

A STUDY OF THE EXPLOITATION OF GRICE'S COOPERATIVE MAXIMS IN TOEFL LISTENING SECTION

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1.1. Rationale

The **TOEFL**, formally known as **Test Of English as a Foreign Language**, is a test of an individual's ability to use and understand American English in an academic setting designed and administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS) and TOEFL is a registered trademark of ETS. It was developed to address the problem of ensuring English language proficiency for non-native speakers wishing to study at U.S. universities. It has become an admission requirement for non-native English speakers at many English-speaking colleges and universities. Additionally, institutions such as government agencies, licensing bodies, businesses, or scholarship programs may require this test.

This study, carried out in the light of pragmatic approach, is attempting to help test takers understand more about how speakers in Toelf listening section exploit certain maxims of Grice's cooperative principle (Grice, 1975) to generate implicature in interaction. This theory helps to analyze not only the linguistic features of the implicatures generated from those conversations but also the mechanisms that generate those implicatures. This is the reason why the author decided to use Grice's cooperative principle as the basis for this study.

1.2. Aims of the study

This study is carried out specifically to aim at:

- (1) revisiting some theoretical background knowledge of implicatures, (especially conversational implicatures), Grice's cooperative principles and verbal irony.
- (2) investigating how speakers in Toelf Listening test exploit certain Grice's cooperative principle maxims to generate implicatures in interaction.

(3) identifying which of the maxims of Grice's conversational cooperative principle is more likely to be flouted in Toelf Listening tests.

1.3. Research questions

This study is supposed to answer the following questions:

(1) How speakers in Toelf Listening tests exploit certain Grice's cooperative principle maxims to generate implicatures in interaction?

(2) Which of the maxims of Grice's conversational cooperative principle is more likely to be flouted in Toelf Listening tests?

1.4. Scope of the study

The research on non-observances of maxims of Grice's cooperative principle is so broad that it is impossible to cover all its aspects. Therefore, this study narrows down the study only to the art of flouting certain maxims of Grice's cooperative principles to create implicatures in Toelf Listening section.

Furthermore, the data are only collected from scripts of the Toelf Listening section in two books: Longman preparation course for the Toelf Test by Deborah Phillips and Toelf Test Preparation Kit by ETS in regard with the limit of time.

PART 2: THE DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Grice's cooperative principle

In order to explain how hearers interpret the utterance implicature, Grice (1975) noticed that in order for the conversation to go smoothly, participants must assume that all interlocutors are following some set of rules. Grice (ibid.) called these rules the Cooperative Principle (CP). The CP runs like this: "*Make your contribution such as is 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: 45). According to the Cooperative Principle both speaker and hearer converse with the willingness to deliver and interpret a message. The speaker and hearer cooperate and that is why they communicate efficiently (Thomas 1995:63).

In order to illustrate how we interpret meaning, Grice (ibid.) presented, in addition to the Cooperative Principle, four conversational maxims to show how we communicate effectively in the light of certain rules. Thanks to Grice's maxims, we can interpret and understand the underlying implication of an utterance (Thomas 1995:63)

The maxim of Quality: requires that the speakers: (1) do not say what you believe to be false, and (2) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (Levinson 1983: 101)

The maxim of Quantity: According to the maxim of quantity, speakers should (1) make their contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange and (2) do not make your contribution more informative than is required. (Levinson ibid.)

The maxim of Relation: requires that the speaker make their contributions relevant. (Levinson 1983: 102)

The maxim of Manner: states that speakers should: (1) avoid obscurity of expression, (2) avoid ambiguity, (3) be brief (Avoid unnecessary prolixity), and (4) be orderly. (Levinson ibid.)

1.2. Mechanism for working out an implicature

Grice (1975) proposed a general pattern for working out an implicature:

(i) *S has said that p*

(ii) *there's no reason to think S is not observing the maxims, or at least the co-operative principle*

(iii) *in order for S to say that p and be indeed observing the maxims, or at least the co-operative principle, S must think that q*

(iv) *S must know that it is mutual knowledge that q must be supposed if S is to be taken to be co-operating*

(v) *S has done nothing to stop me, the addressee, thinking that q*

(vi) *therefore S intends me to think that q, and in saying that p has implicated q*

CHAPTER 2: THE STUDY

2.1. Methodology

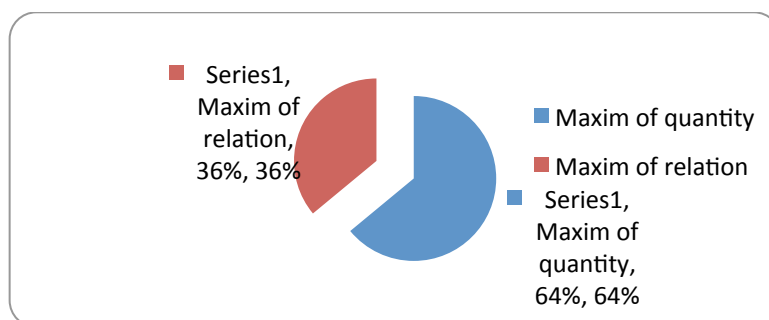
This study was mainly carried out by qualitative method, which is represented in the analysis and synthesis of the data collected from Toelf Listening tests. Besides it employs some supplementary techniques such as referencing to publications; discussing and consulting with the supervisor, teachers and friends; and exploiting personal experiences, and observation.

