

Violating and Flouting Grice's Cooperative Principles in Miller's Play "Death of the Salesman"

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ABSTRACT

Communication is definitely the main objective of any language. The communication process involves a complex verbal behaviour where the participants have to accommodate a variety of interconnected factors before meaning can be generated. In this study the Cooperative Principles and its four maxims are investigated to explain how they are violated and flouted in literary texts. The data of this study are some selected quotations from the play "Death of the Salesman" by Arthur Miller. A qualitative analysis was employed to elicit data analysis. Findings revealed that all Grice's cooperative principle and the maxims were frequently violated and flouted in the play. In the final section, the study has drawn out some conclusions.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Paul Grice is English philosopher who is considered to be the "father of pragmatics", was fascinated by how the hearer gets from the expressed meaning to the implied meaning. That is, his aim was to explain how the hearer gets from what is said to what is meant (Thomas, 1995:56). Grice's (1975) is the approach according to which the concept of implicature is to be analysed. An implicature is something that is implied, left implicit in actual language use. The idea of implicature, which links logic and conversations, was developed by the philosopher Paul Grice. He argued that speakers tend to be cooperative when they talk. One way of being cooperative is for the speaker to give as much information as is expected (Grundy, 2000:73).

According to the Cooperative Principle the speaker and hearer converse with the willingness to deliver and interpret a message. The speaker and hearer cooperate and that is why communicating efficiently (Thomas,

1995:63). In 'Logic and Conversation', Grice (1975:45) defines conversation as an essentially interactive and cooperative process. The general principle is called the Cooperative Principle (CP). The CP runs as follows:

Make your 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.

In order to illustrate how people interpret meaning, Grice presented, in addition to the Cooperative Principle, four conversational maxims to show how people communicate effectively in the light of certain rules. Thomas (1995:63) says that thanks extend to Grice's maxims; we can interpret and understand the underlying implication of an utterance.

Maxim of Quantity (Informativeness)

a- Make your contribution as informative as is required

b- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Quality (Truthfulness)

Super maxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true, more specifically:

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

Maxim of Relation (Relevance)

Super maxim: Make your contribution relevant.

- a- Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner (Clarity)

Super maxim: Be perspicuous... (Be clear), and specifically:

- a- Avoid obscurity of expression.
- b- Avoid ambiguity.
- c- Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
- d- Be orderly.

The central role of the cooperative principle and maxims is to explain how it is possible for speakers to communicate more than they actually say. Speakers may observe all the maxims as in the following example:

(1.1). Husband: Where is my watch?

(1.2). Wife: It is on the table in the hall?

The wife has answered the question clearly (Manner), truthfully (Quality) with right amount of information (quantity), and satisfying the goal of the question (Relation).

1.2 THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

According to Lindblom (2006: 152), Grice pointed out that there are certain ways in which the maxims of the

cooperative principle may go unfulfilled in ordinary conversation.

When some speakers intend their hearers to understand their conversation without observing the maxims, they will flout the maxims but there is no intention of deceiving or misleading the hearers. People can violate a maxim if they are liable to mislead the others. People can also infringe a maxim when they fail to observe a maxim with no intention to deceive someone (Paltridge, 2012: 47).

E.g.:-

A. How are you getting to the airport tomorrow?

B. Well.... I'm going with Peter (ibid, 51).

In this example, B is flouting the maxims of relation and quantity because his answer is irrelevant and because A has given less information than is required therefore; he is flouting the maxim of quantity from which B derives that he may have to make their own way to airport. So a maxim might be flouted in a way that exploits another maxim.

The problem of this study is that Arthur Miller, the author of the play "Death of the Salesman" flouts and violates the maxims of conversation frequently for a purpose. In other words, Miller wants to show his audience the irony of the American dream and the effect of capitalism on the American people, especially, on the poor and the women at that time.

E.g.:- **LINDA: We should've bought the land next door.**

WILLY: The Street is lined with cars. There's not a breath of fresh air in the neighbourhood. The grass don't grow any more, you can't raise a carrot in the back yard. They should've had a law against apartment houses. Remember those two beautiful elm trees out there? When I and Biff hung the swing between them (Miller, 1948: 8).

