

A Gricean Maxims Analysis of Muhammad Naveed's Interview (Who Opened Fire on Imran Khan)

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Abstract: This paper aims to investigate the flouting of maxims and the use of conversational implicature by Muhammad Naveed in his interview with the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD). The present study employs a qualitative research method to explore how Naveed flouts Gricean maxims in his CTD investigation interview. The findings of the study show that Naveed flouted the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner and employed implicatures to convey his ideological belief behind his attempt on the life of Imran Khan, former Prime Minister of Pakistan. The findings highlight how certain expressions and linguistic choices contribute to a narrative shaped by personal conviction and moral framing. While the study emphasizes the role of religious and rhetorical language in constructing this narrative, it also recognizes the complexity of interpreting meaning in high-pressure interview contexts. The findings contribute to the field of forensic linguistics by illustrating how pragmatic principles operate within legal and political discourse, while also indicating the need for broader contextual and methodological considerations to enhance the interpretive depth and reliability of such analyses.

Keywords: Grice Maxims, Cooperative Principles, Conversational Implicature, Flouting of Maxims.

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1. Introduction

Language is one of the fundamental necessities of the existence and survival of human beings that enables people to communicate their ideas, feelings, and helps us understand each other [1], [2]. However, in communication, one of the most recurring concerns is misunderstanding that mostly occurs when the interlocutors have different background knowledge and experiences. Therefore, while communicating, the speakers and the listeners must adhere to some communicative principles that Grice (1975) calls the “cooperative principle”. The principle, as phrased by Grice himself, is: “Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (p. 47). The cooperative principle consists of four maxims: The first one is the maxim of quantity, which, according to Grice, the utterances provide as much information as is required. One should neither give less information than is necessary nor give more information than is needed. The second maxim of Grice is a maxim of quality. According to this principle, the speaker should communicate with adequate knowledge of the discussion. "Try to make your contribution one that is true" in the sense of providing information, and it has two sub maxims; first, "Do not say

what you believe to be false"(p. 47). Second, "Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence". The third Grice maxim is relevance. The maxim of relevance instructs the speakers to "be relevant" [3]. Following this principle, the speaker should stick to the topic of the discussion or the context in which the utterances take place, as well as to prior utterances made throughout the conversation. The fourth maxim is the maxim of manner. This maxim implies the meaning that "How what is said is to be said". According to the theory of cooperative principle (Grice 1975), when speaking, the speaker should be orderly and transparent to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty. The components of this principle are: "be perspicuous," which is the super maxim, and four other sub maxims; first, "avoid obscurity of expression". Second, "avoid ambiguity". Third, "be brief to avoid unnecessary prolixity". Fourthly, "be orderly".

1.1 Flouting of Maxims

Grice (1975) introduces the word flouting as when speakers purposefully avoid using particular maxims in their speech to create ambiguity on the part of their listeners' talks or to achieve other goals; this is considered a violation. According to [4], these maxims can help the conversation flow naturally and productively. In their everyday conversations, people have indeed unintentionally used this cooperative principle or maxims. However, a lot of people really disregard these rules. [5] Asserts that as long as the speaker or the context gives the listener enough cues to notice it, a cooperative speaker is permitted to intentionally violate a maxim. When a speaker disregards one or more maxims to draw an inference, this is referred to as flouting. It suggests that the speaker is not making an effort to mislead or trick the audience into going beyond the semantic level in search of deeper meaning. The maxims are flouted when one or more of them are disregarded by a speaker during a discussion.

We should attempt to satisfy all, or at least some, of these maxims by observing the maxims for a conversation to be meaningful. To authenticate our discourse, we are required to follow these maxims in our speech (Grice, 1975).

There are many reasons why we flout the maxims. For example, some individuals have trouble speaking effectively because they are introverted, for emotional reasons. After all, they are anxious about using a certain phrase, or perhaps they are breaking rules because they want to keep something secret. Contrarily, listeners must be equally engaged in a given communication since there is a potential that a listener will fail to understand the speaker's intended message. [6], [7].

