

## **Linguistic Analysis of Malawi Political Newspaper Cartoons on President Joyce Banda: Towards Grice's Conversational Implicature**

**Wellman Kondowe**

Lecturer in Linguistics

Department of Languages & Literature

Mzuzu University

Malawi.

**Flemmings Fishani Ngwira**

Lecturer in Language & Communication

Department of Basic Medical Sciences

College of Medicine

Malawi.

**Precious Madula**

Lecturer in Communication Studies

Department of Languages & Literature

Mzuzu University

Malawi.

### **Abstract**

*The study aims at analysing verbal and nonverbal features of Malawi newspaper political cartoons on how they employ linguistic features in their portrayal of political leaders. Twenty Point of Order cartoons that depict President Joyce Banda and her government were selected from The Nation newspaper from October 2012 to May 2013 and were analysed using Grice's Conversational Implicature as a theoretical framework. Results of the analysis indicate that Malawi cartoonists oftentimes do not adhere to the conversational maxims by flouting, suspending, and opting out. Flouting maxim of manner is found to be the most preferred way of exploiting the maxims through the use of hedges. The study concludes that the cartoonist deliberately provides vague information not to show confusion or lack of authoritative knowledge; but rather to indicate precision. The vagueness is strategic to avoid appearing judgmental and prompt the readers to generate their personal understanding of the president's actions by taking into account the daily social and political context.*

**Keywords:** Political Cartoon, Joyce Banda, Conversational Implicature, Maxims, Point of order

### **1. Introduction**

Cartoons have widely been defined as metaphorical codification of a satirical humorous genre through which an artist subtly informs, educates and entertains the readership (Adejuwon & Alimi, 2009; Olowolayemo, 2013; Nyoni et al., 2012). Cartoons are used to express opinions, construct valuable arguments and provide specific knowledge on contemporary social issues. They constitute a special media discourse that harnesses language in which linguistic and non-linguistic resources are manipulated efficiently and persuasively to create effect and impression in a dramatic way and evoke a particular response from the audience (Olowolayemo, 2013).

Over the recent years, there has been a substantial research output on political cartoons interested in domestic politics across academic disciplines. The increasing interest indicates that political cartoons have successfully constituted a distinct multimodal genre within media discourses (Sani et al., 2012a). Beyond humour, cartoons are crafted to 'bury' the true meanings, whereby cartoonists' true intended meanings and the premises that constitute their logical scaffolding are hidden through abstraction. Unpacking the verbal and nonverbal instantiations using linguistic approaches helps to recover the abstract information that might not be common on the surface (Wahyuningsih, 2008; Nyoni, Grand & Nyoni, 2012).

However, cartoon studies from linguistic perspectives remain scanty. Most of the available literature has focused its analysis on verbal and visual elements from the social perspective of humour. Worse still, there are no available studies that have been conducted on cartoons in Malawi. This study, therefore, is undertaken to describe how implicature analysis gives contribution to the readership in interpreting abstract connotation of Malawi political leaders. The study focuses on the cartoons under Joyce Banda who was the fourth president of Malawi, the first female president of the country, and the only leader in the country's history or possibly in the whole of Africa to have ruled only for two years.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. To what extent has the cartoonist failed to observe the conversational maxims in the cartoons of Joyce Banda and her government?
- ii. In what ways has the cartoonist failed to observe the maxims?
- iii. What could be the likely reasons for the non-observance of the maxims?

### **Joyce Banda and her Presidency (April 2012-May 2014)**

Joyce Banda was sworn in as the State President of the Republic of Malawi on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2012 after the sudden death of the late President Bingu wa Mutharika. Section 87(1) of the Republic of Malawi constitution paves way to the vice president to take over the presidency in times when the incumbent president becomes incapacitated. Joyce Banda (henceforth "JB"), who was the vice president then, automatically became the president to complete the remaining two years of Bingu wa Mutharika's term of office. Being the first Malawi female president and having ascended to the office at a time Malawians were pressed hard with economic crisis, people's expectations were high.