This example from the play "Death of the Salesman", this conversation is between Willy Loman, the hero of the play, and his wife, Linda. In this exchange the hero is flouting the maxim of relation for his speech is irrelevant from what his wife said, he talks about another thing which is far away. Linda asks him about buying the land next to their house but he answers her about cars in the street and the crowded place. This reflects the bad life of them; he wants to return back to the past time.

1.3 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

The present study aims mainly at:

1. Analysing the selected quotations of the play "Death of the Salesman".
2. Investigating how far implicature is used and employed by the author.
3. Explaining how far Grice's Cooperative Principle and its four maxims are violated and flouted in literary texts.

1.4 THE HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

In order to achieve the aims of the study, it is hypothesized that:

1. Grice's cooperative principle is frequently flouted in the play.
2. All the maxims of conversation, namely Quantity, Quality, Manner, and Relation are flouted in the play.
3. Arthur Miller uses implicature to convey additional implied meaning to his audience.

1.5 THE PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

The procedures to be followed in the present study will be as follows:

1. Explaining in detail Grice's theory of the cooperative principle and its maxims of conversation.
2. Presenting a theoretical background about the notion of implicature in pragmatics.
3. Presenting a theoretical background about the life of the author of the play "Death of the Salesman".
4. Summarizing the plot of the play "Death of the Salesman".
5. Adopting model to solve the problem of the study and serve its purposes.
6. Collecting data (quotations from the play) for the analysis.
7. Extracting conclusions based on the results of the analysis and suggesting recommendations for future studies.

1.6 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is limited to the pragmatic analysis of Miller's "Death of the Salesman" in terms of Grice's (1975) Logic and Conversation. The selected quotations are (40) extracted from the play.

1.7 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will be of interest to those specialized in language, and in pragmatics, in particular. It also enables the student of English language to understand the maxims of the cooperative principle and the way in which it operates, especially in literary texts.

Literature Review

As a matter of fact, languages have appeared for the sake of communication. Speakers and listeners communicate with one another for the purpose of conveying what they want to say either implicitly or explicitly. While conversing, they try to cooperate with one another in order to understand and be understood and this is the core idea of pragmatics (www.macrothink.org/ijl).

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 controls their access to the linguistic and commutative 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 commutative means (Mey, 2004:6)

In the 1970s pragmatics became an integral part of linguistics though it was argued whether it should be regarded as a field of linguistics or philosophy since its first proponents were philosophers such as Austin, Grice and Searle rather than linguists. However, in the 1980s, it started to appear in "textbooks on linguistics". The history of pragmatics can be described as a conjunction of different moves, coming from epistemology and semiotics (Morris 1938), philosophy of language (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), logic (Frege [1892]1952; Russell 1905), and linguistics (Horn 1972; Wilson 1975; Kempson 1975; Gazdar 1979). Basic pragmatics was initially linked to reference and presupposition (Frege 1892 and Russell 1905), semantic and pragmatic presuppositions (Wilson and Kempson; Stalnaker 1977), and illocutionary acts (Austin 1962 and Searle 1969), and it was only in the mid-70s that the concept of implicature was introduced in Grice's article "Logic and Conversation" (1975). Among the most influential

pragmatic theories that has captured the attention of the researcher is Gricean Theory of Conversational Implicature. Grice makes a clear distinction between what is said and what is meant (www.macrothink.org/ijl).

The basic idea behind the Cooperative Principle (CP) is that interlocutors are attempting to be **cooperative** in conversation. Grice's formulation of the CP is rather more detailed:

The Cooperative Principle: 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.

It has four maxims:

A. **QUALITY:** Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack evidence.

B. **QUALITY:**

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required. (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

C. **RELATION:** Be relevant.

D. **MANNER:** Be perspicuous.

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief. (Avoid unnecessary prolixity.)
4. Be orderly. (Horn and Ward, 2006: 6).

According to Yule (1996), it is important to recognize that these maxims are unstated assumptions we have in conversations. The assumption is that people are normally going to provide an appropriate amount of information; we assume that they are telling the truth, they are being relevant and trying to be as clear as they can (Yule, 1996:37). So we can say that here Grice was suggesting standard behavior in conversations. However even in games where the rules are well stipulated, there are always fouls which constitute unfair play or which renders the game unfair. It is the same with conversations.