1.2 Conversational Implicature

Conversational implicature works with the combination of Grice's maxims and the cooperative principle. According to [8], the Cooperative Principle's maxims basis upon which the speaker and hearer cooperate, can be changed to produce implicatures. The characteristics of conversational implicature provide extra meaning that lies behind the semantic meaning of the words [9]. According to Henry [10], speech actions and communication acts both make use of intentions. This will make it easier to see when Grice's maxims are being followed and when they are being violated; when they are not being followed, conversational implication is produced. Moreover, the flouting of maxims, in contrast to the violation of maxims, which occurs to cause misunderstanding on the part of the listener, occurs when people purposefully stop using the maxims to get their listeners to infer the hidden meaning behind the utterances; in other words, the speakers use implicature [11]. Additionally, conversational implicature can be classified into two main types:

- i. ***Generalized conversational implicature:*** References that allude to non-explicit meaning in any sort of setting are known as general conversational implicature (Grice, 1975). Because it does not require any special information to be said, it is a sort of conversational implicature with an obvious meaning. Making the relevant inference requires no specialized knowledge of the context of the utterance [12].
- ii. ***Particularized conversational implicature:*** Participants are able to identify the implicature in the two prior forms of implicature without the need for any further information. However, a lot of our talks take place in really unusual circumstances when contextually recognized inferences are taken into account. To recognize the given meanings that are formed by customized conversational implicature, such inferences are necessary (Lazim, 2020).

At times, speakers may intentionally exclude information that is accurate, comprehensive, relevant, and intelligible, an act which Grice referred to as the *flouting of maxims*. This intentional flouting of conversational norms, according to [13], is often applied to generate an implicature that ultimately achieves the deliberate communicative effect. The aspect of cooperative principles has been thoroughly examined by the researchers; however, limited research has been conducted to explore cooperative principles and implicature in criminal interviews. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the flouting of Gricean maxims and the

use of conversational implicature by Muhammad Naveed in his interview with the Punjab Police after his confession of attempting to take the life of Imran Khan, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The selection of Muhammad Naveed's interview has been influenced by several factors. Firstly, this incident received widespread attention from national and international print and electronic media. Secondly, the interview conducted with Muhammad Naveed was part of a Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) investigation, which was disclosed by the Punjab police. Such kind of data is rare but significant for academic scrutiny, which makes the present study particularly distinctive. Thirdly, the release of such sensitive and confidential interviews evoked widespread outrage on social media, and it generated widespread discourse and controversies.

Therefore, conducting this study significantly contributes to the scholarly discourse by offering insights for future research in this area. Through this analysis, the study seeks to enhance our understanding of the strategic use of language in high-stakes legal contexts.

2. Literature Review

Language plays a vital role, especially in the domain of politics, as it is a powerful tool for the exchange of ideas, shaping public opinion, manipulation, and enabling dialogue between people and political parties [14]. Scholars have thoroughly investigated the deliberate use of language by political leaders through the lens of political discourse analysis and pragmatics, which gives significant insights into how political leaders use language to persuade, manipulate, and influence the public's opinions.

The present study has explored different theoretical frameworks and insights from the research that examined the way language reflects and shapes political ideologies and actions. Studies such as the comparative analysis on policy speeches over the two decades have highlighted the use of language in the realm of politics that reveal how pragmatic elements are employed to convey intended meanings and engage the public [15]. These manipulative use of pragmatic elements to mold public opinion shows the power of linguistic intricacies in political communications [16]. Furthermore, researchers have mapped out the effective techniques and theoretical perspectives that guide studies in the realm of politics by giving us an understanding of the multifaceted role of language in politics. [17].

Grice's Cooperative Principle and its maxims have been explored within various communicative contexts. Juma'a (2020) examines President Donald Trump's interaction with Time magazine in

2020 through the Cooperative Principle framework. The study highlights that Trump frequently flouts maxims to shape public view. Similarly, [18] analyzes political conversations on the Rosi Talkshow and found that the interviewee flouts all four Grice maxims to avoid direct response to the questions.

Further, [19] provides insight into the communicative strategies of Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad during an interview with the ARD channel. The study shows that Assad deliberately violates the maxims to generate an interpretation that would be beneficial to his image and agenda. Another study in the realm of Pakistani Politics has been conducted by [20]. Through a quantitative approach, the study examines Ishaq Dar, the former finance minister of Pakistan interview with the BBC in 2020. The study shows that Dar tends to flout all the Grice maxims to persuade the public towards a favorable view of their party.

