

**Floutings in George Bernard Shaw's Play Saint Joan**

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**ABSTRACT**

The present paper studies the communicative function of language and the basic properties of the meaning that is conveyed through language. The paper is based upon the Theory of Implicature of Grice and its cooperative principle in pragmatics which has great importance in modern studies in linguistics. The cooperative principle contains four major maxims, namely: maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner. These try to identify that utterance meaning would not be accomplished if it would not take in consideration the speaker's intentions ( Lyons 2002:5). The chief objective of this paper is to exhibit that the four Gricean maxims are not very reliable basis but they may be easily abandoned or flouted on several occasions. G.B.Shaw's play Saint Joan is taken as an example to show how flouting of Gricean maxims is applicable in this play. Characters throughout the play are consistently flouting these maxims. Flouting is used for comic purposes or sarcasm by Shaw in an attempt to show that the Catholic Church has committed unjust decisions concerning the burning of the innocent Joan de Arc who was canonized 25 years after she was charged with excommunication .

**Key Words : Flouting , Grice's Maxims , Cooperative Principle, Shaw's Saint Joan**

## المستخلص

يتناول البحث دراسة دور اللغة التفاعلي واهم الخصائص الرئيسية التي يتضمنها المعنى المقصود في عبارة معينة في اللغة . يرتكز البحث على نظرية جرايس وعلى مبدأ التعاون في علم التداوليات والذي له أهمية كبيرة في الدراسات الحديثة في علم اللغة . ويقضي مبدأ التعاون أن المتكلمين متعاونون في تسهيل عملية التخاطب ويتضمن مبدأ الكم ، مبدأ الكيف ، مبدأ الأسلوب ، ومبدأ المناسبة. وتهدف هذه المبادئ لتوضيح ان فهم معنى الكلام لن يكون متاحا الا من خلال معرفة نوايا المتكلم . وان الهدف الاساسي للبحث هو الاشارة الى ان مقاييس او مبادئ جرايس الاربعة ليست اساس موثوق جدا ، حيث من الممكن اختراقها بعدة طرق . وخير مثال على هذا الاختراق هو مسرحية جورج برناردشو "القديسة جون". حيث تقوم الشخصيات خلال المسرحية بخرق مستمر لهذه المبادئ إما لغرض السخرية والاستهزاء او لغرض خلق مواقف كوميدية للترفيه عن القراء. وقد كان هدف شو من خلال هذه المسرحية السخرية والاستهزاء من قرارات المحكمة الكاثوليكية الغير عادلة عندما حرقت جون البريئة والتي تم تبرئتها وعمل تمثال لها بعد 25 عاما من الحكم عليها بالحرمان والعزل من الكنيسة.

الكلمات الداله : خروقات، مبادئ جرايس ، مبدأ التعاون ، مسرحية برناردشو القديسة جون

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication among individuals of a society is fulfilled by the use of language. To exchange information , humans speak with each other and cooperate about things in their lives through language. In many societies, one may find rules and norms that make people understand each other, and these rules apply not only to the way language is used, there are also rules and norms that organize how conversation should be fulfilled . Successful conversation among interlocutors is done by a set of rules that is called conversational maxims. These maxims were found by Paul H. Grice ; the American philosopher ( Aitchison 2000:99). He introduced these four maxims and their sub maxims as rules to be accomplished in a conversation so that people can understand and help each other and he named it The Cooperative Principle which underlie

this cooperative behavior. The maxims are best regarded as hidden principles on which the best communication is built ( Finch 2005:153).

So, the maxims can be departed from in two ways, speakers can choose either to flout or to violate them. Floutings are different from violations. Violating a maxim implies some element of communicative failure: giving too little, or too much detail, being irrelevant, or vague. Floutings, however, are more apparent rather than real violations. They make us conform with the maxims indirectly rather than directly. So, for example, sarcasm, calling out "Nice one" about someone you hate, can be seen as flouting since it violates the maxim of quality. Finch (2005:154) mentions that novelists sometimes flout the maxim of manner when they disrupt the story by using flashbacks or digressions, but we, as readers, believe that the narrative will finally come together. If it doesn't, we conclude that the maxim had been violated.

