**University of Batna 2 Department of English**

**Master ONE (LLA) Promotion: 2022- 2023 Semester: 1**

**Subject: PRAGMATICS Teacher: Dr. MOUAS**

**The Cooperative Principle**

Conversations are not just a set of unrelated utterances produced randomly. In fact, there are rules that govern them (Cruse, 2000). Grice (1975) expects that people follow certain rules, called principles, when communicating with each other. He goes on to argue that these principles make meaningful conversations. He puts his assumption under the concept of the cooperative principle and says that when people interact a cooperative principle is put into practice (cited in Yule 38). The cooperative principle is a theory which explains how people correctly interpret what others are implying, and this is by universal conventions in human interactions (Cutting, 2002). It enables one participant in a conversation to communicate with the other participants, assuming that they are cooperative. In addition, it explains and regulates what people say to contribute in conversations (Widdowson, 2007).

**Grice formulates the cooperative principle as follows:**

“Make your conversational contribution such is required at the stage in which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Cited in Jaszczolt, 2002, p. 210).

In other words, speakers try to contribute meaningful productive utterances in conversation. It then follows that listeners assume that their conversational partners are doing the same. Cook (1989) compares the cooperative principle with grammar rules. He says that when talking, people observe the cooperative principle but they cannot prepare to do so intentionally just like the rules of grammar. In other words, both the cooperative principle and the grammar rules are known by people, but nobody can formulate them completely when talking. According to Plag, Braun, Lappe, & Schramm (2007), the cooperative principle answers two questions. First, how do hearers know that speakers want to convey a certain pragmatic meaning? Second, how do hearers know that they should draw inferences? The cooperative principle is divided into four maxims: quantity, quality, relation and manner. Although Grice puts them in the imperative form, these four maxims are not rules that interlocutors are required to obey. Rather, they are principles to be observed for ‘‘coherent’’ and efficient communication of meaning. By cooperation between speakers and hearers, Grice is only referring to what people need to make sense of each other’s contributions (Thomas, 1995).

**The Conversational Maxims**

In order to illustrate how speakers interpret meaning Grice presented, in addition to the cooperative principle, four maxims. Thanks to his maxims, people can interpret; understand the implying implication of each other’s utterances. Thus, they can communicate effectively with each other (Thomas, 1995).

Grice conversational maxims are rules of conversation assumed to be followed (Yule, 1996). According to Griffiths (2006), ‘‘a maxim is a pithy piece of widely applicable advice.’’ (p.135). He goes on to say that Grice’s maxims play as ‘‘if’’ role because Grice does not put them as advice to show people how to talk, but he says that communication through conversations proceeds as if speakers are generally guided by these maxims (2006).

**The Maxim of Quantity**

The first maxim of the cooperative principle is the maxim of quantity. It is about the amount of information the speaker gives in an utterance in conversations. In other words, the maxim of quantity requires speakers to give the right amount of information when they speak. This means not to be too brief or to give more information than is required (Cutting, 2002). Grice (1975) puts it as follows:

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. (Cited in Yule, 1996, p.37)

In fact, Grice puts the maxim of quantity on the assumption that if the speaker and the hearer already share some knowledge, they do not need to give too much information by using many words. Then, what they say will be heard as ‘‘wordy’’ or ‘‘verbose’’. On the other hand, if the speaker and the hearer are strangers or from different cultures, then giving less information is not appropriate. Hence, they must avoid short utterances, otherwise what they say will be heard as ‘‘obscure’’ (Widdowson, 2007).

There are two things to remember about this maxim. First, if something is said, there is a reason for it. In other words, following this maxim depends on the situation and the purpose of the conversation. Second, if something is left out, participants are already supposed to know it and here people prefer not to observe it (Cutting, 2002). Cruse (2002) illustrates this in the following conversation between a mother and her daughter:

M: What did you have for lunch today?

D1: Backed beans on toast.

D2: Food.

D3: I had 87 warmed up backed beans (although eight of them were slightly crushed) served on slice of toast 12.7cm which had been unevenly toasted…

No doubt, the only adequate response to the mother’s question is the utterance D1 of the daughter, because it is clear and it conveys the meaning wanted. In utterance D2, the daughter gives too little information, so that her answer is too ambiguous, and she does not cooperate with her mother. Whereas, in “D3” the daughter gives too much information than is required. So, she risks being boring (p.356).

