

خرق القواعد في مقالات جوناثان سويفت

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Flouting of Maxims in Jonathan Swift's Essays

Flouting of Maxims in Jonathan Swift's Essays

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الخلاصة :

يقترح البحث الحالي دراسة تداولية للسخرية في اربع مقالات كتبها جوناثان سويفت. يمكن تعريف السخرية تداوليا من خلال ربطها بقواعد جرايس مما يعني أن الكلام يخالف واحداً أو أكثر من قواعد جرايس من أجل نقل شيء ما بشكل غير مباشر. هذا يدل على أن الكلمات تستخدم لشيء آخر غير معناها الحرفي. هذه الدراسة هي دراسة وصفية نوعية تستخدم تحليل المحتوى كأحد الأنواع النوعية. في هذه الدراسة، يتم جمع البيانات على شكل كلمات وليس على شكل أرقام أو إحصائيات أو تجارب أو طرق مسح.. الهدف من هذه الطريقة هو الحصول على معرفة شاملة وتفسير شامل للحدث قيد الدراسة. ونتيجة لذلك، يقوم الباحث بفحص البيانات المكتوبة بأكبر قدر ممكن من العمق. يوضح التحليل في المقالات الأربعة أنه على الرغم من أن السخرية هي نوع من التهجم، إلا أن هناك اختلافات كبيرة تجعلها نوعاً بلاغياً متميزاً، بما في ذلك القصد، والإشارة إلى أحداث سابقة، و عدم الصدق، ووجود هدف أو ضحية واضحة. كما أن المتحدث يخرق جميع القواعد من أجل الاستهزاء بشخص ما أو بموقف معين. لقد نجح هذا الخرق في إيصال المعنى الخفي للكلام. الاستنتاج هو أنه يمكن خرق جميع القواعد لتحقيق

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السخرية. تحتوي الورقة البحثية على خمسة مباحث. يقدم المبحث الأول تعريفًا تداوليًا لماهية السخرية. يناقش المبحث الثاني قواعد جرايس وكيف يتم اعتبارها نموذجًا للتواصل الفعال من قبل المتحدثين. يناقش المبحث الثالث الخرق وأنواع الخرق بالقواعد. يعرض المبحث الرابع منهجية الدراسة. يتناول المبحث الخامس كيف أن المقتطفات من المقالات الأربعة قيد التحقيق تخرق القواعد لتحقيق المعنى غير المباشر. تنتهي الدراسة بالمبحث السادس والخاتمة ، متبوعة بقائمة المراجع التي تم الرجوع إليها.

Abstract

The present research proposes a pragmatic study of sarcasm in four essays written by Jonathan Swift. Sarcasm can be pragmatically defined by relating it to Grice's maxims which means that the utterance is flouting one or more of Grice's maxims in order to convey something indirectly. This indicates that the words are being used for something other than their literal meaning. This study is a descriptive qualitative one that uses content analysis as one of the qualitative types. As a result, the researcher examines the transcribed data in as much depth as possible. The analysis in the four essays demonstrates that although sarcasm is a type of irony, there are significant distinctions that establish it as a distinct rhetorical type, including intentionality, reference to prior events, insincerity and the presence of a clear target or victim. Also, the speaker flouts all the maxims in order to make mockery of someone or a particular situation. The conclusion is that all maxims can be flouted to accomplish sarcasm. The research paper contains five sections. The first section provides a pragmatic definition of what sarcasm is. Section two discusses Grice's maxims and how they are considered a model for effective communication by speakers. Section three discusses flouting and types of maxims flouting. Section four presents the methodology of the study. Section five tackles how the extracts from the essays under investigation are flouting the maxims to carry out the indirect meaning. The study ends with section six the conclusion, followed by a list of references consulted.

Introduction

Since sarcasm, at the speech act theory, is one of the ostensible speech acts (Isaacs & Clark, 1990), the language of the data of this research contains at least two contradictory propositions. Thus, the researchers employ Grice's maxims in order to derive what is not expressed by literal propositions.

Grice's model of conversational maxims (1975) has been used as a foundation for the comprehension of the processes behind the interpretation of sarcasm. According to his view, the hearer hears the





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literal meaning of a sarcastic remark and discovers that it unexpectedly contradicts known facts, i.e. flouts the maxim of quality or "truth." The hearer, however, thinks that the speaker is attempting to communicate and has committed this flout for a cause. Therefore, the hearer considers the context and draws a conversational inference that the actual state of circumstances is the exact opposite of what is said.

