

Conversational Implications in Zootopia in the Light of Violations of the Cooperative Principle

Ruyue Zhang^{1,a,*}

¹*BSc (Hons) Education Studies, University of Bristol, Bristol, United Kingdom, BS8 1TH*

a. ta21394@bristol.ac.uk

**corresponding author*

Abstract: The principle of cooperation is an important philological theory developed by Grice. Apart from its importance in guiding oral communication, it is also pivotal to the expressive power of cinematic art. This paper uses some of the wonderful dialogues in *Zootopia* as material to explore how the characters in the film violate the principle of cooperation in their conversations, thus making the language scenario realistic and natural, the characters vivid and the effect of the work visible. This paper states that the violation of the cooperative principle contributes to the humorous and sarcastic linguistic style of the characters, as well as to their characterization.

Keywords: Cooperative principle, Film dialogue, Conversational meaning, *Zootopia*, Violation

1. Introduction

Language is a uniquely human tool for communication, and linguist Herbert Paul Grice proposes a model of interaction for successful communication, namely the Cooperative Principle (CP) and its maxim, which are based on the philosophy of ordinary language. As a pragmatic phenomenon, humour has received a great deal of attention from scholars and has become one of the most active areas of research in pragmatics. CP is mentioned in numerous pragmatic works, such as Qiu, Schroter and Ariyati, due to its influence on the field of pragmatics [1,2,3]. The pragmatic phenomenon of humour is also a key factor in adding to the expressive power of cinematic art. Eugenville argued that language in film and television cannot be measured solely on its aesthetic value, but rather on its contribution to the story [4]. Apart from helping the audience to understand the storyline of a film, the dialogue of a film is more important in presenting a vivid characterisation, creating a typical character, and enhancing the comedic value of the film. The manner of the discourse should be authentic and believable, albeit processed by the artist, but still true to the natural spoken word. To highlight the typical characteristics of the characters and increase their artistic impact, the playwright should not only design the language of the characters, but also consider the pragmatic aspects. *Zootopia*, a 2016 Disney animated film, was a worldwide success upon its release and has inspired numerous interpretations. This paper will explore how the characters in the film violate the principle of cooperation in their conversations, from a pragmatic perspective, in order to portray the characters and enhance the humour of the work. Likewise, it will demonstrate the feasibility of applying Grice's theory of dialogic meaning to film studies, which implies that future scholars can continue to work in this area in order to reveal more of its value.

2. Cooperative Principle

2.1. The Definition of Cooperative Principle

The cooperation principle in dialogue analysis assumes that dialogue participants strive to be informative, truthful, pertinent, and clear. Philosopher H. Paul Grice introduced this concept in his 1975 article "Logic and Dialogue." In Logic and Dialogue, H.P. Grice focused on cooperation in dialogue, which evolved from language use and pragmatics to study how individuals engage in collaborative communication [5, 6]. In it, he argues that 'conversational communication' is not simply a 'continuum of intermittent speech,' and that if it were, it would not be rational. Instead, according to Grice, meaningful dialogue is distinguished by collaboration. Each participant acknowledges, on some level, that they have a shared goal or set of goals, or at the minimum least, a direction that is mutually acceptable. Grice's approach seeks to explain the process by which listeners transition from literal to figurative understanding [7]. Grice believes that the most evident quality of conversation is that it is a rational, collaborative, and purposeful act. The reason why people can have productive conversations is because they are committed to a common goal and work well together [5]. Grice suggests four 'maxims' or sets of norms be adhered to while applying this approach, listed below [8]:

- Maxim of Quality:
 - a. Try to make your contribution one that is true.
 - b. Do not say what you believe to be false.
 - c. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- Maxim of Quantity:
 - a. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of exchange).
 - b. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.
- Maxim of Manner:
 - a. Be perspicuous.
 - b. Avoid obscurity of expression.
 - c. Avoid ambiguity.
 - d. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
 - e. Be orderly.

2.2. The Violation of Cooperative Principle

Theoretically, both sides of a conversation must comply with the principles of cooperation and mutual cooperation in order to make the other side understand their words and to ensure that the conversation goes smoothly. However, in the actual process of communication, people do not always strictly adhere to these guidelines, and may even deliberately violate them to produce "extra-verbal" meaning, or "special return meaning", to achieve certain communicative purposes. As Darighgoftar and Ghaffari pointed out, not always are Gricean maxims adhered to, and their violation or fluttering carries more information about the meaning of the maxim than when they are adhered to [9]. Gricean maxim defiance described as situations where one or more maxims fail to be present in the communication process [10]. For example, telling jokes, writing books, and making films are different situations when maxims can be disregarded to surprise individuals and thus break out into laughter, to enhance the development of a story's storyline or to produce a special effect [10, 11]. When these norms are violated, 'conversational meaning' is created, broadening the listener's potential interpretations and insights by enhancing the discourse's significance and interest.