Grice (1975) notes that in daily conversations people do not usually say things directly but tend to imply or suggest them, that is, the speaker often manages to convey implicature which does not express the

information explicitly but the hearer may recognize through implicature.

According to Yang (2008: 59) implicature is when speakers are able to mean more than what is actually said. Thus, implicature is the additional, unstated meaning which the speaker implies. Implicature works where there is cooperation between the speaker and hearer. This basically sums what implicature is all about and how speakers and hearers of a language get along cooperatively and politely. Therefore, we can say that implicature is a component of the speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is meant in a speaker's utterance without being part of what is said. Grice distinguishes between what is **said** and what is **implicated**. What is said is truth-conditional, and what is implicated is not. What is implicated, in turn, may be either **conversationally** or **conventionally** implicated, and what is conversationally implicated may be due to either a **generalized** or a **particularized** conversational implicature (Birner, 2013: 62). The conventional implicature refers to what is meant by linguistic items in an utterance, that is, it is conveyed by the conventional meanings of words. The conventional implicature has the same implicature no matter what the context is. It can be added that it is conventional in the sense that i) it does not derive from knowing the rules for talk and ii) it is almost always associated with the same lexical item. The conversational implicature refers to pragmatic inferences which arise from contextual factors and the understanding that conventions are observed in conversations (Mukaro et al, 2013: 163).

Pragmatically speaking, Grice argues that if people fail to fulfil or observe the maxims of cooperative principle during the exchange of conversation, the participant may quietly and unostentatiously violate a maxim. This means that the participant does not observe the maxim intentionally for some purposes. Grice states that in the case when one quietly and unostentatiously violates a maxim, "one is liable to mislead". More often than not, people fail to observe the maxims, be it deliberately or accidentally. Two of such failing to observe maxims of the cooperative principle are: violation and flouting of maxims. The *violation* of maxims is when the maxims are deliberately manipulated so that the speaker misleads the interlocutor. In other word, a speaker can be said to violate a maxim when they know that the hearer will not know the truth and will only understand

the surface meaning of the words. They intentionally generate a misleading implicature. A maxim violation is quietly deceiving. The speaker deliberately supplies insufficient information, saying something that is insincere, irrelevant or ambiguous, and the hearer wrongly assumes that they are cooperating (Cutting, 2002: 40).

In struggling to clearly define these notions Pultridge puts forward an example as: when a mother tells her children “Mummy's gone on a little holiday because she needs a rest” (Paltridge, 2012: 47). In this example, the mother has not said she is going away to think about divorce of her husband. But instead, she violates the maxim of quality, meaning that she is not telling the truth. Unlike the violation of maxims, which takes place to cause misunderstanding on the part of the listener, the flouting of maxims takes place when individuals deliberately cease to apply the maxims to persuade their listeners to infer the hidden meaning behind the utterances; that is, the speakers employ implicature. Levinson also asserts that unlike the violation of maxims, which takes place to cause misunderstanding on the part of the listener, the *flouting* of maxims occurs when individuals intentionally do not apply the maxims in order to persuade their listeners to derive the hidden meaning behind what is said, that is, the speakers employ implicature. He also believes that when someone is flouting a maxim, they are not *deliberately* trying to deceive or mislead their interlocutors, but they are deliberately not *observing* the maxims, in order for the interlocutors to understand another set of meaning (Levinson, 2008:109). Flouting occurs when the speakers appear not to follow the maxims of the cooperative principle but expect hearers to appreciate or understand the meaning implies, as in the case of the dress shop assistant, the romantic date and the chilly room, it can be said that they are flouting the maxims. It is similar to an indirect speech act, in it, the speaker assumes that the hearer knows that their words should not be taken at face value and they can infer the implicit meaning (Cutting, 2002:37). For Example:

Well, how do I look?

Your shoes are nice (ibid).

In this example, the speaker flouts the maxim of quantity when he gives too little information, he does not mention anything about his or her clothes (ibid).

