

Analysis of Conversational Implicatures in Camus' *The Misunderstanding*: A Pragmatic Exploration

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Abstract

Implicatures perform an important role in creating humour or imparting different shades of meaning to a message. Similarly, flouting has become one of the common features in our daily communication. The focus of this paper is to study the cooperative principles in Camus' French play, The Misunderstanding (1943). This is a qualitative research. For this purpose, the data has been collected through the purposive sampling technique. In this study, the framework of Grice (1975) has been adopted, in which he described four maxims that should be obeyed by a speaker while making a conversation. The present study explores that in what ways the Gricean maxims have been flouted by the characters of the play. Findings reveal that there are 24 implicatures found in 16 utterances. Out of these 24 implicatures, the maxim of quantity has been flouted more than the others as it appears with the ratio of 9/24. Then comes the maxim of manner with the ratio of 8/24. The maxim of a relation comes on the third rank with the ratio of 6/24 and in the last comes the maxim of quality with the lowest ratio of 1/24. This study can be further expanded to find out the scalar implicatures and speech acts in the selected play.

Keywords: *Communication, Co-operative Principles, Conversational Implicatures, Implied Meaning, Pragmatics*

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Introduction

Communication is a process that takes place every day. There are different modes in which communication occurs i.e., through the use of words (verbal communication), body language, rise and fall of intonation, etc. In Merriam Webster Dictionary, the term Communication has been defined as, "A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behaviour." With the help of communication, people convey and transfer their messages to the listeners. Cook (1989), alludes, "the idea that conversation proceeds according to principle, known and applied by all human beings, was first proposed in a limited form by the philosopher Paul Grice (1975). The idea was further described as the co-operative principle" (p. 29). The co-operative principles are the assumptions that the speaker will obey or follow during communication (1989, p. 29). The speaker is supposed to be true (the maxim of quality), he should be brief (the maxim of quantity), should be relevant (the maxim of relevance) and clear (the maxim of manner) (Yule, 1989, p. 29). In "Discourse Analysis" (1983), Brown and Yule have also talked about the co-operative principles of Grice, "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage, at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or the direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (p. 31). Quantity Maxim says; "Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange.) Do

not make your contribution more informative than is required."; Quality: "Do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence."; Relation: "Be relevant."; Manner: "Be perspicuous, avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity), be orderly." (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 32).

Usually, these cooperative principles or conversational principles are not obeyed by the speakers. When these maxims are violated or flouted then the conversational implicatures occur. The implicatures, according to Yule (1996) are, "the additional conveyed meanings" (p. 35). The occurrence of implicatures is not something to be ignored. These implicatures provide the implied meanings to the listeners and the readers. The implied meaning, according to Merriam Webster is "to express indirectly", "a suggested meaning or the indirect meaning".

For this study, a French play, *The Misunderstanding* (1943), written by Albert Camus in French named, *Le Malentendu* that has been translated into English by Graham Ley, has been selected. The play is about a man, who left his mother and sister twenty years ago and was living overseas. His widowed mother and daughter were making their living by killing their lodging guests. When he came back as a lodging guest, his mother and sister could not recognize him and killed him by considering him as a regular lodging guest.

Statement of the Problem

There have been a lot of researches done on Albert Camus' absurdist philosophical play, *The Misunderstanding* (1943) in which the play has been analyzed in the light of absurdist and existentialist theories. However, there has not been any research that investigates the text pragmatically. The current research explores this play through the lens of Grice's cooperative principles and four maxims have been observed which, have been flouted by the characters of the play.

Objective of the Study

This study aims to explore the violation of Grice's four maxims of conversation by the characters of the play.

Research Question

- In what ways the Gricean maxims have been flouted by the characters in Camus' play, *The Misunderstanding* (1943)?

