

COOPERATIVE STRATEGIES IN HAROLD PINTER'S THE CARETAKER

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Abstract: The present paper aims at the application of the Cooperative Principle and its maxims to one of the forms of literature at research level, namely, the absurd drama. It tries to unfold the usefulness of the Cooperative Principle in the study of literature. It also throws light on the study of literature with a new perspective. Its major purpose is to explore how communication is meaning oriented and how Pragmatics helps the readers to arrive at the exact meaning. The selected conversational pieces from Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* enable us to study how the observance or violation of the maxims, helps to make conversation smooth as well as complicated, both at the surface level and the deeper level. It also shows how the interlocutors proceed in the conversation with their background and contextual knowledge. Characters often seem to be uncooperative at the surface level in conversation. Here, Semantics fails to impart the intended meaning expressed by the characters. The application of the pragmatics helps the readers to derive the intended meaning out of seemingly uncooperative utterances. The present paper asserts that the pragmatic approach to a literary form offers adequate information and insight by reaching at hidden meaning.

Keyword: Cooperative Strategies, Harold Pinter's and *The Caretaker*.

The Cooperative Principle Theory:

Cooperative Principle is assumed as the basic concept in pragmatics, guiding communication. The use of Cooperative Principle proves to be helpful for people to improve the flexibility and accuracy in language communication. Grice defines the Cooperative Principle as,

"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". (1975:45)

Grice proposed this key concept in Pragmatics, in the William James Lecture Series, delivered at Harvard in 1967 and partially published (Grice, 1975). According to Grice, The Cooperative Principle refers to how people interact with each other. The principle aims at the people's normal behavior through effective and efficient use of language in conversation to cooperative ends.

Grice identified four principles, which are called as the maxims of conversation, underlying the effective use of language. The maxims can be stated as follows:

1. The Maxim of Quality (Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically)
 - a) Do not say what you believe to be false.
 - b) Do not say for which you lack adequate evidence.
2. The Maxim of Quantity (Concerning the amount of information to be conveyed):
 - a) Make your contribution as informative as is required.
 - b) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
3. The Maxim of Relevance
 - a) Make your contribution relevant.
4. The Maxim of Manner (Concerning not so much what is said as how it is said, be perspicuous)
 - a) Avoid ambiguity

- b) Avoid obscurity of expression.
- c) Be brief (Avoid unnecessary prolixity).
- d) Be orderly.

Observance and Violation of the Cooperative Principle:

The speakers normally try to satisfy the four maxims of the Cooperative Principle in order to observe it. Response is the core part in conversation. A compliment should be politely accepted or tactfully rejected, a question should be answered or an invitation should be accepted or declined. The listener, in this way is expected to observe the Cooperative Principle. If he does not do so, he seems to be uncooperative and in this sense, he violates the Cooperative Principle. A maxim can be observed or violated for the communicative purposes. Grice calls the violation of the maxims as 'flouting' or 'exploitation' of maxims. Let us see how the maxims can be observed or violated.

The sentence "John has two cars" implicates that the speaker believes that John has two cars and has the adequate evidence for it. This is an example of the observance of the Maxim of Quality. On the contrary, "John flies aeroplane in water" is an example of violation of the Maxim of Quality as it is a false statement and nobody has the adequate evidence for it. In the following dialogue, we can note that the Maxim of Quantity has been observed.

A: Where were you yesterday night?

B: In the clubhouse.

On the contrary, if the speaker B gives the answer like "I was in college in the beginning but moved to cinema in the afternoon and then came to clubhouse at night". It can be said that the speaker B has violated the Maxim of Quantity.

We can note the observance of the Maxim of Manner in the following dialogue.

A: What are you reading?

B: I am reading a novel

In this dialogue, the speaker B has given the answer to the question of the speaker A in brief and without any ambiguity. Therefore, he has followed the Maxim of Manner. However, in the following dialogue, the violation of the Maxim of Manner can be noted.