3. The Synopsis of *Zootopia*

Zootopia is a beautiful animal metropolis where all the mammals live together. Judy the bunny is determined to become a policeman, but everyone around her says it is unrealistic and her parents advise her to give up. Although she later succeeds in becoming a policeman through hard work, on her first day at the police station she is given a menial job as a traffic policeman. While working as a traffic cop, she accidentally befriends Nick the Fox, a con man. Meanwhile, there are several cases of missing animals in *Zootopia*. The reason behind these cases is the disappearance of animals caused by the lion mayor and the forest wolf to cover up the truth, as well as a plot by the sheep deputy mayor to plan a terrorist attack on carnivores. With the help of the very clever Nick the fox, Judy successfully solved these disappearances and find out who is behind the animal terror attacks.

The film was a success and was well-received by audiences due to its humorous, yet very warm and healing style, as well as its strong and complex characters. Obviously, all of this was accomplished not only by the consistency and flow of the plot, the excellent acting skills of the actors, and the warmth and brilliance of the images but also by the portrayal of the characters. The characters are portrayed not only through their actions and mannerisms but also through their important lines. The dialogue in this film is also very distinctive. The following article analyses the lines of the film in terms of the four principles of collaboration.

4. The Violations of Cooperative Principle in *Zootopia*

4.1. Violation of The Maxim of Quantity

The Maxim of Quantity- contribute as much data as is required without giving too much detail. The examples are as follows:

(1) Mrs. Austen: " Chief Bogo, please! Five minutes of your time, please. " Brute: " Ma'am, as I've told you, we're doing everything we can." Mrs. Austen: "My husband has been missing for ten days. His name is Otterton. He's a florist. We have 2 beautiful children He would never just disappear. "Chief Bogo: "Ma'am, our detectives are very busy." Mrs. Austen: " Please. There's gotta be somebody to find my Emmitt."

By not answering Mrs. Austen's question directly, Chief Bogo violated the "quantitative principle." In other words, there was not enough information. Mrs. Austen desired an update on the disappearance of her husband, but Chief Bull did not explain specifically how Mrs. Austen's husband had disappeared, in violation of the first sub-criterion of " the Maxim of Quantity ". The conversational meaning is, "Our detectives have been working hard on the investigation, but the exact circumstances of the disappearance have not yet been ascertained."

(2) Judy: "What do you think happened?" Nick: " Oh, no, wait a minute. Polar bear pelts... Rat-pack music, fancy cups, I know whose car this is, we gotta go! They call him Mr. Big, and he does not like me. So, we gotta go! " Judy: "I'm not leaving, this is a crime scene." Nick: "Well, it's gonna to be a bigger crime scene..."

Judy asks Nick what happened at the scene, and Nick answers his question about what he found but not about Judy. The information, although sufficient, is superfluous, violating the second sub-criterion of the " the Maxim of Quantity ", creating a tense atmosphere and setting the scene for the rest of the play.

(3) Judy: "Sir, I'm not just some token bunny. Chief Bogo: " Well then, writing a hundred tickets a day should be easy." Judy:" A 100 tickets. I'm not gonna write 100 tickets. I'm gonna write 200 tickets. Before noon."

Instead of directly affirming Judy's description of herself as not a token bunny, Chief Bogo asks rhetorically then how easy it should be for you to write a ticket, violating the second sub-rule of the

code of quantity: don't give extra information outside of fellowship. This part of the dialogue reflects the contempt and sarcasm of Chief Bogo towards Judy, while showing the positive character of Judy who fully wants to prove that she is capable.

4.2. Violation of The Maxim of Quality

The Maxim of Quality- do not make claims you don't think are true or for which you don't have evidence. The examples are as follows:

(1) Judy: "You told that mouse the Pawpsicle sticks were redwood!" Nick: "That's right. Redwood. With a space in the middle. Wood that is red."

Nick claims that red popsicle stick wood is mahogany after omitting a few words, which is obviously a lie. Nick's false statement, which he knew to be false, violated the first sub-criterion of the "the Maxim of Quality" by saying something he knew to be to make fun of Judy.

(2) Judy's Mom: " What your father means, hon, is that it's gonna be difficult, impossible even... for you to become a police officer." Judy's Dad: "Right, there's never been a bunny cop. No. Bunnies don't do that." Judy: "H Well... Then I guess I'll have to be the first one. Because I am gonna make the world a better place!" Judy's Dad: " Or, heck, you know. You wanna talk about making the world a better place, no better way to do it than becoming a carrot farmer. " Judy's Mom: " Yes! Your dad, me, your 275 brothers and sisters. One carrot at a time. We're changing the world. " Judy's Dad: " Carrot farming is a noble profession."