These studies highlight a broader trend within political discourse, where the political leaders deliberately manipulate cooperative principles to serve their interests. This literature review reveals the depth and diversity of research on the flouting of Grice's maxims in political interviews, which highlights the importance of understanding these dynamics to fully interpret the intricacies of political discourse.

Moreover, the study aims to explore the communicative strategies employed by Muhammad Naveed during his interview with the Punjab Police after his attempt on the life of Imran Khan on November 3, 2022. Employing the Gricean theory of the Cooperative Principle and implicature as a framework, the study aims to explore the extent to which Naveed flouts conversational maxims and employs implicatures within this high-stakes discourse. This investigation is pioneering in its focus, given the recent and highly sensitive nature of the interview content, which was unexpectedly disseminated by the police department through social media platforms.

The primary objective of this analysis is to elucidate the application of cooperative principles in a context beyond an ordinary conversational setting, shedding light on how Muhammad Naveed navigates the intricacies of cooperative discourse under the pressure of a police investigation. By examining the nature and frequency of maxim flouting and the employment of implicatures, this study contributes valuable insights into the communicative dynamics in legal interrogations and the broader implications for understanding discourse strategies in legal and political crises.

3. Methodology

We used a mixed research method to conduct this study. The present study employs a qualitative research method because the study investigates and analyzes the flouting of maxims and the use of implicature in Muhammad Naveed's interview and explores the reasons for the flouting of maxims. Simultaneously, the present study also utilizes the quantitative research method because it deals with quantitative analysis using frequency to support the qualitative results of the study. The interview of Muhammad Naveed was conducted during a Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) investigation, which was unofficially released and recognized by the Punjab police on November 4, 2022. The interview was downloaded from YouTube and then transcribed orthographically, and for a better understanding of the utterances, the English-translated subtitle was downloaded from <https://youtu.be/0SVKhycWrGY>. Additionally, Jefferson's model of data transcription [21] was used to examine the intonation, pauses, and overlaps in the conversation. Thereafter, the flouting of the maxims and use of implicature in Muhammad Naveed's interview were analyzed using the theoretical concept of "cooperative principle and implicature" proposed by Grice (1975). Grice introduces the word floating as when speakers purposefully avoid using particular maxims in their speech to create ambiguity on the part of their listeners' talks or to achieve other goals.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 The Flouting of Maxim of Relation, Manner and Quantity

پولیس: اچھائی بتاویہ تم نے کام کیوں کیا؟

Police: Ok tell why did you do this?

محمد نوید: السلام علیکم ورحمة اللہ

Muhammad Naveed: *Assalamulaikum Wa Rahamatullah* (Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings)

In the above excerpt, the policeman was asking Muhammad Naveed why he opened fire on Imran Khan. The police wanted to know the reason behind the criminal practice. However, Muhammad Naveed, instead of telling just the intentions and reasons behind the assassination attempt of Imran Khan, said "السلام علیکم ورحمة اللہ" (Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings). Thus, he was flouting the maxim of relation "be relevant" in that he was supposed to tell the reasons and objectives behind the gun attack, but he was not observing the maxim of relation while producing an irrelevant utterance. Muhammad Naveed also failed to observe the

maxim of manner "be brief and avoid unnecessary prolixity" while violating the rule of the maxim of manner and giving unnecessary prolixity. In addition, the maxim of quantity "the utterances should provide as much information as is required" was also flouted because the greeting was not significantly required, especially in the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) investigation.

Generalized Conversational Implicature: The utterance "السلام عليكم ورحمة الله" (Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings) gave rise to a generalized implicature because it can be inferred without any particular context. Primarily, the Arabic phrase "Assalamualaikum Wa Rahmatullah" is common in Muslim culture. It is customary for people to greet one another with "salam" when they first meet or even when they first speak. However, it is a fact that in police investigations, especially in Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) investigations, the police and the culprit mostly do not start their conversation with such formal greetings as "Assalamualaikum" (Peace be upon you) and "Walaikum Salam (Peace be upon you also). However, Muhammad Naveed started his claim with "Assalamualaikum Wa Rahmatullah," which implied that he wanted to show his identity as a true Muslim, as [22] believes that the greeting "Assalamualaikum" reflects Muslims' cultural and religious identity. Using the Islamic expression "السلام عليكم ورحمة الله" (Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings), Muhammad Naveed may have aimed to present himself as a devout Muslim and imply the truthfulness of his upcoming statements. However, religious expressions like Assalamualaikum are also deeply embedded in cultural and habitual communication within Muslim communities. [23] Found that even Non-Muslim Indian and Malaysian students in Palembang used this greeting to gain social acceptance among Muslim peers. In Naveed's case—since he opened fire on the container of Imran Khan and claimed he did so in response to blasphemy—his use of "السلام عليكم ورحمة الله" could be seen as an attempt to establish religious credibility, although such expressions are also commonly used without calculated intent.