A: What are you reading?

B: I am reading a face.

The speaker B has given the ambiguous answer and has violated the Maxim of Manner.

The Maxim of Relevance can also be seen as followed or observed. For example:

A: Where is my pocket?

B: On your table.

The speaker B in the above dialogue has given the relevant answer to the question of the speaker A and has observed the Maxim of Relevance. On the contrary, if he would have given the answer like, "I have taken my lunch" or any other irrelevant answer, it would be a violation of the Maxim of Manner.

It is said that conversation would be most successful if the Cooperative Principle and these maxims would be complied with. However, people always violate this principle and these maxims, which make the conversation partially successful or simply a failure.

Observance and Violation of the Cooperative Principle in *The Birthday Party*:

The present paper analyzes the observance and violation of the maxims of Cooperative Principle in the selected conversational pieces from Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party*. It explores the very reasons behind the observance or violation of these maxims and reveals the 'meaning between and beyond the lines'. The background of the utterance and the factors, which forced the interlocutors to observe or violate the particular maxim, are for analysis.

Analysis of Dialogues:

Conversational Exchange 1

Contextual Background

The setting of the play is of a room crowded with the collection of untidy things like boxes containing nuts, screws, paint buckets, vases, a kitchen sink, a lawn-mower, a shopping trolley, a toaster, a statue of Buddha, non-working gas stove etc. A bucket is seen as attached to ceiling of room to catch the drops of rain water due to the leakage in roof. In the opening scene of Act I, Mick is seen as alone in the room. With the door bangs, muffled voices are heard. Davies enters in the room with Aston and Mick leaves it before they enter. Conversation opens between Aston and Davies. Aston is the owner of the house who rescues a tramp, Davies from attack of Scotchman who has beaten him severely.

Conversation

ASTON. Sit down.

DAVIES. Thanks. (Looking about) Uuh . . .

ASTON. Just a minute.

ASTON looks around for a chair, sees one lying

on its side by the rolled carpet at the fireplace, and starts to get it out.

DAVIES. Sit down? Huh . . . I haven't had a good sit down . . . I haven't had a proper sit down . . . well, I couldn't tell you. . .

ASTON (placing the chair). Here you are.

DAVIES. Ten minutes off for a tea-break in the middle of the night in that place and I couldn't find a seat, not one. All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them, all them aliens had it. And they had me working there . . . they had me working. . . .

ASTON sits on the bed, takes out a tobacco tin and papers, and begins to roll himself a cigarette. DAVIES watches him.

(CT: 7-8)

Interpretation of Conversation and CP Analysis

Aston has brought Davies to his home after rescuing him at a café. Aston asks him to sit down. Davies in response shows his gratitude and looks for a seat. He doesn't get it. Aston suggests him to wait for a minute. Aston tries to find a chair but fails. Davies abruptly starts conversing with Aston as he has not got a good sit down, a proper sit down. He even expresses his inability to tell this to Aston. Meanwhile, Aston manages to get a chair and places it for Davies. He continues that all the Poles, Greeks and Blacks were assigned for seat but he wasn't. They all made him to work there in that café. In due time, Aston sits on the bed and rolls the cigarette for himself. Davies keeps watching him. He adds again the same sitting incident and gives an account of treatment as dirt which he has got from them. He informed the thing to bar manager too.

