



# Flouting in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

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by

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### Abstract

The present research studies language in communication depending on Grice's theory implicature and its cooperative principles which contains four maxims. These maxims are: maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of manner, and maxim of relation. The main aim of these maxims is to connect the meaning with speaker's intention, to emphasize that the meaning cannot be completed without illustrating the speaker intention and also to show that these maxims can be easily broken or flouted through the novel, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen. This novel is a rich arena because of Mrs. Bennet's aim of getting her daughters rich husbands and this aim creates various reactions from other characters that make fun of her scheme. It is the best example to show the flouting of Grecian maxims. Writers resort to flouting to achieve certain purpose as to insert humor or irony, to give little information, to clarify something i.e. to give more information, to shift the subject and other purposes; flouting is something that described as positive thing in novel or film.

Keywords : Flouting, Grice's Maxims , Cooperative Principle , *Pride and Prejudice*, and irony.

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الملخص

البحث يتناول دراسة دور اللغة في التواصل و المحادثة معتمدا على نظريه جريس والتي تحوي أربعة محاور مترابطة وهي مبدأ الكم ، مبدأ الأسلوب مبدأ المناسبة، ومبدأ الكيفية. واكد البحث على ان الحصول على المعنى الكامل لا يتم بدون فهم معايير تلك النظرية. وقد تناول البحث خروقات لتلك المبادئ في رواية جين أوستن (التكبر والهوى) والتي تعتبر موضوع مناسب لتطبيق تلك المبادئ لما فيها من خروقات كثيرة لمبادئ النظرية. وقد اظهر البحث أن تلك الخروقات يمكن أن توظف و تعتبر ضرورية في النص لفهم شخصية المتكلم وتفيد بربط الأحداث ببعضها. والاساس في هذا البحث هو تتبع الخروقات لنظرية جريس التي وظفت بشكل جديد ليعطى معنى يدعم النص. والخروقات أضافت لمسات فكاهية و مواقف كوميدية للعمل نفسه أو لتوضيح شئ أو اعطاء معنى اضافي او لتغيير الموضوع. لذا توصف تلك الخروقات بالايجابية في العمل الادبي.

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language is the main means of communication. People exchange information with each other speaking about themselves through language. In spite of depending on language, each community has rules to be followed in communication and there are rules that establish the successful conversation. So, the rules of conversation are called maxims. Paul H. Grice includes these rules within his theory of maxim. To him, these maxims are necessary to have relevant conversation the maxims are regarded are the main element in understanding any speech. The speakers can depart maxims through flouting by providing either too little or too much words or unclear detail. Flouting can measured the creative writing. Flouting can occur when a speaker tries to cheat or deceive other which leads comedy and irony.



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## 2-1 PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics is one field of Linguistics which concerns with invisible meaning of utterance. It is used to unclothe the meaning in written and spoken utterance. Pragmatics sometimes goes deeper than linguistic rules in revealing the hidden meaning that cannot be understood without checking the way the speakers use it (Aitchison 2000:17) and (Habermas 1998:54). Lyons states that via pragmatics meaning can reveal the meaning without complete depending on words (2002 :5). Pragmatics can be defined as the study of language in context and via situations (Richard and Schmidt 2010 :449). Charles Morris establishes this field (Blackmore 2002:71),but Grice participates in shaping this field in its final shape.

## 2 -2 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

Cooperative principles are introduced by Grice in order to achieve a complete conversation. Grundy (2002: 73) states that Grice argued that speakers intend to be cooperative when they talk. One way of being cooperative is to give as much information as expected. Grice considers cooperative principle`s aims to "make your conversational 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" (1989: 26). Levinson defines cooperative principle as "a set of general rules to describe how participants cooperate in conversation to achieve smooth and efficient interaction" ( 1983 101). There is a strong connection between cooperative principle and the maxims of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relevance and maxim of manner. Sometimes people ignore these rules and flouting either to add more information or to insert some humors in their talking. Through flouting, one can read



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further meanings from the utterance. Grice's principle aims to make your contribution as it is required. Grice translates the principles in four maxims (Ibid). These maxims are:

### 2-2-1 Maxim of Quantity

According to Grice, the user of language should use as number of words as it is required no less no more in order not to flouting the maxim. This maxim depends on the amount of information that is given for an answer.

### 2-2-2 Maxim of Quality

This maxim depends on the authenticity of the information that is given. Thus violating this maxim occurs when the speech is false and lacks evidence. This maxim implies that the speaker utterance should be true and avoid any utterance that has less evidence.