Her predecessor's second year in office was wracked by acute shortages of fuel, forex, medical equipment *etcetera*. This was due to his refusal to accept International Monetary Fund's (IMF) policies (Ntata, 2012). International relations worsened resulting into many development partners withdrawing their aid and grants. They expressed concern over Bingu's attacks on democracy and his increasingly erratic policies. This tremendously worsened the life of many Malawians. Hence, his sudden death was meant to mark the beginning of a new political landscape. As such, some of JB's major challenges were to restore diplomatic ties with the aid donors and the neighbouring countries. Therefore, as soon as she took over the office, she acted conversely to her predecessor. In May 2012, she devalued the local currency, following IMF's recommendation, by over 50% against the United States dollar as a step towards recovering the economy and to attract donor funding. She launched international trips to mend the broken ties. In order to reduce government spending, she decided to sell the country's only presidential jet and a fleet of 60 luxury cars.

However, during her second year of her presidency, the nation witnessed a massive financial scandal involving looting, theft and corruption, famously known as the "Cashgate" scandal, in government's coffers. The scandal involved a number of Civil Servants being found with huge amounts of money inconsistent with their monthly income and without any documentation on how they got the money. It was also suspected that JB was linked to the scandal and that her party was trying to raise funds for the May 20, 2014 General Election Campaign (*BBC News*, 2014). Furthermore, it was also discovered that the proceeds from the sale of the presidential jet were not accounted for. There was no paperwork to explain how the proceeds were banked or spent. These unscrupulous acts hugely damaged her reputation and eventually led to her loss on the nation's first ever tripartite elections held on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2014. Consequently, Arthur Peter Mutharika, a younger brother to the former president Bingu wa Mutharika, became the fifth president of Malawi. It is from this brief background that the study takes a keen interest to investigate how the media presented JB's government through the use of cartoons. Mainly, the study investigates how the cartoon *Point of Order* utilises verbal and visual elements to present JB's administration to the readers.

### **2. Theoretical Framework**

Grice's Conversational Implicature (CI) has been adopted as the theoretical backbone for the study. The theory has been the most favoured in recent linguistic studies on cartoons and humour-related discourses like comedies (Abiola, 2011; Khir, 2012; Olowolayemo, 2013). CI is generated as a result of non-observance of conversational maxims in Cooperative Principle (CP) (Thomas, 1995).

CP asserts that one should make contributions as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which one is engaged (Levinson, 2000). It is illustrated in four sub-principles called maxims. The four conversational maxims govern inferences in conversations. Grice suggests that cooperation in a conversation is based on speakers and hearers using the following guidelines to interpret the inferences necessary to make sense of the conversation:

1. Maxim of quantity: be informative
  - a) Make your contribution as informative as required.
  - b) Do not make your contribution more informative than required.
2. Maxim of quality: be truthful
  - a) Do not say what you believe to be false.
  - b) Do not say that for which you lack evidence.
3. Maxim of relation: be relevant.
4. Maxim of manner: be perspicuous.
  - a) Avoid obscurity of expression.
  - b) Avoid ambiguity.
  - c) Be brief
  - d) Be orderly.

Maxims are unstated assumptions people have during verbal interaction, and each interactant is expected to adhere to the four maxims. When one of the maxims has been exploited or not observed, an alternative meaning is generated (Thomas, 1995). This additional meaning is what Grice terms Implicature. Implicatures are assumptions over and above the meaning of the sentence used which the speaker knows and intends that the hearer will make in the face of an apparently open non-observance of the CP in order to interpret the speaker's sentence in accordance with the CP. The particular CI that an utterance generates on a particular context is a function of the hearer's estimate of the speaker's reflexive estimate of what the hearer assumes and will conclude. The theory was favoured for its ability to calculate an argument: To Grice, the calculation follows the following pattern:

B has said that *p*; there is no reason to suppose that B is not observing the maxim of CP; B could not be doing this unless B thought that *q*: B knows that the hearer can see the supposition that he thinks *q* is required; B has done nothing to stop the hearer thinking that *q*: B intends the hearer to think that *q* (Levinson, 2000; Grice, 1975).