The best way for speakers to show that they care about following the quantity maxim is by using certain expressions when interacting. For example, English speakers may use ‘‘I won’t bother you with the details’’, ‘‘to cut a long story short,’’ etc. (Neddar, 2004). Yule (1996) provides the following examples to illustrate how speakers use those expressions in their utterances. In the following utterances speakers are talking about their vacation:

-As probably know’ I am terrified of bugs.

-So, to cut a long story short, we gabbed our stuff and ran.

-I won’t bother you with all the details, but it was an exciting trip (p.38).

**The Maxim of Quality**

The second maxim that Grice talks about is the quality maxim. It is about the truthfulness of the information given in conversations (Cruse, 2000). According to Thomas (1995), the maxim of quality is a matter of giving the right information. Therefore, speakers should say nothing that they know to be false, or which they lack sufficient evidence. That is to say, it requires speakers to provide true information when communicating. In other words, they must avoid lying. Thus, people can only talk, when they are sure of the truthfulness of what they are saying (Cutting, 2002). Grice (1975) puts it as follows:

1-Try to make your contribution one that is true

2-Do not say what you believe to be false.

3-Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (cited in Yule 37).

What can be observed from this maxim is that the second sub maxim (a) includes the first (b); there is nothing that corresponds something in the real world and is false at the same time (Cruse, 2000). Cruse (2000) paraphrases this maxim as ‘‘do not make unsupported statements.’’ (p.355). Thus, keeping silent is better than saying things which you are not sure about.

Another thing about the quality maxim is that it is often ‘‘breached’’ than it is ‘‘observed’’. However, if people cannot match what is said with certain things which they can imagine in the world, they would never learn the language (Cruse, 2000). What must be remembered about this maxim is that whether observed or breached there is a reason behind (Mey, 2001).

The best way that puts speakers in safety from not observing the quality maxim is by using certain expressions. For example, in the English language people use the following: ‘‘as far as I know’’ ‘‘for the best of my knowledge’’, ‘‘I may be mistaken’’, ‘‘I’m not sure if this is true (right)’’, ‘‘I guess’’, etc. (Yule, 1996). To illustrate this Cutting (2002) gives the following example:

A: I’ll ring you tomorrow afternoon then.

B: Erm, I shall be there as far as I know, and in the meantime have a word with Mum and Dad if they are free. Right, bye-bye, then sweetheart.

C: Bye-bye, bye.

In this exchange, B ‘‘uses as far as I know’’ which means ‘‘I cannot be totally sure if this is true’’ to show that she is uncertain if she could talk to him on the time he mentions (tomorrow afternoon). So, by using this expression as far as “I know” in her response, B cannot be accused for lying if she cannot be at home when he calls her (p.35).

Horn (2006), considers that the quality maxim is the most important maxim. He sees that it is hard to identify how many maxims are satisfied without the observation of the quality maxim.

As the quantity maxim, quality is applied or violated depending on the situation of the conversations. For Widdowson (2007), in some situations it is more appropriate not to tell the truth. We shall see this in the coming points.

**The Maxim of Relation**

The third maxim is that of relation, which says that speakers are required to be relevant to what has been said before (Cutting, 2002). In other words, what speakers say ought to be relevant to the ‘‘topic’’ or the ‘‘purpose’’ of communication (Widdowson, 2007).

According to Cruse (2000) this maxim is based on the assumption that for a conversation to be meaningful and acceptable, it is not enough to be true. Hence, utterances in conversations require being relevant as well as being true and informative. In other words, informative and true utterances in conversation can be meaningless if they are irrelevant ones. Leech (1983), formulates the relevant maxims as follows ‘‘an utterance U is relevant to the speech situation to the extent that U can be interpreted as contributing to the conversational goals of S or H’’ (cited in Cruse, 2000, p.357). Cutting (2002) provides the following exchange to illustrate how people observe the relation maxim:

A: There’s somebody at the door.

B: I’m in the bath.

From the above exchange, one can understand that B’s utterance is relevant to A’s one. It can be understood that B cannot open the door because he is in the bathroom taking a bath. He expects that B could infer that easily (p.35).

