Flouting the Gricean Maxims in Vernacular Conversations

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Abstract

This study has undertaken a synthesis of the research literature on the four Gricean Maxims: the Maxim of Quality, the Maxim of Quantity, the Maxim of Relevance, and the Maxim of Manner. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the praxis of the four Gricean Maxims namely Quality, Quantity, Relevance, and Manner, as employed in vernacular conversations; describe how the participants flout those maxims; discover the implicatures produced by flouting the Gricean maxims; and develop activities as benchmark toward community awareness, for the participants of vernacular conversations like those from the identified local radio stations in the city of Tandag. This study covered only vernacular conversations employed in vernacular radio programs of local stations in Tandag City namely SURE FM: Tandag's First, Tandag's Best- 97.5 megahertz (MHz.) and PRIME FM: Good Kaayo, Your Health to Wealth Radio- 99.1 megahertz (MHz). Conversations recorded in this study did not only limit to Tandaganon dialect but also dialects in the province of Surigao dell Sur with inclusion of Cebuano-Visayan casually used by radio disc jockeys. Participant observation was done in the two identified local radio stations in Tandag City namely SURE FM and PRIME FM. The selection of these two local radio FM Stations in the City of Tandag undergoes Random Purposeful- (still small sample size) type of purposive sampling for it adds credibility to sample when potential purposeful sample is larger than one can handle. The informants of this study were all the participants of the conversations recorded. The informants included the disk jockeys or radio announcers/commentators of local radio programs in vernacular, the callers, chatters, and live guests of the stations all engaging in vernacular conversations. Non-

Participant observation was employed in this phenomenologicall research. I found as identified in the coding: of the 88 conversations, 12 of them belong to the Formal Logic (FL=12) while 76 belong to the Conversational Logic (CL=76). The four Gricean Maxims in Conversations were all violated. Through flouting those Gricean Maxims in vernacular conversations, implicatures were produced. The four illocutionary acts namely expressives, directives, commissives, and declaratives were manifested by the sample utterances. In the conversations, there were 88 utterances which are produced by the speakers as the implicatures. From the 88 conversations, (GM-Ql=16; GM-Qn=29; GM-Rv=19; GM-Mn=24) flouting the four Gricean Maxims, the utterances of Speaker B in all the conversations are the implicatures produced. The implicatures are produced not only by flouting the four Gricean Maxims (GM-Ql=16; GM-Qn=29; GM-Rv=19; GM-Mn=24)but also by manifesting illocutionary acts (IAE=48 utterances; IADr=18 utterances; IAC=21 utterances; IADc=1 utterance) evident in the conversations.

Keywords: Flout; Paul Grice; Vernacular Conversations; Gricean Maxims

Introduction

Geoffrey Leech in his "English Grammar in Conversation" expressed that people communicate every day. However, we are unaware in even using our mother tongue that we have oftentimes violated the Gricean conversational maxims. Since we oftentimes flout those maxims, there is the occurrence of miscommunication and misunderstanding among the participants of the conversation. Thus in order to avoid such phenomena, this work is the benchmark to conduct fora, symposia, and the like, presenting natural vernacular

conversations in the local community with analysis relevant to the Gricean maxims. Once awareness is instilled, flouting the Gricean maxims in vernacular conversations is expected to lessen (Leech, n.d.). This qualitative research pertains to an inquiry on the maxims being flouted in the conversations in vernacular radio station programs. Furthermore, it also aims to answer the queries on identifying evident illocutionary act/acts manifested in the sample utterances, determining the implicaturesproduced by those violations and pointing out implicatures usually produced by the committed illocutionary acts.

There is a popular belief that women's speech is more indirect than men's speech as studied by Rundguist, Suellen (Ilmiah International Journal, 2007). Grice as mentioned by Rundguist, Suellen (2006) refers this to as flouting the maxims of conversation. Sperber and Willson's theory of indirectness, cited by UnikaAtma Jaya (2007), which has a cognitive rather than social basis, one would be less likely to expect social variables to interact with degrees of indirectness. A study of Rundguist, Suellen (2006) shows that there are differences in the degree to which men and women flout the Gricean Maxims. Filipino families tend to always use indirect speech and implication in family dinner conversations, viewed from a Gricean perspective. There has even no evidence that the acts of non-observance (violating or flouting Gricean maxims) vary in age and gender for instance. On the other hand, children seem to break the maxims primarily for social purposes like joking. In this setting, one can classify the variations regarding the distribution of the different contexts and types of the non-observance. There is the existence of Gricean cooperative principle in radio programs through stations in the City of Tandag. One can examine how the conversations in various radio programs are employed and how it deviate the Gricean cooperative principle.

