

Conversational Implicatures and Violation of Conversational Maxims in Television Interviews

Fejes Dóra* and Fejes Gábor**

* Budapest University of Technology and Economics/Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, Budapest, Hungary

** Óbuda University/ Alba Regia University Center, Székesfehérvár, Hungary

91fejesdora@gmail.com, fejesg@szivaryanet.hu

I. THE TOPIC OF THE CONVERSATION

The topic of my presentation is the conversational implicatures and the violations of the maxims of Herbert Paul Grice in a chosen interview. I would like to find the answer, if these violations can be connected to the fact that the interviewee dominates during the interview, and the interviewer loses control. I would like to manifest the lack of cooperation and after that I would like to give solutions, what should she have done to deal with these violations, and abuses. My hypothesis is that in an interaction, when someone uses these violations of the maxims, he/she can get dominance during the interview against his/her partner. I would like to give you examples in a television interview, analyzed by me. I think my topic can be useful for those reporters, presenters and interviewers, who have ever got into a situation like this, but they felt incapable, and helpless and they felt that they couldn't do their work well.

But I think, my presentation will be a good example for the ordinary people too, because everybody has ever got into a situation when he/she had lost control in an interaction, and their partner dominated due to the violations of the maxims.

A. The method of the analysis

My chosen interview was broadcasted in a Hungarian television, called ATV, in a television program called Egyenes beszéd (Direct speech). The presenter of this program is very well-known and one of the best presenters in Hungary. Her name is Kálmán Olga.

The interviewee's name is Mogács Dániel, and he is in a political party called Two-Tailed Dog Party. It is an ironical and paradoxical party in Hungary, so some kind of fail-party (street art), but they were really popular in the elections in 2010. Mogács Dániel was also choosable in the mayor elections in 2010 and he was a well-known and popular personality, as being a humorist. He always parodies the Hungarian political elite in the interviews.

In my analysis I would like to point to the violations of the maxims. In this dialogue there were many from these violations, because it was very far from the rational quarrel. I had examined many political interviews, but I analyzed them just from the communicational point of view, so I didn't pay attention to the problems of the law. I don't judge over none of the interviewer and interviewee, I only paid attention to the communicational point of view, and I analyzed their sentences in that way.

This interview can be found on Youtube video portal, and I publish the link downside of the page.

In my analysis I use the conversational maxims of H.P. Grice in the translation of Zentai István. I would like to determine my central notions in the first part of the presentation, and I would like to get answers why Grice thought that our words are very close to our acts, and why are the verbal and the non-verbal so closely linked. He said that we can implicate a deeper purport in our words, and we act differently what we really want to act.

In the second part of the presentation I would like to give examples from my interview to these verbal violations, and I would like to give solutions, different answering strategies.

B. My aims

I found this topic really important because in the Hungarian media there are many presenters who cannot tackle with these communicational problems. They feel that there is some kind of failure in communication and the other dominates during it, but they do not know why.

One of the best presenters of Hungary is Kálmán Olga, but she also failed against this man, who used violations of the maxims and the ignorance of the communication.

What is more not only the dominance is the mayor aim in this situation, but also the sympathy of the viewers. In the television conversations take part three persons: interviewer, interviewee and the viewers. The interviewee wants to gain the viewers attention and sympathy instead of the interviewer, and they are usually successful with these violations.

I would like to prove this in my presentation, and I hope after my dissertation these violations would be clear for everybody, and an ordinary person will be able to manage them at all.

II. H.P. GRICE: LOGIC AND CONVERSATION

The most famous article of Grice was published in 1975 and it is called Logic and conversation. In this article he mentions two very important notions: the implicature and the Cooperative Principle. Grice says that the interpretation of a sentence is really far from its conversational meaning. He says that the sentence is what we say out and the manifestation is the outcome/ result of the saying out.

A. *The implicature*

So we should separate the interpretation of the sentence and the meaning, the manifestation according to Grice. The meaning is what we say, and the implicature is what we communicate or intimate. I would like to give an example for the better understanding.

For example:

John believes that the English people are really brave and he wants to tell it to Paul. He can communicate it in three ways.

