

Violating and Flouting the Cooperative Principle in Some Selected Short Stories

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Abstract

The present research aims to study the role of language in communication and the main properties of the assumed meaning that is conveyed through language.

This work , directed by and built upon Grice's Theory of Implicature with its main principle (The cooperative principle, which embodies maxims the four Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner), and it tries to show that the meaning of an utterance would not be complete if it does not taken into account the intentions of the speaker.

The study attempts to show that language and context with all their elements cannot be separated, and that ,as a consequence , the meaning conveyed should by no means seen as a decontextualized activity .

Yet , the main aim of this work is the attempt to show that Grice's four conversational maxims are not fixed rules but maxims that can be broken easily or flouted on many occasions.

The research includes five sections : the first section is devoted to the introduction which states the problem, aim and scope of the study and some important linguistic concepts and Grice's four maxims .The second section includes the main difference between linguistic principles and rules. The third section states some different philosophical and linguistic points of view , which agree and refuse Grice's four maxims. In the fourth section, three models of analysis are presented and an eclectic model is developed to be used in the process of analysis. The fifth section introduces the conclusions which this work arrives at .

Key words: Analyzing the selected short stories , The Wedding , quality.

الخلاصة

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة دور اللغة في الاتصال والخصائص الرئيسية للمعنى المفترض خلالها، مستنداً إلى نظرية غرايس ومبدأها العام "مبدأ التعاون" الذي يتضمن المبادئ الرئيسية الأربعة: الكم، النوع، الصلة، والكيف مبيناً إلى عدم اكتمال معنى اللفظ إذا لم يؤخذ بعين الاعتبار قصد المتحدث. وأن مبادئ غرايس الأساسية الأربعة للحديث ليست قواعد ثابتة بل مجرد مبادئ قابلة للتجاوز في كثير من الأحيان.

يتكون البحث من خمسة أبواب: باب الأول هو مقدمة ويتناول المشكلة وهدف البحث وبعض التعاريف اللغوية ومبادئ غرايس الأربعة الأساسية والباب الثاني يتضمن بعض الفروق بين مفهوم المبادئ والأحكام اللغوية . أما الباب الثالث يوضح بعض آراء مؤيدية ومعارضة لحالات تتجاوز مبادئ غرايس الأساسية . والباب الرابع يتضمن ثلاثة نماذج للتحليل لثلاث كتاب مختلفين في كتابة القصة القصيرة في الأدب الانكليزي. والباب الخامس النتائج التي توصل إليها الباحث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل قصص قصيرة، الزواج، النوع .

1.1 Introduction

Communication in society happens chiefly by means of language. It is a continuous process in which the interlocutors co-operate with each other by maintaining certain rules and regulations in order to continue the conversation. However the users of language ,as social beings ,communicate and use language on society premises; society control their access to the linguistic and communicative means . As we know, these conversational -principles come under the topic of pragmatics . Pragmatics, as the study of the way humans use their language in communication, focuses on the study of these communicative means. The present research is an endeavor to throw some light on the nature of discourse in short stories .It also shows that Grice's four conversational maxims are not fixed rules but maxims that can be broken easily or flouted on many occasions .Then, an attempt will be made to examine the selected short stories written by different authors. Many researchers have done researches on the application of pragmatics to drama and novels but short stories remains to be a neglected area of research in terms of applied pragmatics. In the short stories, there are many conversational pieces which can be studied against the backdrop of pragmatics. The conversational pieces though embedded in the structural design ,have extended meaning beyond the grammatical boundaries ;they discovered the socio -cultural reality when these short stories were written.

Richards et al.(2002: 412) state that Pragmatics is sometimes contrasted with semantics, which deals with meaning without reference to users and communicative functions of the sentence.

Pragmatics is the study of the use of language in communication, particularly the relationships between sentences and the contexts of situations in which they are used.

Mey (2001:71-72) states that communicative principles, by which it is understood that people, when communicating ,have something to tell each other. Communication, furthermore requires people to cooperate; the "bare facts" of conversation come alive only in mutually accepted, pragmatically determined context. Grice (1975 :41-58) was the first to talk about co- operation in relation to the act of linguistic communication .Cooperation has itself been elevated to the status of an independent principle in the works of the late British/American philosopher H.Paul Grice (1957-1989), whose cooperative Principle (abbreviated :CP) consists of four pragmatic sub-principle or " maxims " ,to wit :

The maxim of quantity:

- 1 –Make your contribution as informative as required;
- 2- Do not make your contribution more informative than required.