Judy's parents want Judy to realize that it is difficult to achieve her dream, saying that a rabbit can never be a policeman, but that this cannot be verified, contrary to the second sub-criterion of the Quality Principle; and that there is no better way to make the world a better place than to be a carrot puller, contrary to the first principle of the "Quality Principle". The first sub-criterion of "the Maxim of Quality" is violated by saying something that they know to be false, in the hope that Judy will change her dream to a more secure job and become a carrot farmer like them. In a given conversation, a lie shows more about the speaker's true soul and character than the truth. Even though the parents are breaking the cooperative rule of conversation, it shows how much they care about their child.

4.3. Violation of The Maxim of Relation

The Maxim of Relation- what is said should be relevant. The examples are as follows:

(1) Elephant Cashier: " There aren't any fox ice cream joints in your part of town?" Nick: " No, no. There are, there are. It's just, my boy, this goofy little stinker, he loves all things elephant. He wants to be one when he grows up. Isn't that adorable? Who the heck am I to crush his little dreams, huh? Right?" Elephant Cashier: " Look, you probably can't read, fox, but the sign says. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone! So beat it. "

Nick first responded to the elephant cashier's question and explained why they had come here specifically to buy ice cream, as his little boy loves elephants and even dreams of becoming one when he grows up. It was clear that the father and son were pleading for mercy, but the elephant cashier was unresponsive, even getting angry that Nick couldn't read the words on the sign and still sternly shoos them away, clearly not in keeping with the circumstances and the elephant cashier's breach of relationship guidelines. In addition to Nick's ability to speak well and his desire to ask for ice cream, it also shows the indifference of the large animals towards the small ones, and the fact that all the animals in zootopia do not live together as harmoniously as they seem to.

(2) Judy: " Sir. I don't wanna be a meter maid, I wanna be a real cop." Do you think the mayor asked what I wanted? Life isn't some cartoon musical where you sing a little song, and your insipid dreams... Magically come true! So let it go."

The plea of Judy is ignored by Chief Bogo, who answers Judy with a rhetorical question, ostensibly violating "the Maxim of Relation". This means for Judy to accept the reality of becoming a ticket-posting cop, something like becoming a real cop won't happen. Here the realistic, cold image of Chief Bogo director is established.

4.4. Violation of The Maxim of Manner

The Maxim of Manner- be clear and concise; avoid rambling; adhere to a strict order of ideas. The example is as follows:

(1) Nick: " Clearly there's a biological component? These predators may be reverting to their primitive, savage ways " Judy: " Are you serious? I just stated the facts of the case.

I mean, it's not like a bunny could go savage. " Nick: " Right, but a fox could? Huh?" Judy: " Nick, stop it, you're not like them. " Nick: " Oh, there's a 'them' now? " Judy: " You know what I mean, you're not that kind of predator." Nick: "The kind that makes you think you need to carry around a fox repellent? Yeah, don't think I didn't notice that little item the first time we met. Look. Let me ask you a question. Are you afraid of me? Do you think I might go nuts? You think I might go savage? You think I might try to eat you? Huh! I knew it, huh. Just when I thought somebody actually believed in me, huh? Probably best if you don't have a predator as a partner." Judy: "No, Nick. Nick!"

Judy violated the second guideline of "the Maxim of Manner", which is to avoid ambiguity, by failing to specify which predators these supposedly insane animals refer to, leading Nick to feel offended. Additionally, here is also the climactic scene that drives the entire film into conflict and reveals its central theme.

5. Conclusion

In actual communication, the principles of cooperation are not always strictly adhered to. However, violation of the principles of cooperation does not necessarily impede the normal flow of communication, and when the communicator intentionally violates the principles of cooperation to express the meaning of the conversation's special needs, it can produce hilarious results. This is exemplified in the film *Zootopia* in which the study analyses the violation of each of the four guidelines of the cooperation principle using a selection of typical examples. The results indicate that the violation of the cooperative principle contributes to the humorous and sarcastic linguistic style of the characters, as well as to their characterization.

Through this analysis, this author hopes that the humorous dialogue in the film will be better understood and that it will give some insights to the screenwriter. However, this paper contains some limitations. For instance, the corpus of this study is too small. Apart from that, this study demonstrates that the theory of pragmatic analysis is very useful in film research, and future researchers can continue to work in this field to reveal more meaning of the theory of pragmatic analysis.

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