

THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE: IS GRICE'S THEORY SUITABLE TO INDONESIAN LANGUAGE CULTURE?

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ABSTRACT

Article discussed how native speakers of Indonesian observed Grice's maxims. One hundred conversations contributed in live talk show from varied Indonesia television channels were analysed. The results show that Grice's maxims are fulfilled in many conversations. Nevertheless, in other situations, two kinds of non-fulfilment of the maxims are observed. First, the speaker deliberately exploits a maxim, which is suitable to Grice's theory. Second, the speaker fails to observe but does not exploit a maxim, which leads to some interpretations of the cultural patterns of the Indonesian language: communicative politeness, high context culture and the needs of harmony in communication that are considered as the manifesting of Indonesian culture.

Keywords: Cooperative Principle, maxims, cultural identity, cultural values

ABSTRAK

Artikel mendiskusikan tentang penutur asli bahasa Indonesia menerapkan maksim Grice. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka, dengan mencermati dan menganalisis 100 percakapan talk show dari beberapa channel televisi. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa maksim Grice diterapkan dalam beberapa percakapan. Namun pada situasi lain, dua hal yang tidak dapat dipenuhi: pertama, pembicara secara nyata menerapkan maksim yang sesuai dengan teori Grice. Kedua, pembicara gagal untuk menerapkan namun tidak secara benar sehingga menimbulkan penafsiran terkait dengan pola budaya bahasa Indonesia, yaitu komunikasi yang santun, budaya yang tinggi, dan kebutuhan harmoni di dalam komunikasi yang dipertimbangkan sebagai manifestasi budaya Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Prinsip Kerja Sama, maksim, identitas budaya, nilai budaya

INTRODUCTION

In order to communicate successfully, human beings are supposed to obey to a certain mode of interaction. For this reason, the linguist, Herbert Paul Grice, developed a mode of interaction for successful communication called the Cooperative Principle (CP) and its maxims based on ordinary language philosophy. The CP has been mentioned in many pragmatics works such as Yule (1996) and Grundy (2000) for its influence on the field of pragmatics.

The objective of this study is to investigate to what extent native speakers of Indonesia observe Grice's maxims and to analyze whether the maxims are suitable the Indonesian socio-cultural norms and cultural values system, since "cultural values systems influence discourse patterns and promote the different communicative styles" (Clyne, 2006). Furthermore, this study also discusses whether the Gricean theory is really culturally interdependent, observed in Indonesian culture that is based on the language-cultural identities and socio-cultural norms and values of the Indonesian society.

In order to communicate successfully, each interlocutor in every conversation is needed to follow certain conversational rules. Based on this condition, Grice developed the CP which every person should obey in order to realise a successful communication. Grice (1989) states the Cooperative Principle as follows: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are engaged." Furthermore, he develops the classification of maxims into:

- a. Maxim of 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 adequate evidence.
- b. Maxim of Quantity:
 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of exchange).
 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- c. Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.
- d. Maxim of Manner: Be perspicuous.
 1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
 2. Avoid ambiguity.
 3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
 4. Be orderly.

Below is the example of all maxims in one conversation.

- (1) A: Where is Juliet?
B: She is in her room, I'm sure.

It can be seen that speaker B, according to Grice's framework, observes all of the maxims as he answers speaker A's question clearly (Manner) and truthfully (Quality). Moreover, speaker B's contribution is sufficiently provided (Quantity), and his answer is directly relevant to speaker A's question (Relation).

Interlocutors in a conversation are often expected to follow all principles in order to communicate successfully. However, there are certain situations in which people

fail to observe the maxims; they may intentionally or unintentionally fail to follow the maxims because of their purpose of interaction. Grice (1989:30) states that a participant in a conversation may fail to fulfil a maxim in various ways as stated: (1) He may quietly violate a maxim; if so, in some cases he will be liable to mislead. (2) He may opt out from the operation both of the maxim and of the Cooperative Principle; he may say, indicate or allow it to become plain that he is unwilling to co-operate in the way the maxim requires. He may say, for example, I cannot say more; my lips are sealed. (3) He may be faced by a clash: He may be unable, for example, to fulfil the first maxim of Quantity (Be as informative as is required) without violating the second maxim of Quality (Have adequate evidence for what you say). (4) He may flout a maxim; that is, he may blatantly fail to fulfil it. On the assumption that the speaker is able to fulfil the maxim and to do so without violating another maxim (because of a clash), is not opting out, and is not, in the view of the blatancy of his performance, trying to mislead, the hearer is faced with a minor problem: How can his saying what he did say be reconciled with the supposition that he is observing the overall Cooperative Principle? This situation is one that characteristically gives rise to conversational implicature; and when a conversational implicature is generated in this way, I shall say that a maxim is being exploited.