Creativity in communication can be measured by the use of floutings. Interlocutors are aware of an underlying tension between the maxim and its flouted form which may give rise in many examples to indirect speech acts. Anderson (2013:22) adds that the maxims can be flouted when someone is trying obviously to deceive or mislead his

Interlocutors, but he is not directly noticing the maxims. So, they can understand another set of meaning. Shaw's drama Saint Joan explains with details the floutings of the four maxims. Ironically, Shaw endeavors to illustrate that the Catholic Church is more willing to admit private judgment than the Protestant Church, which is founded on the principle ( Seagrave 2013: 73). Accordingly, the floutings that the characters make in this play unfold hidden sarcasm or humor.

## **2.1 PRAGMATICS**

It is one of modern branches in Linguistics that studies utterance hidden meaning which can be used to refer to an act or to the product of that act . The utterance is intended to cover both spoken and written language. Utterance meaning is the product of sentence meaning and context ( Lyons 2002 :165). Pragmatics deals with how language users use it in some ways which cannot be understood from linguistic background alone. It deals with how listeners grasp the hidden meaning of speakers ( Aitchison 2000:17) and ( Habermas 1998:54).

In any theoretical account , intentionality is certainly important if one would give the meaning of language utterances, even if it is not found in the words of which these utterances are made ( Lyons 2002 :5). Whereas Richard and Schmidt ( 2010 : 449) define pragmatics as the study of language use in communication, especially the relationship between sentences, the context and situations in which they are used.

Wharton (2009:2)and Blackmore (2002:71) state that we may owe the term "pragmatics" to Charles Morris (1938), but Grice ranks highly among few to whom credit is due for shaping the discipline as we know it today. They elaborate that Grice's theory of Implicature made the recognition that verbal communication is more than a simple coding and decoding process, but it is an intelligent inferential activity involving the expression and recognition of intentions. The inferential processes involved in utterance interpretation may involve assumptions about the temporal or casual relationships between events in the world or about relationships between the speaker and hearer.

## **2.2 THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE**

It is a term derived from Paul Grice's Theory of Implicature (1989) and it is necessary in studying the conversational structure. Grice's principle claims that "people cooperate in the process of communication to reduce misunderstanding" . This principle itself states : "Make your contribution such as is required ; at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted aim or direction of the speech exchange in which you are engaged ". ( Finch 2005:154) and (Guerts 2010:10)

It is constituted of four main maxims with minor or sub maxims as follows:

2.2.1 Maxims of Quantity : these have two sub maxims which state:

A. Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange.

B. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

The following mini - dialogue will illustrate :

1. a. Sue: How did you get this book?

b. Sara: In my own way.

The answer of Sara is not so informative so as to meet Sue's needs. As Guerts explains that this breaking of the quantity maxim can be mainly explained by the supposition that Sara knows that to be more informative is to say something that would break the maxim of quality . " Don't say what you lack adequate evidence for " . It might be, for instance, that Sara believes her answer to be precise enough for Sue's purposes, or Sara and Sue may be playing a tricky game in which the participants aren't supposed to give full answers . And there are several possible situations in which Sara may not assure that the speaker does not know how or where from she gets the book .

2.2.2 Maxim of Relation : Be relevant. For instance:

2.a. Sara: Am out of milk ,

b. Sue: There is a supermarket near the corner of the street.

Clearly the first purpose of this short dialogue is to help Sara get milk to breakfast , so Sue's reply would not be relevant to this purpose unless she knew that the supermarket was opened ( or at least might be opened), had milk . In consequence, the implicature that Sue has is deduced by the maxim of relation ( Guerts 2010:13).

2.2.3 Maxim of Manner : super maxim : Be perspicuous. More specifically:

A : Avoid obscurity    B: Avoid ambiguity

C: Be brief    D : Be orderly .    The following example will illustrate:

3. a. Susan: What is that noise?

b. Sue: Miss Sara made some sounds that corresponded with the song " home sweet home "

Here, the speaker used many words to avoid the verb "sing", using an almost more prolix clause "produced a series of sounds" instead. She will not do so unless she knew, and she wanted to convey to the listener, that the verb "sing" was not entirely suitable , presumably because Miss Sara's singing was not very interesting . (ibid).