The maxim of quality:

- Do not say what you believe to be false;
Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

The maxim of relation:

- Make your contribution relevant .

The maxim of manner

- Be perspicuous , and specifically
- 1-Avoid obscurity
 - 2 -Avoid ambiguity

3- Be brief

4- Be orderly

These four maxims can be seen as instances of one super ordinate

(as Grice calls it) Cooperative Principle:

Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 1975:47) To begin with, let's ask how the CP works, not in the abstract world of principles ,but in actual language use . When do we use the maxims , respectively when do we fail to use them ,and why are they necessary in the first place ?The answer to the last question is: because otherwise communication would be very difficult, and perhaps break down altogether. The first two questions may be illustrated anecdotally by the following story, showing the usefulness and necessity of some of the maxims in everyday conversation .

Consider the following scenario. There is a woman sitting on a park bench and a large dog lying on the ground in front of the bench. A man comes along and sits down on the bench.

Man: Does your dog bite? Woman : No(the man reaches down to pet ,the dog which bites the man's hand)

Man: Ouch /Hey you said your dog doesn't bite .

Woman . He doesn't .But that's not my dog .

One of the problems in this scenario has to do with communication specifically ,it seems to be a problem caused by the man's assumption that more was communicated than was said .It isn't a problem with presupposition because the assumption in your dog (i.e. the woman has a dog) is true for both speakers .The problem is the man's assumption that his question "does your dog bites? and the woman's answer 'No ' both apply to the dog in front of them .In other words ,she might expected to provide the information stated in the lasted line. Of course ,if she had mentioned this information earlier ,the story wouldn't be as funny. For the event to be funny ,the woman has to give less information than is expected. The concept of there being an expected amount of information provided in conversation is just one aspect of the more general idea that people involved in a conversation will cooperate with each other (of course ,the woman may actually be indicating that she does not want to take part in any cooperative interaction with the stranger) . In most circumstances, the assumption of cooperation is so pervasive that it can be stated as cooperative principle of conversation and elaborated in four sub – principles ,called maxims .

Grice (1975:58) says that when we communicate we assume, without realizing it, that we, and the people we are talking to, will be conversationally cooperative. We will cooperate to achieve mutual conversational ends. This conversational cooperation even to work when we are not being cooperative socially . So, for example ,we can be arguing with one another angrily and yet we still cooperate quite a lot conversationally to achieve the argument ,this conversational cooperation manifests itself , according to Grice, in a number of conversational MAXIMS ,as he calls them, but ,which we feel the need to abide by ,these maxims look at first sight like rules, but they appear to be broken more often than grammatical or phonological rules and this is why Grice uses the term 'maxim rather than 'rules"

However ,we can see the violation of these maxims in our daily conversation .The maxims unlike so many grammatical rules, they operate in concrete contexts ,rather than in the abstract space of linguistic speculation .

Mey(2001:66-67) has given a very beautiful example about the violation of cooperative principles .Sara ,the author's daughter plays with a ball in the house of a friend who is a great lover of books and her little bouncing ball gets lost behind a row of books on one of the shelves . When the small girl asks the owner of the books if he had seen the ball, he replied

"Why don't you look behind volume 6 of Dostoyevsky's collected works?"

Mey (ibid) calls the answer a non –cooperative utterance

A –It violates the maxim of manner by offering information in a manner which is not "perspicuous" .The name "Dostoyevsky" doesn't have any meaning for the little girl.

b- It violates the maxim of quantity because it contains both too little and much information at the same time. Too much for one who doesn't know anything about Dostoyevsky and too little to help the girl retrieve her lost ball.

Co-operative principle is motivated by the goals and requirements of the interlocutors. Usually, interlocutors co-operate with each other by observing these maxims and therefore conversation becomes fruitful.

1.2 Maxims but not strict Linguistic Rules .

Grice' s suggested maxims are considered as norms , conventions and not strict rules that cannot be broken .

So the maxim of Quantity ,Quality , Relation and Manner (Grice,1975), can be violated or flouted in many occasions .