However, in this research, sarcasm exposes a gap between the literal and intended meaning of an utterance; therefore, the researchers think that sarcasm is a pragmatic concept that does not flout only the maxim of quality; rather any of Grice's maxims can be flouted to produce sarcasm.

1. Sarcasm

Some dictionaries and academic definitions of sarcasm have been presented to address various aspects of it.

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, sarcasm refers to "words that are opposite of what one intends in order to offend or ridicule someone" (Hornby, 1995, p. 1041).

As far as linguists' definitions of sarcasm is concerned, such as Muecke (1969), Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989), Barbe (1995), Gibbs and Colston (2007), Cheang and Pell (2008), they see sarcasm as a subcategory of verbal irony which means stating one thing but meaning the exact opposite.

For instance, when someone says to a person whose actions or words have recently caused problem:

(1) "You've been helpful!"

It means that the person is not helpful (Cruse, 2006).

However, linguists such as Wilson and Sperber (1992) argue that this traditional approach disregards the fact that the intended meaning of verbal irony is not always the polar opposite of the literal meaning rather, it can be different meaning. The following is an example given to support their argument:

You have invited me to visit you in Tuscany [in Italy]. Tuscany in May, you write, is the most beautiful place on earth. I arrive in a freak cold spell, wind howling, rain lashing down. As you drive me home along flooded roads, I turn to you and exclaim:

(2) Ah, Tuscany in May! (Wilson & Sperber, 1992, pp. 55-56)

In this example, the speaker achieves irony with this exclamation. Nevertheless, this irony is difficult to explain from a conventional standpoint. It is challenging to think of a meaning that is the opposite of the exclamatory utterance and to be the intended meaning.



Grice (1975) adopts a theory of irony that is comparable to the traditional one, which is used to comprehend sarcasm. According to Grice, every utterance has an implicit underlying meaning that contradicts its explicit literal meaning. Grice's theory of irony is also incorporated into his well-known models of "the cooperative principle" and "conversational implicature", which analyse the literal meanings as implicatures brought on by deliberate flout of the maxim of quality, i.e. do not express what you believe to be untrue.

Grice (1975) proposes a "two-stage" model of non-literal language processing which consists of a first literal and obligatory stage and a second non-literal optional stage. Irony begins with the statement "flouting conversational maxims," i.e. those that are context-independent and indicate to the hearer that he/she should reject the literal interpretation and instead construct implicature.

For example, if someone ironically says:

(3) "You are a fine friend!"

he/she means it to be understood as you are not a fine friend. By doing this, he/she flouts the maxim of quality and says something that is not sincere or true on the surface. The flout should make the hearer think of the non-literal meaning by which the speaker is intending to through implicature (Grice, 1975). This indicates that sarcasm can be also understood from the flouting of maxim of quality.

Another account proposed to comprehend sarcasm is the two theories: The echoic mention theory by Sperber and Wilson (1981) and the pretense theory by Clark and Gerrig (1984). Both argue against the classical and Gricean assumption that the literal meaning of an ironic utterance is replaced by its underlying opposite meaning. Instead, they examine irony as a speaker's expressing of his/her attitude (Wilson, 2006).

According to the echoic mention theory, a hearer comprehends an ironic speech when he/she is able to identify that the speaker is ridiculing or expressing his/her attitude against a previously stated proposition in certain conversation. This proposition may have been stated openly or suggested implicitly in that previous conversation (Sperber & Wilson, 1981). The following utterance, for example:

(4) "As I reached the bank at closing time, the bank clerk helpfully shut the door in my face,"

is a typical assertion where only "helpfully" is echoic and dissociative. The speaker says that the bank employee shut the door as he/she arrived, but the action of the employee was not helpful. The word "helpfully" is regarded as a sarcastic reference to either the promises of helpfulness and





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concern that banks usually make in their ads or to the general rule that people should be helpful to each other which has been broken in this situation (Wilson, 2006).