As phrased by Paul Grice, who introduced it, it states, "Make your contribution such as it is required, at the state at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." Philosopher Kent Bach writes: "We need first to get clear on the character of Grice's maxims. They are not sociological generalizations about speech, nor are they moral prescriptions or proscriptions on what to say or communicate. Although Grice presented them in the form of guidelines for how to communicate successfully, I think they are better construed as presumptions about utterances, presumptions that we as listeners rely on and we, as speakers exploit *(Bach, 2005, pp. 41-58)*. Previous studies focused on providing evidence supporting a theory with a social component, identifying non-observance of Gricean maxims in family dinner table conversations, and the use of Gricean cooperative principles in radio programs, while this study is aimed at explaining the foundational analysis behind what the subject issue of the previous researches is trying to solve. It is believed that in order to observe Paul Grice's maxims in conversations, the community, as the participants of everyday discourse, has to be oriented and aware about this logic and conversation.

World peace has been a long term issue. Even in the country, peace is still longed not to mention what had happened in Zamboanga. People against people; Filipinos against Filipinos. This study is hoped to be an instrument toward achieving peace that starts in every community through effective communication. It is further hoped to have a great impact to people by putting in praxis the benchmark of this research. The gaps are in necessity to be addressed because people exist with language used in conversations. Communication is happening in every community. Thus, every speaking participant needs awareness and basic knowledge to how s/he can effectively engage among the participants of a conversation. If the results of this qualitative research will be widely reinforced to various societies, there is much possibility to produce clear and efficient communication towards each other. The gaps happening from the smallest group to the biggest communities may be resolved if the aim of this study will be strengthened in its implementation phase. This

phenomenological research aimed at analyzing statements taken from vernacular conversations whether they belong to Formal or Conversational Logic, the Gricean Maxims being violated, and the implicatures produced.

Methodology and Techniques Used

This study used qualitative design. To Mack, et al., it is a type of scientific research. Moreover, in general terms, a scientific research consists of an investigation that seeks answers to a question, systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question, collects evidence, produces findings that were not determined in advance, and produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provided information about the "human" side of an issue- that is, the often contradictory behaviors, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals like that of the participants in a conversation. As a qualitative research (Suatengco, 2012, p.99), it assumed that social reality is continuously constructed in local situations. It made a holistic observation of the total context within which social action occurs. It used analytic induction to analyze data and it discovered concepts and theories after data have been collected. The approach was inductive and the goal was to describe multiple realities, develop deep understanding and captures everyday life and human perspective.

Its approach to inquiry was through phenomenological research. Whereas a narrative study reports the life of single individual, phenomenological study to John Creswell, describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept of a phenomenon. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (a "grasp of the very nature of the thing," van Manen, cited by Creswell in 2007, p. 177). Phenomenology is popular in the social and health sciences, especially in sociology (Borgatta&Borgatta, cited by Creswell in

2007; Swingewood, cited by Creswell in 2007), psychology (Giorgi, cited by Creswell in 2007; Polkinghorne, cited by Creswell in 2007), nursing and the health sciences (Nieswiadomy, cited by Creswell I 2007; Oiler, cited by Creswell in 2007), and education (Tesch, cited by Creswell in 2007; van Manen, cited by Creswell in 2007).

Descriptive method was used in analyzing and discussing the data. In data collection, participant observation, as the qualitative research method of this study, was used.

The researcher began by securing permission from the Local Stations in Tandag City through sending the managers Letter of Permission to conduct such study. Letter of Permission to conduct study was sent to Ms. Judith Sagaysay Suarez, station manager of Sure FM, and to Mr. Roberto M. Sales, OIC-station manager of Prime FM. Letter of Permission was signed by the researcher, Thesis Writing and Language and Literature Research Advisers, Assistant Dean, and the Dean. After the permits have been secured, the researcher first visited Sure FM, then Prime FM. I have had gathered adequate information about the two local FM radio stations. After gathering necessary information about the stations, the researcher then observed the participants of vernacular conversations in a program as I recorded the dialogue or group conversations of the participants. After the recording of contributions of the two FM stations, audio data had undergone transcription process for the purposes of examining, analyzing, and discussing data as to the illocutionary act/acts manifested by the sample utterances, the Gricean maxims violated, and the implicatures produced.

The researcher visualized the data collection as a series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer emerging research questions. As a qualitative researcher, I engaged in a series of activities in the process of collecting data. Most importantly, the researcher had to consider the multiple phases that extend beyond the typical reference point of conducting interviews or conducting observations.