Literature Review

The play of Albert Camus has been observed from a philosophical perspective by different researchers. Behrens (1964) sees Camus' play "*The Misunderstanding*" as the existential 'character-idea', as the characters in the play seemed to him to be portrayed as the vehicle of the author's existential thoughts and ideas rather than being portrayed as merely individuals. Roberts (2013) has analyzed the

platform of Levinas' ethical and educational perspective. He argues that the same communicative misunderstanding is experienced in the teaching institutions. The teachers fail to communicate properly and pay attention to the 'others' i.e., the students which consequently leads to the problems and complexities in pedagogy. Siame (2020) supports the arguments set by Behrens (1964) that the characters in this play are the projection of the author's vision of life. He views that the humans in this world are living a robotic life. They have a repetitive cycle, a habit and routine to follow which is running their lives. In the same way, the characters in the play also have a habit that is regulating their lives and it is killing their lodgers to earn a living. The researcher states that they have turned from being-for-itself to being-in-itself. According to Sartre's perspective, the being-in-itself is objects which are around the human beings and do not have consciousness whereas, the being-for-itself are humans, who possess a consciousness and strive for their future.

A great number of researches have been conducted on the study on conversational implicatures in movie scripts, literature and discourse. Atmawijaya & Suryani (2019) have applied the theory of implicature to the script of the movie *Goosebumps*. They have pointed out the conversational implicature and conventional implicatures present in the dialogues which have helped the characters in the maintenance of relationships and in giving comical effect to their discourses. Likewise, Riani and

Nasution (2019) in their study have also analyzed a movie script of *Peaceful Warrior* on the principles of Grice's maxims and concluded that the actors have disobeyed the cooperative principles to convey their emotions. Similarly, Labobar (2018) has also applied the co-operative principles theory in her study. She has observed that the maxims have been flouted in the film "*The Escape* (2014)". The researcher has discovered the reasons behind the floating of maxims in characters' speech are: they want to tell a lie, hide the truth, make the situation complicated or develop good interpersonal relations. Andy and Ambalegin (2019) have studied the conversational implicatures in the movie script "*Night at the Museum*". They have discovered that the characters have been shown violating conversational principles to make the plot interesting and gripping for the audience. Another study that has been done on conversational implicatures includes the work of Wahyuningsih and Gustania (2021). They have studied the violation of Grice's principles and Ekman's deceit theory in the *Aladdin* film. The characters have been observed violating the principles and showing deceitful behaviour in the movie. The findings of their research expose the fact of telling lies, deceiving others and violating the maxims is, for face-saving, belittling others and attempting to take charge of the situation. Wardana, Surbakti, Anayati and Mayasari (2020) have explored that the main characters in "*Coco*" movie have disobeyed Grice's conversational principles in their dialogues for different purposes.

Other researches that have been conducted on conversational implicatures include (2019) paper. He observed the conversational implicatures taking place in Jane Austen's novel, "*Emma*" and found out that the character's reason for using indirect speech was to keep themselves away from the disputes. Tian (2021) has analyzed Lawrence's short story "*The Shadow in the Rose Garden*" from the lens of Grice's cooperative principles and found that the violation has been done in the husband and wife's conversation. Suryadi & Muslim (2019) have investigated the conversational implicatures in the drama *The Bear*. The results show the utilization of conversational implicatures in the text is to show power and politeness in the character's speech. Imami's (2017) pragmatic analysis of the play *Waiting for Godot* has also talked about the cooperative principles, which have been flouted by the characters to produce the air of absurdism and the meaningless state of life. Al-Aameri and Jamil (2020) have studied the violation of cooperative principles in Miller's play "*Death of the Salesman*". The researcher concluded that the characters were in the pursuit of the American dream and in their struggle, they all fell apart and violated Grice's maxims for different purposes. Speech and media discourse have also been analyzed on the grounds of Grice's cooperative principles. Lestari (2018) has studied the flouting of cooperative principles in advertisements. He is of the view that to give the special effects and implied meanings, the Gricean maxims have been floated in the ads. Jiatong (2020) has observed the