The second theory claims that when a person makes an ironic statement, he/she is pretending to be another person, to whom the statement is attributed, he/she wants the hearer to see and know, through his/her act, the speaker's opinion of the ironic remark and how ridiculous it is. The speaker then tries to make fun of either the pretending person or the ironic statement. This pretending person can be a real or an imaginary one who agrees with the point of the ironic statement (Clark & Gerrig 1984). To explain this, Clark and Gerrig (1984) present the following example:

(5) "Trust the weather Bureau! See what lovely weather it is: rain, rain, rain."

In "See what lovely weather it is: rain, rain, rain," the speaker is pretending to be someone who is "unseeing" person, like a weather forecaster, telling an unknown audience how nice the weather is. Through the pretense, the speaker wants the hearer to understand that the speaker is criticising anyone who would say or accept the utterance as a sincere act.

Haiman (1998) views the intention of a speaker to be a significant factor in determining whether an utterance is sarcastic or not, he defines sarcasm as the intentional mocking of others by the speaker. Likewise, Fowler (2009) mentions that "the essence of sarcasm is the intention of giving pain by ironical words or other bitter words" (p. 1331).

Some linguists, such as Ducharme (1994), Hancock (2004), and Cheang and Pell (2008), assert the negative nature of sarcasm, in the sense that it is used as a reaction to situations or things that offend someone. Others identify sarcasm with other feelings. For instance, Kovaz et al. (2013) define sarcasm as a kind of verbal irony that typically incorporates negativity and humour. Similarly, Kim (2014) asserts that "negative emotions such as contempt, anger, dislike and frustration" may prompt a speaker to provide harsh and bitter sarcasm.

Linguists maintain that sarcasm has a target or victim. For McDonald (1999), sarcasm is defined as a kind of ironic speech usually employed to express implicit criticism with a specific victim as its target. Likewise, Attardo (2000) notes that sarcasm is "an overtly aggressive type of irony with clearer markers/cues and a clear target" (p. 795). Similarly, Wilson (2012) states that sarcasm often has a clear target or victim: The person who is the focus of the speaker's hostile or negative criticism.



To conclude, sarcasm is a subcategory of verbal irony in which the intended meaning is opposed or different from the literal meaning. It involves a negative attitude directed toward a clear target or victim. Furthermore, insincerity, intentionality, reference to prior events and context are further distinguishing criteria for its nature.

2. Grice's Conversational Maxims

According to the philosopher and linguist Pual Grice (1975), there is a set of assumptions that defines and governs conversational behaviors as a speech act. This set of beliefs that guides someone in speech is known as "cooperative principle".

The cooperative principle posits that interlocutors have an implicit understanding to cooperate in a meaningful way during an interactive event. In Grice's own words, the cooperative principle is as follows:

a rough general principle which participants will be expected to observe, namely: Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice, 1975, p. 45)

Grice (1975) develops the cooperative principle by providing a series of conversational maxims that serve to understand what it means to cooperate in a speech. He proposes four conversational categories or "maxims", as they are known, for that it should be expected for interlocutors to follow. These maxims are:

a. Maxim of quantity: "1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange) 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required."

b. Maxim of quality: "Try to make your contribution one that is true," "1. Do not say what you believe to be false 2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence."

c. Maxim of relation: "Be relevant"

d. Maxim of manner: "Be perspicuous," "1. Avoid obscurity of expression 2. Avoid ambiguity 3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity) 4. Be orderly" (pp. 45-46).

In other words, the cooperative principle is defined by Levinson (1983) as "what participants have to do in order to converse in a maximally efficient, rational, co-operative way, they should speak sincerely, relevantly and clearly while providing sufficient information" (p. 102).

2.1 Observance of Maxims

The least interesting instance of cooperation is when a speaker recognises all of the maxims, as in the example below:

(6) "Husband: Where are the car keys?"





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“Wife: They're on the table in the hall.”

The wife replies in a precise “manner” and honest “quality” way, providing exactly the necessary amount of information “quantity” and explicitly addressing her husband's purpose for asking the question “relation”. She expresses exactly what she intends, nothing more or less and causes no implications, i.e. there is no difference to be observed between what she says and what she means and there is no further level of meaning to be considered in this situation (Thomas, 1995).

2.2 Non-Observance of Maxims

Non-observance of maxims refers to the failure to observe maxims through breaching their rules, whether intentionally or accidentally. When analyzing meaning that is not given directly, the non-observance of the maxims is of importance.

