

Cooperative principle essay example

[Linguistics](#)



Understanding Cooperative Principle

Introduction

Cooperative principle encompasses assumption an understanding of how interaction occur between the speaker and listener. Linguistic and philosopher H. P. Grice (1975) introduced the theory of Cooperative principle to address the relationship between direct and indirect conversation and concepts about things that the speaker can and cannot do with words (p. 45). There are basic assumptions made when people are conversing, which includes the establish cooperation with one another in constructing meaningful conversation. In order to understand the conceptual underpinnings of cooperative principle, Grice's (1975) Cooperative principle will be closely examined to determine the tenets of conversation and its encompassing weakness. The theory posits that speakers tend not to speak to prevent misinterpretation and the listeners on the other hand give the speaker the benefit of the doubt by making assumptions that some sense is being conveyed (Grice, 1975, p. 45).

The Principle in Focus

It is apparent at the linguistic discourse that a one-to-one mapping of utterance meaning and linguistic forms. Generally, an intended meaning in a conversation can be produced by direct speech, but the same intended meaning could also be conveyed through several act of indirect speech. Grice in particular had been very concern about finding the distinction between meaning and saying. His primary objective is to unravel the mystery behind the process of the speaker generating the meaning and how the listener picks up the meaning what has been said and make assumptions

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of the intended meaning. For example, if the speaker said “ is there enough balloons for the party”, then the listener will respond with “ I’ll go pick up more on the way to get the cake”. In this example, a native English speaker will have no difficulty picking up the message in the speech by simply reading between the lines that there are not enough balloons for the party that the listener will be compelled to get more. Grice explored this phenomenon using four maxims namely quantity, quality, relation and manner to explain the implication process.

“ Make your contribution such as 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. 45).

The first maxim is quantity, which stipulates that contributing to the conversation should be as informative as necessary (Grice, 1975, p. 46). However, one should not make more informative contribution than needed. For example, if a person asks, “ where is my coat” and the second person responded with “ just buy a new one”, it is clear that the second person made a less informative response. Quality maxim establishes cooperation within a conversation by adhering to the same level of level of information in the conversational exchange. On the quality maxim, it stipulates that one should not say anything that he believes to be false or otherwise a lie. On the other hand, one should also not say anything that has no adequate evidence (Grice, 1975, p. 46). If the speakers in a conversation are making false responses, either lying, or making speculations based on hearsay evidence, either the maxim was violated or, therefore, no cooperation was established. In terms of relation maxim, anything being said has to be relevant to the conversation (Grice, 1975, p. 46). When a speaker asks for a

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name of the listener and the listener responded with his address, therefore listener is violating the maxim because he responded with irrelevant information. Lastly, the maxim of manner stipulates that one should not make obscure expression, ambiguity unnecessary prolixity, and being orderly (Grice, 1975, p. 46). These maxims suggest that there are several ways of acceptable speech that conforms to the standards of behavioral norms. Therefore, Grice's cooperative principle can be understood as a critical factor during a conversational interaction between the speaker and listener. Meaning, it is about the expectations that the listener has of the speaker. On the other hand, the role of the speaker is to convey truthful statement and say only what is needed and within the norms of behavioral standards.

Understanding what the other person is talking about is not enough to establish cooperation within in the conversational setting. People often talk to each other trying to make smooth conversation, but a consistent interaction cannot be considered successful until cooperation within the conversation was established. This is when individuals involved within a conversation assumes that both of them seeks the same level of cooperation that will put both speakers in the same page of the conversation by perceiving the right meaning being conveyed by one another. When a speaker is trying to communicate to the listener, he encompasses cooperativeness. However, that particular something must constitute more than what the words really mean. Therefore, the listener will tend to come up with several assumptions that may or might not conform to the meaning being conveyed by the cooperating speaker, which is called implicature (Juez, 1995, p. 26).

Conclusion

Grice pointed out that when communicating, assumptions occur without apparent realization that people talking to each other are engaged in a cooperative conversation that creates either mutual or non-mutual understanding depending on perceived meaning. Conversational cooperation occurs even if the speakers are not socially cooperative. Therefore, cooperative principle manifests itself according to adherence to maxims, which determines cooperation in a conversation.

References

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