The above maxims are seen by Kempson (1977:70) as just conventions and norms and ,unlike linguistic rules , since in any case often broken.

In comparison between the conversational maxims and linguistic rules, Leech (1983:7-8) states that the kind of constraint on linguistic behavior exemplified by Grice' s CP differs from the kind of rule normally formulated in linguistics.

To Allan (1986:30), the maxims can be considered as the compass refers to different direction through which a traveller can tell which direction should be tried .

And finally ,Finch (2000:160) regards maxims as the implicit principles on successful communication is built. Being so ,they can be departed whenever such communication is not needed or is intended to be hindered .

Some linguists follow the lead of Sperber and Wilson (1980) in arguing that all the maxims of the CP can be incorporated within the injunction " To Be Relevant ".Those linguists demand that since not telling the truth is insufficiently informative and a type of presenting information in a haphazard way ,so all the case is no more than neglecting the demands of Relevance .

1.3 Violating and Flouting

Sperber and Wilson(1995:118-171) have objected to these maxims saying: it seems to us to be a matter of common experience that the degree of co-operation described by Grice is not automatically expected of communicators. People who don't give us all the information we wish they would, and don't answer our questions as well as they could are no doubt much to blame, but not for violating principles of "communication"

Thus we see that these principles have their own limitations, yet they are important and useful to know and carry out in conversational activities.

Finch (2000:160) explains that violations are different from flouting. Violating a maxim involves some element of communication failure: providing too little or too much details being irrelevant or too vague

Concerning the process of flouting ,kempson (1977:70) states that the norms of conversation are deliberately and flagrantly broken in such a way that the speaker knows and intends that the hearer shall recognize that a maxim has been broken. Mey(2001:76) identifies three important areas where such problem may arise.

First, there is cooperation itself, taken as a general, inviolable and indisputable rule of behavior.

Second, there are significant intercultural differences in cooperative principle . Some linguists(e.g. Gazdar,1979)have understood these findings as implying that cooperation , interpreted as strict adherence to the Gricean principles (be perspicuous ' etc.), are always defined relative to a particular culture .

The third issue is rather different, even though it has a superficial similarity to the first two. One cannot help noticing that certain forms of social (including language) behavior are preferred(and hence rewarded), while others are subject to sanction .

According to Brown and Levinson(1978:220-233), the whole process can be stated as follows:

1-Flouting the maxim of quantity results in:

A-Understatement

B-Overstatement

C- Tautology.

2- Flouting the maxim of quality produces

A-Irony

b- Metaphor

c- Rhetorical questions

3- Flouting relevance (maxim of relation) would result, in fact, in no figure of speech but sometimes, the irrelevant situations may lead to comic scenes. Such flouting may take the type of changing the subject suddenly ,especially in cases of asking a question by speaker which is usually far from the topic in question, in case of failing of addressing the topic directly. All these matters have also been mentioned by Thomas(1995:70).

4- While flouting the maxim of manner produces:

A-ambiguity

b- Vagueness

c- Ellipsis

Thornborrow(1998:96) defines that metaphor is another linguistic process used to make comparisons between the attributes of one thing /person and something else.

Hornby (1974:542) describes this stylistic device as the use of words to indicate something different from the literal meaning, as in 'I'll make him eat his words, or 'He has a heart of stone'.

Metaphors can be very simple, but there are many ways in which they can also be extremely complex,

e.g. your hands are blocks of ice.

Tautology is widely discussed in logic.It is derived from the Greek word which means 'same –speech"

For Wales (1989:455), the term is of Greek origin also and through which an argument or proposition is repeated in the same or different words in the same utterance ,e.g. An elephant is an animal ; facts are facts.

1.4 Analyzing the selected short stories

For the purpose of analysis ,the researcher would examine and evaluate the conversational pieces considering good examples for observation and violation of the maxims of cooperation in three short stories by different authors.

The short story is "**The Wedding**" by Valentine Mavuso is selected for the analysis .

Bongi "if you want me to go, I will,"

"Oh, excuse me, for staring, it's justIt's just, that you look beautiful, I said, with a smile.