violation of cooperative principles done by Trump in his speech which he delivered at the 73rd UN General Debate. Trump has been observed flouting all the four maxims and disobeying the traditional style of delivering a speech. Agbo and Odo (2021) have studied the newspaper campaign text of Nigeria, in which they have observed that politicians during their election campaigns have flouted the principles to get the votes. Muhammad and Karim (2019) have studied the T.V interviews of politicians and artists. Their research shows that the artists in their interviews tried to follow the co-operative principles as compared to the politicians. The reason that has been stated by the researchers is that the politicians cannot answer every question, since they have their secrets to hide. This is why they have been observed violating Grice's maxims. Qassemi, Ziabari and Kheirabadi (2018) have studied the Iranian news report, where they have detected the violation of Grice's maxims. In the report, the quality maxim was violated the most. The reporters violate the maxims to attract the readers or to support one party and exploit the other one. Zaidi, Mehdi, Sarwar and Mehmood (2020) have evaluated the beggars' discourse. The interviews with the beggars have revealed that they tend to violate the cooperative principles to achieve their goal which is, getting more money by telling people about their bad condition. The study of Ekah and Akpan (2018) has discussed the non-observance of Grice's Maxims in social media. The chats which have been analyzed in this regard show that

the interlocutors violate all four maxims of Grice during their conversation. They have tried to give more or less than the required information. Moreover, they did not answer each other properly and remained ambiguous and irrelevant to the topics during their conversation.

In the same way, in this study, Grice's theory of conversational implicatures has been applied to Camus' play *The Misunderstanding* (1943), to find out the violation of maxims which resulted in *the misunderstanding* of the implied meanings conveyed by the characters.

Methodology

The methodology which was adopted for this study was a qualitative descriptive approach. The textual analysis of the selected play was done by collecting the data through intensive reading of the text and then highlighting the text where Grice's maxims were not observed by the characters. The source of the data in this research was Camus' play. The study remained focused on the appearance of the implicatures which helped in the data sampling. Act One was selected for the analysis out of three acts. The selected data was then analyzed according to the co-operative principles of Grice (1975).

Data Analysis

To have effective communication, every interlocutor must be aware of these conversational principles. These principles are also

known as Gricean maxims or Gricean principles. These maxims have been observed in Camus' play *The Misunderstanding*. The data was collected by the purposive sampling technique. This play consists of three acts. Act one had been selected for the analysis, as all the characters have been introduced in that part and the story was made clear to the readers.

Utterance: 01

"MARTHA: Did he seem well-off? Lot's of money with him?

MOTHER: He wasn't worried by the price" (Camus, 1943, p. 3).

In this conversation, the mother violates the maxim of relation. When Martha asks her if the man is rich the answer can be yes or no, but Mother says "he wasn't worried by the price" (p.3). This implies that the man is rich who has just arrived to stay in their hotel.

Utterance: 02

"MOTHER: There's nothing wrong. I'm just tired, that's all. I think I need a rest.

MARTHA: A rest? That's easy. I'll take on all the housework, yours as well as mine. The days can be all yours. All the day, and every day.

MOTHER: That's not what I meant. Not that kind of rest. No, it's just an old woman's dream. I just want a bit of peace, the chance to let things slide. (She gives a weak laugh.) I know. It all sounds very stupid. I wonder if religion has anything to do with it. It may be catching up with me, at long last. You never know. It has its attractions".

(Camus, 1943, p. 03)

In this conversation, the mother seems to be violating the maxim of quantity. When her daughter asks her what's the matter, she tells her that she is just tired. After that, her daughter offers her that she can do her chores too. In her answer, the mother violates the maxim of quantity. Instead of saying okay, thank you! or no, you do not have to do my work. She talks about the dreams which she has. She wants to have some peace in her life. She also violates the maxim of relation when she talks about religion. This implies that she does not want her daughter to do her work, what she wants is, the break from the work they are used to do.