### 2-2-3 Maxim of Relevance

To be relevant to achieve this maxim, the partners in the conversation should keep on talking on the same topic without any deviating towards another topic.

### 2-2-4 Maxim of Manner

The participants of any conversation should be clear and brief to match with this maxim. Ambiguity is the main thing that violates this maxim. Arrangement of idea is required in this maxim. Depending on these rules, the amount of the information should be as it is required, no less no more. This information should be true, clear and brief (Campbell 2001: 256). The Speaker should obey these rules in order to get clarity.



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### 3-1 Data Analysis

Austen's *Pride and prejudice* is a rich area of flouting so Grice's theory can be applied in this novel to show the flouting that is committed by the characters in their conversation in the four maxims: maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relevance, and maxim of manner. The flouting is done by various characters. Their floutings fall under various reasons as they want to give more information or to insert some humor. These flouting will be clarified according to Grice's theory. All the data are taken from the novel *Pride and prejudice*.

Mrs. Bennet: "My dear Mr. Bennet, have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"

Mrs. Bennet: "for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it."

Mr. Bennet: made no answer.

Mrs. Bennet: "Do not you want to know who has taken it

Mr. Bennet: "*You* want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

Mr. Bennet: "What is his name?"

"Bingley."

Mr. Bennet: "Is he married or single?"

Mr. Bennet: "Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. That a fine thing for our girls!"

Mrs. Bennet: "My dear Mr. Bennet, how can you be so tiresome!

You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them

Mr. Bennet: "Is that his design in settling here?"

Mrs. Bennet: "Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he *may* fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes." ( Austen 2001: 3)

This conversation is between Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet who tells her husband that Netherfield is rented by a rich man. In this conversation both Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Bennet make flouting of quantity. As Grice's theory is based on the idea that exchanging the information should be as it is required no less on more (1989: 26).



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Mr. Bennet gives no answer. Also when she tells him "Do not you want to know who has taken it ." Mr. Bennet makes flouting of quantity according to Grice his answer should be either 'yes' or 'no' but he gives more information that it is needed saying "You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it." also Mrs. Bennet flouting the maxim of quantity in answering her husband question "is he married or single?" according to Grice her answer should be either married or single. On the contrary she gives more information in describing the new neighbor "Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. That a fine thing for our girls!" Mrs. Bennet makes flouting of quantity in her answer to her husband question "Is that his design in settling here?" according to Grice her answer should be either yes or no but she gives more information than it needed "Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes." Mr. Bennet also makes fun of his wife and flouting the maxim of manner as he uses irony in his question that Mr. Benigle came to Netherfield for marrying one of her daughters .

Mrs. Bennet: "Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves."

Mr. Bennet: "You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least."(4)

In this conversation between Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Bennet, she complains that her husband does not help her in getting husbands for their daughters by saying "Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves." According to Grice, Mr. Bennet`s reply contains flouting the maxim of quality when he uses irony as he says "You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least."



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Jane: "I was very much flattered by his asking me to dance a second time. I did not expect such a compliment."

Elizabeth: "Oh! you are a great deal too apt you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in any body. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life." (10)

This conversation takes place between Jane and Elizabeth. Jane expresses her happiness that Mr. Bingle asks her to dance with her for the second time. According to Grice Elizabeth's answer contains flouting of quality as she uses exaggeration in "Oh! you are a great deal too apt you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in any body. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life."

Mr. Bennet: "But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighborhood."

Mrs. Bennet: "It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come since you will not visit them."

Mr. Bennet: "Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all." (5)

This conversation takes place between Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet. Mr. Bennet utterance contains flouting of manner and quality as he makes fun of his wife in hunting husbands for her daughters "But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighborhood."

Mr. Bennet: "How good it was in you, my dear Mr. Bennet! But I knew I should persuade you at last. I was sure you loved your girls too well to neglect such an acquaintance. ..."

Mr. Bennet: "Now, Kitty, you may cough as much as you chuse," (6)

This conversation takes place between Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Bennet. She expresses her happiness that her husband visits Mr. Bingley. Mr. Bennet in his uttering makes flouting of quality as he uses irony when he says "Now, Kitty, you may cough as



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much as you chuse," because in pervious sitting when Mrs. Bennet was angry of Mr. Bennet she asks Kitty to stop cough

Elizabeth: "and I could easily forgive *his* pride, if he had not mortified *mine*."

a young Lucas: "If I were as rich as Mr. Darcy, I should not care how proud I was. I would keep a pack of foxhounds, and drink a bottle of wine every day." (14)

This conversation takes place between Elizabeth and young Lucas. The former expresses her attitude concerning Mr. Darcy pride "and I could easily forgive *his* pride, if he had not mortified *mine*." Lucas utterance flouting the maxim of quality as she uses exaggeration: "If I were as rich as Mr. Darcy, I should not care how proud I was. I would keep a pack of foxhounds, and drink a bottle of wine every day."

