

Grice's Cooperative Principles in G. B. Shaw's Pygmalion

Omar Fouad Ghafor

University of Halabja, Department of English Language, Halabja

Email: omar.ghafor@uoh.edu.iq

Yadgar Faeq Saeed

Charmo University, Department of English Language

Email: yadgar.fayaq@charmouniversity.org

Hedayat Muhamad Ahmad

University of Halabja, Department of English Language, Halabja

University of Human Development, Department of English language, Sulaimani

Email: hedayat.ahmad@uoh.edu.iq

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to apply all the cooperative principle maxims in the golden play of the famous playwright George Bernard Shaw, Pygmalion. When one of the maxims is non-observed or flouted among the characters' speeches, misunderstanding happens which creates many social, psychological and physical conflicts. The researchers tried to investigate the sorts of communications among the characters of the play, like social and educational ones through applying all the cooperative principle maxims (quality, quantity, manner and relation) that clearly highlights the reasons behind the ocean of the differences among the characters and society. Pygmalion is one of the prominent texts of the most widely read socialist writer in the English-speaking world, Shaw, it left a great and historical footprint in the world of literature and its impacts on the receivers is a non-stop one. Due to its greatness, the researchers tried to make another different meaning for the speeches of the play with the support of Grice's maxims.

Keywords: Pygmalion, Grice, cooperative principles, Social ranks.

Introduction

Conversation always needs meaning and meaning analysis is too controversial as the utterances are the main reasons for bridging both speakers and listeners together in a way the conversational partners believe in mutual understanding. Grice (1975) introduces his four maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner). Paul Grice (1975) developed a principle of conversation 'Cooperative Principle' and claimed that effective communication needs some general principles of conversation from both speaker and listener, later referred to as Gricean Maxims. These principles will help people to understand the meaning of their speeches through dialogues and conversations they make and interpret the intentions of the utterances. Literature is a wide and effective era that consists of some genres, they include words and surely the words are holding meaning connotatively and annotatively.

Grice's Maxims (1975) are supportive in dealing with the words of literature in a way they help the literary text dealers to have creativity in the text analysis. One of the most effective genres of literature is drama, apparently it includes speech and the speeches are in need to be interpreted, analyzed and evaluated academically, due to that reason this paper works on the most influential and well-known play of the universal playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) his prophecy and footprint in writing is famous among intellectual figures. Grice's Maxims (1975) can be considered as a guide to clarify and analyze his intent in writing his universal play, *Pygmalion* (1913). Shaw is regarded as a rationalist writer and he believes that everything is reason dependent, (*Pygmalion* 1913).

He tells the life story of a poor girl who is selling flowers on street in London to be transmitted by professor Henry Higgins who is an intelligent phonetician into a girl who is having full quality of a real lady through teaching her the phonetics lessons, the exposition of the play is shown with the two on a rainy and cold night when some passers-by are around. The poor girl's name is Eliza Doolittle who has no family member support, her father is drunk and she lost her mother some years ago. Professor Higgins who is taking note from the different dialects of London's people is there and there is another good looking man who is professor Colonel Pickering that came all the way from India to meet professor Higgins in London, and there is another high class family with three members Mrs. Eynsfor Hill, her daughter Miss Clara Hill and her son Freddy who is entering Liza's life and becomes her partner in the end of the play. The family want to go home at late night but there is no taxi to carry them in that time of night before forcing Freddy to fetch one, while departing he encounters The Flower Girl for the first time and bumps her basket, it falls to the ground, but he leaves her, so, she informs him to watch his steps and called him with Freddy. After hearing The Flower girl calling her son by his real name and without any title, Freddy's mother worries about the event and thinks that, maybe, there is a love relationship or an affair between Freddy, his son, and Eliza, the flower girl. She investigates about the relationship between her and his son by asking the flower girl how she knows his name, the Flower Girl replies she does not know his name and randomly called him as Freddy, and she is right about that. This story passes and the professors introduce themselves to each other, they bet on Liza's dialect to be transformed into the duchess within three months and participate in the Ambassador's house party.

After reaching the deadline and through a tough experience of teaching, professor Higgins can win the bet after Liza's participation in the ambassador's house party in a very interesting way; she played her role in a perfect way and she proved that her ability is unlimited. Liza becomes angry when she hears the sadly conversation of the two professors about the bet, she shows her zeal by cursing the two down for their ugly deed and for exploiting her to satisfy their own egos. She leaves forever and approaches Freddy after the later proposes to her. As it is apparent at the end of *Pygmalion*, the play is different from the legend, while Mr. Higgins and Liza are separated forever but the legends sculptor and sculpture are united heartily, it means that Shaw wants to give a message that the ability of Liza who is the representative of women is unlimited and they are as powerful as men.

The Cooperative Principle

The Cooperative Principle (CP) is a conversational principle developed by Herbert Paul Grice, British philosopher of language, in 1975. He argues, "Participants expect that each will make a conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange." (Grice, 1975: 45) This means that the cooperative principle accounts for conversational implicatures, a theory which was originally coined by H. P. Grice in 1975 and an implicature is something the speaker implies with an utterance, even though it is not literally expressed. Participants of the conversation assume that a speaker is being cooperative, and they make conversational implicatures about what is said (Levinson, 1983, p. 101) and (Crystal, 1985, p. 153).

Humans are social beings and they usually talk with or to others. Grice believes that speakers want to be cooperative when they talk. According to him, cooperative means that the speaker knows that each utterance is a potential intervention in the personal rights, autonomy and wishes of the other. That is why we have to shape our utterances in a way that is as precise as possible to the context (Bach, 2003).