It is, therefore, believed that such a logical calculation would apparently assist in implicature analysis of cartoon discourse.

There are five ways in which one can fail to observe a conversational maxim (Thomas, 1995). Firstly, a maxim can be *flouted* when a speaker fails to observe CP with deliberate intentions of generating an implicature. *Violation* of a maxim occurs when a speaker fails to observe a maxim with an intention to mislead. The maxim can also be *infringed* which is as a result of imperfect linguistic performance, with no intentions to deceive or generate implicature (Levinson, 2000). A maxim can also be *opted out* when a speaker indicates unwillingness to cooperate in the way the maxim requires. Finally, a maxim is *suspended* when the non-fulfilment of a maxim is expected by participants and, therefore, does not generate any implicature.

### 3. Literature Review

Nyoni et al. (2012) note that before the term 'cartoon' was introduced in its modern sense, satirical and humorous drawings of all kinds were referred to as caricatures. Today, the term 'caricature' is used mainly to refer to distorted portraiture that emphasizes the characteristic traits of an individual. The term 'cartoon' has also been applied to comics, television and film animation, newspapers drawings, continuity strips and graphic novels, humorous book, magazine illustrations and satirical puppetry (Nyoni, Grand, & Nyoni, 2012). Since cartoons came to be known, scholars across disciplines have developed an increasing interest on political cartoons. This growing research interest demonstrates that political cartoons have become a distinct and established genre within media discourse to provide political commentary aimed at reorienting the public.

Lamb (2004) considers political cartoons as critical artifacts used to lampoon political leaders and their contemptible policies. Cartoons' depictions are usually satirical; their militant effects are just like that of armoury used for launching attacks on the political leaders and the democratic process through pictorial depictions. Sani et al. (2012b) observe that political cartoons are used as a vehicle of setting social agenda in newspapers to reorient and shape the public opinion through recurrent depictions mirroring current socio-political issues at a given period. In another study, Benoit et al. (2001) explored and analysed 2000 political cartoons concerning Clinton-Lewinsky-Starr Affair which concentrated on the investigations, impeachment and trial of President Clinton. Their study satirically depicted Clinton reflecting the enormity of the scenario. Nyoni's et al. (2012) analysis of Zimbabwe "Wasu" cartoon note that although cartoons are perceived by the ordinary reader as primarily meant to tickle them into laughter, on a more serious level they are meant to comment on the on-goings in a particular society with the aim of creating a better and improved society.

Eko's (2007) investigation of how African newspapers dehumanised four African political leaders discovered that not only do graphic illustrations of political cartoons function as political satire, they are also used to promote candidates' reputation. Edwards and Ware (2005) focused on how political cartoons represent public opinions in campaign media. Han (2006) focused on political satire, where he examined the Japanese Cartoon Journalism and its pictorial statements on Korea. Conners (2005) explored political cartoons and the popular culture in the 2004 American presidential campaigns. He claims that political cartoons are used as tools for manipulating voters' opinion on the candidates captured in a single cartoon message during the campaign period. Thus, cartoons are used as elaborate campaign machinery in a period of elections. Basically, the success of a cartoon text depends on the interplay between verbal and visual elements.

In his study, Tsakona (2009) examined language and interaction in cartoons, using multimodal theory of humour as an analytical framework. He indicates that cartoon humour is a complex process that involves different mechanisms of language interplay between verbal and nonverbal devices such as exaggeration, contradiction and metaphor. Audiences need to pay close attention to both verbal and visual details contained in each cartoon to grasp its meaning. Sani et al. (2012a) investigated how Nigerian cartoonists construct satire by investigating the linguistic elements using Halliday's modality model. They discovered that interrogative clauses are frequently used, and simple sentences were mostly preferred by Nigerian cartoons.