An important step in the process was to find people or places and to gain access to and establish rapport with participants so that they will provide good data. A closely interrelated step in the process involved determining a strategy for the purposeful sampling of individuals or sites. This will not be a probability sample that will enable me to determine statistical inferences to a population; rather, it is purposeful sample that intentionally sampled a group of people that could best inform me about the research problem under examination. Thus, the researcher needed to determine which type of purposeful sampling will be best to use.

When I have chosen the sites or people, decisions are needed to be made about the most appropriate data collection approaches. Increasingly, I had more choices regarding data collection, such as email-messages and online data gathering, and typically I collected data from more than one source. To collect this information, I developed protocols or written forms for recording the information and I needed to develop some forms for recording the data, such as interview or observational protocols. Also, I needed to anticipate issues of data collection, called "field issues", which may be a problem, such as having inadequate data, which will need to prematurely leave the field or site, or contributing to lost information. Finally, I have decided how to store data so that they can easily be found and protected from damage or loss (Creswell, 2007, pp.118-9).

Results and Discussions

Out of the 145 conversations transcribed, there were 16 conversations which fall under the Gricean Maxim of Quality. 29 conversations fall under the Gricean Maxim of Quantity. 19 conversations fall under the Gricean Maxim of Relevance, and 24 conversations fall under the Gricean Maxim of Manner. There are a total of 88 conversations which are flouting the four Gricean Maxims.

The most flouted maxim therefore, is the Gricean Maxim of Quantity and the least flouted maxim is the Gricean Maxim of Quality.

To this categorization of qualitative data, it can be said that speakers of vernacular conversations tend to be honest with their utterances but they always gave information more than what is required by the other speaker.

There were 16 (out of 145) conversations that fall under this maxim. This is the least flouted Gricean Maxim. This maxim according to Paul Grice, desires the participants to be truthful. Participants shall not say what they believe to be false. They shall not say something for which they lack adequate evidence.

These 16 conversations, as categorized, flouted this maxim of quality. See for example in the first conversation, **Speaker A** said that **the incident was done by people who are foolish; people who are residing in Unidos**. However, **Speaker B** responded that **not all people from Unidos are foolish**. Thus, it violates the maxim of quality because **Speaker A actually lacked adequate evidence that people from Unidos are the ones who did the poisoning of the fishes.**

Another instance is conversation no. 2.**Speaker Awanted to be clarified about a certain issue. However, having not enough evidence, Speaker B only thought, believing that the person was only stating out an observation in the past year. A texter even said according to Speaker B that fishes died and floated and that the texter is sure of the said statement though it lacked adequate evidence.**

For the rest of the conversations which fall under this maxim, the same manner of flouting is constituted by these conversations.

There were 29 conversations (out of 145) which fall under this Gricean Maxim. This is in fact, the most flouted maxim among the four. To the proponent of this principle, Herbert Paul Grice, the maxim of quality refers to the quantity of information. The participants of the conversation shall make their contribution as informative as it is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). The contribution shall not be more informative than how it is required.

However, this principle was flouted by these conversations under this maxim. For instance, in the first conversation, **Speaker A asked permission from Speaker B for a hug. Speaker B responded positively but there was additional information uttered by Speaker B which is not anymore required by Speaker A. Speaker B could actually say 'yes', to affirm to the request of Speaker A. Nevertheless, Speaker B added "so long that it is Speaker A, Speaker B shall always say yes to Speaker A's request".**

Another example is evident in conversation no. 2. **Another request is asked by Speaker A. In the same manner, Speaker responded much that what was required by the first speaker instead of just saying "no way". In this conversation, Speaker B cited reasons of the refusal to the request which is more than what is required by Speaker A, to just know if Speaker B is affirmed or opposed to the request.** To the rest of the conversations in this category, flouting the Gricean Maxim of Quantity is constituted by the speakers.

There were 19 conversations (out of 145) which fall under this maxim, as flouted. This is the least flouted maxim next to the maxim of quality. To the proponent of this principle, Herbert Paul Grice, the maxim of relation talks about relevance. The participants of the conversation shall engage in the exchange with relevance.

However, this Gricean principle was flouted by these conversations below. In the first conversation for instance, **Speaker A** asked **"Where would you have to go?"Speaker B** responded irrelevantly. The response was **"Their stocks are always new."**

Another flouting conversation is the second one. The question was **"What are you waiting for?"** The irrelevant response was **"Go now to Torque Concept Store which is located at Serra Ty Building, Moonglow, Tandag City."**

The rest of the conversations under this category are all flouting the Gricean

maxim of relevance. There were no inherent relations of the utterances among the exchange of speakers.

