

Research Article

**STUDY OF VIOLATION OF CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPAL
IN PINTER'S "THE CARETAKER"**

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is a study of flouting of co-operative principle in Pinter's "The Caretaker" Act – I. The study examines the dialogues of the characters from pragmatic perspective. The study seeks to give more insights on those assumptions in the existing critical literature which insists on the devaluation of language and meaninglessness in The Caretaker Act –I. The analysis in this study is based on Grice's theory of Co-operative Principle. The observations about the dialogues focus on the various ways in which the characters fail to observe the co-operative principle and its four maxims, namely the maxim of quality, quantity, manner and relation.

INTRODUCTION

The scope of pragmatics as an area of language studies is a wide one. According to Levinson (1983) because its scope covers both context dependent aspects of language structure, and principle of language usage and understanding that have little to do with linguistic structure, it may be difficult to forge a definition that will cover both of these aspects. Despite this, however, scholars in the area generally explain that pragmatics accounts for the specific meanings of utterances in particular social and situational contexts, In particular, Leech and Short (1981:290) write:

The pragmatic analysis of language can be broadly understood to be the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered.

CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

In social science generally and linguistics specifically, the cooperative principle describes how people interact with one another. As phrased by Paul Grice, who introduced it, it states, "Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." Though phrased as a prescriptive command, the principle is intended as a description of how people normally behave in conversation.

The philosopher Paul Grice proposed four conversational maxims that arise from the pragmatics of natural language. The Gricean Maxims are a way to explain the link between utterances and what is understood from them. The Maxims are based on his cooperative principle, which states, 'Make your conversational 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,' and is so called because listeners and speakers must speak cooperatively and mutually accept one another to be understood in a particular way. The principle describes how effective communication

in conversation is achieved in common social situations and is further broken down into the four Maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner.

FLOUTING OF CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLE IN THE CARETAKER ACT - I

The analysis of characters' conversational behaviour on the basis of Grice's theory of Conversational Implicature shows that the characters are flouting the conversational maxims from the beginning of the play till its end. For example Aston offers Davies a sit three times but Davies initiates a very unusual reply to Davies's offer. He violates the co-operative principles as he remains standing. More than this, he is consistently responding to Aston with an irrelevant long speech initiating the topic of his unpleasantness in the café. By doing this, he fails to fulfil both the quantity and relation maxims. Through this flouting, Davies is revealed as a rude and querulous person who tries to draw Aston's sympathy.

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, and begins to roll himself a cigarette. Davis watches him.

All them blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, the lot of them, that's what, doing me out of a seat, treating me like dirt. When he come at me tonight I told him.

Aston: Take a seat.

Davies: Yes, but what I got to do first, you see, what I got to do, I got to loosen myself up, you see what I mean? I could have got done in down there.

In this verbal exchange, we notice that Davies talks too much and his talk is inappropriate to Aston's offer thus he flouts maxim of quantity and relation. Besides Davies's attempt to draw Aston's sympathy, his flouting of the previous maxims is intended to characterize him as a rude and querulous person. These two traits are manifested again in his flouting of the manner maxim when he speaks unsuccinctly in his second utterance and in his stage directions.

The first exchange between Aston and Davies sets a model of interaction for the rest of the conversations in which the characters alternatively are violating the co-operative principal and exploiting the maxims. Davies's tendency to insist on his bad luck and his attempt to get Aston believe what he says, for example, leads him again to flout the maxim of quantity and relation.

Davies: (*handling the tin.*) When he come at me tonight I told him. Didn't I? You heard me tell him, didn't you?

Aston: I saw him have a go at you.

Davies: Go at me? You wouldn't grumble. The filthy skate, an old man like me. I've had dinner with the best.

By flouting the quantity and relation maxims in this exchange, Davies is portrayed as an insolent hostile man who tries to prove his superior worth. In fact, his expression of deprivation

exceeds the expectations and breaks the norms of social behaviour when he pretends, 'I've dinner with the best', and when he names the scotch man, 'The filthy skate'.

Davies's conversational contributions disclose their traits in his character, such as aggressiveness and arrogance. These traits are made apparent in the same exchange where he flouts the maxim of quantity and relation another time in order to expand on his misfortunes.

Aston: Yes, I saw him have a go at you.

Davies: all them toe-rags mate got the manners of pigs. I might have been on the road a few years but you can take it from me I'm clean. I keep myself up. That's why I left my wife. Fortnight after I married her, no, not so much as that, no more than a week, I took the lid off a saucepan, you know what was in it? A pile of her underclothing, unwashed. The pan for vegetables, it was. The vegetable pan. That's when I left her and I haven't seen her since.