Davies is suggested to sit by Aston and he expresses his sense of gratitude towards him. Thus, he observes maxim of manner with his gratitude. Aston tries to search a chair for Davies and manages to find it afterwards. In this way, he shows his generous nature and he too observes maxim of manner. Davies, on contrary, raises an account of his sit down in which he gives information more than required. He repeats the expressions of his good sit down and proper sit down. Hence, he has violated maxim of quantity. Davies adds more that everyone including Poles, Greeks and Blacks were assigned to sit down. They all made him to work. He repeats the same account again. He blames that they all treated him like dirt. He told the thing to bar manager. Therefore, with unnecessary talk and repetition of same sentences, Davies again violates maxim of quantity. He violates maxim of manner with his contemptuous attitude towards Poles, Greeks and Blacks. He claims that those were having seat but he wasn't. It reflects his hostile nature for other races. He pauses in the ongoing conversation, exposes his uneasiness. He fails to find suitable words for his expression. Davies' violation of maxims reveals his requisites and worries, his approach towards others, and his concern of himself as a man of dignity. He tries to catch attention of Aston towards him with all these efforts. However, it is noticing that behaves indifferently with Davies and pays attention to his physical needs and not psychological, with his short responses as '*Sit Down*', '*Here you are*'.

Conversational Exchange 2**Contextual Background**

Davies seems to be eager to know more about the house and premise. He asks Aston that whether there are more rooms in the house. He gets the reply as those rooms are not in use. The downstairs portion of the house is also closed up and it needs seeing up the floors. Davies asks about persons living next door.

Conversation

DAVIES. I noticed that there was someone was living in the house next door.

ASTON. What?

DAVIES. (gesturing). I noticed...

ASTON. Yes. There's people living all along the road.

DAVIES. Yes, I noticed the curtains pulled down there next door as we came along.

ASTON. They are neighbours

Pause.

DAVIES. This your house then, is it?

Pause.

ASTON. I'm in charge.

(CT: 12)

Interpretation of Conversation and CP Analysis

Davies has noticed persons living in the house next doors. Aston feels astonished and asks him what?. Davies tries to give answer but he is interrupted by Aston. He says that there are people living all along the road. Davies continues as he noticed the curtains pulled down in the next door when they were coming. Aston replies that they are the neighbours. After a pause Davies makes judgment that the house belongs to Aston and asks him for confirmation. Aston too, with a pause replies that he is in charge of that house.

Davies has asked a question about persons living in the house next doors but Aston feels astonished and asks him *what?*. In fact, Aston has understood Davies' question but still he asks him a counter question and thus, violates maxim of manner. Davies tries to utter the same question and he gets interrupted by Aston. Here, Aston has violated the maxim of manner again. He states him that there are people living all along the road. Though Davies has pointed towards specific persons, Aston states him about people living all along the road which is irrelevant answer. Thus, he violates maxim of relevance. Davies continues that he noticed the curtains pulled down in the next door when they were coming. To his statement Aston gives relevant answer as they are the neighbours. Hence, Aston observes maxim of relevance here. Davies comes to the conclusion that the house belongs to Aston and seeks his confirmation. Aston gives an equally vague and ambiguous reply violating both the maxims of quantity and manner as he is in charge of that house. This piece of conversation reveals fact that though Aston and Davies have shared a room, they are mere strangers not familiar to each other.

Conversational Exchange 3**Contextual Background**

Davies questions to Aston whether he has got a spare pair of shoes as some bad persons at the monastery let him down again. He has got a friend there who gives him shoes. That friend has gone now. He appreciates the toilets and soaps in the monastery. Aston offers him a pair of shoes and he exclaims with joy as those are life and death for him and he had to go to Luton wearing those.

Conversation

ASTON. What happened when you got there, then?

Pause.

DAVIES. I used to know a bootmaker in Acton. He was a good mate to me.

Pause

You know what that bastard monk said to me?

Pause

How many more blacks you got around here then?

(CT: 14)

Interpretation of Conversation and CP Analysis

Aston asks Davies about his visit to the monastery. Davies in response answers as he used to know a bootmaker who was his friend. After a pause, he continues and asks a counter question to Davies as whether he knows what that bastard monk said to him. Again with a pause, he asks how many blacks Aston has got around his place.