Grice formulates it as ‘‘be relevant’’ (cited in Yule, 1996, 37). Another example is given by Widdowson (2007) to illustrate the observance of the relation maxim:

Wife: How do like my new hat?

Husband: Very much.

Or: Looks nice.

Or: Well not sure, it is quite your colour.

Taking into consideration that the husband is cooperating with his wife, he produces relevant utterances. All the three utterances are relevant, because all of them can be relevant answers to the wife’s question (p.61).

Speakers can make relevant utterances if they are afraid of misleading the hearers, by using specific markers like ‘‘oh by the way’’, ‘‘anyway’’, ‘‘well’’. They can use them too, when they want to change the topic under discussion. The following utterances which are taken from Yule (1996) show the use of those markers:

-I don’t know if this is important, but some of the files are missing.

-This may sound like a dumb question, but whose hand writing is this?

-Not to change the subject, but is this related to the budget? (p.39)

Cutting (2002) provides

-I mean, just going back to your point, I mean to me an order, from is a contract. If we are going to push something in then let’s keep it as general as possible. (p.35)

1.4.4 The Maxim of Manner

The last maxim is that of manner, which is regarded as less important than the three previous ones. It says that speakers’ utterances should be clear and easily understood (Cruse, 2000). According to Cutting (2002), speakers should be ‘‘brief’’, ‘‘orderly’’ and they should avoid ‘‘obscurity’’ and ‘‘ambiguity’’ (35). Widdowson (2007) says that to apply the manner maxim speakers must be ‘‘clear’’ and must avoid ‘‘ambiguity’’ and ‘‘obscurity’’ (p.62).

Grice suggests the following:

-Be perspicuous.

-Avoid obscurity of expression.

-Avoid ambiguity

-Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)

-Be orderly (cited in Yule, 1996, p.37).

According to Cruse, this maxim explains itself except that not everyone knows what is meant by prolixity and being orderly. He goes on to say that avoiding unnecessary prolixity means avoiding lengthy utterances. In addition, being orderly means to talk about incidents according to their order of occurrence for the sake of providing relevant and meaningful utterances. Otherwise, hearers could not match the speakers’ utterances; for example, ‘‘the ranger rode off into the sunset and jumped on his horse.’’ In this example, the speaker should use ‘‘after’’ instead of ‘‘and’’, or begin his utterance as follows: the lone ranger jumped on his horse and rode off into the sunset (2000). Just as the previous maxims, manner maxim can be marked by using: “I may be a bit confused”, “I’m not sure if this makes sense”, “I don’t know if this clear at all” (Yule, 1996). To illustrate this, an exchange is put by Cutting from a committee:

Thank you chariman.jus.just to clarify one point. There is a meeting of the police committee on Monday and there is an item on their budget for prevision of their camera (2002, p.35)

So by using ‘just to clarify one point’, the speaker indicates that he cares about the application of this maxim.

**Non-observances**

Any failure to observe a maxim may be referred to as ‘breaking’ a maxim. When speakers break a maxim, the hearers look for the implicature since they assume that the cooperative principle is in operation. Non observances of maxims are often used in operation and are often used intentionally in order to evoke humour or to avoid discomfort. Grice discussed four ways of conveying elicit meaning (Grundy, 1995).

**Flouting**

When flouting a maxim, the speaker does not intend to mislead the hearer but wants the hearer to look for the conversational implicature, that is the meaning of utterance not directly stated in the words uttered. Therefore, when the speaker intentionally fails to observe a maxim, the purpose may be to effectively communicate a message (Thomas, 1995).

Accordingly, if working under the cooperative principle, the hearer will interpret the meaning and fill in the missing information relying on the context. In other words, flouting the maxims is the direct reason for the occurrence of implicatures. But, this can be only applied in specific situations: (a) when the hearers can infer that maxims are flouted (b) if the speaker expects that the maxims are being flouted, and (c) when the speaker has no intention to mislead thehearer (Cruse, 2000). Plag et al. (2007) say that flouting is a complex task for hearers, because they should look for what is meant from the unsaid.

According to Chapman (2000), flouting is when speakers contribute in interactions although they appear to be uncooperative.