Furthermore, Grice makes a distinction between violating a maxim and openly flouting a maxim. If the speaker flouts a maxim, he has deliberately and openly failed to observe one or more maxims for (a) communicative purpose(s), which leads to implicatures in a conversation. Below is an example of flouting a maxim:
(2) Leila: Whoa! Has your boss gone crazy?
Mary: Let's go get some coffee.
(Yule 1996: 43)

According to Yule, Mary intentionally flouts the maxim of Relevance to make an implicature in her answer to Leila's question. There are certain reasons that makes Mary reply to Leila's question by unrelated answer and Leila has to make some inference from Mary (for example, the boss might be nearby) and she understands why Mary makes an apparently non-relevant remark. The implicature here is that Mary cannot answer the question in that context.

On the other hand, Grice defines maxim violation as "is quiet and unostentatious". If the speaker violates a maxim, he or she is liable to provide insufficient, ambiguous, or irrelevant information, which might negatively affect communication and do not lead to implicatures. Let us consider the following example for a better understanding about maxim violation. This example is an extract from a fictional interaction between Thompson and his girlfriend, Ginny:

- (3) Thompson has been refusing to kiss Ginny, her girlfriend. So, she starts to think he may be having an affair:
'Thompson. I've got to ask you this.'
She stopped.
'Ask me then —'
'Will you give me a truthful answer? However much you think it'll hurt me?'

Ginny's voice had a little quaver.
 'I promise.'
 Ginny looked at him.
 'Is there another girl?'
 Thompson raised his chin and looked at her.
 'No,' he said. 'There isn't another girl.'

Later Thompson asserts that he is not having an affair with another girl but with another man, but Ginny cannot help believing him on the basis of information he provides (Thomas, 1995). The fact is that Thompson is having an affair with another man, but he does not want to reveal such information; therefore, he misleads Ginny and, according to Grice's framework, violates conversational maxims.

Besides the two kinds of non-fulfilment of the maxims mentioned above, some other kinds of non-observance of the maxims have also been discussed. In certain interaction, the speaker does not observe the Gricean maxims because he or she may infringe, opt out of, or suspend a maxim (Mooney, 2004).

Based on cross-cultural perspectives, there is one question rising whether Grice's CP and its maxims can be observed similarly in different cultures/discourse style. Clyne (1994:12) claims:

"Contrasts in discourse structures indicate an anglocentric element in the maxims of the Cooperative Principle as worded by Grice and their inapplicability or limited relevance to cultures where content and knowledge are core values."

Wierzbicka (1991) also states that it is quite impossible to apply a cooperative principle (if it exists) of a language to another language because there are different modes of interaction in cultural differences. Furthermore, Keenan (2000) also discussed the relation between Grice's conversational maxim and cross-culturally. Concerning the maxim of Quantity cross-culturally, Keenan (2000:217-218) states that:

"In testing the maxim "Be informative" cross-culturally, we do not expect to find that in some societies the maxim always holds and in some societies the maxim never holds. It is improbable, for example, that there is some society in which being informative is categorically inappropriate. Differences between societies, if there are any, are more likely to be differences in specification of domains in which the maxim is expected to hold and differences in the degree to which members are expected to conform to this maxim. In some societies, meeting the informational needs of a conversational partner may be relatively unmarked or routine behaviour. In other societies, meeting another's informational needs may be relatively unexpected or marked behaviour."