Scanty literature on pragmatic analysis of political cartoons using CI reveals that there are different ways cartoonists employ in crafting cartoon discourses. Political cartoonists deliberately distort and exaggerate features of public figures in order to make fun of them (Olowolayemo, 2013; Wahyuningsiha, 2008; Abiola, 2011). They artistically combine verbal and non-verbal resources to question authority and draw attention to social ills. In order to achieve this, studies have shown that cartoons blatantly fail to observe the cooperative principle with an intention to generate implicature (Olowolayemo, 2013; Khir, 2012). In his analysis of 'Piled, Higher and Deeper' comic strips, Kirama (2002), discovered that maxim of manner is the most flouted one. Olowolayemo's (2013) study, however, reveals that political cartoonists do not always fail to observe the CP, to a certain extent; some cartoonists adhere to the maxims.

The literature, therefore, has revealed that political cartoonists use satire, humour, contrast and surprise, usually in order to attack political figures. However, despite a considerable research on political cartoons, very few research works have specifically focused on linguistic analysis especially from pragmatics point of view. Due to the limited pragmatic approach in analysing political cartoon, an attempt is made in this study to investigate how Malawi newspapers cartoons utilised verbal and visual acts to comment on JB and her administration.

#### **4. Methodological Procedure**

##### **4.1 The Data**

The study analyses *Point of Order* cartoon crafted by Ralph Mawera which appears weekly on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in the Malawi newspaper, *The Nation*. The newspaper has been chosen because of its wide readership. Newspapers from October 2012 to May 2013 have provided the data. The chosen period is very critical because it presents the immediate events that occurred soon after JB constitutionally took over the presidency from Bingu wa Mutharika. The period also witnessed immediate effects of the devaluation of the local currency and its accompanying aftermath. A total of twenty cartoons that depicted JB and her government were photocopied and analysed manually. However, in order to have an in-depth understanding, the discussion has drawn instances from eight samples and they have been appended at the end of the paper.

## 4.2 The Analysis

The analysis has been structured to address the research questions highlighted above. Four maxims of Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle; maxim of quality, quantity, manner, and relation have been applied to the cartoon samples to examine cases where the cartoonist failed to observe them and provide possible reasons the cartoonist made such choices. It is hoped that adopting CI as the framework for analysis is expected to provide a microscopic understanding of the linguistic nature of *Point of Order* cartoon under JB.

## 4.3 The Point of Order cartoon

Graphically handwritten, frequently accompanied by written texts and thought bubbles, *Point of Order* cartoons have provided rich data of high content. They are usually political satires blatantly aiming at critiquing government of the day. This cartoon comprises two parts: the presence of political prominent officers usually the State President, and two human-like caricatures representing the public. The two caricatures are usually indulged in a dialogue to assess the statements or actions of the president. The utterances made by these two caricatures are very instrumental in the analysis because they present questions and statements which become readers' food for thought.

In the collected data, JB is depicted as a giant woman usually dressed in traditional attire with a wide thick scarf dangling on her shoulders. She is oftentimes captured in public addresses and her utterances and actions are immediately assessed by the caricatures through questions or thought bubbles. The analysis specifically focuses on verbal and nonverbal acts of the two caricatures. CI has systematically been employed to utilize linguistic and non-linguistic elements provided in the captions to discover possible meanings readers might imply in the cartoon discourse.

## 5. Analysis and Discussion

All the cartoon data analysed in this paper are reactions to recurrent issues affecting the Malawi society, and they are believed to have already been reported in other media outlets. The cartoons carry a variety of social themes including donor reliant, economy, media protection rights, and general governance. The messages are meant to evoke emotions of anger, fear, desperation and hopelessness in the readers through visual and verbal discourse. The cartoonist tactically crafts his discourse to present same issues in their unique way.

Results of the study indicate that cartoonists, in many ways, fail to observe conversational maxims. Studies have indicated that cartoonists do that with intents of creating humour in the readers and/or to stretch them derive their own interpretations (Raskin & Attardo, 1991). In our study, it has been found out that the cartoonist flouts, opts out, and suspends almost all the four maxims with flouting being dominant. However, the analysis seeks to identify the affected maxims and the linguistic devices that have been employed and the possible reasons behind.