In the play “Death of a Salesman”, the author, Arthur Miller discusses the “American Dream” which is

based on the “Declaration of Independence”: “We believe that all men are born with these inalienable rights—life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.” This “dream” consists of a genuine and determined belief that in America, all things are possible to all men, regardless of birth or wealth; if you work hard enough you will achieve anything. However, Miller believes that people have been “ultimately misguided” and Miller’s play, *Death of a Salesman*, is a moving destruction of the whole myth. So Miller clarifies this when he makes Willy, the hero of the play, always flouting and violating the maxims of the cooperative principle because he lived in his illusion. Miller criticises life in America at that time and describes Willy as a victim of the capitalism (Souires, 1983: 10).

Data Collection and Analysis

In this section, the researcher analyses some selected quotations of the more specific aspect of flouting and violation of the maxims of the cooperative principle in “Death of the salesman”. It presents the implied meaning in the drama and also discusses the goal which stands behind such violation and flouting of all maxims. Before mentioning the analysis, it is important to talk about the play. This study makes an attempt to analyse *Death of a Salesman* in an attempt to mirror the struggling modern characters who live in the world of capitalism but are the slave of the preventive beliefs of capitalism. This play is the story of all human beings who are in search of success, Love, Pride, and Ambition, but are oscillating between the modern and postmodern values. They find themselves disintegrated and isolated in the cruel language of postmodern and consumer world. The study tries to show the entrapped modern man who finds the postmodern language weird and its values as resisting forces against the fossilized metanarratives (Azizpour and Hooti, 2010:15).

1. **LINDA: You didn’t smash the car, did you? WILLY (with casual irritation): I said nothing happened. Didn’t you hear me? (Miller, 1948:3).**

This quotation is in (ACT 1, SCENE 1) between Willy, the hero of the play and his wife, Linda, they talk about his job, he told her that he was so tired and he could not go on more, therefore, she thought that he made an accident and break the car. Willy answers her but his answer was very short that he flouts the maxim of quantity by giving less information than required.

2. WILLY: Why don't you open a window in here, for God's sake?

LINDA (with infinite patience): They're all open, dear.

WILLY: The way they boxed us in here. Bricks and windows, windows and bricks (Miller,1948:8).

This conversation is in (ACT 1, SCENE 2), in it Willy violates the maxim of quality by giving false information to his wife, he feels that he lives in prison so he tells his wife to open the windows and he is astonished why she does not open them while they are really opened. There is an implied meaning in his speech. He wants to say that his life is miserable.

3. HAPPY: Like Uncle Charley, heh?
WILLY: Bigger than Uncle Charley! Because Charley is not — liked. He's liked, but he's not — well liked (Miller, 1948:19).

This quotation is in (ACT 1, SCENE 3) in which Willy is flouting the maxims of quantity and quality in his speech to his sons Happy and Biff, he gives information more than is required and tells them something that is not true and lack adequate evidence. He deliberately tells his sons that he is bigger than his friend Charley and he is well liked than him but truly he is not.

4. LINDA: How much did you do?
WILLY: Well, I — I did — about a hundred and eighty gross in Providence. Well, no — it came to — roughly two hundred gross on the whole trip (Miller, 1948 : 22).

This quotation is in (ACT 1, SCENE 5) in which Willy and Linda discuss about money that Willy has got from his selling. He violates the maxim of quality, he wants his wife to understand that he is a good salesman and he can get more money, he does that on a purpose. Willy lives in his illusion because he cannot face his really life for he is not a good salesman. So there is implied meaning reflect the bad life of poor people of American life.

5. CHARLEY: Maybe you're in for some of his money.
WILLY: Naa, he had seven sons. There's just one opportunity I had with that man.... (Miller,1948:30).

This quotation is in (ACT 1, SCENE 6) in which Willy and his friend and the man who Willy jealous of, they discuss about the job. Willy is flouting the maxim of

relation when talks about something irrelevant, he lives in his illusion and return to the past time, he talks with his dead brother, Ben which represents a symbol of success. So he flouts the maxi of relation and manner by giving a lot of information which are not ordered.