2.2.4 The Quality Maxim : super maxim : try to make your contribution one that is accurate . More specifically:

G: Do not say what you know to be false.

H: Do not say what you lack enough evidence.

### **3. Flouting Grice's four Maxims**

3.1 Flouting the Maxim of Quality in which speakers do not tell the truth or the information lacks evidence, and sometimes the meaning is not literally true. According to Brown and Levinson ( 1978 :222) that flouting this maxim results in irony, metaphor, and rhetorical questions.

3.2 Maxim of Quantity is flouted when the information is too informative or less informative. According to Muslih ( 2015 : 66) flouting of the quantity maxim may result in understatement, overstatement, and tautology.

3.3 The Maxim of Relation is flouted when the speaker is being irrelevant to the topic of the conversation, and accordingly may result in comic scenes.

3.4 Flouting the Maxim of Manner occurs when a contribution is ambiguous or not orderly and may cause the obscurity of expression. If the maxim of manner is flouted , this would result in ambiguous ,vague, or ellipted dialogues . (Dornerus 2005 :12).

### **4. Shaw's Saint Joan as Flouts That Exploit the Four Gricean Maxims**

Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856. He began his career as journalist, then a novelist, and at last as a dramatist, in which he made a great success and was awarded Noble Prize for literature in 1925. His family was Protestant, but Shaw rejected the Christian faith ( Tilak 2006:1) and (Nailufah 2008:13). He wrote his play Saint Joan in 1923 which is considered as a record of what mankind does to its geniuses and saints. The appeal of Saint Joan to Shaw was that she was " The first Protestant martyr" by which he meant that she chose to put her conscience against

the judgment of the Church (Tilak 2006:27).

Throughout the play, the characters flout the four maxims of Grice (1989). Shaw intended to portray his characters as they were mentioned in history without any direct biases or prejudices to certain religious or political point of view.

#### 4.1 Flouting the Maxim of Quality in Saint Joan

4.1.1 Steward: The hens are laying like mad, sir. Five dozen eggs!

Robert: Christ in Heaven. She did come from God.

In this dialogue between Robert and his Steward, Robert is flouting the maxim of quality as the hens did not lay any eggs before his approval to Joan's demands claiming him to support her with soldiers and horses to raise the siege of Orleans. It is intended by Shaw for humor.

4.1.2 Charles: Why does not he raise the siege then?

La Hire: The wind is against him.

Bluebeard: How can it hurt him at Orleans? It does not at the Channel.

Shaw is flouting the maxim of quality being humorous about the character of Bluebeard showing his character as being stupid.

4.1.3 Warwick said : Glasdale. Sir William

Cauchon: Glass-dell . He was not a saint; and many of us think that he was drowned for his blasphemies against Her

Warwick: What are we to infer from all this, my lord? Has the maid converted you?



Here Cauchon is deliberately flouting the quality maxim as he is not saying the truth about Joan and her claims to be a saint. He denied her to be one.

4.1.4 Cauchon: I cannot burn the maid . The Church will not take life.  
And my first mission is to seek this girl's salvation

Warwick: No doubt. But you do burn people, usually .

Here the maxim of quality is flouted by Cauchon as he is not truthful and evidences proved that he burned few women before in the name of Catholic Church, also he accused Joan to be a heretic and a witch.

4.1.5 Robert: No eggs ? thousand thunders; man, what do  
you mean by no eggs?

Steward: my lord , it is not my fault . It is the act of God.

The Steward has flouted the quality maxim as he does not give a justification or a convincing reason why the hens are not laying eggs, making his master feel furious.

4.1.6 Steward: do so in God's name, sir. Think of those hens, the best ones in Champagne;

Robert: think of my boot; and have your backside out of its reach

Again the Steward is flouting the maxim of quality for comic purpose insisting that it is because of his master's refusal to give Joan her demands, the hens were cursed and not laying eggs.

4.1.7 Robert: Poulengy stay here; and back me up.

Robert is flouting the maxim of quality as he used to believe that Joan is mad, so why does he need Poulengy to give him back up?

4.1.8 Robert: I believe you think raising a siege is as easy as chasing a cow out of meadow. You think soldiering is anybody's job?