4.2 The Flouting of Maxim of Quality and Manner

پولیس: اچانک فیصلہ کیا یا پہلے

Police: Did you suddenly make this decision or earlier?

محمد نوید: اچانک فیصلہ کیا دن سے صبح سے جس دن کا یہ لاہور سے چلا آیا اس دن سے میں نے یہ سازش یہ سوچی

Muhammad Naveed: I made this decision suddenly, today, in the morning. I thought of this conspiracy since the day Imran Khan left Lahore.

In this excerpt, the policeman was asking Muhammad Naveed whether he had suddenly decided to kill Imran Khan. Muhammad Naveed's answer contained flouting of the maxim of manner "avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity" and the maxim of quality "try to make your contribution one that is true". Muhammad Naveed's answer was ambiguous because he first said that he suddenly decided to kill Imran Khan that day, and then he said in the morning and then said that he decided to kill Imran Khan since the day Imran Khan left Lahore. It is challenging to accept this statement as entirely truthful, as the three utterances — "suddenly today," "in the morning," and "since the day Imran Khan left Lahore" — seem to contradict one another. The inconsistency becomes more apparent when compared with Naveed's earlier claim that he decided to open fire because the Azaan (call for prayers) was being given while PTI was making noise. Yet, in the next moment, he states that he had made up his mind since the day the PTI long march began in Lahore. While this contradiction might suggest a breach of the maxim of manner by introducing ambiguity, it is important to consider that such inconsistencies could also result from confusion or psychological stress, rather than intentional manipulation. Therefore, rather than interpreting this as a clear case of flouting the maxims to deceive, it might reflect a violation due to internal conflict or pressure during the interview, which can affect the clarity and coherence of speech.

4.3 The Flouting of Maxim of Quantity

پولیس: نی تمہارے پیچھے کون ہے جس نے یہ

Police: No, who is behind you ...?

محمد نوید: میرے پیچھے کوئی فی ہے میں الحمد للہ اکیلا ہوں

Accused: There is no one behind me. I:: am ↑*Alhamdulillah* (praise be to God) alone.

In the above conversation, the utterance of Muhammad Naveed "I:: am ↑*Alhamdulillah* alone" was not cooperative. He is flouting the maxim of quantity while giving extra information. The policeman asked him a clear and brief question that he only wanted to Who was behind him who provoked him to kill Imran Khan? However, Muhammad Naveed, after answering the question "There is no one with me", repeated his answer in a different way, which was not required according to the maxim of quantity.

Generalized Conversational Implicature: The utterance “I: am ↑Alhamdulillah (praise be to God) alone” can be categorized as a generalized conversational implicature because it does not require any special background knowledge about its context to be inferred. The phrase “Alhamdulillah,” according to [24], expresses a sense of gratitude, and is often used to show satisfaction with one’s condition—whether favorable or not. [25] Adds that it carries connotations of veneration and appreciation alongside praise. In this case, the raised intonation on “Alhamdulillah” may suggest that Naveed was content with his actions and unrepentant. However, given the frequency and wide use of such religious expressions in everyday conversation, especially during moments of emotional or psychological stress, it is possible that the utterance reflected a culturally ingrained response rather than a deliberate statement of ideology. Moreover, by saying “I am ↑Alhamdulillah alone,” Naveed may have been emphasizing that he acted independently in the assassination attempt on Imran Khan, attempting to clear any doubts about political or organizational involvement.

4.4 The Flouting of Maxim of Quantity and Relation

پولیس: جب تم گھر سے آئے ہو تو کون ہتا تمہارے ساتھ

Police: When you left home who was with you?

نوید محمد: اکیلا ہتا بائیک اپنی پے آیا ہوں اپنی بائیک

Muhammad Naveed: There was no one with me. I left home alone, on my bike, my bike.