Kochman (1981) shows different ways of communicative cooperation between blacks and whites. For instance, in Black American culture, being cooperative means saying a lot and showing immodesty. Kochman, therefore, makes a distinction of the differences of communicative strategies between blacks and whites,

claiming that black and white cultural differences are generally ignored when attempts are made to understand how and why black white communication fails. The reason is:

"Cultural differences play a covert role in the communication process. When blacks and whites interact in public meetings, their agenda does not typically include a discussion of the way they are interpreting each other's behaviour, the reasons they are interpreting it as they do, or the way they are expecting the meeting to evolve." (Kochman, 1981:7)

This is contrary to the CP, which assumes that people in conversations should be cooperative by providing no more or less information.

METHOD

Techniques of data collection in this study were conducted by observation and note-taking while conversations were carried out. One hundred conversations taken from live talk shows on different Indonesian television channels were observed and transcribed into Indonesian for analysis. The subjects in the conversations were varied. They were between 20 and 50 years old; having different occupations such as football player, singers, businessmen, governmental officials, politicians, actors and actresses, etc. While the topics of the conversation were varied also. They could be about politics, economics, or even personal matters. The data indicate that, in many situations, the interlocutors in conversations observe the Gricean maxims. Nevertheless, in many other instances, the speakers do not follow the maxims. Therefore, there are two conversational settings to be analysed: fulfilment of the maxims and non-fulfilment of the maxims.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the data show that the four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner are observed in different degrees, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Fulfilment of the Maxims

Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner
33 (33%)	100 (100%)	90 (90%)	45 (45%)

From 100 conversations, the results indicate that the maxim of Quantity is not observed in all conversation in terms of the two sub-maxims: "Make your contribution as informative as is required" and "Do not make your contribution more informative than is required". The percentage for maxim of quantity is quite small. A typical feature of the observance of the maxim of quantity lies in the fact that the information expected to be provided in these situations is not very complicated. The speakers' simple questions lead their conversational partners to providing sufficient information which fits the criteria of fulfilling the maxim of Quantity.

As for the maxim of Quality, it might be quite difficult to observe to what extent the speaker fulfils the

maxim in terms of its criteria: “Do not say what you believe to be false” and “Do not say for which you lack adequate evidence”. The problem here is how the outsider is able to understand whether what the speakers said were true or not. However, from the researcher’s observation and on the basis of the information provided by the interlocutors in the conversations and the different contexts, all the conversations followed the maxim of Quality because the speakers do not say what they believe to be false and certainly, they do not say for which they lack sufficient evidence nor do they intend to deceive their addressees.

In term of maxim of Relation, most conversations are relevant to the questions raised by the speakers in the conversations. As can be seen in Table 1 above, 90 out of 100 conversations follow the maxim of Relation. These conversations do not change the topic of the conversation and hence fit the goal of the speaker in asking the question.

The results also show that once a conversation is stuck to the maxim of Quantity, it also does not follow the maxim of Manner. Only 45% of the conversations fulfil this maxim. However, some interlocutors in the interactions did not make their conversations in a clear way. Some conversations here are usually the political talk show, in which the speakers tend to answer the questions ambiguously, and not being briefly and orderly either.

There are two kinds of non-observance which need to be analysed in this research: deliberately exploiting a maxim which fits the Gricean framework and not exploiting a maxim. According to Grice, in many situations, speakers in talk conversations openly and blatantly fail to observe a maxim. In this case, they intentionally flout a maxim in order to achieve a certain purpose of communication. Out of 100 contributions from our data, conversations belonging to this category are relatively small for quality and relation maxims, however the floating maxims are quite high in maxim of quantity and maxim of manner, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Deliberately Exploiting a Maxim

Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner
67 (67%)	2 (2%)	4 (4%)	54 (54%)

There are many situations in which the speaker intentionally flouts the maxim of Quantity and which, statistically, equals 67%. In this situations, it can be found that the speakers tend to answer more than what are needed. For example:

- (4) Wartawan : Kira-kira ada berapa jumlah perempuan yang mendapat aliran dana dari Ahmad Fthonah?
 Pengacara: Ada sekitar 30 perempuan. Akan tetapi jumlah ini masih akan terus bertambah mengingat bahwa proses penyidikan masih akan terus berlangsung.
 Interviewer : Approximately, how many women got the cash from Ahmad Fathonah?
 Lawyer: There are 30 women, approximately. However, this number will increase since the investigation has not finished yet.

