



Grice's Rules of Conversation

ศิริพร มุขนาค

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ได้อธิบายถึงกฎในการสนทนา ๔ ประการ ซึ่งตั้งขึ้นโดย H.P. Grice กฎทั้ง ๔ นั้นคือ ๑. ปริมาณ (Quantity) ๒. คุณภาพ (Quality) ๓. ความสัมพันธ์ (Relation) และ ๔. ลักษณะ (Manner) ของการโต้ตอบสนทนา หากกฎข้อหนึ่งข้อใด ถูกละเมิด หมายความว่าผู้รับสารจะตีความตามตัวตรง ๆ ไม่ได้เพราะผู้ส่งสารต้องการสื่อความหมายอื่น ๆ โดยนัยดังเช่นปรากฏในตัวอย่าง ซึ่งหยิบยกมาจากสิ่งที่ได้ยินจากการสนทนาตามที่เป็นจริง กฎของ Grice อาจนำไปใช้ได้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อความต่อเนื่อง (discourse) เพื่อแสดงถึงความแตกต่างกันระหว่างรูปแบบ (form) และการใช้ (Use) เนื่องจากการสนทนาขอมประกอบด้วยผู้พูดและผู้ฟัง แต่ Grice สร้างกฎโดยวิเคราะห์บทสนทนาจากทัศนะของผู้พูดฝ่ายเดียว จึงอาจมีข้อจำกัดที่พึงสังวรอยู่ด้วย

In his attempt to describe the features of discourse which are associated with the 'conversational' implicature, H.P. Grice hypothesizes a cooperative principle which the interlocutors are expected to observe in their verbal interaction. This principle dictates each participant to be aware of the purpose or the direction of the conversation and to make their contribution accordingly to achieve the ultimate purpose of communication. If there happens to be any deviation, they will assume that there is something else being implied. For the purpose of communicative clarity, Grice sets up 4 maxims or rules of conversation : Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner.

1. Quantity : a) Be as informative as required.
b) Be no more informative than required.
2. Quality : a) Say only what you believe to be true.
b) Say only what you have adequate evidence for.
3. Relation : Be relevant.

4. Manner : Be perspicuous

- a) Don't be obscure.
- b) Don't be ambiguous.
- c) Be brief.
- d) Be orderly.

... A participant in the verbal transaction may fail to fulfill a maxim in any of the following ways :

1. He may violate the maxim and, consequently, mislead his audience.
2. He may opt out.
3. He may be faced with a clash when he has to violate one maxim in order to be able to fulfill the other.
4. He may flout a maxim to communicate something other than the superficial meaning of his utterance.

The following are examples from actual use of a language in which the maxims or rules have not been followed one way or the other. An attempt is made to identify the conversational rules in question and also to present some possible explanation of the underlying meaning being conveyed.

I. An example in which the second maxim of Quantity has been flouted.

The following dispute was between two little sisters over a toy which they are supposed to share.

Older girl : I'm older. I must have it first.

Younger girl : I'm your sister. Mom says you must let me have it.

Here there is no need for either of them to inform the other of her age or her place in the family tree. The older girl seemed to think that since it is always older people who can lay down the rules, she should be able to exercise her seniority here. The younger one, unable to refute that, had to refer to the super-power, 'Mom'. But in the first place, they stated the plain fact known to both of them just to remind the other of the privilege that they thought went with it.

II. Examples of a flouting of the first maxim of Quality are commonly found in irony, metaphor, exaggeration and understatement. The following are some of them:

II a. At a house party, it was getting late and one of the remaining guests mentioned a couple of times that it's time to leave. But he just went on talking and made no move to comply with his remark. When he said again, 'I'm afraid we have to leave, his girl-friend said, "You've said that a thousand times already." Obviously, he did not repeat himself that many, and it seems unlikely for anyone to keep record of every statement someone else has made during such gathering. What she was implying was that he had said it before and not just once. Cases with expressions of time are quite common. A person might answer, "I'll be down in a minute" to a call to the dining-table, or a shop assistant might say, "I'll be right back with you in a second" to a waiting customer which she is hurrying another one to the cashier. In both cases, the speakers and the hearers understand that everything is meant except the exact amount of time stated.

II b. Surprised when a friend told me what she had heard, I asked her for the source of news and she answered, "Little bird told me." It is obvious that this cannot be taken literally. The only logical conclusion that can be made is that the person did not want to reveal her informant. Expressions like "via the grape-vine" serve the same purpose.

Important as Grice's maxims are, there remains this great problem with the rules as Robin Lakoff has pointed out (Lakoff, 1977) : there are many differences between the speaker and his audience. The interaction does not take place in a vacuum but there is old information, linguistic and non-linguistic. Grice's rules of conversation are formulated from the speaker's side but what the speaker regards as crystal clear might be obscure and hard to figure out to his audience, the speaker's adequacy might prove inadequate to other participants and so on.

References :

- Grice, H.P. "Logic and Conversation." In P. Cole and J.L. Morgan (eds.), Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3 : Speech Acts, 1971, pp. 41-58. New York, Academic Press.
- Lakoff, R. "What You Can Do With Words : Politeness, Pragmatics and Performatives." In A. Rogers, B. Wall and J. Murphy (eds.), Proceedings of the Texas Conference on Performatives, Presuppositions and Implicatures, 1977, pp. 79-106. Arlington, Va. : Center for Applied Linguistics,