It is the task of hearers to interpret these contributions to the present conversation. In other words, hearers must infer that speakers are exploiting a maxim for communicative purposes. Another definition of flouting is given by Paltridge (2006); speakers purposely fail to observe the cooperative principle because they assume that hearers are aware of this.

**Flouting Quantity**

According to Cutting (2002), when people give too much or too little information, they flout the quantity maxim for instance in:

A: Well, how do I look?

B: Your shoes are nice.

In this exchange, B flouts the quantity maxim, because she does not provide the information required for A. When A asks B about her opinion concerning her appearance, she expects an answer about her whole appearance. B then, makes an incomplete utterance. For more illustration of flouting this maxim, Yule (1996) provides the following example about two women discussing about the taste of the hamburger they are eating:

-A hamburger is a hamburger.

In this example, the woman flouts the quantity maxim because she gives too little information. However, following the cooperative principle, the hearer assumes that the speaker is intending to communicate something. Hence, she fails to observe the quantity maxim for the purpose of flouting it, and an implication is generated. In other words, when being asked about the hamburger, B implicates that the hamburger is not worth evaluating; all hamburgers are delicious. The second implication could be that she has no opinion either good or bad. Griffiths (2006) illustrates the flouting of the quantity maxim in the following example:

A: Are you from America?

B: No followed by silence.

In this case, B’s answer ‘no’ is not sufficient for the question that has been asked. As a result, she flouts the quantity maxim. But assuming that B is following the cooperative principle, A can interpret B’s implied meaning. In fact, A can infer the implication generated which is that B does not want to tell A where she is from. Hence, by flouting the quantity maxim, B indicates that she does not want to tell A where she is from.

There are two reasons that motivate speakers to flout the quantity maxim. First, when they do not want to cooperate with others. Second, when they assume that hearers can understand them without providing the information required.

The previous examples discussed about flouting quantity, are all about giving too little information than is needed. But the quantity maxim can be flouted too, when too much information is provided than what is needed. For example:

-What did you do?

-With exaggerated patience.

……. elaborates a long list of totally uninteresting details.

This exchange is between a mother and her daughter. In this situation, the daughter flouts the quantity maxim by giving too much information. Thus, an implicature is that the mother is too curious to know how her daughter is doing (Cruse, 2000).

**Flouting Quality**

Quality can be flouted in many ways. First, it can be flouted to express exaggeration; as the following example might suggest:

-I’m starving

-These bags weigh a ton.

-The drink costs a fortune.

In this example, speakers do not want their utterances to be understood literally. For instance, in ‘I’m starving’ the speaker wants simply to convey that she is very hungry (Widdowson, 2007).

Second, speakers can flout the quality maxim by using metaphors as in ‘my house is a refrigerator in January’, or ‘my brother is a pig’. The first utterance can be interpreted as my house is very cold in January and it seems as if the speaker were in a refrigerator. Similarly, irony is another way of flouting the quality maxim. In irony, the speaker expresses a positive statement and implies a negative one (Cutting, 2002). The last way of flouting the quality maxim is banter. In contrast with irony, in banter, speakers say something negative implying a positive one. Such as:

-You’re nasty, mean and stingy. How can you give me only one kiss? (Cutting, 2002)

According to (Cruse, 2000), when flouting the quality maxim, people do not want their utterances to be taken literally, at the same time they do not want to mislead the hearers. In fact, people flout this maxim mainly for creating humour and irony.

**Flouting Relation**

When speakers flout the relation maxim they intend to communicate more than what is said. In other words, speakers expect that listeners will be able to infer the right meaning, although the utterances sound odd, by relating the utterances to the preceding one (s). As a result, hearers must make irrelevant utterances relevant to get the meaning (Cutting 2002). To clearly show this, here is an example from Cruse (2000).

A: I say, did you hear about Mary’s…

B: Yes well, it rained the whole time we were there.

Following Gricean analysis, we can say that B’s utterance is completely irrelevant to A’s one. A is talking about a colleague Mary, and B is describing how was her day. The reason is that she sees Mary approaching them, but A does not. Thus, B implicates the utterance ‘look Mary is coming’. (p.39). Plag et al. (2007) give the following example to illustrate how people flout the relation maxim.