Instead of only saying more than 30, the lawyer adds some information more than what is being asked. One important aspect that should be noticed in this conversation is the lawyer intends to say that there are more than 30 women got the cash from Ahmad Fathonah, however he did not say it directly.

The results also show that there are only two conversations in which the propositional content of two contributions is not related to the topic introduced. The speakers in this case openly flout the maxim of Quality. Only two out of one hundred conversations belong to this category, which makes only 2%.

As for the maxim of Manner, there are 54 situations in which the speakers fail to observe the maxim, i.e. 54 %. Flouting this maxim takes place in many conversations. The following example is taken from our data:

- (5) A: Apakah Anda menyukai jenis musik ini?
 B: Sebelumnya saya menyukai jenis musikpop, akan tetapi kemudian saya lebih tertarik pada jenis musik dangdut ini.
 A: Do you like this type of music?
 B: I liked pop music before, but next I was more interested in this dangdut music.

Instead of saying No, I don’t (like it), speaker B makes her contribution in an unclear way and intends her partner to understand what she means. One important aspect that should be noticed in this conversation is that speaker B was a pop singer, and that it is a pride for some singers in Indonesia. She might have thought that she would be happy by becoming a pop singer but then she found that dangdut is more interesting.

However, there must be a reason why either the lawyer or the dangdut singer cannot speak out. Therefore they make their conversations in this way in order to avoid a face-threatening act. If they had expressed their opinions more directly, their illocutionary act might be interpreted as a threat to another person’s face. Therefore, they have to perform a face-saving act. For this reason, the speakers deliberately have to fail to observe the maxim of Quantity and maxim of Manner in this circumstance so that they can achieve her goal of communication.

It is quite noticeable that, in many speech situations, the interlocutors fail to observe the Gricean maxims according to the CP. However, the way they fail to fulfil a maxim is completely different from those Grice suggests. The speakers in these interactions often fail to fulfil the maxims of Quantity and Manner: they make their conversational contributions more detailed than is required. It should be stressed that a maxim non-observance of this kind is not intentional and that it does not lead to any implicature. The speaker does not intend or expect his so-called unnecessarily long contribution to be recognised by the hearer and the hearer himself is satisfied with the way the speaker responds to his question; the speaker, in turn, is understood as being cooperative.

The number of non-fulfilment of this kind is quite considerable. In 60 out of 100 conversations, the maxim of Quantity is not observed, which makes 60%, and in 70 conversations, the maxim of Manner are not followed, which equals 70%. As for the maxims of Relation and Quality, no conversations are in this category as shown

in Table 3.

Table 3 Failing to Fulfil but not Exploiting a Maxim

Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner
60 (60%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	70 (70%)

The results indicate that there is a considerable amount of situations in which the speakers do not follow the maxims of Quantity and Manner in terms of the CP. In the case of non-observance of the maxim of Quantity, the speakers provide additional information before or after the core information they want to convey. Furthermore, they often speak in an unclear way and so fail to observe the maxim of Manner according to the CP. Nevertheless, the speakers in these situations fail to observe - but do not exploit - a maxim in order to achieve their communicative goal. Why does this happen? The possible interpretation lies in the cultural patterns of the Indonesian language: communicative politeness, high context culture, and the values of harmony in communication.

Communicative politeness is highly valued in Indonesian society. This empirical study shows that, after having made their main conversation, the speakers add even more information which may be regarded as unnecessary:

- (6) A: Manakah yang Anda pilih, menjadi model atau pemain sepak bola?
 B: Saya lebih memilih menjadi pemain sepak bola, ketimbang menjadi model. Menjadi seorang model dituntut untuk selalu berpeampilan sempurna karena masyarakat kita melihat model sebagai figur yang harus enak dilihat.
 A: *Which one do you prefer, being a model or football player?*
 B: *I prefer to be a football player, not being a model. Being a model means have to be a perfect man because our society sees a model as a always good-looking figure.*

In speaker B's mind, it seems that the information I prefer to be a football player is not sufficient with respect to the question Which one do you prefer, being a model or a football player? He provides much more information, which is unrelated to the choice between being a model or being a football player. All the aspects he contributes after mentioning the choice between the two occupations represent the reasons for his choice.