In his work (1975), Grice describes different ways in which a participant in a speech exchange may fail to fulfill a maxim. The speaker may infringe a maxim, opt out of observing a maxim, violate a maxim, flout a maxim, or may be faced by a clash of maxims. The crucial point to notice in each of the aforementioned categories is that the speaker fails to observe the maxims even when he/she has no intent to construct an implicature; therefore, they will not be used in this study. However, there are instances when the blatant non-observance prompts the search for an implicature (Thomas, 1995). These instances are presented in the next section.

3. Flouting

A speaker may overtly disobey a maxim, not with the goal of tricking or misleading the hearer, but rather to urge the hearer to seek for a meaning that is apart from, or in addition to, the given meaning. This new meaning is called “conversational implicature” and the act of generating it is called “flouting”¹ or “exploitation” (Grice, 1975, p. 49).

A flout, Bousfield (2008) defines, is “one alternative method through which harsh or impolite beliefs might be expressed, either politely or impolitely, depending on the situation at hand” (p. 23). As a result, a flout can only be interpreted if the hearer has the same background knowledge as the speaker. Not only does knowledge involve rules for interpreting linguistic things, but it also includes knowledge about the world to which a speaker might indicate or allude (Coulthard, 1985).

In Grice's (1975) view, the ability to comprehend sarcasm arises from the realization that the speaker has flouted only the maxim of quality. By

¹ This term is used by Grice (1975).



virtue of this, the hearer derives a meaning that is in line with the cooperative principle, triggering an implicature.

To sum up, in this research, the researchers examine sarcasm which exposes a gap between the literal and intended meaning of an utterance; therefore, the researchers think that sarcasm is a pragmatic concept that flouts not only the maxim of quality; rather any of Grice's maxims can be flouted in the data of this study to produce sarcasm. The following types of maxim flouting affirm this observation.

3.1 Types of Maxim Flouting

As Grice (1975), Levinson (1983), Thomas (1995) and Vance (2012) remark, flouting is possible in four sub-principles of maxim. They are: Flouting the maxim of quantity, flouting the maxim of quality, flouting the maxim of relation and flouting the maxim of manner (Thomas, 1995).

a. Flouts Exploiting the Maxim of Quantity

When a speaker clearly provides more or less information than the context demands, this is considered a flout of the maxim of quantity (Thomas, 1995).

For instance, if someone criticises a terrible dinner by saying:

(7) "not the best thing I've ever taste,"

he/she is flouting the maxim of quantity rather than quality. Since the dinner is terrible, it may not be the finest thing he/she has ever eaten; therefore, strictly speaking, the statement is not "untrue," rather, he/she is guilty of hiding all of the details of his/her assessment resulting into sarcasm (Vance, 2012).

b. Flouts Exploiting the Maxim of Quality

Flouts that take advantage of the maxim of quality occur when the speaker asserts something that is obviously false or for which he/she lacks sufficient proof (Thomas, 1995). Similarly, Cruse (2000) states that disobeying the maxim of quality is literally not true and it is likely to deceive the hearer due to the context of use in the speech. Thus, this flout of maxim of quality achieves sarcasm.

For example:

(8) "A: Teheran's in Turkey isn't it, teacher?"

"B: And London's in Armenia I suppose."

A sarcastic remark is reflected in B's statement. It shows how B flouts maxim of quality. B replies to Armenian comment about London. In fact, London is in England, and this is incorrect. Hence, A is also incorrect (Levinson, 1983). From the flouting of maxim of quality, B's statement is identified as sarcastic.

c. Flouts Exploiting the Maxim of Relation





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The maxim of relation is flouted by giving an answer or statement that is clearly unrelated to the current situation. According to Cutting (2002), a speaker who flouts the maxim of relation expects the hearer to be able to realise what the utterance does not state and create the link between his/her statement and the one before it.

For example, a speaker can remark:

(9) "I just love when people use their turn signals", when he/she sees someone failing to use their turn signal. The speaker does appreciate it when others follow their turn signals; therefore, this remark does not flout the maxim of quality. Instead, by flouting the maxim of relevance, sarcasm of this utterance is brought to light: Remarks on people using their turn signals are irrelevant if one sees other people do not use these signals (Vance, 2012).

d. Flouts Exploiting the Maxim of Manner

This maxim suggests that for effective communication, one must be clear, eliminate obscurity and ambiguity, be brief and maintain order. Sarcastic utterances can flout this maxim by being ambiguous and not clear or there is additional information that exaggerates the speaker's meaning (Vance, 2012).