When the police asked Muhammad Naveed who was with him when he left home, Muhammad Naveed’s answer contained a flouting of the maxim of quantity and relation. The question was clear; the policeman wanted to know whether someone else was with him or not when he left home. However, Muhammad Naveed, instead of just answering the question simply, produced a lengthy and irrelevant utterance. He said that he came on his own bike, and then he repeated the utterance that the bike belonged to him. From this line, “I left home alone, on my own bike, my bike,” Muhammad Naveed was trying to justify his statement and tried to convince the police that whatever he was telling was true.

4.5 The Flouting of Maxim of Quantity and Manner

پولیس: جس دن سے لاہور سے سوچی

Police: = Since the day Imran Khan left Lahore?

محمد نوید: ہاں جی کہ میں نے اس کو چھوڑنا ہی ہے

Muhammad Naveed: =Yes that I will kill him.

پولیس: ہنی تمہارے پیچھے کون ہے جس نے یہ

Police: No, who is behind you? Who...

In the above excerpt, it can be seen that the police asked Muhammad Naveed a clear tag question to confirm his previous statement him in ‘yes’ or ‘no’. However, Muhammad Naveed failed to observe the maxim of quantity (one should neither give less information than is necessary nor more information than is needed) as he gave more information instead of saying just ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

In addition, in the very next sentence, the police flouted the maxim of relation as he said, “No,” which makes his utterance ambiguous. The policeman first asked Muhammad Naveed whether he had decided to kill Imran Khan when Imran Khan left Lahore, and when Muhammad Naveed confirmed it, the policeman negated his question and pretended that he did not mean it; rather, he wanted to know something else. Thus, this line contained the flouting of the maxim of manner.

4.6 The frequency of the flouting of the maxims

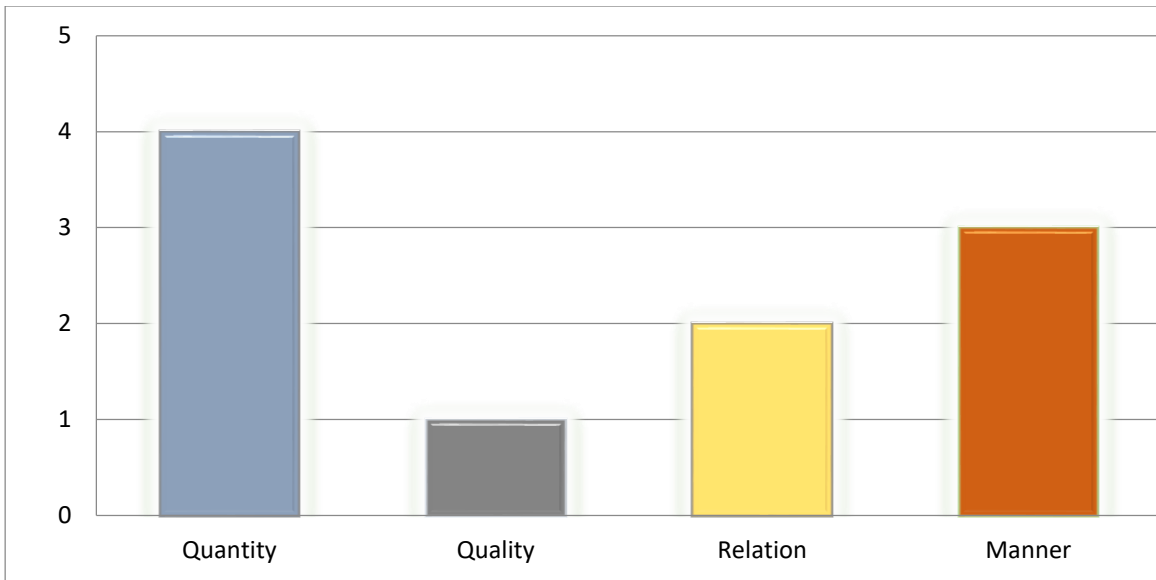


Figure1. The frequency of the flouting of maxims in Muhammad Naveed’s interview

Figure 1 shows that Muhammad Naveed’s interview contains a total of 10 violations of Grice maxims. According to the data presented in Figure 1, Muhammad Naveed has flouted the maxim of quantity more frequently. While frequently flouting the maxim of quantity, which calls for a

speaker to provide as much information as is required for a given conversational context, Naveed may have attempted to convince the police that he was not involved in a conspiracy and that he acted alone in the assassination attempt on Imran Khan. Secondly, the maxim of manners was noticeably flouted, which reveals the obscure, ambiguous, and disorderly answers of the criminal. However, the maxim of relation was flouted twice while giving irrelevant answers to the questions of the police.