Grice designed the principle of cooperation to characterize conversation. He wrote, "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. 183).

Grice's Cooperative Principle is a set of norms that are expected in conversations. It consists of four maxims, people should follow these maxims in order to be cooperative and understood:

- Maxim of Quality: the speaker has to tell the truth or something that is provable by appropriate evidence.
- Maxim of Quantity: the speaker has to be as informative as required, s/he should not say more or less.
- Maxim of Relation: the response has to be relevant to the topic of discussion.
- Maxim of Manner: the speaker has to avoid ambiguity or obscurity; s/he should be direct and straightforward (Bach, 2003).

The cooperative principle assumes that in conversation analysis the participants try to be informative, truthful, relevant, and clear. Grice, the founder of the principle, claims that "talk exchanges aren't merely a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction" (Grice, 1975, p. 184) and (Nordquist, 2019).

Birner in her Introduction to Pragmatics explains the four ways in which the speaker can behave when it comes to CP, he or she can:

- Observe the maxims,
- Violate the maxims,
- Flout the maxims, or
- Opt out the maxims. (Birner, 2013, 43)

To observe a specific maxim means to obey it, i.e., to say the exact and the right amount of the words when someone asks a question and awaits the answer, moreover, observing is saying what you believe to be true and you have appropriate evidence for it, and it must be relevant to the question and, of course, precise, clear and unambiguous (depending on the type of the maxim in the asked question). Violating a maxim takes place when the speaker fails to observe it. Violating a maxim is different from flouting in that the speaker utters a statement and he or she is aware that it is false (non-observance of Maxim of Quality). To flout out a maxim means to violate it, too, but in this case the violation is obvious and blatant that in most cases the hearer is aware and knows when it takes place. To opt out a maxim is when the hearer refuses to be a part of the conversation, for example, my son wants to start playing a game with and I respond by turning to my mobile and read an eBook, I opted out (Birner, 2013, 43).

Grice's maxims in Pygmalion

Each academic utterance has a meaning with a mean purpose, it at least occurs between two people which are known as sender and receiver, to maintain this profession language has a lion share, as it is apparent language is the best device for communication, bridging this communication needs understanding which can be comprehended annotatively and connotatively through applying the all four maxims of Grice (Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Relation, Maxim of Manner) (Grice, 1975). In literature generally both meanings are common but special for drama, G.B.Shaw's Pygmalion is the most prominent sample for fulfilling this paper. There are many characters in this play; among them we select some speeches of some main characters of the play and apply all the maxims of Grice. In some parts of the play we encounter some speeches that some or all the maxims are observed in some other parts are not that are supportive to deliver meaningful purposes if we apply this maxim to them as follow:

Example One:

"The Mother: Now tell me how you know that young gentleman's name.

The Flower Girl: I didn't." (Pygmalion 3)

Here the maxim of quality is apparently non-observed, because the length of the answer is shorter than the length of the question. The answer could be "I don't know that gentleman's name)

Example Two:

The Bystander: {sparingly} who told you my people came from Selsey?

The Note Taker: Never you mind. They did {to the girl} how do you come to be so far east? You were born in Lisson Grove.

The Flower Girl: {appalled} oh, what harm is there in my living Lisson Grove? It wasn't fit for a pig to live in; and I had to pay four and six a week. {In tears} oh, boo-hoo-oo (5)

Here the quantity of the answer is much more than the question, the maxim of quantity is non-observed while the quality is also violated. It could be a name or at least a short answer for the question, also the maxims of relation and manner are non-observed in the speech of the Flower Girl because it she misunderstood the purpose of the Note Taker.

Example Three:

The Sarcastic Bystander :{ not attending to her} do you know where I come from?

The Note Taker: {Promptly}. Hoxton.

Here all the four maxims are well observed; when the reader comes across this speech the answer feeds him/her well.

Example Four:

MRS. PEARCE. Don't answer back, girl. You don't understand the gentleman. Come with me. [She leads the way to the door, and holds it open for Eliza].

LIZA [as she goes out] Well, what I say is right. I won't go near the king, not if I'm going to have my head cut off. If I'd known what I was letting myself in for, I wouldn't have come here. I always been a good girl; and I never offered to say a word to him; and I don't owe him nothing; and I don't care; and I won't be put upon; and I have my feelings the same as anyone else- (21)

In this example from Pygmalion the maxims of quality and manner are non-observed by in Liza's speech, while we read the speeches we can see that the message of Mrs. Pearce is clear, but the answer of Liza is ambiguous, clearly she violated the path of communication.

Conclusion

This paper is conducted to show the importance of the Grice's Co-operative principles which consists of four maxims quantity, quality, relation and manner and apply them to the well-known play of G.B Shaw so us to discuss and analyse the meaning of the play-speeches because they have deeper meaning, to understand the meaning of this play and get the purpose of them Grice's maxims are helpful to determine the aim of the entrances for example there is a lady who is the main character of the play and known as the flower girl she is not educated and

Her dialect is not interesting through the maxims that sometimes they are violated and sometimes not the quality of her speech is examined, meanwhile the other main character of the play Mr. Higgins who is completing the idea of the play he has conflicts (psychological, social) with the flower girl on the flower girl's dialect, he criticizes her accent then helps her to be transformed from gutter into duchess. Finally it can be considered that all utterances have messages and these messages can be detected through applying Grice's maxims to them.

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