There were 24 conversations which fall under flouting this maxim out of the 88 flouting conversations from the 145 transcribed conversations. Herbert Paul Grice, the proponent, requires the participants of the conversation in this maxim to be clear. One should avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity. It orders the conversation to be brief and orderly by avoiding unnecessary prolixity.

However, this maxim was flouted by these conversations below. Let us try to examine the first conversation. **Speaker A asked Speaker B to stop tackling about the issue.** The response of **Speaker B**, as I have noticed, **possessed prolixity and obscurity of expression leading to ambiguity.** In the end, the **only point of the utterance is trying to say 'no' toward stopping the discussion of the issue.**

Let us try to examine conversation no. 2.The response of **Speaker B** was **not brief and orderly**. It **informs that the product is available in Torque concept Store** though **Speaker A** was only **inquiring if people are looking for an android phone with WiFi.**

The rest of the conversations here constitute implicatures from flouting this maxim of manner.

Ilocutionary acts manifested in the sample utterances

The four illocutionary acts namely expressives, directives, commissives, and declaratives were manifested by the sample utterances. Out of the 88 conversations flouting the four gricean maxims (GM-Ql=16; GM-Qn=29; GM-Rv=19; GM-Mn=24), 48 of them manifested an expressive illocutionary act. 18 utterances manifested a directive illocutionary act. 21 utterances manifested a commissive illocutionary act while only 1 utterance manifested a declarative illocutionary act. (IAE=48 utterances; IADr=18 utterances; IAC=21 utterances; IADc=1 utterance)

It is very evident that most of the conversation participants' utterances were expressives. In this illocutionary act, speakers express their feelings, e.g. apologizing, welcoming, and sympathizing, among others according to Norquist (2006). On the other hand, conversation participants' contributions in the conversations seldomly manifest the declarative illocutionary act. In this illocutionary act, the speaker's utterance brings about a new external situation, e.g. christening, marrying, and resigning, among others.

Implicatures produced in those violations

From these 88 conversations below (GM-Ql=16; GM-Qn=29; GM-Rv=19; GM-Mn=24) flouting the four Gricean Maxims, the utterances of Speaker B in all the conversations are the implicatures produced. When a Gricean Maxim is flouted, a conversation still goes on with the aid of the cooperative principle by Paul Grice. People who obey the cooperative principles in their language will make sure that what they say in a conversation furthers the purpose of that conversation just like these conversations below though flouting the four Gricean Maxims.

The cooperative principle describes how people interact with one another. It goes both wat ways: speakers (generally) observe the cooperative principle, and listeners (generally) assume that speakers are observing it. Listeners and speakers must speak cooperatively and mutually acceot one another to be understood in a particular way. This principle describes how effective communication in conversation is achieved in common social conversation.

In these conversations, there were 88 utterances which are produced by the speakers as the implicatures. An implicature is the product exchange when one or both speakers flout a maxim in their conversation. For instance, **Speaker A: Where to? Speaker B: I am going to buy some fruits.** An implicature is produced by Speaker B by flouting the Gricean Maxim of Manner. **Instead of giving the exact place to go, the Speaker gave an obscure expression "to buy some fruits".**

How the implicatures produced corollary to the first subquestion

The implicatures enumerated above are produced not only by flouting the four Gricean Maxims (GM-Ql=16; GM-Qn=29; GM-Rv=19; GM-Mn=24)but also by manifesting illocutionary acts (IAE=48 utterances; IADr=18 utterances; IAC=21 utterances; IADc=1 utterance) evident in the conversations. The conversations were also identified and coded whether they belong to the formal or conversational logic. Of the 88 conversations, 12 of them belong to the Formal Logic (FL=12) while 76 belong to the Conversational Logic (CL=76).

In Formal Logic, for example, a simple syllogism like: All psycholinguists are clever. Jim is a psycholinguist. It implies (makes an implication) or it gives us an inference that Jim is clever. In Conversational Logic, if I say, *Can you be quiet?* We draw an inference tha the person being asked is noisy. If a colleague asks me how a student did in class, and I reply *She always came to class on time and her penmanship was very neat.* We draw an inference that the student was doing well in her studies. What is the logical basis for these inferences? It will boil down to Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle.

With 25 conversations from the first set, 14 from the second set, 57 from the third set, and 49 from the fourth set, there were 145 conversations transcribed in this phenomenology. I then stopped recording audio data and transcribing them after the researcher had found out that I have reached the saturation point of qualitative data. As mentioned in my validity and reliability rigor under living with my data, the researcher lived with the data collection until no new information appears. This is a manifestation that I have reached the saturation point of the data collection process. In other words, the researcher had to stop and proceed with the qualitative treatment of the data collected for they bear enough and same weight of context in the data analysis as stressed by Taylor, C and Gibbs, G R (2010).