Utterance: 03

"MOTHER: (taking a long look at her) You've got a hard face, Martha.

MARTHA: (coming up to her, calmly) But loveable? To you at least?

MOTHER: (still looking at her and after a moment of silence) Yes, loveable. I think so. Hard or not.

MARTHA: (with emotion) Oh, mother, mother! All we need is the money! With money in our hands there's an end to grey skies and damp, dripping roofs...Did he have much to say, when you saw him?".(Camus, 1943, p. 04)

In this piece of the conversation, the maxim of quantity and relation have been violated by Martha. When her mother affirms that her face is loveable to her, Martha can take it as a compliment and say thank you. Instead, she makes her answer long by violating the maxim of

quantity. Moreover, she also flouts the maxim of relation by talking about the money that she needs to get away from the life that they are having. These lines of Martha are not meaningless but convey their meaning successfully. This implies that all she wants is money. In other words, only money can make her smile and make her look better.

Utterance: 04

"MARTHA: What was his expression when he asked for his room?

MOTHER: I can't say I noticed. My eyes are bad, and besides, I wasn't looking. Not very closely. I know from experience that it's better not to look at them. It's easier to kill when you don't know the face. (Pause.) There. That should please you. I'm not afraid of words. Not any more. The moment has passed". (Camus, p. 4,5)

Here again, the maxim of quantity and relations have been violated by the mother. Martha asks her about the expressions of the guest, but their mother tells her that she could not notice him because of her weak eyesight. Then, she gives more details in her answer which makes her violate the maxim of relevance as well by talking about her past experiences. This implies that neither the mother saw the man's expressions nor she preferred to look at him so that, she may not have trouble in killing him later.

Utterance: 05

"JAN: You followed me.

MARIA: I'm sorry, I couldn't... I won't

stay long. Just a look. It's not much to ask, if I'm to leave you here". (Camus, p. 07)

The maximum quantity has have been flouted here by Maria. Her husband, Jan, asks her that she followed him to the hotel, to which she apologizes and gives the answer more than the requirement, and requests permission to let her stay with him for some time. This can be implied that Maria was asked not to come with her husband but she could not control herself and followed him, and she wants her husband to let her stay and not make her go away.

Utterance: 06

"MARIA: One word would have been enough.

JAN: But I couldn't find the right one! And anyway, what's the hurry? I came here with money in my pockets, and if I can I want to make them happy...Knowing that I did what I had to do. But perhaps coming home isn't quite as easy as it sounds. It takes a bit of time to make a son out of just another man". (Camus, 1943,p. 08)

The violation of the maxim of quantity and relation has been done by Jan. He has violated the maxim of quantity by giving more than the required information to Maria. His wife asks him to tell the truth by simply using one word, to which he replies that he could not find a word to tell them the truth, and then adds more information to it which was not needed. Moreover, he has violated the maxim of relation, by talking about the death of the father

and the responsibility which lies on his shoulder, and the money which he has brought to help his family. It can be inferred that Jan wants to help his family and tell them that who he is but he is having a difficulty in finding the right way to put it.

Utterance: 07

"JAN: Maria! How can you doubt my love?

MARIA: I don't, I don't! It's not that. But your love is one thing, and your dreams are another. Or your obligations, as you would say. It doesn't matter...I'm never tired of you, and the thought of this evening (she throws herself against him in tears)...is more than I can bear!". (Camus, 1943, p.10)

The maxim of quantity has been flouted by Maria. At first, she gives Jan the answer to his question and then she continues the conversation by talking about the dreams and obligations which Jan has to fulfil. This implies that Maria does not want her husband to spend his evening and night away from her. She is having a hunch that her husband will get tired of her or they will get separated.

Utterance: 08

"JAN: Now that is cruel. You know I love you as much as anyone could.