First, the study will be based on the analysis of numerous materials on theories of pragmatics (mostly concerned with the implicature and the quality maxim of Grice's cooperative principle).

Second, the scripts of Toelf Listening tests were analyzed in order to select the situations in which certain maxims are flouted. All results received from this analysis would be synthesized and put into groups to compare which maxim is mostly exploited to generate implicatures.

2.2. Findings and discussion

The next part of the thesis is the analysis of situations in which certain maxims are flouted to generate implicatures. 70 conversations have been selected carefully and explained in the light of Gricean cooperative principle. They are grouped into four categories; each category contains a number of situations exploiting certain maxims. The frequency of flouting the maxims in these conversations can be illustrated in the following chart:



As can be seen in the chart, the maxim of quantity is the most frequently flouted in Toelf Listening section (64%). The speakers deliberately provide too little or too much information when they're not willing to expose what is in their mind. Their

ultimate goal is to send implicit messages with the hope that listeners will understand their unspoken notes.

The second most frequently flouted maxim is the maxim relation (36%). The character chooses not to observe the maxim of relation in order to avoid subjects that would embarrass them or put them in unpleasant situations as well as hint at something that they would not want to say straight out. Speakers flout the maxim in order to make their statements stronger.

The following part of the paper will present the analysis of some typical situations in which certain maxims are flouted to generate implicatures.

2.2.1. The analysis on a situation which flouts the maxim of quantity

(man): Were all three students accepted to the university?

(woman): John was accepted.

The mechanism in which implicature is generated in this situation can be analyzed as follows:

(i) The woman stated that John was accepted to the university, and she didn't mention the two other students.

(ii) The man asked whether three students were admitted to the university. Obviously, in this situation, the woman contributed less than is required by the listener.

(iii) There's no reason to think the woman is not observing the maxims, or at least the co-operative principle.

(iv) In order for the woman to give that information and be indeed observing the maxims, or at least the co-operative principle, she must be trying to put across some other proposition.

(v) This must be obviously related proposition.

(vi) The most reasonable way to explain the woman's utterance is that those who are not mentioned were not admitted to the university.

(vii) The woman must know that it is mutual knowledge that the man must be supposed if she is to be taken to be co-operating.

(viii) The woman has done nothing to stop the man, the addressee, from making such an inference.

(ix) Therefore, in giving less information than required, the woman implicated not all three students are admitted to the university. In fact, 2 of them weren't accepted.

2.2.2. The analysis on a situation which flouts the maxim of relation

(man): What did you think of Professor Martin's lecture on the migratory habits of whales?

(woman): I couldn't keep my eyes open.

The mechanism in which implicature is generated in this situation can be analyzed as follows:

(i) The woman stated that she couldn't keep her eyes open.

(ii) In this situation, the man is asking about the woman's opinion Professor Martin's lecture on the migratory habits of whales. The woman's utterance is clearly unrelated to the topic of discussion. Thus, she is considered to be flouting the maxim of relation which requires speaker to make his contribution relevant.

(iii) There's no reason to think the woman is not observing the maxims, or at least the co-operative principle.

(iv) The only way one can reconcile the assumption that the woman is co-operative with the content of her utterance is to assume that she is trying to lead the listener to an implicit message. She couldn't keep her eyes open during the lecture because she was sleepy. Thus, the listener might infer that the lecture was not so interesting.

(v) The woman must know that it is mutual knowledge that the man must be supposed if she is to be taken to be co-operating.

(vi) The woman has done nothing to stop the man, the addressee, from making such an inference

(vii) Therefore, by flouting the maxim of relation, the woman implicated that the class was very boring.

PART 3: THE CONCLUSION

3.1. Recapitulation of main ideas

Grice's four maxims have made it possible to explain how we interpret meaning in interactions. However, in interaction, speakers sometimes choose not to observe certain maxims to generate implicature. Speakers in Toelf Listening test often flout certain maxims to create implicature. Maxims of quantity and relation are most likely flouted to generate implicatures in Toelf Listening Test.

3.2. Significance of the study:

Hopefully, this study can help improve students' understanding of what the speakers mean in Toelf Listening Test, so they can improve their scores. Also, it can help assist teachers to explain more clearly and effectively when teaching the test. Finally, the writer hopes that students can apply these communicative skills to mediate their interpersonal relationships.

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