23**  
answered incorrectly

[Reading the item aloud] I think the statement is ambiguous. Option "d" is correct.

(6)

گویند زمانی در سازمان ملل با سران کفار مباحثت و مجادلت می کرد [کمال خرازی] و اصحاب، شرح کراماتش با کفار می گفتند. پس کفار پرسیدند یا شیخ، ما را بر مرتبت تو رشک می آید واگو تا با چه بدین جا رسیدی؟ گفت: بدین جا که هستیم؟ گفتند: آری. گفت یا طیاره!  
در مورد قسمتی که زیر آن خط کشیده شده، کدام گزینه صحیح است؟

(الف) پاسخ کوتاه و غیرقابل فهم است

(ب) به دروغ چنین پاسخ داده است

(ج) پاسخ بی ربط است

(د) پاسخ مبهم است

[English Translation]:

(6)

Once upon a time Kamal Kharazi was in a meeting with some unbelievers in the United Nations. His companions were talking about his dignity. So those unbelievers asked him how he reached this level. He answered: "To where we are

(7)

ز گلیپایگان رفت شخصی به اردو  
قاضی شود، صدر (=صدر اعظم، وزیر) راضی نمی شد  
به رشوت خری داد و بستد قضا را  
خر نمی بود، قاضی نمی شد

در شعر بالا، مصراعی که زیر آن خط کشیده شده:

(الف) فقط دارای یک معنی است

(ب) همزمان دارای دو معنی متفاوت است

(ج) فقط به "شخص" اشاره دارد

(د) فقط به مصراع اول در بیت دوم اشاره دارد

[English Translation]:

(7)

1. Once upon a time a person decided to go to get a judge's position.

But the prime minister didn't let him do so.

He gave the minister a donkey as a bribe and got this position.

He would not become a judge if there was no donkey.

In the poem above, what's the meaning of the underlined hemistich?

- A) It has only one meaning;
- B) It has two different meanings at the same time;
- C) It only refers to "person";
- D) It refers to the first hemistich of the second verse.

**Razieh age: 28**  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] It has two meanings at the same time. The word "donkey" has two meanings here.

**Ensieh age: 22** answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] It has two meanings at the same time. The word "donkey" has two meanings.

**Mohammad age: 25**  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] It has two meanings at the same time.

**Danial age: 23**  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] I think it's ambiguous. It has two meanings at the same time.

مصادق: نواخته و محکوم شده، بین اگر می زد، چه می شد؟

کلماتی که زیر آنها خط کشیده شده:

الف) دارای یک معنی مشخص هستند

ب) دارای دو معنای متفاوت هستند

ج) اصلاً معنای مشخصی ندارند

د) با یکدیگر ارتباط معنایی ندارند

[English Translation]:

8)

A man accused of slapping his wife in the face.

Mamsadegh: "It was only playing a slap in the face; what would it be like if he hit her?"

The underlined words:

- A) have a specific meaning;
- B) has two different meanings
- C) don't have any meaning;
- D) don't have a semantic relation.

**Razieh age: 28**  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] They have a meaningful relationship. It has two meanings.

**Ensieh age: 22** answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] I think the words have two different meanings.

**Mohammad age: 25**  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] Well the word has two different meanings.

**Danial age: 23**  
answered correctly

[Reading the item aloud] It has two different meanings.

Table 6 shows the frequency and percentage of eight items of the Persian version of test. In this qualitative phase of the study four students participated.

(8) مردی به اتهام نواختن سیلی به صورت همسرش محکوم شد.

**Table 6.** Frequencies and Percentages of eight items of Persian version of test

	True		False	
	F	%	F	%
Q1	3	75	1	25
Q2	2	50	2	50
Q3	3	75	1	25
Q4	2	50	2	50
Q5	3	25	1	75
Q6	3	25	1	75
Q7	0	100	4	0
Q8	0	100	4	0

As table 6 indicated, most of the participants selected wrong items for questions 5 and 6. Therefore, Questions 5 and 6 (f=3, p=75%) are the most difficult questions. Moreover, all of the participants selected correct items for Questions 7 and 8 (f=4, p=100%). Therefore, they are the easiest questions.

Totally, it seemed that participants mostly chose their answer by rejecting the option. Although their language level was advanced, they still had poor Persian language skills.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study mainly intended to find Grice's non-observed conversational maxims which bring difficulty for native Persian speakers to comprehend Persian discourse of humor. Results of the descriptive statistics of the four maxims in Persian Humor Comprehension Test also indicated that among four non-observed conversational maxims, Manner (.64) has the highest mean score which makes it the easiest maxim and relevance (.46) has the lowest mean score which makes it the most difficult maxim. Finally, the results of the qualitative phase of the study was done through think-aloud method. Results of the qualitative data also confirms the quantitative results. It was found that in Persian Humor Comprehension Test, manner (.64) was the easiest maxim and relevance was the most difficult maxim.

Since there has been no research in the realm of developing a comprehension test which attempts to measure humor understanding of Persian speakers, comparing and contrasting the findings is out of question. However, it is recommended that the same test be administered to non-native speakers of Persian in order to estimate its psychometric properties since the items have been extracted from a variety of sources (See Persian References). In addition, generalizing the findings from the present study to other contexts should be done with caution given possible differences in terms of L1 background, socio-cultural norms, and educational backgrounds. Some research in other contexts and with various participants is required to collect empirical evidence to consolidate the results of the research.

### Implications of the study

This study presents some pedagogical implications for material developers in Persian settings. As it mentioned earlier, equipping learners with only grammar and vocabulary seems insufficient to comprehend humor even in one's mother tongue. Therefore, it seems that curriculum designers should include humor in the educational plan.

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