Joan: I can't believe it would be very difficult if God is on your side, and you are hoping to put your life in His hand. But my soldiers are very simple.

Joan has flouted the quality maxim in that it is not true that fighting against English soldiers, or whomsoever, is not a simple job.

4.1.9 Bluebeard [ to the Chamberlain]: Your sincere lamb, Archbishop. good day Sir . Do you know what happened to La Hire?

Bluebeard has flouted the quality maxim as he is not saying the truth, being a hypocrite man who is only faithful to his own benefits.

4.1.10 La Hire [striding past Bluebeard and planting himself between the Archbishop and La Tramouille ] : This is nothing to joke about . It is worth than we thought. It was not a soldier, but an angle dressed as a soldier.

La Hire is flouting maxim of quality as it lacks evidence for what he is saying.

4.1.11 Charles [to Bluebeard]: This will exactly shews your ignorance, Bluebeard. My grandfather had a saint who used to float in the air when she was playing, and told him everything he wanted to know. My poor father had two saints, Marie de Maille and the Gasque of Avignon. It is our family; and I do not care what you say: I will have my saint too.

Charles is flouting the maxim of quality as there is no one single evidence for what he is saying, and it might not be true, because if it is true, he would make use of it, and not as he is a coward bankrupt.

4.1.12 La Hire: swear by all devils in hell- Oh, God forgive me, what am I saying? – By our Lady and the saints, this might be the

angel that beat Foul Mouthed Frank dead for swearing.

Flouting the maxim of quality because there is no evidence that Frank is dead for swearing, and the Archbishop confirmed that Frank is drowned by coincidence because he was drunk and fell into a well.

4.1.13 Warwick: ah! You are an Englishman, are you?

The Chaplain: I am not, my lord: I am a gentleman. Still like your lordship. I was born there only, so it makes a difference.

The Chaplain is flouting maxim of quality because he is not saying the complete truth of being an Englishman or denying being one.

4.1.14 Cauchon: We shall have to consider not merely our own opinions here, but the opinions, the prejudices, if you prefer of a French court.

He is flouting the maxim of quality for he didn't mention the Catholic court but the French court.

4.1.15 Cauchon: I don't deny that there are no supernatural powers on her side. But the names on that white banner were not the names of Satan and Beelzebub, but the blessed names of our Lord and His holy mother. And your commander Glasdale who was drowned was no saint; and many of our people think that he was drowned for his blasphemies against the maid.

Cauchon is flouting the maxim of quality for later on he admits The Maid is heretic and a witch and now he says that she is the servant of God.

4.1.16 Warwick: Sir: I give my apologies to you for the word used by Messier John de Stogumber. It does not mean in England what it does in France. In your language traitor means betrayer: one who is perfidious, treacherous, unfaithful, disloyal. In our country it means simple one who is not wholly devoted to our English interests.

Warwick is flouting the maxim of quality for lacking adequate evidence for what he is saying. It is most likely that he is making fun of Cauchon.

4.1.17 Warwick: my lord, you are so hard on us poor English. But we certainly do not share your pious desire to save The Maid: in fact I tell you now plainly that her death is a political necessity which I regret but cannot help. If the Church lets her go

Warwick is flouting the maxim of quality as it is a contradiction saying that it is a political necessity and then he regrets it after a while. He is not truthful.

4.1.18 The Inquisitor: Ah, very innocent . What does the maid know of the church and the law? She did not comprehend a word we said .It is the ignorant that suffer . Come ; we will be late for the end .

The Inquisitor is flouting the maxim of quality, another hypocrite who says something but acts the opposite. If he realizes that Joan is innocent, then why he did not save her from the burning end?

4.1.19 The Chaplain: I meant no harm. I did not know what it would be like.

He flouted the quality maxim as he does not say the truth because he helped the soldiers push Joan to the stake and watched her burning .

## 4.2 Flouting the Quantity maxims in Saint Joan

4.2.1 Joan: To crown the Dauphin in Rheims Cathedral means the English abandon France.

Robert: anything else ?

Joan: Not at the present , thank you , sir .