To provide an example, suppose a speaker wants to praise something with sarcasm by saying:

(10) "I guess it's OK",

the speaker describes a fantastic meal, but in this case, he/she omits part of the information which is his/her positive judgment; therefore, he/she is being intentionally unclear and vague about in using it (Vance, 2012).

4. Methodology

This study is a descriptive qualitative one that uses content analysis as one of the qualitative types. In this study, the data is gathered in the form of words rather than numbers, statistics, experiments or survey methods. The descriptive qualitative research is associated with synthesizes and concisely describes the data. According to Ary et al. (2010), the primary features of qualitative research include the following: an emphasis on context and meaning, a natural setting, a human instrument, descriptive data, emergent design and inductive analysis. A qualitative researcher attempts to comprehend a phenomenon by looking at the big picture rather than breaking it down into factors.

Furthermore, according to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) descriptive qualitative methods represent phenomena in words rather than numerical measures.



The goal of this method is to get a thorough knowledge and comprehensive explanation of the event under investigation. As a result, the researcher examines the transcribed data in as much depth as possible. In this study the data are extracted from four essays written by Jonathan Swift. These essays are *Predictions for the Year 1708* (1708), *A Meditation upon a Broomstick* (1710), *A Modest Proposal* (1729) and *Of Mean and Great Figures, Made by Several Persons* (1765).

The collected data is analysed pragmatically according to Grice's (1975) model of conversational maxims. This model is being chosen due to its crucial significant in interpreting sarcastic extracts.

5. Data Analysis

Essay 1: *Predictions for the Year 1708* (1708)

Extract 1:

“My first prediction is but a trifle, yet I will mention it, to show how ignorant those sottish pretenders to astrology are in their own concerns: It relates to Partridge the almanac maker; I have consulted the stars of his nativity by my own rules, and find he will infallibly die upon the 29th of March next, about eleven at night, of a raging fever; therefore I advise him to consider of it, and settle his affairs in time.” (Swift, 1708/2013, p. 188)

Grice's Maxims

Maxim of Quantity

There is no flouting to this maxim since the speaker's, who is pretending to be an almanac maker who makes prediction for people, utterance is as informative as required.

Maxim of Quality

The speaker flouts this maxim since he says that he knows the exact day and time of the death of Partridge the almanac maker, as well as the fact that he will die because of a raging fever and that is something untrue because the speaker is not a real almanac maker, but he wants to make fun of almanac makers for the false predictions which they make, so by flouting the maxim of quality, the utterance is identified as sarcastic.

Maxim of Relation

The speaker obeys this maxim since his utterance is relevant to the topic that he is supposed to argue about which is about the almanac makers and their predictions.

Maxim of Manner

The speaker follows this maxim since his utterance is devoid of ambiguity and obscurity and it is characterized by brevity and clarity.





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Extract 2:

“I likewise foretold the Battle of Almanza to the very day and hour, with the loss on both sides, and the consequences thereof.” (Swift, 1708 /2013, p. 186)

Grice's Maxims

Maxim of Quantity

There is no flouting to this maxim since the speaker's utterance is as informative as required.

Maxim of Quality

The speaker flouts this maxim since he says that he knows the exact day and time of the Battle of Almanza, as well as the fact that both sides would lose and what would happen and that is something untrue because the battle already happened and the speaker is not a real almanac maker, but he wants to make fun of almanac makers for the false predictions which they make, so by flouting the maxim of quality, the utterance is identified as sarcastic.

Maxim of Relation

The speaker obeys this maxim since his utterance is relevant to the topic that he is supposed to argue about which is about the almanac makers and their predictions.

Maxim of Manner

The speaker follows this maxim since his utterance is devoid of ambiguity and obscurity and it is characterized by brevity and clarity.