### 5.1 Flouting a Maxim

A speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim without intentions of deceiving or misleading but because he or she wishes to prompt the hearer to look for a different meaning or an addition to the one being expressed (Thomas 1995). As noted by Mey (1996), flouting is a case of verbal communication when people make a blatant show of breaking one of the maxims in order to lead the addressee to look for a covert implied meaning. Thomas (1995), notes that the maxim of quality is flouted when the speaker says something which is obviously not true. Speakers exploit the maxim of quantity by deliberately giving more or less information than required. They do that by either talking too much or too little in compliance with the goal of the on-going conversation. The maxim of manner is exploited when there is absence of clarity, brevity and transparency of communicative intentions in the interlocution. The maxim of relation, as the name suggests, tends to occur when the response is obviously irrelevant to the topic, abrupt change of topic, overt failure to address interlocutor's goal in asking a question.

Results of the analysed data reveal that conversational maxims are highly flouted in *Point of Order* cartoons. This is in tandem with a number of cartoon studies that have echoed a similar sentiment, for instance, Abiola (2011), Khir (2012) and Olowolayemo (2013). However, the analysis of this study reveals that most cartoon samples exploit the maxim of manner by obviously being vague mainly by using hedging devices. These are linguistics devices that writers employ to mitigate or get detached from their claims (Salager-Meyer, 1997; Nivales, 2010).

There are a number of instances that are notable from the data where maxim of manner is flouted. Firstly, in **Cartoon 1**, JB is depicted saying that she is the first Malawian president to have been invited to the White House.

On the other side, the cartoon displays a newspaper captioned *Lyndon Johnston hosts Kamuzu Banda at the White house in 1967*. The news headline is very instrumental as it provides a platform upon which readers can test her utterances. This triggers the question from the first caricature as he wonders whether the president is *joking*. The question flouts maxim of manner because it lacks transparency to inform readers that JB is making a false claim which contradicts with the displayed 1967 news headline. This question implies that JB, in her capacity as a president, should have known that Kamuzu Banda, the first president of the Republic of Malawi, was also invited at the White House, unless she has limited knowledge of Malawi political history. The response *No, she seems serious!* further flouts the same maxim of manner. The speaker is tactfully providing a vague response by using a hedge. The hedge is used in the cartoon to signal the readers not to deduce anything from his response. In a normal state of events, the caricature would simply have cooperated by responding either ‘Yes, she is serious’ or ‘No, she is not serious’ but imbedding the hedge *seems* makes the response non-directional.

Hedging is also used in **Cartoon 2** to flout maxim of manner. In the sample, JB is depicted taking a side by side walk with a male Scottish Prime Minister (PM) in Scotland. Paradoxically, while the PM carries his own umbrella, JB is in the company of her personal assistant who holds an umbrella over her. This raises a question *when will she start to hold the umbrella on her own?* The question presupposes that JB has never held an umbrella on her own before, which is contrary to what other high profiled politicians across the world do. The maxim of manner is flouted in the response *maybe after the Scotland trip*. The answer is not direct as it also resorts to the use of hedge *maybe*. The response would either read ‘she will change after the Scotland’, or ‘she will not change’, but using the hedge has left the question unresolved in the readers’ mind.

Further instances where the maxim of manner is flouted through hedging can be noted in **Cartoon 3**. In this sample, JB is captured holding a *Declaration of the Table Mountain* document in her hand, telling the media that she cannot sign it because British have not yet signed. This statement is confronted by the caricature, as he asks *I thought it was for Africa?* The use of the hedging device *I thought* makes the question flout maxim of manner by deliberately being vague and not transparent. The cartoonist patently shuns from informing the readers explicitly that JB is not being genuine because the document is for the protection of press freedom and rights in Africa and has nothing to do with Britain (WAN, 2007)<sup>1</sup>. The cartoonist has done so in order to avoid his personal intrusion and to appear judging the president. He does not want to mislead the readers but rather provide a podium upon which they can assess JB’s assertion by themselves.