Bongi and Mandal are standing at the door .She asks him to allow her to entre. Her question is supposed to be answered as adjacency pair (request- answer), but she does not receive any answer .So she asks whether he allows her to entre or go again. Thus he violates the maxim of quantity according to Grice's principles" Give the appropriate amount of information –not too much or too little "

"What?" I asked

I said "I don't want to marry you any more 'she repeated "

"Yeah, yeah, I heard that, but why???"I ask her

According to Levinson ,Brown(1978) and Yule's model (1985) ,we notice that he uses Wh-word "what "to know the reason behind her decision to cancel the marriage . He seems to fail in choosing the correct word. Thus the flouting of the relevance maxim is clear .

Are you feeling sick?

Or are you drunk?

Or are you testing me?

In this dialogue ,Mandla asks his fiancée a series of questions to emphasize something which is known by him. Such type of questions is not expected to be answered. Thus, these rhetorical questions are considered as type of flouting of the maxim of quality according to brown and Levinson 's model .

"Why my father, why not any of my friends "said Mandla

"What did you see in him? The man is 68 years"

"Old for god's sake

What is wrong with you woman?

Again there is flouting of the maxim of quality since he asks a series of the questions to know the reason behind her choosing his father as lover not any of his friends .These rhetorical questions makes him flout the maxim of quality

Themba was father's name

Hey themba, please come in and let's talk man to man"

Mandla calls his father in ironic way by calling (thema)his first name as Bongi usually does to show contrast situation in relationship between Bongi and his father on the one hand ,and his father and his family on the other hand .so when someone misuse appropriate concept in the conversation ,it is clear flouting of the maxim of quality.

"Please, don't, she said

"Don't make it difficult for yourself, I will find my own way out "

After she makes a shock to him ,she asks him not to follow her to the door . She seems to violate the maxim of quality since her request comes in an ironic way according to brown and Levinson's model.(1978)

The second short story is written by W.W.JACOBS .It is called " A Love Passage"

Ugh/there's a beetle .ugh /said the girl

It's quite dead ,said the mate

I've never seen a live beetle on this ship

In this dialogue, the mate tries to describe a dirty place in an ironic way by saying that he hasn't seen a live beetle on the ship. He means that the place is unclean and ugly with dead beetles, so he uses this evidence true in an opposite way. It is clear that he flouts the maxim of the quality as he speaks in an ironic way.

The mate, she'll marry the clerk

The skipper, I'll bet you she don't.

Again, Jack (the mate) aims to make the skipper nervous by telling him that his daughter would marry the clerk she loves, and not the person whom her father wants her to marry him. This is an ironic situation that leads the mate not to follow the maxim of quality .

The skipper ,Tell her about a lot of young girls you know as married young middle – aged men, and loved em loved more and more every day of their lives.

The mate ,not another word .

The captain does not tell the truth by saying the mate knows a lot of young girls who are happy in their marriage to middle-aged men .He aims to persuade his daughter to marry Towson, the business man , by lying. So he flouts the maxim of quality.

Calm and peaceful up here, isn't? said Jack

Don't talk to me, said Miss Alsen

Why doesn't this nasty little ship keep still? I believe it's you making her jumping about like this, said the girl.

Me? The mate

Jack wants to start a conversation by telling Alsen how stars are bright and beautiful. But she dislikes talking with him , and changes the talking. This sudden change of conversation or dialogue leads her to break the maxim of relevance.

I shouldn't like to be a sailor even if I were a man ,the girl

Why not ?,the mate

I don't know, said the girl; meditatively " sailors are generally such scrubby little men, aren't they?"

In this conversation, she metaphorically describes sailors in bad way. She says that they are scrubby. According to Brown and Levison' s model(1978), it is clear that the maxim of quality is not fulfilled , but flouted here, as she speaks in such a way.

The skipper, who the --what the---who the devil 's done this?

I did ,the mate .

You did? You ?what for ?the skipper

The skipper surprises as he finds the rime of the portrait is covered with mustard. But he asks series of questions which are supposed to be answered. He seems to break the maxim of quantity. He doesn't wait to be answered

The mate : I don't know, something seemed to come over me all of a sudden, and I felt I MUST do it.

But what did you want to such a monkey –trick FOR? Roared the skipper

The mate does not follow the maxim of quality as he does not tell the truth that his daughter who asks him to do. He says that he did it as he felt to do. The skipper also flouts the maxim of quality as he metaphorically describes jack's doing as monkey- trick.