Mrs. Bennet: "No, my dear, you had better go on horseback, because it seems likely to rain; and then you must stay all night."

Mr. Bennet : "if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders." (21- 22)

In this conversation Mrs. Bennet makes a plan in order to let her daughter stay in Mr. Bingley house so she refuses to let her takes the carriage as it begins to rain without caring for her safety "No, my dear, you had better go on horseback, because it seems likely to rain; and then you must stay all night." According to Grice Mr. Bennet reply contains flouting the maxim of quality as he uses irony, "if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders."

Caroline : "It is impossible to laugh at Mr. Darcy."

Elizabeth: "Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at!" (39)

This conversation is between Caroline and Elizabeth. Caroline expresses her opinion of Mr. Darcy "It is impossible to laugh at Mr. Darcy." According to Grice Elizabeth's



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utterance flouting the maxim of quality as she uses irony " Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at?"

Mrs. Bennet: "But depend upon it, Mr. Collins, that Lizzy shall be brought to reason. I will speak to her about it myself directly. She is a very headstrong foolish girl, and does not know her own interest; but will make her know it."

Mr. Collins: "Pardon me for interrupting you, Madam; but if she is really headstrong and foolish, I know not whether she would altogether be a very desirable wife to a man in my situation, who naturally looks for happiness in the marriage state. If therefore she actually persists in rejecting my suit, perhaps it were better not to force her into accepting me, because if liable to such defects of temper, she could not contribute much to my felicity."

Mrs. Bennet: "Sir, you quite misunderstand me, Lizzy is only headstrong in such matters as these. In everything else she is as good natured a girl as ever lived.. . ." (75-76)

This conversation is between Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Collins. Mrs. Bennet ensures Mr. Collins that she will convince her daughter to accept him as a husband, she describes her daughter as: "But depend upon it, Mr. Collins, that Lizzy shall be brought to reason. . ." It is clearly she makes flouting of quality as she shifts her words after Mr. Collins asking her "Pardon me for interrupting you, Madam; but if she is really headstrong and foolish, I know not whether she would altogether be a very desirable wife. . ."

Elizabeth: "Engaged to Mr. Collins! my dear Charlotte,—impossible!"

Charlotte : "I see what you are feeling, you must be surprised, very much surprised,—so lately as Mr. Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had time to think it all over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life I will speak to her about it myself directly. She is a very headstrong foolish girl, and does not know her own interest; but will make her know it." (75- 85)

This conversation happens between Lizzie and Charlotte. Lizzie tells Charlotte about her engagement, "Engaged to Mr. Collins! My dear Charlotte—*impossible!* " Lizzie expresses her attitude about Mr. Collins her answer does not encourage her to accept Collins. It is clear from this conversation that Charlotte`s utterance breaks the



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maxim of quantity. She gives too more information than it is needed: "I see what you are feeling, you must be surprised, very much surprised,—so lately as Mr. Collins was wishing to marry you. But when you have had time to think it all over, I hope you will be satisfied with what I have done. I am not romantic you know. I never was. I ask only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins's character, connections, and situation in life. ..."

Elizabeth: "She looks sickly and cross.—Yes, she will do for him very well. She will make him a very proper wife.(106)

Elizabeth's utterance to herself when she sees Miss de Bourge, who is not good looking. So, Elizabeth flouting the maxim of quality as she uses irony by saying "She looks sickly and cross.—Yes, she will do for him very well. She will make him a very proper wife."

Lady: "Catherine: what is your age?"

Elizabeth: "With three younger sisters grown up," (110)

This conversation occurs between Lizzie and Lady Catherine. Lady Catherine asks Lizzie about her age "What is your age?" According to Grice 's maxims her answer should be a number as 20 or 26 but she does not answer her directly. She is flouting the maxim of quantity as she gives too much information "With three younger sisters grown up,"

Mr. Bingley : "And I wish my collection were larger for your benefit and my own credit; but I am an idle fellow, and though I have not many, I have more than I ever look into"(26) .

This lines are between Lizzie and Mr. Bingley. Lizzie's speech concerning the book in the library is receiving long and unexpected answer of Mr. Bingley in which he expresses his regret because he neglects his reading. "And I wish my collection were larger for your benefit and my own credit; but I am an idle fellow, and though I have not many, I have more than I ever look into." Mr. Bingley gives her more information. Mr. Bingley 's utterance falls under the flouting of the maxim of quantity as he gives too much information than it required.



