

Homework 7

Pragmatics: Grice's Conversational Maxims

For this homework assignment, you will be collecting your own data to observe how speakers exploit the Cooperative Principle and Grice's Conversational Maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner to communicate things that are *not* said. Keep in mind that these Maxims relate to conversation and language use in context, not to statements taken out of context.

Pay attention to language as it is used in videos, online communication, or other media (i.e., in movies, tv shows, news reports, Tweeted conversations, or comic strips, not interpersonal communications that you observe among your friends). Find an example of someone violating or flouting one of Grice's maxims. Then, in one double-spaced page:

- 1) Describe the utterance and its conversational context of use.
- 2) Describe the maxim that is being violated and how it is being violated. What do you think the speaker is trying to convey through this violation?
- 3) And finally, explain what a participant in or observer of this conversation might infer based on this violation of the conversational maxims. What immediate unspoken information is communicated? What effect, if any, does this violation have on the communicative exchange? Are there likely to be any long-term effects of the violation among the participants in the conversation?

This assignment must be typed. Please write up your answers in one piece of prose, not just as a series of answers to these three questions. Be sure to cite the source of your data! If you can, include a link to a website on which it can be viewed.

You may discuss your results with others before writing them up, but you should collect data on your own. This means that people who work together on this assignment cannot choose the same example or examples drawn from the same media clip.

As you search for examples, keep in mind that we can also Google "example of Grice's maxims." It's ok to take inspiration from materials about Grice that you find online, but presenting someone else's ideas or analysis as your own is plagiarism, and will be dealt with accordingly. If you do draw inspiration from a particular source (other than your textbook), be sure to provide a citation for it.

A final note: You may not use the scene from season 3, episode 17 of The Big Bang Theory in which Raj asks Sheldon for ketchup for this assignment. (You'll know it if you run across it.) If you use this scene or any example that was explicitly mentioned in class, you will not receive any credit for this assignment.

Assessment Criteria

Excellent (A level):

- Select an appropriate example and provide a way for us to view it.
- Correctly identify the conversational maxim that is being violated/flouted and provide insight into how and why it is being done.
- Demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the short- and/or long-term effects of the violation on the conversation and/or the interlocutors.
- Be about one page long.

Note that these are the criteria for an A (95%) on this assignment. For an A+, you'll need to go beyond these expectations and impress us in some way.

Acceptable (B level):

- Select an appropriate example and provide a way for us to see it.
- Incorrectly identify the conversational maxim that is being violated/flouted but provide insight into how and why it is being done.
- Demonstrate some consideration of the short- and/or long-term effects of the violation on the conversation and/or the interlocutors.
- Be about one page long.

Problematic (C/D level):

- Select a somewhat appropriate example of a violation of something Pragmatic (although perhaps not of a Gricean maxim) and/or not provide a way for us to see it.
- Incorrectly identify the conversational maxim that is being violated/flouted and provide a confused description of how and why it is being done.
- Fail to describe the short- and/or long-term effects of the violation on the conversation and/or the interlocutors.
- Be shorter than the assigned length.

Unacceptable (F level):

- Fail to provide an example of a Pragmatic violation.
- Incorrectly identify the conversational maxim that is being violated/flouted and fail to provide an accurate description of how and why it is being done.
- Fail to describe the short- and/or long-term effects of the violation on the conversation and/or the interlocutors.
- Be shorter than the assigned length.