5. Conclusion

The present study investigated the flouting of Gricean maxims and the use of conversational implicature, specifically through Islamic expressions such as Assalamualaikum Wa Rahmatullah and Alhamdulillah, in Muhammad Naveed's interview following his attack on Imran Khan's container. The findings of the study suggest that while criminals often flout conversational maxims to deceive authorities and portray themselves as innocent, Muhammad Naveed appeared to flout the maxims, particularly the maxim of quantity, not to mislead but to emphasize his sole responsibility for the assassination attempt. Flouting all the maxims, he implied pride in his actions, justifying them by expressing a belief that Imran Khan was misleading the nation and that his conscience compelled him to act.

Furthermore, Naveed's mental state or sociocultural background can also be examined in future research that may have shaped his language. Therefore, a more nuanced analysis would consider these factors to better understand how Gricean maxims function in high-stakes interrogation settings. However, the present study significantly contributes to forensic linguistics by highlighting how conversational implicature and maxim violations may reveal underlying motives in Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) interviews.

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Appendices

Complete Interview of Muhammad Naveed

پولیس: اچھا یہ بتاویے تم نے کام کیوں کیا

ملزم: السلام علیکم ورحمۃ اللہ

پولیس: ہاں

ملزم: جی سر میں نے اس لے کیا ہے کی یہ لوگوں کو گمراہ کر رہا تھا عمران حنان اور مجھ سے یہ چیز دیکھی نی گی تو میں نے

اسے مار دیا۔ مارنے کی کوشش کی پوری مارنے کی کوشش کہ میں اس کو مار دوں صرف اور صرف عمران حنان کو اور کسی کو نہیں

پولیس: یہ تم نے یہ کیوں سوچا یہ

ملزم: یہ میں نے سوچا ادھر آزان ہو رہی ہے اور ادھر ڈک لگا کے شور کر رہا تھا (پولیس: نی یہ تم نے اچانک فیصلہ)

اس چیز کو سوچ کر میرے ضمیر نے یہ چیز اچھانی مانا

پولیس: اچانک فیصلہ کیا یا پہلے

ملزم: اچانک فیصلہ کیا دن سے صبح سے جس دن کا یہ لاہور سے چلا آیا اس دن سے میں نے یہ سازش یہ سوچی

پولیس: جس دن سے لاہور سے سوچی

ملزم: ہاں جی کہ میں نے اس کو چھوڑنا ہی ہے

پولیس: نی تمہارے پیچھے کون ہے جس نے یہ

محمد نوید: میرے پیچھے کوئی نی ہے میں الحمد للہ اکیلا ہوں

پولیس: تمہارے ساتھ کتنے لوگ تھے

میرے ساتھ کوئی بھی نی ہے اکیلا ہوں

پولیس: جب تم گھر سے آئے ہو تو کون ہتا تمہارے ساتھ

اکیلا تھا بائیک اپنی پے آیا ہوں اپنی بائیک

Police: Ok tell why did you do this?

Accused: Assalamulaikum wa Rahmatullah

Police: yes

Accused: I did this because he is misleading people Imran Khan (.) and I couldn't bear that. So, I killed him, tried to kill him, ↑ I tried my best to kill him. ↑Only Imran khan, I did not want to kill anyone else.

Police: Why did you think of doing this?

Accused: I thought of this because on one hand the Azaan ((call for prayers)) was giving and on the other, he was creating a racket (Police: no, did you suddenly). My conscience did not accept this as a good thing.

Police: Did you suddenly make this decision?

Accused: I made this decision suddenly today, since morning, since the day Imran Khan left Lahore I thought of this conspiracy, this.

Police: = Since the day Imran Khan left Lahore?

Accused: =Yes that I was not going to let him be.

Police: No, who is behind you who...?

Accused: There is no one with me. I: am ↑Alhamdulillah alone.

Police: How many people were with you?

Accused: There is no one behind me: I am alone.

Police: When you left home who was with you?

Accused: There was no one with me. I left home alone, on my own bike, my bike.