

Cooperative principle

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The outline:

- ❖ Cooperative principle
- ❖ Grice's Maxims
- ❖ Violating and flouting the maxims « examples »
- ❖ Conclusion

Cooperative principle

- **Grice says that when we communicate we assume, without realising it, that we, and the people we are talking to, will be conversationally cooperative - we will cooperate to achieve mutual conversational ends.**
- **Grice proposed that many aspects of “speaker’s meaning” result from the assumption that the participants in a conversation are cooperating in an attempt to reach mutual goals – or at least are pretending to do so!**



➤ “Make your contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” Grice (1975:45)

Maxim of quality

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

Maxim of Quantity

- ❖ Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.
- ❖ Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Relevance

- Be relevant!

Maxim of manner

- Make your contribution clear!
- Do not be ambiguous!
- Be ordered!
- Be brief!
- Avoid obscurity!

Violation of Maxims

- ❖ Violation, according to Grice (1975), takes place when speakers intentionally refrain to apply certain maxims in their conversation to cause misunderstanding on their participants' part or to achieve some other purposes.

violation of the maxim of quality

- Mother: Did you study all day long?
- Son who has been playing all day long: Yes, I've been studying till now!

➔ In this exchange, the boy is not truthful and violates the maxim of quality. He is lying to avoid unpleasant consequences such as: punishment or to be forced to study for the rest of the day.

Violation of the maxim of quantity

- John: Where have you been? I searched everywhere for you during the past three months!
- Mike: I wasn't around. So, what's the big deal?

John poses a question, which he needs to be answered by Mike. What Mike says in return does not lack the truth, however is still insufficient.



John does not say as much as it is necessary to make his contribution cooperative. Hence, he leaves his listener unsatisfied.

Violation of the maxim of relevance

- Teacher: Why didn't you do your homework?
- Student: May I go and get some water? I'm so thirsty.

→ In the above exchange, the student's answer is by no means relevant to the teacher's question. One reason for this answer can be the fact that the student is trying to evade the interrogation posed by the teacher.

Violation of the maxim of manner

- Sarah: Did you enjoy the party last night?
- Anna: There was plenty of oriental food on the table, lots of flowers all over the place, people hanging around chatting with each other...



Sara asked a very simple question, however what she receives from Anna is a protracted description of what was going on in the party. Two interpretations can be made from Anna's description: 1. Anna had such a good time in the party that she is obviously too excited and has no idea where to begin. 2. Anna had such a terrible time and she does not know how to complain about it.

Flouting the maxims

- In the case of flouting (exploitation) of cooperative maxims, the speaker desires the greatest understanding in his/her recipient because it is expected that the interlocutor is able to uncover the hidden meaning behind the utterances.

Flouting the maxim of quality

- ❖ Teacher to a student who arrives late more than ten minutes to the class meeting:
 - Wow! You're such a punctual fellow! Welcome to the class.
 - Student: Sorry sir! It won't happen again.

➔ It is obvious from what the teacher says that he is teasing the student and his purpose is, by no means, praising him. He exploits the maxim of quality (being truthful) to be sarcastic.

Flouting the maxim of quantity

- ❖ Majid and Ali are talking on the phone:
 - Ali: Where are you, Majid?
 - Majid: I'm in my clothes.

→ Majid tells the truth because it is expected that people are always in some clothes, yet he flouts the maxim of quantity because the information is insufficient for Ali.

Flouting the maxim of relevance

- • Bob: What were you and Anna talking about? You were looking at me all the time!
- • Marry: Oh, well... why don't we go get something to drink?



Marry answers Bob question with a suggestion in an obvious attempt to evade it perhaps to avoid hurting Bob's feelings. Hence, she flouts the maxim of relevance.

Flouting the maxim of manner

- Wife: Darling..... What's the story with that new watch on your wrist?
- Husband: Oh, this watch you're talking about! I knew it... I told my boss that my wife would be curious when she sees it. Oh, honey you have no idea how much they're satisfied with my performance, lately!



The husband would be better off if he told his wife from the beginning of the conversation that his boss awarded him a prize. However, he flouts the maxim of manner to assure his wife that the watch was a gift from a person that she also knew and there is no need for jealousy.

Conclusion

- To conclude, Grice's cooperative principle is meant to specify rules (maxims) that should be followed by speakers in a conversation in order to achieve cooperation.

References

- *2011 International Conference on Languages, Literature and Linguistics IPEDR vol.26 (2011) © (2011) IACSIT Press, Singapore.*