Robert is flouting the maxim of quantity because instead of telling her that her demands are impossible to be fulfilled with their available equipment and few soldiers they have, he is being sarcastic.

4.2.2 Poulegney [ to Robert]: There exists something with her. They are pretty foul mouthed and foul minded down there in the guardroom, some of them. But there has not been a word that has anything to do with her being a woman. They have stopped swearing before her. There is something , something. It may be worth trying.

Poulegney is flouting the maxim of quantity for giving too much details concerning Joan to say that she might be a saint.

4.2.3 The Chaplain [ to Warwick]: He is only a French man, my lord.

The Chaplain is flouting maxim of quantity as he gives very brief information about Donius, he is being sarcastic. He is underestimating French men.

4.2.4 The noble: One do has to leave a margin. Many of Charles's people will sell her to the Burgandians, the Burgandians will sell her to us; and there will probably be three or four middlemen who will expect their little commotions.

Flouting the maxim of quantity for giving too much details to say that he is ready to pay a big ransom to catch Joan and deliver her to the authorities accusing her to be a witch.

4.2.5 The same quotation number "4.1.15" said by Cauchon is flouting maxim of quantity for giving too much details to say that Glasdale deserved to be killed for being a fighting animal during their battles against the French people.

4.2.6 Warwick [to Cauchon ]: dear me , at all times their intentions were friendly to you .

Flouting the maxim of quantity as he did not give sufficient information about " their friendly intentions", meaning that the Inquisitor agrees with Cauchon that The Maid is to be considered a heretic not a prisoner of war.

4.2.7 Courcelles: I don't suggest anything , sir . But it looks that there is a conspiracy here to hush up the fact that the maid stole the Bishop's Seulis's horse.

Flouting the maxim of quantity as he gives unnecessary details concerning Joan's fatal crime of heresy, not of the alleged Bishop's horse.

4.2.8 Robert: They come from your imagination.

Joan: Of course. That is how the messages of God come to us.

Poulegney: Checkmate.

Here Poulegney is flouting the maxim of quantity. He either implies that Joan has won over Robert in their arguasion , or he might have been playing chess with someone else in the room.

4.2.9 The Chaplain: I admit that there is no faith in a Frenchman. I know what the Cardinal of Winchester will say when he hears of this. I know what the Earl of Warwick will do when he learns that you intend to betray him. There are eight hundred men at the gate who will see that this abominable witch is burnt in spite of your teeth.

Flouting the maxim of quantity for giving too much revelations to those lords who might agree with him in his judgments about Joan.

#### 4.3 Flouting the Maxim of Relation in Saint Joan

4.3.1 La Tramouille: He has sworn himself into a fit, perhaps.

He is flouting maxim of relation as it is irrelevant to their discussion.

4.3.2 Charles [to Joan]: He seems to order the army and  
whenever I care for a friend , he murders him.

He is flouting the maxim of relation as he addresses Joan concerning La Tramouille who is the leader of the army whose job is to kill Charles's enemies not his friends.

4.3.3 As in 4.2.9 flouting the maxim of quantity, it is also flouting the maxim of relation in which the Chaplain is being irrelevant to the trial of Joan by accusing the Bishop, the Inquisitor, and the Assessors of being traitors. Shaw is making fun of the Chaplain. He is showing his character as stupid and ridiculous.

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4.3.4 The Steward [to Robert] : Do so in God's name, sir. Think of those  
hens, the best layers in Champagne.

The Steward is flouting the maxim of relation as it is irrelevant to their subject of discussion giving a comic situation.

4.3.5 Charles: My friend: If they will no longer say that I was crowned by a witch an a heretic , I shall not fuss about how the trick has been made . Joan would not have declared it if it came right in the end: she was not that sort : I know her. Is her rehabilitation done ? I made it very clear that there was no nonsense about it.

Charles is flouting the maxim of relation because they were talking about Joan's being innocent, after twenty five years of condemning her

with the penalty of death, and he is talking of being crowned by a saint not a heretic.

4.3.6 Joan: You must not be afraid, Robert-

Robert: Damm you, I 'm not Afraid . And who gave you leave to call me Robert?

Joan is flouting the maxim of relation being sarcastic about Robert who was trying to convince her that fighting against English soldiers and their Black Prince is not easy for her.