English people are really brave. /Every English is brave.

Mary is English, so really brave.

Mary is English... really brave.

The first sentence is conventional and says what it communicates. In the second sentence he communicates more, what he says, because he says that Mary is brave, because she is English. In this case *so* is an implicature. It is a conventional implicature. In the third sentence he communicate more, than he says, because he implicates that Mary is English and really brave, but she is brave, because she is English. So it is a hidden implicature, because none of the words express the real meaning in the sentence.

B. *The Cooperative Principle*

H.P. Grice says that during a talk, our manifestations are not separated from each other, they are connected to our partners'. In the ideal conversation we have a common aim or a commonly accepted direction. We call this the Cooperative Principle. It is not a norm, just a small rule of the conversation.

A criticism is that the Gricean Maxims can easily be misinterpreted to be a guideline for etiquette, instructing speakers on how to be moral, polite conversationalists. However, the Gricean Maxims, despite their wording, are only meant to describe the commonly accepted traits of successful cooperative communication.

Geoffrey Leech created the Politeness maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. In my analysis I do not want to work with these maxims, because I only examine the communicational side of the conversations, and I think I can show something new according to the Gricean Maxims.

In the analyzed interview I noticed the total ignorance of the Cooperative Principle. The aim of the interviewee is totally different from the interviewer, and shirk out almost all of the questions. It is an interesting situations, because he accepted the invitation into this program, this conversational situation, and after that, he totally ignored it. In my opinion he wanted to implicate a further purpose, and he acted the humorist during the whole interview.

III. THE NON-COMPLIANCE OF THE MAXIMS DURING THE INTERVIEW

The maxim of quantity:

Make your contribution as informative as it is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

For example:

Kálmán Olga asks Mogács Dániel to tell a detail about, „Why it is sure that you are going to win in the elections?” Mogács Dániel answers that „it is sure, because of the statistics.”

In this case Mogács was not informative enough, so did not observe the maxim of quantity.

The maxim of quality:

Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

For example:

„Kálmán, the winning is totally sure, because we think it over many times, we didn't start this job today, but at least one week before. I don't want to tell you details, but it is more sure, that we win, than any other thing.”

In this sentence Mogács did not keep the maxim of quality, because he is not able to augur who will win in the elections.

The maxim of relevance:

Be relevant!

With respect to this maxim, Grice writes, "Though the maxim itself is terse, its formulation conceals a number of problems that exercise me a good deal: questions about what different kinds and focuses of relevance there may be, how these shift in the course of a talk exchange, how to allow for the fact that subjects of conversations are legitimately changed, and so on. I find the treatment of such questions exceedingly difficult, and I hope to revert to them in later work." (Grice 1989:27)

For example when Kálmán Olga asks something and he wants to glue somewhere his chewing gum. It is rrelay impolite and he also did not keep the maxim of relevance.

When Kálmán Olga asks him, that if he won the elections, would he be a real politician, he says that he would like to be the mayor, because the mayors' salary is irrationally high.

He also ignore the maxim of relevance when after a question in connection with his futural political status he asks the interviewer about where she lives.

The maxim of manner:

Be clear!

Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity.

Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

Be orderly.

For example:

Kálmán Olga asks him, what would he do with the huge amount of money, he earns. Mogács Dániel answers, he would spend it for himself and his mother, in the district he would build up houses for his mother. It is really turbidite and ambiguite, because I think none of the voters would be pleased if Mogács would spend their money for building up houses for himself.

A. *Violations of maxims in the interview*

Open violation:

When someone violate a maxim openly, he/she do not want to hide the real purpose. Here can we mention the endless, indistinct explications, when we notice that the speaker do not tell the truth, or he/she wants to misguide us. But it can also happen that we do not notice these violations.

Examples:

In the beginning of the interview Kálmán Olga says that she heard from different places that the Two-Tailed Dog Party have a winning chance in the elections and she asks Mogács Dániel if they won the elections, what would they do? After that question Mogács Dániel asks what the interviewer's name is. It was a really impolite question, and do not fit into the interview's conditions.

That is the same with the chewing gum; every viewer recognise the open violation.