6. WILLY: If you don't know how to play the game I'm not gonna throw my money away on you!
CHARLEY (rising): It was my ace, for God's sake!
WILLY: I'm through, I'm through! (Miller, 1948:32).

This quotation is in (ACT 1, SCENE 6) in which Willy is violating the maxims of relation by saying irrelevant information and the maxim of the manner by saying ambiguous and obscure information, there is repetition in his speech, he wants to emphasis his point of view that he is well-liked and a good salesman. He always lives in his illusions.

7. WILLY (longingly): Can't you stay a few days? You're just what I need, Ben, because I — I have a fine position here, but I — well, Dad left when I was such a baby and I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel — kind of temporary about myself.

BEN: I'll be late for my train. (Miller, 1948: 37).

This quotation is in (ACT 1, SCENE 7) in which Willy is flouting the maxims of manner and relation. Willy lives in his illusion because he always escapes from his miserable present life and return to his happy past life. So according to his family he speaks irrelevant information and talk too much and ambiguous speech. He is hesitant and afraid that his brother, Ben leaves him alone then he will to his normal and sad life.

8. LINDA: I'm just wondering if Oliver will remember him. You think he might?

WILLY (coming out of the bathroom in his pajamas): Remember him? What's the matter with you, you crazy? If he'd've stayed with Oliver he'd be on top by now! Wait'll Oliver gets a look at him. You don't know the average caliber any more. The average young man today — (he is getting into bed) — is got a caliber of zero. Greatest thing in the world for him was to bum around. (Miller, 1948: 48).

This quotation is in (ACT 1, SCENE 10) in which Willy again violating and flouting the maxim of quantity and quality by telling his wife, Linda a lot of information

which is untrue about his son, Biff that he is famous, well-liked and well known man. He implies something that he does not want her wife to discover it through his speech. The truth is opposite what have been said.

9. HOWARD: Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember. Well, I couldn't think of anything for you, Willy. WILLY: I tell ya, Howard. The kids are all grown up, y 'know. I don't need much anymore. If I could take home — well, sixty-five dollars a week, I could swing it.

HOWARD: Yeah, but Willy, see I (Miller, 1948: 56).

This quotation is in (ACT 2, SCENE 1) in which Willy is violating the maxim of quality by telling his manager untrue information. He lies to him by saying that he doesn't need money and his sons were grown up and they help him a lot. But the truth is he needs money more than any time and his sons do not help him. Here in this quotation the author, Auther Miller wants to clarify the suffering of poor people at that time.

10. BIFF: Why don't you let me finish? WILLY: I'm not interested in stories about the past or any crap of that kind because the woods are burning, boys, you understand? There's a big blaze going on all around. I was fired today. (Miller, 1948:78).

This quotation is in (ACT 2, SCENE 4) in which Willy is flouting the four maxims of the cooperating principle by telling his son, Biff strange information that irrelevant and ambiguous, he implied meaning inside his speech, he decides to do something and he does not want his son know it. His speech has false information, he is

contradicting himself. He says that he is not interested in stories about the past but truly he lives in his illusion.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of the data in the play "Death of a salesman" by the author, Arthur Miller, there are flouting and violating of the four maxims (Quantity, Quality, Manner and Relation) of the cooperative principle and there is implied meaning, conversational implicature. Miller uses the flouting and violating of the maxims to clarify how poor people lived at that time in America and how they are suffering through the speech of the hero, Willy Loman. This drama of the common man being defeated by the society and he is the victim of the capitalism. Miller tells us what we need to understand through a series of flashbacks and daydreaming sequences. We soon discover that Willy's lack of self-worth derives from experiences related to his son Biff, to his waning career as a salesman and to his inability to make life wonderful for his wife Linda. It is the story of an aging man who considers himself a failure but is incapable of consciously admitting it. His debts prey heavily on his mind, and he reaches the point where everything seems to break down before it is "paid for."

The study has presented a pragmatic analysis of the play Death of the salesman to highlight the violation and flouting of the maxims of the cooperative principle by the major characters .We hope that the analysis would improve the reader's knowledge of how the different characters violated and flouted maxims and then they understand quite well the speakers' intended meanings in their conversation. This has a relation to the plot of the drama in which the characters mean more than what they utter.

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