A: Do you know what time it is, I’ve left my watch at home, and we’re going to have a meeting at eight thirty.

B: The church bells are ringing.

A: Great, half an hour left.

What can be observed from this exchange is that there is no relevance between what A and B are saying. However, A’s reply shows that she is not confused, or lost. On the contrary, she says ‘Great, half an hour left’, which means that she understands the utterance, and she finds no problem in inferring the meaning, although on its surface B’s utterance seems irrelevant.

**Flouting Manner**

In order to exclude a third part, people often flout the manner maxim. In other words, when two people do not want a third person to understand what they are talking about, they flout the manner maxim. By doing so, they produce ambiguous utterances (Cutting 2002).

The following exchange, illustrates this kind of flouting :

A: I’ll look after Samantha for you, don’t worry we’ll have a lovely time. Won’t we, Sam?

B: Great, but if you don’t mind, you don’t post her any post prandicle concotions involving super cooled oxide of hydrogen. It usually gives rise to convulsive nausea.

In this exchange, B speaks in an ambiguous way when he said ‘her’; ‘post prandial concotions’; ‘super cooled oxide of hydrogen, ‛convulsive nausea’ because she does not want Sam to know what they are talking about (Cruse, 2000, p. 361)

Chapman (2000) provides another example to illustrate how this maxim is actually flouted by people, and how implicatures are generated from this flouting:

-I found your lecture unhelpful.

-I found your lecture not helpful.

In the first utterance, the speaker flouts the third sub maxim of manner which states: be ‘brief’. In the first utterance, the speaker implicates that the lecture is not wholly helpful.

**Violating**

In contrast to flouting, when violating a maxim, speakers intend to mislead the hearers. Speakers seem as if they are cooperating, but with the intention to lead the hearers to infer a misleading implicature (Thomas, 1995). According to Davis (1998) violating a maxim is quietly deceiving, the speaker gives insufficient information, says something false, and provides irrelevant or ambiguous utterances with the purpose of misleading hearers. The speaker can achieve this because the hearers assume that she is cooperating with them.

Cutting (2002, p.40) provides the following example to illustrate how maxims are violated:

Husband: How much did that dress cost, darling?

Wife: Less than the last one.

Or: Thirty five pound

Or: I know let’s go out tonight.

Or: A tiny fraction of my salary, though probably a bigger fraction of the salary of the woman sold it to me.

From the above exchange, we can say that in the first reply the wife violates the quantity maxim; she is not informative as required. In her second reply, the wife violates the quality maxim because she is lying. In the third reply she violates the relation maxim because she changes the topic and her utterance is not relevant to her husband’s one. The last reply is an ambiguous utterance; thus, the wife violates the manner maxim.

A good example, concerning violating maxims, is that exchange between a man and a woman:

Man: Does your dog bite?

Woman: No.

Man: (The man reaches down to pet the dog. The dog bites his hand). Ouch! Hey! You said that your dog doesn’t bite.

Woman: He doesn’t. But that is not my dog.

In this exchange the woman violates the quantity maxim. She does not give enough information to the man, and at the same time she is not implying anything. She knows that the man is asking about the dog in front of her, and not her dog at home. Yet, she intends not to give the right amount of information. Regarding to the man, he assumes that the woman is cooperating with him, and he understands more than what is said (Yule, 1996).

What is important to remember is that violations are very hard to be detected because they cannot be known, for example, it is hard to predict whether the speaker is lying or not (Cutting, 2002).

**Opting out**

Opting out is the third way in failing to fulfil a maxim. In opting out a maxim, speakers do not imply anything, and what is intended is said by the words. When opting out a maxim, speakers are not unwilling to cooperate and reveal more than they already have. Speakers choose not to observe the maxim and state an unwillingness to do so. (Thomas, 1995).

An example of opting out maxims is provided by Cutting in the following:

-I’m afraid I can’t give you that information.

In this example the speaker clearly states that he does not want to cooperate, and he really means that (Thomas, 1995).

**Infringing a maxim**

Just like opting out, in infringing speakers do not imply anything too. The difference between the two is that infringing occurs when interlocutors misunderstand each other because of culture differences (Cutting, 2002).