Essay 2: *A Meditation upon a Broomstick* (1710)

Extract 3:

“When I behold this I sighed, and said within myself, "Surely mortal man is a broomstick!" Nature sent him into the world strong and lusty, in a thriving condition, wearing his own hair on his head, the proper branches of this reasoning vegetable, till the axe of intemperance has lopped off his green boughs, and left him a withered trunk; he then flies to art, and puts on a periwig, valuing himself upon an unnatural bundle of hairs, all covered with powder, that never grew on his head; but now should this our broomstick pretend to enter the scene, proud of those birchen spoils it never bore, and all covered with dust, through the sweepings of the finest lady's chamber, we should be apt to ridicule and despise its vanity. Partial judges that we are of our own excellencies, and other men's defaults!” (Swift, 1710 /2013, p. 1192)

Grice's Maxims



Maxim of Quantity

The speaker, who is pretending to be the writer Robert Boyle, flouts the maxim of quantity because his speech is full of prolixity. Instead of being informative to this point, he provides excessive description to the state of man and how he is born and aged. Thus, he flouts the maxim of quantity by being more informative and this flout results in sarcasm because he wants to imitate the same writing style of Robert Boyle.

Maxim of Quality

The speaker flouts this maxim since he compares human existence to a broomstick and that is something he has no evidence for, consequently it is untrue because he wants to show that he is not satisfied with Robert Boyle's writing, so by flouting the maxim of quality, the utterance is identified as sarcastic.

Maxim of Relation

This maxim is obeyed by the speaker, since his claims are relevant to the subject matter that is to be covered in his essay which is about Boyle's reflections that were musings on common topics that were compared to religious themes. Boyle would think about a fire or home cleaning and find a mirror of God's or man's connection to his soul in it. In the Temple home, these thoughts were quite well-liked. One day, Swift dissatisfied with the predictability of Boyle's arguments, eventually composed his own meditation to mock Boyle's writing style.

Maxim of Manner

This maxim is partly flouted because the speaker has not been brief in terms of expressing his description toward man because he wants to imitate the same writing style of Robert Boyle, by flouting the maxim of manner, the utterance is identified as sarcastic.

Essay 3: *A Modest Proposal* (1729)

Extract 4:

“It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads and cabin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms.” (Swift, 1729 /2013, p. 928)

Grice's Maxims

Maxim of Quantity

The speaker, who is pretending to be one of the Englishmen, does not flout this maxim since his description is as informative as is required.

Maxim of Quality





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The speaker flouts the maxim of quality when he presents false description about Englishmen when he describes them as “melancholy” since in reality Englishmen are indifferent to the state of beggars, so by flouting the maxim of quality, the utterance is identified as sarcastic. The speaker intends to mock the hierarchical structure that governs British society.

Maxim of Relation

The speaker adheres to this maxim because his description is relevant to the topic of his discussion which is about a proposal to solve the problems of poor Irish.

Maxim of Manner

This maxim is followed by the speaker, as seen by the fact that his description is neither vague nor unclear, rather is distinguished by its conciseness and clarity.

Extract 5:

“The number of souls in this kingdom being usually reckoned one million and a half, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple whose wives are breeders; from which number I subtract thirty thousand couple, who are able to maintain their own children, (although I apprehend there cannot be so many, under the present distresses of the kingdom) but this being granted, there will remain an hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand, for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident or disease within the year. There only remain an hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born. The question therefore is, How this number shall be reared, and provided for? which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed.” (Swift, 1729/2013, p. 929)

Grice's Maxims

Maxim of Quantity

The speaker flouts this maxim since he presents more information to talk about the numbers of people, so this flout results in sarcasm.

Maxim of Quality

The speaker flouts the maxim of quality when he presents false claims with his calculations i.e. unreal numbers of born children every year. Literally, he seems very certain with what he is claiming, but his elaborate and ostensibly illogical calculations are not supported by any evidence and based only on his own knowledge, hence they cannot be true. He fabricates his numbers, and his fury of computations betrays his



care for the Irish people. By this insincerity, he sarcastically, implies that the English government treats poor families as little more than statistics, or even commodities.

Maxim of Relation

The speaker adheres to this maxim because his description is relevant to the topic of his discussion which is about a proposal to solve the problems of poor Irish.

Maxim of Manner

This maxim is partly flouted because the speaker has not been brief in terms of expressing his information that is about the numbers of people, so by flouting the maxim of manner, the utterance is identified as sarcastic

Extract 6:

“I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasie, or a ragoust.” (Swift, 1729 /2013, p. 930)

Grice's Maxims

Maxim of Quantity

The speaker does not flout this maxim since his description is as informative as is required.