In cartoon **sample 4**, two news reporters for print and electronic media bring newspapers, radio, and TV to JB. Upon seeing them, she closes both ears and faces away. This evokes a question from the first caricature *why is she resisting the media?* The response *I guess she is scared of dying a media-related death*, flouts maxim of manner. Maxim of manner is exploited by the hedge *I guess* which makes the answer vague because it is also not directing the readers to a specific reason JB closes her ears.

On the use of the hedges like *suggest, seems, appears, maybe*, and others, Nivales, (2010) and Kondowe (2014) note that such linguistic resources do not show confusion or lack of authoritative knowledge but rather indicate precision. When hedges are used in texts they present the true state of the writer/speaker’s understanding and may be used to negotiate an accurate representation of their state of knowledge. In cartoon **samples 1 and 2**, for instance, the cartoonist through the caricature wishes to reduce the strength of claims especially when stronger statements cannot be justified by evidence, which in the end will deter their credibility. In **sample 1**, it is not clear the extent of JB’s seriousness in making such a public statement that she is the first president to have been invited to the White House; hence the cartoon does not want to appear judgmental or attacking her. Similarly in **cartoon 2**, the cartoonist is not sure whether or not JB will change and start to carry her own umbrella. Therefore, opting for the hedges *seems* and *maybe* in the respective samples helps to tone down their response and appear polite. Such strategic vagueness is meant to prompt the readers to generate their personal understanding by taking into account the daily social and political context.

However, apart from the maxim of manner, **Cartoon 4** further flouts maxim of quality. The response *I guess she is scared of dying a media-related death* is counterfactual as it does not portray the reality. It is not true that JB is afraid of ‘media-related deaths’. There are no such deaths that are caused by one’s exposure to media content. JB should already be aware of the contents and she is avoiding the pain she might suffer once she attends to the news.

<sup>1</sup> WAN stands for *World Association for Newspapers*

The study also reveals that the maxim of relation is also flouted in the cartoons analysed. This supports the study of Olowoyalemo (2013) in which he found that Nigerian cartoonists oftentimes flout the maxim of relation in verbal exchanges in order to bring about some comic reasons.

In **sample 5**, a small boy labelled 'Malawi' is battling for life after being dangerously attacked by a beast (Economic crisis). In reaction to the boy's call for help from the boss, one caricature asks *is the boss in the position to help?* The other responds *everyone is fighting for their survival*. The maxim of relation is flouted in second caricature's response. It does not provide the relevant information as the question demands. The relevant response would be either 'the boss would help or not'. However, unlike Olowoyalemo's study which discovered that the cartoonist flouts relevance maxim for humour, in the data for this study, the cartoon takes an educative stance to show the readers the problems of over-reliance on donor aid. Usually when small nations are hit with economic crises, donors are not exempted from such crises; as such every nation needs to find their own solutions apart from merely depending on donors who are oftentimes affected as well.

### 5.2 Suspending a Maxim

Suspension is another way that has been noted to be used in the cartoonist's non-observance of the maxims. As noted by Thomas (1995) under certain circumstances as part of certain events there is no expectation on the part of any participant that one or several maxims should be observed and non-fulfilment does not generate any implicatures. He gives an instance of speedy communications via telegrams, e-mails, and notes. The maxim of quantity is suspended because such means are functional owing to their very brevity. Instances of suspension can be noted in **Cartoon 6** which depicts JB telling the public that donors told her to devalue the kwacha and they also told her to travel and build international relations. The statements evoke questions from the first caricature *Is she the head of state?* The question being asked is obvious unless there is more to the question than what is being asked which triggers the other caricature to suspend the maxim by responding *Search me!* which does not provide any substantial information.