4.3.7 The Chaplain: We were not beaten so much , my lord. No English man is very beaten ever .

He is flouting the maxim of relation as it did not matter if it was fair or not fair.

4.4 Flouting the Maxim of Manner in Saint Joan

4.4.1 Robert: How old are you?

Joan: Seventeen , they told me so . It may be nineteen. I cannot remember.

Joan is flouting the maxim of manner as it is an ambiguous answer, she might be seventeen or nineteen.

4.4.2 Robert: What's your name?

Joan: They usually call me Jenny in Lorraine. But in France I am Joan, and the soldiers are calling me the maid.

Again Joan is flouting the maxim of manner for being inconsistent about her name.



4.4.3 Poulegney: There is no use, Robert: she can choke you in that way every time.

Poulegney is flouting the maxim of manner for the possible ambiguity that Joan can choke Robert by her bare hands or by her strong words.

4.4.4 La Hire: This is nothing to joke about. It is worth than we thought. It was not a soldier, but an angle dressed as a soldier.

La Hire is flouting the maxim of manner because his description of Joan is vague or obscure.

4.4.5 Warwick: One has to leave a margin. some of Charles's followers can sell her to the Burgandians, the Burgandians can sell her to us; and there will be certainly three or four middlemen who will expect little commotions.

Warwick flouts the manner maxim for the ambiguity of "middlemen" we don't know if he means Englishmen, French men, or the Jews.

4.4.6 Cauchon [ Answering warwick's question, that if they caught The Maid they will give her to the Inquisition and she will be burnt]: If she were captured in my diocese: yes.

Cauchon is flouting the maxim of manner for admitting or not admitting that Joan was a sorceress is not clear. He is being ambiguous.

4.4.7 The Chaplain: But some of the most main points have been reduced almost to nothing. For instance, The Maid has actually declared that the blessed saints Margaret and Cathrine, and the holy Archangle Michael, spoke to her in French. That is a vital point.

The Chaplain is flouting the maxim of manner as it is vague, because if the saints have talked in French or Latin is not "the vital point" or the real thing that matters during the trial of Joan.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The research has shown that Gricean Maxims is frequently flouted to create different comic or dramatic scenes. The maxims of quality and quantity are mostly flouted to create humorous situations. This is due to the intentions of Shaw to portray his characters in Saint Joan as fools and weird.

While the maxims of relation and manner are often flouted to show that a character like the Chaplain is almost always irrelevant in certain dramatic contexts for comic purposes. Other characters like the Steward are made to flout the maxims of manner and quality also for humorous purposes and to show that a naive character of simple logic may have more sense than his master Robert.

Characters like Cauchon, Charles, and Warwick are intended to flout maxims of quality and quantity to show how deceitful, hypocrite, selfish, and coward characters they are, as they utter what they do not imply. Joan, the tragic heroine of the play has won battles for them and crowned King Charles the Seventh of France, also is meant to flout maxims of quality as she succeeded to win the battles but she was also a failure because at the very end she was excommunicated by the Church.

Tilak (2006:29) states that Shaw subjected every accepted value, custom, tradition, or faith to satirical treatment. Most of Shaw's criticism is of two kinds, first, art criticism; and second, criticism of society's formulated ideas in religion, politics, and morality. Art to him is the expression in strong-willed self-control of the processes of the

hidden logic of life. The only function of art is the interpretation of the forces of life. All that give entertainment, that supply pleasure.

Shaw's characters are constantly flouting Gricean maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner being sarcastic or humorous. His philosophical point of view is not hidden after all. The characters like Cauchon, the Inquisitor, Warwick, The Chaplain, are typical portrayals of historical personalities who flout maxims of quality and quantity to show for instance how Cauchon was a greedy, hypocrite, black-hearted villain who sent Joan to the stake pretending to be sorry at his heart because it is his duty to do so, to safeguard the authority and prestige of the Church. The Chaplain's flouts of relation maxim show what his utterances are really meant to convey, that is to give dramatic relief, as he was portrayed as a fool.

It is an interesting and entertaining thing at the same time to read Shaw's play Saint Joan from a Gricean point of view.

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