What draw the reader's attention in this exchange are Davies non-conscious contradictions. His speech as an expression of unpleasantness can call for the Aston and the reader's sympathy, but his flouting of quantity and relation maxims by his aggressive language and his incongruent talk about his wife's lack of standards of personal hygiene to stress his deprivation and show his moral correctness conceals what he claims and response he seeks. Davies's exaggerated sense of misfortune and his incongruent pompous statements can be seen as an absurd attempt to distort the truth and hide behind his words. In fact, while he claims, 'I was brought up with the right ideas', he contradicts himself by saying – 'if I had few years off me I'd ... I'd break you in a half. The propriety and the respect that Davies claims are disapproved by his inappropriate and aggressive language.

Davies is revealed also as an ineffectual person. This is shown when he flouts the quantity and manner maxims in his recurrent attempt to incline Aston to observe his apprehensions.

Davies: (*Coming closer*) Did you see what happened with that one?

Aston: I only got the end of it.

Davies: Comes up to me, parks a bucket of rubbish at me tells me to take it out the back. It's not my job to take out the bucket! They got a boy there for taking out the bucket. I wasn't engaged to take out buckets. My job's cleaning the floor, clearing up the tables, doing a bit of washing – up, nothing to do with taking out buckets.

Aston: Uh.

In this exchange, Davies talks too much and repeats himself more than once; therefore, he fails to observe the quality and manner maxims. By flouting these maxims, Pinter intends to establish Davies as an ineffectual person who tries to cover up his fear and social inadequacy. In fact, by revising Davies's earlier discriminating speech about Blacks, the Greeks and the Poles who prevents him from seating, his emphasis on the fact that it is not his job to take the buckets out suggests his state of insecurity and his attempt to evade his abilities and inferiorities. This is confirmed when he says to the Scotch man, 'I got my rights... I might have been on the road but nobody's got more rights than I have'.

Davies ineffectualness is manifested again in his recurrent flouting of the maxims manner when he responds Aston who invites to be a Caretaker in Mick's house. By contrast, Aston is revealed as a diffident and inassertive person.

It is notable that Davies is also impulsive person. His attempt to draw Aston's attention, which is revealed in his reversion of the story of the bucket through which he flouts the maxim of relation, to be relevant is one example in which Davies's compulsiveness is made remarkable.

Davies: I told him what to do with his bucket. Didn't I? You heard. Look here, I said, I'm an old man, I said, where I was brought up we had some idea how to talk to old people with the proper respect, we was brought up with the right ideas.....

More important than his grammatical mistake is his saying which doesn't match at all what Aston and the audience are expecting. From his first utterance, we learn that what he is going to say will be concerned with what the Scotch man will do with that bucket, but his speech is completely deviated. He speaks rather about his appropriate social behaviour and his proper respect. By doing so, Davies is shown as compulsive person.

It is increasingly apparent that Davies is always moving away from the central topic or a line of argument to speak about his personal worries and anxieties. In fact, in addition to his story about the people's maltreatment and attack in the café, he resorts to other recollections of events intended to elicit and provoke Aston's interests and feeling. This desire for recognition from Aston is an indication of his insecurity. One instance in which Davies is revealed as an insecure man is perceived when he recounts the story of generous mate at Shepherd's Bush, a story which leads him to flout two maxims at once.

Davies: Them bastards at the monastery let me down again.
Aston: (*going to his bed*) Where?
Davies: Down in Luton. Monastery down at Luton I got a mate at Shepherd's Bush, you see
Aston: (*looking under his bed*). I might have a pair.
Davies: I got this mate at Shepherd's Bush. In the convenience. Well, he was in the convenience. Run about the best convenience they had. (He watches Aston.) Run about the best one. Always slipped me a bit of soap, any time I went in there. Very good soap. They have to have the best soap. I was never without a piece of soap, whenever I happened to be knocking about the Shepherd's Bush area.
Aston: (*emerging from under the bed with shoes*). Pair of brown.

Davies' non-observance of the quality and relation maxims in his utterance, 'down in Luton. Monastery down at Luton.... I got mate at Shepherd's Bush? You see ...', and his failure to pay attention to Aston's response about his previous request concerning his need for footwear could be explained by his impatience to change his standing and get Aston's support and respect. Indeed, the stage directions (Davies watches him) reveals this clearly. Aston, in his turn, fails to fulfil the relation maxim each time Davies tries to provoke his feeling. Aston's failure to respond appropriately is likely to be seen as an evidence of lack of interest in what Davies is saying.

CONCLUSION:

As the result indicates, Pinter's dialogues in "The Caretaker" are full of violations of the co-operative principles. In fact, the characters practically flout every maxim of conversation in every dialogue in the play. We experience absurdity and irrationality in the character's conversation. However, though the playwright induces such a sense of absurdity and irrationality by violating the conversational rules in the character's dialogue and though our certainty about the characters and what they say is undermined from time to time in the play, we should assume that the playwright attaches a great significance to the character flouting of the conversational maxims. This significance appears mainly in the role the characters verbal excess, repetitions, digressions, self contradictions, pauses and silences, avoidance and evasiveness, play in the creation of the characters identity and establishment of violence effects in the play.

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