MARIA: No. Only as much as any man could. But men don't know how to love. Nothing is enough for them. They must have their dreams. It's the only thing they do well. Dreaming. They dream obligations. New ones every day...There's no time for dreams if

you're in love".(Camus, 1943, p.11)

Here again, in this conversation, Maria is seen violating the maxim of manner and quantity. She has floated the manner maxim, by saying that every day, men have new dreams. She is being ambiguous here by not being specific. Hence, she has violated the manner maxim. The violation of quantity maxim is done by providing more than the required information. This implies that she wants to prove her point that men do not bother about love and fear of being alone. They are only concerned with their dreams. She wants to convince him to not spend his night by staying away from her.

Utterance: 09

"MARTHA: I hadn't noticed it. Could you give me your wife's address?

JAN: She stayed at home. In Africa". (Camus, 1943, p.15)

Here, the maxim of quality has been violated by Jan. He has lied to Martha about his wife, who has also come with him, but he chooses not to give her adequate information and lied to her. It can be implied that he does not want to give them a clue of who he is. Otherwise, he thinks, he will not come to know what their needs are.

Utterance: 10

"MARTHA: I see. Excellent. (She shuts the book.) Can I get you anything to drink? The room's not quite ready for you yet.

JAN: No, I'm fine. I'll wait here, if I

may. But I do hope I'm not in your way.
MARTHA: How could you be? This room is set aside for guests.

JAN: Yes, but you know what I mean. One person on his can sometimes be more of a nuisance than a whole crowd of people".(Camus, 1943,p. 15)

In this conversation, Jan is not being clear and relevant and has flouted the manner and relation maxim. He has violated the maxim of relation by asking an irrelevant question from Martha that is going to be in her way if he stays here (p.15). In addition to it, the manner maxim has been violated when he says that one person who is alone can be annoying and disturbing. From this conversation, it can be implied that he thinks his presence will bring back the twenty years old memories and will make his job easy.

Utterance: 11

"JAN: But...(He hesitates.) Don't you ever feel the need for a bit of life? It must be very dull here. Don't you ever feel lonely?

MARTHA: Look, I'd like to get some things straight if you don't mind. Once you step inside that door, you become a guest... Remember, you're the guest. Enjoy what's on offer. But please don't ask for more".(Camus, 1943,p. 16)

The maxim of manner has been flouted by Jan when he says "don't you ever feel lonely" (p. 16). He is being ambiguous about what he intends to ask. This implies that he wants to know from her that if she ever required her long-gone brother or has she ever missed him. In addition to it, the

quantity maxim has been violated by Martha when she tries to snub him. It can be inferred that she does not want to continue the conversation with him because she does not want to be familiar with him.

Utterance: 12

"MOTHER: It'll be the monastery that's brought you, I expect. I gather it is very well thought of.

JAN: Yes I have heard of it. But I was thinking of looking around the whole area. I used to know it very well, some time ago. Good memories.

MOTHER: You've lived here before?

JAN: No. But I passed through once, a long time ago. I haven't forgotten it".(Camus, 1943, p. 18)

The maxim of manner has been flouted by Jan. He is not being clear when he says, "good memories" and "a long time ago" (p. 18). This can be implied that he is trying to tell them that he belongs to this country too. He knows the place and had good memories as well which he never tends to forget.

Utterance: 13

"MOTHER: Do you intend to stay long?

JAN: I don't know. I expect that seems a bit strange... You have to have a reason for staying in a place... And until you know what kind of reception you're going to get, you can't be sure what you're going to do". (Camus, 1943, p. 18)

The maxim of quantity and

manner have been flouted by Jan. He has flouted the quantity maxim by giving his mother more than the required information. In addition to it, the manner maxim has been flouted by his not being clear about the reception that one receives. This can be implied that firstly, he wants to continue the conversation with his mother because he wants her to know him. Secondly, his focus on the reception tells that he wants them to be nice to him so that, it may become easy for him to tell the truth.

Utterance: 14

"MOTHER: Well, I expect you'll soon get tired of it here.

JAN: Oh I don't know. I'm a man of warm feelings, and I'll soon find something to remember if I'm given the chance.