Who ?who 's kitty Lonely

Kitty lonely, " he said in surprise, " the little girl you are going to marry who are you getting at?

Didn't you buy the ring with money?

No ,said the mate , " I ---oh ,no ---of course – what on earth are you talking about ?

According to brown and Yule's model, the speaker gives false information, and then he asks irrelevant question lead the speaker to flout the maxim of quality and relevant maxim .

I suppose it's a joke of his, said the mate

And the salt, said she; 'I won't tell her

In above conversation, the mate tries to explain the situation. But she does not be cooperative; she changes the talking by asking him to pass salt. This change of topic leads to break the maxim of Relevance .

Bessie Watson, said the mate

Little girl in a blue hat with white feathers, and a blue frock, that came with us.

Again there is another flouting of maxim of quality. Since the mate tells lying and does not follow Gricean principle "tell the truth ---"

The skipper: Perhaps you'll tell us who this Bessie Watson is, and where she lives?

The mate: She lives with kitty lonely said the mate

Both the speakers are not cooperative. Both of them do not know the girls and pretend they know them. By doing so. They do not follow the maxim of quality and the maxim of relation as they are vague in their speech.

The third short story is written by Charles Dickens

"The Baron of Grogzwig" by Charles Dickens

The story is about the Baron von koelduethough who spends his life in hunting and drinking wine every night. He likes a merry life and does everything he likes. His behavior is rough with his friends and family . Finally he loses his money and decides to kill himself.

Fill to the lady of grogzwig

I said to the lady of grogzwig

I said to the lady of grogzwig

In above dialogue , the Baron repeats the same sentence which is supposed to be understood by the followers from the first time . This tautology makes the baron flout the maxim of quantity according to Grice 's principle " give the appropriate amount of information –not too much or too little

To please me, love

To please the devil, ma'am" answered the baron

The Baron's wife pleases him to disband his followers. But the Baron does not accept. According to Brown and Levison 's models, he flouts the maxim of quality,since he metaphorically compared himself with the devil .This type of metaphor results in flouting the maxim of quality , calling him as devil is as sort of belittling his humanity.

Perhaps it's not sharp enough

Put a flask of wine and the largest pipe

I ii smoke a last pipe

The Baron decided to kill himself. So he took a knife from cupboard. Then he sharpened the knife and asked the domestic to bring a bottle of wine and the largest pipe to him. His behavior seems not to be serious as a man want to kill him. He flouts the maxim of quality since he speaks in ironic way.

What's now? Replied the stranger

What's now? replied the Baron

How did you get here?

The stranger starts his conversation with ambiguous question. This makes him flout the maxim of manner, also flouts the maxim of quantity since he gives a little information. Then the Baron who supposed to answer the question, he asks another question. The failing of address the topic of talk makes the Baron also flout the maxim of manner.

You seem in a hurry

Why , yes , I am .

The Baron asks the stranger but the strange asks and answers in the same time. So there is flouting the maxim of quantity on the side of the stranger.

Conclusion

1-The reasons of the cooperative principles used in short story are to make easy we understand the dialogue or conversation in literary texts in addition that this aim at minimizing misunderstanding among the readers and characters .

2-There are some utterances in the selected short stories that flout the maxim of relevance .It implies that the characters in the story tend to avoid talking about something. They change the topic of conversation and do not give well responses to the partner.

3- There are some utterances that flout the maxim of manner in the selected short stories to say something which the listener does not know or realize .

4-The violation of maxims in stories causes the conversation not to go smoothly. The authors want to make some variations in the conversation, so the conversation will not be boring .

5- Scholars may face some difficulties in the analysis of the cooperative principle of in short stories since the short stories are limited in length,characters and plot.

6-The influence of socio –cultural norms are explicit on the characters to follow the linguistic behavior of the society .So one cannot interpret their conversations without understanding the social reality .

7-The study of the cooperative principles would be limited as there are few characters in the short story .

8-The maximum flouting of the maxims ,in the selected short stories, is quality maxim ,then followed by the quantity maxim in the selected short stories .

9-In order to appreciate the full impact of each utterance in the story ,it is important that the reader looks at various utterances from both characters and authorial viewpoint .

10- Language is something not static. It is inevitably prone to change like any other phenomenon in life, and understanding its role in life and communication should be realized in accordance with this fact.

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