**Implicature**

Kempeson (1979) defines implicature as ‘‘assumption over and above the meaning of a sentence used which the speaker knows and intends that the hearer will make’’ (p.217). In many verbal exchanges, hearers need to look for an implicature, that is to say, implication of the utterances is not clearly stated in words but implied for the hearers to interpret. In other words, in some situations people do not fully cooperate with each other, but keep behaving on the same assumptions about communication. In some other situations, interactants may decide to flout some of Grice’s four maxims; to be ‘‘uninformative’’, ‘‘evasive’’, ‘‘irrelevant’’ or ‘‘obscure’’. However, they still produce meaningful utterances or if we can say inferred by recipient as meaningful. This has been referred to by Grice as ‘‘implicature’’. This latter, is actually used to refer to what is implied, what the speakers mean rather than what they say (Davis, 1998). Thus, it is the speakers’ responsibility for making clear meaning. In fact, the maxims themselves focus on speakers’ behaviour rather on hearers’. In addition, the cooperative principle and the four maxims give hearers an active role for predicting the meaning. That is to say, in some interactions speakers implicate meaning, when communicating and it is the task of the listeners to infer those implicated messages. This can be achieved on the assumption of the cooperative principle (Livenson, 1983). Davis (1998) defines implicature as ‘‘the act of meaning implying something by saying something else’’ (p.5).

Grice distinguishes between two types of implicatures. The distinction is in fact between what is said and what is implicated. Grice puts them in conversational and conventional implicatures.

A conversational implicature is based on the assumption that hearers assume that speakers are cooperative. Hence, hearers can draw conclusions about what a speaker is implicating. Grice (1975) puts it as follows:

What is conversationally implicated is what is required that one assumes a speaker to think in order to preserve the assumption that he is observing the cooperative principle (and perhaps some conversational maxims as well). (As cited in Bendjelloul, 2008, p.57)

First, the conversational implicature depends on what is said; what is implicated is calculated by the hearer from what is said, in addition to the context and other features of utterances. Moreover, for conversational implicature to be generated, the speaker must believe that hearers are in the position to recognize the implicature (Levinson, 1983).

In Grice own words:

The presence of conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaced by an argument, the implicature (if present at all) will not count as conversational implicature; it will be a conventional implicature. (Cited in Bendjelloul, 2008, p.58)

According to Cruse (2000), there are two conditions on conversational implicature.

First, it is the result of flouting the cooperative principle or the maxims. Second, it depends on the context. The following exchange is taken from Davis (1998) to illustrate how implicatures are generated:

A: I’ve just run out of petrol.

B: There’s a garage just around the corner.

What can be said from this exchange is that, B implicates that in the garage there is petrol. But if B knows that the garage is closed or sold out of petrol, then he is less cooperative. Anyway in both cases an implicature is generated.

Conventional implicature, on the other hand, has nothing to do with the cooperative principle or the four maxims, and it almost has to do with particular words in conversations (Grundy, 1995). For instance, English speakers use ‘but’, ‘therefore’, ‘manage’, ‘yet’, in utterances as:

-He is smart but not at all boring.

The implicature in this utterance, depending on ‘but’, is that most people who are smart are boring. The implicature ‘but’ shows the contrast between what comes before and after it.

The difference between conversational and conventional implicatures is explained and clarified in the following way: The difference between conversational and conventional implicatures at the level of sentences lies in the nature of the conventions involved. Both are semantic conventions. The contrastive implication is no part of the meaning of ‘‘but’’. The nonuniversal implication is no part of the meaning of ‘‘some’’ (Davis, 1998, p. 157).

The context, and knowing the cooperative principle and the four maxims are not the only conditions for generating implicatures, there is another important condition which is that the shared background knowledge between interlocutors (Levinson, 1983).

**Conclusion**

As it has been said so far, Grices’s four maxims play an important role in making smooth conversations. That is to say, following Grice’s theory, speakers must produce truthful (quality), relevant (relevance), clear (manner) utterances that contain the adequate amount of information (quantity), for conveying the message they want to the hearers. However, they frequently fail to observe them. In other words, they flout; violate; opt out; or infringe one or more maxims. Consequently, an implicature is generated and more is communicated than it is said.