Coding scheme and coding data

This is a step from defining relationships between/among concepts. In here, I created a coding scheme that best defines the themes that have been identified and provided a way to break up the data for further analysis. The codes were used to analyze the data. The themes were grouped according to their similar charactertistics. Indicated are also the frequencies of recurrence that the themes were used to the conversations flouted.

CODES	COLOR	MEANING
GM-Q l	Dark Red	Gricean Maxim of Quality
GM-Qn	Red	Gricean Maxim of Quantity
GM-Rv	Purple	Gricean Maxim of Relevance
GM-Mn	Dark Blue	Gricean Maxim of Manner
IA	Black	Illocutionary Act/s
IADr	Blue	Directive/s
IAC	Light Blue	Commissive/s
IAE	Green	Expressive/s
IADc	Light Green	Declarative/s
FL	Orange	Formal Logic
CL	Dark Orange	Conversational Logic
T	Black	Theme/s
T1	Black	worrying (no. of use: 1)
T2	Black	suspicion (no. of use: 3)
T3	Black	support, encouragement, persuasion (no. of use: 4)
T4	Black	clarification, doubt, confusion (no. of use: 4)
T5	Black	belief, assumption (no. of use: 2)
T6	Black	hatred, anger, dismay, discouragement (no. of use: 6)
T7	Black	fear (no. of use: 4)
T8	Black	confrontation (no. of use: 1)
T9	Black	discredit, decline, refusal (no. of use: 9)
T10	Black	shock, surprise, shockness (no. of use: 6)
T11	Black	initiative (no. of use: 1)
T12	Black	joke, joking (no. of use: 4)
T13	Black	sarcasm (no. of use: 2)
T14	Black	kindness, acceptance, love, concern, care, sympathy (no. of use: 8)
T15	Black	promotion (no. of use: 1)
T16	Black	optimism (no. of use: 1)
T17	Black	hyperbole (no. of use 1)
T18	Black	practicality (no. of use: 1)
T19	Black	joy (no. of use: 1)
T20	Black	revelation (no. of use: 4)
T21	Black	sadness (no. of use: 1)
T22	Black	firmness (no. of use: 2)
T23	Black	incapacity (no. of use: 1)
T24	Black	domination, gender stereotyping, unfairness (no. of uses: 4)
T25	Black	aggressiveness, assertion (no. of use: 2)
T26	Black	complaint (no. of use: 2)
T27	Black	humility (no. of use: 1)
T28	Black	letting go (no. of use: 1)
T29	Black	warning (no. of use: 1)
T30	Black	seduction, satisfaction (no. of use: 3)
T31	Black	jealousy (no. of use: 1)

T32	Black	confidence (no. of use: 1)
T33	Black	informative (no. of use: 1)
T34	Black	interest (no. of use: 1)
T35	Black	negation, pessimism (no. of use: 2)
T36	Black	curiousity (no. of use: 1)
T37	Black	wondering (no. of use: 1)
T38	Black	mutual understanding (no. of use: 1)
T39	Black	underestimation (no. of use: 1)
T40	Black	talking dirty (no. of use: 1)

Conclusions & Recommendations

To communicate effectively with others, teachers should not only teach the learners about grammar, the structural rules of language, and semantics, among others, but also pragmatics. As supported by Siegal (1999:n.p.), learners must be aware of a large body of implicit information on how to engage in a conversation. The conversational awareness is necessary for learners to comprehend the intended meaning of another speaker and to successfully convey their own messages to others.

Learners communicate everyday. They should be able not only to use the structures that they have learned but also to understand what is communicated by the manner and style of an utterance.

Pragmatics- this is the very use of language. This is a branch of linguistics concerned with the use of language in social contexts and the ways in which people produce and comprehend meanings through language according to Richard Nordquist (2012:n.p.). If learners' understanding of language know nothing about pragmatics, speakers will only have a literal understanding of a word meaning or sentence as opposed to what it might be used to convey in a certain context.

We might be good speakers but we lack the fluency to analyze and understand our own utterances. In the use of illocutionary acts for instance, we might have uttered all the speech acts of illocutionary but we were not able to know and notice or understand that certain utterances manifest the said speech acts. This should be the role of language teachers in the 21st century. Instilling practical use of language in various social contexts rather than just learning sentence patterns, subject-verb agreement, and the like.

People engage in daily conversations. In order to use language at its best, this phenomenology is done to make understanding evident.

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