Davies' reply is absolutely irrelevant to the question asked by Aston. He gives an account of his friend in action, the monk and then blacks which is irrelevant. Thus, he violates maxim of relevance. He even violates maxim of manner with the use of slang word 'bastard' while referring to monk. His violation shows that he is unwilling to give the details of his past to Aston. He even reflects his racial awareness through his violation of relevance maxim.

Conversational Exchange 4**Contextual Background**

Aston offers a pair of shoes to Davies. He asks him to try those. He refuses to accept those and starts examining them. He calls the shoes as strong, hardy and good. But those are not fit to him as he has got a broad foot. Davies even calls them as pointed too and would cripple him in a weak. They are not of much use but they don't hurt. Davies expresses his gratitude towards Aston again for offering him a pair of shoes. Aston gives him assurance to get another pair for him. Davies expresses his inability to move in the shoes like these. He has to move for organizing some things.

Conversation

ASTON. Where you going to go?

DAVIES. Oh, I got one or two things in mind. I'm waiting for the weather to break.

Pause.

ASTON (attending to the toaster). Would. . . would you like to sleep here?

DAVIES. Here?

ASTON. You can sleep here if you like.

DAVIES. Here? Oh, I don't know about that.

Pause.

How long for?

ASTON. Till you . . . get yourself fixed up.

(CT: 16)

Interpretation of Conversation and CP Analysis

Aston asks Davies where he is going to. Davies in reply answers that he has some things in his mind and he is just waiting for the weather to break. After a pause, Aston asks him whether he would like to sleep in his room. Davies surprisingly asks him 'here'. Aston clarifies that he can sleep there if he likes. Davies again asks the same question and adds that he doesn't know anything about it. After a pause, he asks Aston for how much time he can sleep there. Aston replies that he can sleep there till he gets himself accommodate at another place.

Aston has asked Davies about the place where he wishes to go. In response, Davies utters that he has some plans in his mind and he is just waiting for clear weather. Here, Davies' reply is irrelevant to Aston's question as there is no any logical relation between them. He doesn't want to mention the place where he is going to. Furthermore, Aston asks him if he would like to sleep in his room. Davies unbelievably asks him 'here'. Aston again clarifies him that he would sleep there if he likes. In a sense, Aston offers him bed to sleep and a place to stay. Davies violates maxim of quantity as he has not given answer to Aston's question. Instead, he has asked a question to him for twice. Davies has violated this maxim as he feels startled with Aston's offer to sleep in his room. He even adds and asks that how much time he can stay there. Thus, he again violates maxim of quantity. However, he violates this maxim for the confirmation of a reasonable duration of his stay as Aston has proposed him something that he hasn't expected. Aston replies that he can stay there still he gets another accommodation. Aston violates maxim of quantity by offering Davies a place to stay in two different ways. Hence, he shows his readiness to keep Davies in his room. In addition, Aston observes maxim of relevance with his relevant answer to Davies as he can stay there still he gets another accommodation. He even observes maxim of manner with his generous nature as he wishes to help a tramp, Davies.

Conversational Exchange 5

Contextual Background

Davies is seemed to be curious about many things in the house of Aston. He asks that whether that gas stove is in working condition and how he prepares tea. He gets negative reply from Aston for both of his questions and comments 'That's a bit rough' as if he has experienced all those comforts in his life before. He then asks that is he building something and gets answer as he might build shed at the back of the house. Davies then asks questions about lawn, a pond and fish too.

Conversation

DAVIES. Where you going to put your shed?

ASTON (turning). I'll have to clear the garden first.

(CT: 17)

Interpretation of Conversation and CP Analysis

Davies asks Aston that where he is going to put his shed. Aston gives a contrastive reply to his question as he will have to clear garden first.

As Aston has given a contrastive reply to Davies, it can be noted as irrelevant for the conversation. Hence, he violates the maxim of relevance. Thus, he doesn't tell him about the place of shed directly. He gives reply about cleaning the garden first. Aston violates this maxim as he avoids answering his series of questions.

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