### 5.3 Opting out of Maxim

The cartoonist, through the caricature, is noted to have opted out of the maxims. The speaker opts out of observing a maxim whenever he or she indicates unwillingness to cooperate in the way the maxim requires. This happens when the speaker exerts his or her right to remain silent or choose not to say anything that is likely to be detrimental or highly offensive. In **Cartoon 7**, JB and other two ruling party figures speak to the media on Economic Recovery Plan (ERP). In this sample, JB in 2012, tells the media that the economy would recover in 18 months' time. Later in 2013, in a separate interview with two party officials, one of them says, the economy would need at least 5 years, while the other says it would recover by the end of the year (2013). The cartoonist, through the first caricature, presents the public as they ask *which is which?* The other caricature does not respond thereby opting out of the maxim of quantity. He avoids the question asked by the other and it is shown that he has a similar question which is displayed through a thought bubble. By shunning from providing the answer, the cartoonist also shows his surprised state of mind brought about by JB's actions. He wants to show the readers that the media does not have all the answers, they would rather think and assess their president on their own without relying on the media.

JB in **Cartoon 8** is captured in a motionless state, with her head leaning on her palm, surrounded by starved children labelled, 'Unima', 'consumers', 'civil servants' and others, in dire need of basic essentials from her as a president. This could be the case because as scholars like Hinckley (1990) have noted, presidents stand for their countries and they have come to be viewed as a common father of their citizens, burdened with the care of their children. Interestingly, unlike in the cartoon samples already discussed, the two caricatures, in this cartoon, are not indulged in a dialogue. Both caricatures have opted out of the quantity maxim by avoiding commenting on the events. The silence might be communicating something about the state of the nation knowing that baby cries are results of hunger related effects. This has been juxtaposed with JB's leaning of a head on a palm, which symbolically denotes a desperate and hopeless nation. The cartoonist creates a crippled and helpless environment where the people are in pressing need of the basic essentials and the president is not even in a position to have readily available solution; a situation which has made everyone speechless.

The analysis, however observes that instances of infringement of maxims are not noticeable from the analysed data. This supports (Obibunmi, (2006) observations that infringement of maxim occurs as a result of linguistic incompetence, psychosocial and cognitive impairment or one's inability to speak clearly. Such instances are easy to find in spoken than in the written discourse.

## 6. Conclusion

The linguistic analysis of *Point of Order* cartoon in *The Nation* newspaper has revealed that Malawi cartoonists deliberately fail to adhere to the conversational maxims. Through analysis of both visual and verbal features of the cartoons, it has been observed that cartoons blatantly flout, opt out and suspend Grice's maxims. The data has revealed that flouting the maxim of manner is the dominant way chosen by the cartoonist mostly through the use of hedging devices. The cartoonist strategically presents vague information to the readership to detach themselves and reduce the strength of their claims especially when they cannot provide evidence to justify stronger statements, which might put their credibility at risk. Further, it is also noted that the Malawi cartoonist avoids personal intrusion and does not want to appear judging the public figure but, in a humorous way, provides a podium upon which readers can assess their president's assertion taking into account the political context of the nation.

Future linguistic studies on cartoons may focus on the use of language from functional point of view, how the cartoonists relate to the audience, using mood and modality as frameworks.