MARTHA: (with impatience) This isn't a place for warm feelings". (Camus, 1943, p. 19)

The maxim of manner has been violated by Jan and Martha. Jan has flouted the manner maxim by saying that he is "a man of warm feeling" (p. 19). The utterance of Jan implies that he is being open to them so that, they also share their feelings with him. Martha has violated the manner maxim by saying that "this isn't a place for warm feelings" (p. 19). Here, she is not directly saying him that he does not have to be personal with them because sooner or later, they are going to kill him.

Utterance: 15

"MOTHER: Time comes and goes. It's been many years now, so long that can't remember when it started, and I've forgotten what I was like before. This is my daughter.

MARTHA: There's no call for family history, mother". (Camus, 1943, p. 19)

In this conversation, the manner maxim has been exploited by Martha by saying "there is no call for a family" (p. 19). She has not directly refrained from her mother from sharing personal information with the stranger, but by using this expression, she has successfully stopped her mother from doing it. This can be inferred that she does not want her mother to be familiar with the person that they are going to murder later.

Utterance: 16

"JAN: (very quickly) Let her go on... At the end of working life that's the way you feel. But things might have been very different if you had a man to help you. A strong right arm is something every woman needs.

MOTHER: Oh, I've had help... Why, I think I'd almost forgotten who he was before he was in his grave". (Camus, 1943, p.19)

The maxim of manner has been violated by Jan. He is being obscure in his question when he says that the situation would be different if they have a helping hand of a man. This implies that he is not talking about their son but he intends to elicit the information that he wants to hear.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are illustrated in the tables given below.

Table # 1

Utterance	Maxim of Manner	Maxim of Quantity	Maxim of Relation	Maxim of Quality
01			✓	
02		✓	✓	
03		✓	✓	
04		✓	✓	
05		✓		
06		✓	✓	
07		✓		
08	✓	✓		
09				✓
10	✓		✓	
11	✓	✓		
12	✓			
13	✓	✓		
14	✓			
15	✓			
16	✓			

Table # 2

Maxim of Manner	Maxim of Quantity	Maxim of Relation	Maxim of Quality	Total No. of Implicatures	Total No. of Utterances
08	09	06	01	24	16

Table # 1 talks about the types of maxims that have been observed in 16 utterances. In utterance # 1 only the violation of the relation maxim was found. In utterances # 2,3,4 and 6, the violation of quantity and relation maxim has been observed. In utterances # 5 and 7 only the violation of quantity maxim has been found. In utterances # 8, 11 and 13, the violation of manner and quantity maxim has been observed. In utterance # 9, only the quality maxim remained unfulfilled by the character. In utterance # 10, the violation of manner and relation maxim has been seen. In utterances # 12, 14, 15 and 16 only the maxim of manner has been violated by the characters.

Table # 2 reveals that a total of 16 utterances have been analyzed, in which 24 implicatures are found. Out of these 24 implicatures, the maxim of quantity has been flouted more than the others as it appears with the ratio of 9/24. Then comes the maxim of manner with the ratio of 8/24. The maxim of a relation comes on the third rank with the ratio of 6/24 and in the last comes the maxim of quality with the lowest ratio of 1/24.

Conclusions

From the findings described above, it is observed that the characters of *The Misunderstanding*, have flouted the maxim of quantity more than the other maxims. This shows that in the conversation, the characters have tried to give more than the required information to the readers or listeners. The violation of the manner maxim is the proof of the characters' avoidance of

being clear and orderly. They have made their conversation very ambiguous for their readers. The flouting of the relation maxim illustrates that the characters have not remained relevant in their discourses and have provided the information more than the requirement. The lowest ratio of the maxim of quality demonstrates that almost all the characters have tried to provide adequate information to the readers. It can be concluded that the violation of cooperative principles by the characters has resulted in *the misunderstanding* of the implied meanings conveyed by the characters, hence, verifying the title of the play.

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