Maxim of Quality

The speaker flouts the maxim of quality when he proposes that Irish children should be eaten up by the rest of the population and this is something false because cannibalism is a feature against human's nature, so by flouting the maxim of quality, the utterance is identified as sarcastic. The speaker wants to show that Englishmen do not concern on the poor Irish and he intends to illustrate the effects of colonialism in Ireland and how he figuratively refers to their cannibalistic greed.

Maxim of Relation

The speaker does not adhere to this maxim because his proposal is not relevant to the topic of his discussion which is titled as “modest proposal”, it is far from being humble and “modest.” So, by flouting the maxim of relation, the utterance is identified as sarcastic.

Maxim of Manner

This maxim is followed by the speaker, as seen by the fact that his description is neither vague nor unclear, rather is distinguished by its conciseness and clarity.





Flouting of Maxims in Jonathan Swift's Essays

Extract 7:

“Then as to the females, it would, I think, with humble submission, be a loss to the publick, because they soon would become breeders themselves: And besides, it is not improbable that some scrupulous people might be apt to censure such a practice, (although indeed very unjustly) as a little bordering upon cruelty, which, I confess, hath always been with me the strongest objection against any project, how well soever intended.” (Swift, 1729/2013, p. 932)

Grice's Maxims

Maxim of Quantity

The speaker follows this maxim since his utterance is as informative as is required.

Maxim of Quality

The speaker flouts the maxim of quality when he gives false justification for his disagreement on eating the females because it contradicts his proposal to kill and eat the children. He is pretending to disagree on killing the females, yet he himself proposes to kill the infants, so by flouting the maxim of quality, the utterance is identified as sarcastic. The speaker wants to mock the Englishmen who do not concern on the plight of poor Irish.

Maxim of Relation

There is a flouting to this maxim since the speaker's utterance is not relevant to the proposal that he introduces in the topic which he claims to be “modest proposal” because he wants to make the females as breeders and source for food only and this treatment is similar to the treatment of animals, so by flouting the maxim of relation, the utterance is identified as sarcastic. The speaker wants to mock the Englishmen who do not concern on the plight of poor Irish.

Maxim of Manner

This maxim is followed by the speaker, as seen by the fact that his advice is neither vague nor unclear, rather is distinguished by its conciseness and clarity.

Essay 4: *Of Mean and Great Figures, Made by Several Persons* (1765)

Extract 8:

“Socrates, the whole last day of his life, and particularly from the time he took the poison until the moment he expired.” (Swift, 1765/1883, p. 249)

Grice's Maxims



Maxim of Quantity

The speaker does not obey this maxim since his utterance is less informative than is required because he mentions little information to talk about Socrates and this is because he wants to underestimate the value of Socrates' accomplishments to remind the reader of a plan for a historical book where the main focus is on what makes these people "great" and what they did that show how great they were, so by flouting the maxim of quantity, the utterance is identified as sarcastic.

Maxim of Quality

The speaker flouts this maxim since he says that the most notable attribute of Socrates is that only when he consumed poison on his final day of life and that is something false and untrue because Socrates is known for his great philosophy, so by flouting the maxim of quality, the utterance is identified as sarcastic.

Maxim of Relation

The speaker does not adhere to this maxim because his utterance about Socrates is not relevant to the topic of his discussion which is about the great actions of some figures. He does not mention Socrates' great achievement because he wants to underestimate the value of Socrates' accomplishments to remind the reader of a plan for a historical book where the main focus is on what makes these people "great" and what they did that show how great they were, so by flouting the maxim of relation, the utterance is identified as sarcastic.

Maxim of Manner

This maxim is not followed by the speaker since he does not show his claim in a clear manner to make the readers reconsider Socrates' great achievements, so by flouting the maxim of manner, the utterance is identified as sarcastic.

6. Conclusion

The analysis in the four essays shows that although sarcasm is a kind of irony, yet there are important distinctions that establish it as a distinct rhetorical type such as intentionality, reference to prior events, insincerity and the presence of a clear target or victim. Also, the writer has flouted all the maxims to make fun on someone or to mock a specific situation. Those flouts have achieved their purpose and communicated the hidden meaning of the utterance. It is concluded that all the maxims can be flouted to achieve sarcasm.

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