## References

- Abiola, F. J. (2011). A pragmatic analysis of selected cartoons from Nigerian dailies the Guardian, the Punch and the Nation. Bachelor's Thesis. University of Ilorin, Ilorin: Nigeria.
- Adejuwon, A. & Alimi, S. (2011). Cartoons as illustration: Political process in Nigeria. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 4(3): 57-76.
- BBC News, (2014, Jan 27). 'Cashgate' - Malawi's murky tale of shooting and corruption. Available on: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-2591265>
- Burns, E. (2007). *Infamous Scribblers: The Founding Fathers and the rowdy beginnings of American journalism*. Public Affairs. By Eric Burns. *Historian*, 69: 526-527.
- Conners, J. L. (2005). Visual Representations of the 2004 Presidential Campaign. *Behavioural Sciences*, 49(3): 479.
- Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (Section 87) as amended in 2010.
- Edwards, J. L., and Ware, L. (2005). Representing the Public in Campaign Media. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(3), 466-487.
- Eko, L. (2007). It's a Political Jungle Out There. *International Communication Gazette*, 69(3): 219.
- Giarelli, E., Tulman, L. (2003). Methodological issues in the use of published cartoons as data. *Quarterly Health Research*, 13(7): 945.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). *Logic and Conversation*. In Cole P. and Morgan Jerry.
- Han, J. S. (2006). Empire of Comic Visions: Japanese Cartoon Journalism and its Pictorial Statements on Korea, 1876–1910. *Japanese Studies*, 26(3), 283–302.
- Hinckley, B. (1990). *The Symbolic Presidency: How Presidents Portray Themselves*. New York: Routledge.
- Khair, A.N, (2012). A semantic and pragmatic approach to verb particle constructions used in cartoons and puns *Language Value*, 4 (1): 97-117.
- Kondowe, W. (2014). Hedging and Boosting as Interactional Metadiscourse in Literature Doctoral Dissertation Abstracts. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLALW)*, 5(3): 214-221.
- Lamb, C. (2004). Drawn to extremes: The use and abuse of editorial cartoons. *Nieman Reports*, Columbia University Press, 58(4): 44-46.
- Levinson, S. (2000). *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalised Conversational Implicature*. London: The MIT Press.
- McCombs, M.E., & Shaw, D.L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36 (2): 176-18.
- Nivales, M. L (2010). Hedging in College Research Papers: Implications for Language Instruction. In *Asian EFL Journal*. pp 35-45.



- Ntata, A. (2012). *Trappings of Power: Political Leadership in Africa*. UK: AuthorHouse.
- Nyoni, M., Grand, N., Nyoni, T. (2012). Beyond The Humour: a Newspaper Cartoon as Socio-Political-Economic Commentary: The Case of 'Wasu' of the Manica Post in Zimbabwe. *Greener Journal of Social Science*, 2(6): 179-190.
- Odeunmi, A. (2006). *Meaning in English: An Introduction*. Ogbomosho: Critical Sphere.
- Olowolayemo, F. (2013). Verisimilitude in Editorial Cartoons from Punch Newspaper: A Pragmatics Analysis. *Language in India*, 13 (5): 43-63.
- Salager-Meyer, F. (1997). I think that perhaps you should: A study of hedges in written scientific discourse. In T. Miller (Ed.), *Functional approaches to written text: classroom applications*. (pp. 105-118). Washington, D.C., USA: English Language Programs-United States Information Agency.
- Sani, I., Abdullah, M. H., Abdullah, F. S. and Ali, A. M. (2012). Political Cartoons as a Vehicle of Setting Social Agenda: The Newspaper Example. *Asian Social Science*, 8 (6):156-164.
- Sani, I., Abdullah, M. H., Ali, A. M., and Abdullah, F. S. (2012). Linguistic analysis on the construction of satire in Nigerian political cartoons: The example of newspaper cartoons. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies* 4(3):52-59.
- Thomas, J. (1995). *Meanings in Interaction: An Introduction*. London: Longman.
- Tsakona, V. (2009). Language and image interaction in cartoons: Towards a multimodal theory of humor. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41(6): 1171-1188.
- Wahyuningsiha, I. (2008). *Conversational Implicature analysis of the verbal humor of the selected editions of 'the born loser' comic strips*. Jember University: Indonesia.
- Wilcox, D.L., Cameron, G.T., Ault, P.H., & Agee, W.K. (2003). *Public relations: Strategies and tactics*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- World Association of Newspapers (2007). Declaration of Table Mountain Abolishing "Insult Laws" in Africa and Setting Free Press Higher on the Agenda. Available on: <http://www.wanpress.org/IMG/pdf/TableMountainDeclaration.pdf>

## Appendix

### Cartoons used in the discussion

#### Cartoon 1: JB speaks after her return from the White house



**Cartoon 2: JB and Scottish Prime Minister**



**Figure 3: JB reacts to the Declaration of Table Mountain Document**



Cartoons 4: JB shuns the Media



Cartoon 5: Malawi under Economic Crisis: Donors Equally Affected



Cartoon 6: JB speaks on Kwacha Devaluation



### Cartoon 7: JB and Party Officials speak on Economic Recovery Plan



Cartoon 8: Public Cries