The answer to the question why speaker B makes his conversation in such a way lies in the concept of politeness in communication. Indonesian people sometimes think that providing enough information such as the response Yes, I do to the question Do you like being a football player? seems to be uncooperative and impolite in everyday conversations. Therefore, the conversation should be something like: Yes, I do. Because being a football player gives me unimagined experiences. In brief, native speakers of Indonesian often communicate additional information in order to expand their conversations for reasons of communicative politeness.

Indeed, politeness is a means of conversational

cooperation among Indonesian people. This politeness is shown by providing more information than the partners expect. There is one more thing that should be taken into consideration: the concept of communicative politeness here is not employed on the spot: the speaker does not exploit a maxim (the maxim of Quantity in this case) in the very moment in order to be polite in conversations. Politeness in Indonesian seems to be placed in the speaker's mind from his or her early childhood on. Therefore, the concept of communicative politeness represents Indonesian cultural aspect.

One reason why many speakers in our data often communicate with their partners in an unclear way is what Hall and Hall (1989) suggests as high context culture, which is also considered as an important component of Indonesian cultural identity. High context culture is defined in such a way that most of the information is either in the physical context or initialized in the person, while only very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. High context transactions feature pre-programmed information which is in the receiver and in the setting, with only minimal information being encoded in the transmitted message. They also states:

“When talking about something that they have on their minds, a high-context culture individual will expect his interlocutor to know what's bothering him, so that he doesn't have to be specific. The result is that he will talk around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place expect the crucial one. Placing it properly – this keystone – is the role of his interlocutor. To do this for him is an insult and a violation of his individuality.” (Hall & Hall, 1989:113)

According to Gudykunst et al. (1996), high context communication is also indirect, ambiguous, harmony-maintaining, reserved and understated. High context culture is sometimes considered a reason why there are misunderstandings in intercultural communication due to its respective characteristics. People often encounter severe problems understanding their counterparts and interpreting correctly what the latter want to convey. Furthermore, in high context communication, the speaker provides part of the message and leaves the rest to be filled in by the listener. Although the speaker talks around what he wants, he expects the listener to understand what he actually wants to say.

There are many situations in which the speakers fail to observe Grice's maxim of Manner, but they do not exploit this maxim so as to achieve their communicative goal, which leads to the possible interpretation of another Indonesian cultural value: harmony in communication. Suseno (1995) states that harmony is the central of Indonesian culture as communalism and collectivism lead Indonesian people to the notion of harmony. Thus, Indonesian people do not want to perform a face-threatening act but choose a face saving act in order to avoid conflict.

Suseno (1995) also claims that the Indonesian values of preserving harmony and concern for a face-saving act sometimes make the hearer in a conversation pretend that he understands everything although actually he understands less or even nothing. Because of the notion of harmony, the hearer often accepts ambiguous utterances

and rarely complains about potential contradictions. This may result in misunderstandings in conversations, which will lead to a non-observance of the maxim of Manner.

CONCLUSION

In our study, the interlocutors in the conversations in some situations observe all the maxims, especially those of Quality and Relation. In many situations, however, the maxims of Quantity and Manner are not observed in a way that is different from what Grice suggests, which leads to a possible interpretation of the cultural patterns of the Indonesian language. The Gricean maxims of Quantity and Manner are culturally dependent and differently observed in Indonesian culture, possibly because of the different notions of “quantity” and “manner” in Indonesian language culture in comparison with Anglo-American language culture(s) theoretically suggested by Grice.

However, it should not be thought that Indonesian people deliberately do not follow the maxim of quantity and maxim of manner because different cultures show different discourse patterns, which is a crucial point in intercultural communication. Every discourse community develops its own rules of community behaviour, which become part of their individual and group identity. Failing to recognize such aspects creates stereotypes (Clyne, 2006). The linguistic behavior of Indonesian language then presents the cultural patterns of this language. In order to communicate successfully with Indonesian people, speakers with different cultural backgrounds should therefore understand Indonesian cultural identity.

There may be a cooperative principle in every discourse context, but how it can be built up depends upon the discourse patterns of each culture. Furthermore, in order to match cultural variation, Grice should be culturally adapted to fit the cultural norms, values, and identities of each society (Clyne 1994).

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