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Lizzie: I wonder who first discovered the efficacy of poetry in driving away love!"

Darcy: "I have been used to consider poetry as the *food* of love,"

Lizzie: "Of a fine, stout, healthy love it may. Everything nourishes what is strong already. But if it be only a slight, thin sort of inclination, I am convinced that one good sonnet will starve it entirely away." (31)

Lizzie in this conversation asked "I wonder who first discovered the efficacy of poetry in driving away love!" It means who says that poetry has the ability to drive love out. Mr. Darcy's response "I have been used to consider poetry as the *food* of love," his answer flouting the maxim of quantity. His answer should be indicated the person that discovered the poetry instead he gives additional idea concerning the connection between poetry and love. According to Grice's theory, his speech falls under the flouting of the maxim of quality using metaphor so he makes flouting (Cutting 2002: 37). There is flouting of the maxim of quality in this conversation. Lizzie's utterance "Of a fine, stout, healthy love it may. Everything nourishes what is strong already. But if it be only a slight, thin sort of inclination, I am convinced that "one good sonnet will starve it entirely away. Falls under the flouting of manner as she uses metaphor. Also her answer is irrelevant to Mr. Darcy. She breaks the maxim of relevance.

Mr. Darcy : "I cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen, in the whole range of my acquaintance, that are really accomplished."

Miss Bingley: "Nor I, I am sure,"

Elizabeth: "you must comprehend a great deal in your idea of an accomplished woman."

Mr. Darcy : "Yes; I do comprehend a great deal in it." (27)

Darcy, Miss Bingley, and Lizzie participate in this conversation Mr. Darcy's expressing "I do not know more than half a dozen women that are truly accomplished." His talking includes exaggeration Mr. Darcy flouting the maxim of quality. Mr. Darcy utterance included exaggerated.

Mr. Darcy: "Do not you feel a great inclination, Miss Bennet, to seize such an opportunity of dancing a reel?"

Lizzie : made no answer.



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Lizzie: "Oh! said she, "I heard you before; but I could not immediately determine what to say in reply. You wanted me, I know, to say yes, that you might have the pleasure of despising my taste; but delight in overthrowing those kind of schemes, and cheating a person of their premeditated contempt. I have therefore made up my mind to tell you, that I do not want to dance a reel at all—and now despise me if you dare." (35)

In this conversation Mr. Darcy asks Lizzie "Do not you feel a great inclination. ..." She violates the maxim of quantity as she gives no answer. She also makes flouting the maxim of quantity in her answer "Oh! said she, "I heard you before; but I could not immediately determine what to say in reply. You wanted me, I know, to say yes, that you might have the pleasure of despising my taste; ..." According to Grice her answer should be either yes or no instead she gives more information.

Fitzwilliam : What was my friend like in Hertfordshire?

Lizzie : You really care to know? Prepare yourself for something very dreadful. The first time I saw him, he danced with nobody, though gentlemen were scarce and there was more than one lady without a partner. (116)

The conversation happens between Fitzwilliam and Lizzie. Fitzwilliam's question "What was my friend like in Hertfordshire?" aims to know something about Mr. Darcy. Lizzie replies "You really care to know? Prepare yourself for something very dreadful. The first time I saw him, he danced with nobody, though gentlemen were scarce . ..." Her speech flouting the maxim of quality as it is insufficient to the question .

Charlotte : What on earth have you done to poor Mr. Darcy?

Lizzie : I have no idea. (91)

This dialogue is between Charlotte and Lizzie. Charlotte's utterance "What on earth have you done to poor Mr. Darcy?" whereas Lizzie's reply "I have no idea." Flouting the maxim of quantity as Lizzie's answer is less than it required Cutting (2002: 37) flouting the maxim quality happens in using the hyperbole, metaphor, irony. In



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summary, anyone flouting the maxim aims to achieve certain purpose. It may be change the topic, to make it clear.

### Conclusion

This work intends to show that Grice's maxims can be flouted. It is investigated through the novel of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The research traces flouting in four maxims: manner, quality, quantity and relevance. The reasons of flouting are to give more information than it is needed. Sometime it is used to insert humor. It appears clearly when one get far away from the conversation to be irrelevant. Flouting maxims aims to add additional meaning to the conversation and it shows the type of characters that flout the conversation. Flouting shows the actual sense of words. The readers enjoy the true comedy or irony through flouting because of the new addition to the meaning. Austen's characters are constantly flouting Gricean maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner being sarcastic or humorous.

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