The total ignorance of the Cooperative Principle in the non-verbal way, when Mogács Dániel walks out of the studio, before the end of the interview.

Collision:

It can happen, that the maxims contradict each other. To keep one of the maxims, the speaker should violate an other. That is what we call collision. For example a school director should enumerate the workers in his school. He do not remember all of the names, because he do not know the cleaning stuff in the school very well. But he can enumerate all the teachers' names. If he wants to keep the maxim of quality, he tries to enumerate the names. Saying he do not remember all of the names would not be true. If he keeps the maxim of quality and enumerate the names, he remember, he would violate the maxim of quantity, because he do not mention enough names.

Examples:

„*The car is full of statistics about the chances of the election*”- says Mogács Dániel. But he do not bring them inside, because he says „*There's a huge storm outside.*” This is a collision, because the way I see, Mogács Dániel could not expound the statistics. To convince us, he should prove the opposite of this statement. He do not do that, but tries to convince us about the election, according to the never-seen statistics.

Emergence:

The speaker can indicate that he/she do not want to contribute in the dialogue according to the rules. It can come from outside of the conversational situation. For example a reporter asks a question from the Prime Minister, but if he gave an answer, he would flout a State Secret. In this task the minister emerge from the maxim legitimate, if he answers '*Sorry, I cannot tell you more!*' But it can occur only in this case, when the answerer was the real flouter of the rules. So one can emerge from a maxime, or the Cooperative Principle, when he/she react for a misdemeanor.

Examples:

When Mogács Dániel asks the name of the presenter, instead of answering the real question, which was 'if they won he elections, would they really politicize?'

Another emergence is when Kálmán Olga ask him to tell some details that persuade us from the end of the elections he says '*I only want you to get direct questions!*' In this case I think he divert the topic deliberately, because he could not answer, or the respond would bring him an unpleasant situation.

Kálmán Olga asks '*What kind of statistics show that the outcome of the election is favorable for the party?*', and Mogács Dániel answers that these statistics '*are outside in the car*', but he will not bring them inside, because '*there's a huge storm outside*'. That is also an emerge because he was invited here to expound the party's chances, according to the statistics, but he emerge from this situation and do not give direct answers.

When he says that his chewing gum is in his mouth and he wants to glue it somewhere, he use the emergence again, because he indicates he do not want to cooperate with the interviewer.

Mogács Dániel answers the question directly only once, when he admitted that if life gave him the chance to be a politician, he would. Kálmán Olga reanswer '*Are you serious?*', and after that Mogács Dániel (instead of the answer) asks '*Where do you live?*'. That is an interesting emerge, and it can overwrite the real purpose of Mogács Dániel (is it really true that he wants to deal with politics?).

Other examples for emergence:

K.O. Now you are nominees, but if you will be the mayor in the seventh district, would you like to deal with politics, or in the last moment could you say, that it was just a joke?

M.D. I really want to be a mayor, because i would get a lot of money.

K.O. And what will you do, if anybody from your party wins. Will you do this political stuff, or in the last moment you retract, and tell the people sorry, it was just a joke?

M.O. But it isn't a joke Kálmán, do I seem to be joking now?

Abuse of maxims:

It can occur, that the speaker would be able to keep the rules, but do not do this. He abuse a maxim, but keep on with the communication, and he/she seems to cooperate with his/her partner. In this case the message and the Cooperative Principle will satisfied in the recipient, and he/she would attribute a meaning for the manifestation. In this case, the speaker abused with one of the maxims.

Examples:

„*Kálmán, the winning is totally sure, because we think it over many times, we didn't start this job today, but at least one week before. I don't want to tell you details, but it is more sure, that we win, than any other thing.*” In this case, the Cooperative Principle is satisfied in the recipient, but Mogács Dániel abused the maxim.

When Kálmán Olga realize that there were another chewing gum under the table, Mogács Dániel picks it off and says '*We clean where we can, that will be with the seventh district too.*' He flouted the relevance maxim and emerge from an answer, and after that he keeps the cooperation seemingly, and satisfy the message in the receiver with a stunning analogue (as the chewing gum disappears, the rubbish would disappear in the seventh district). That is a positive act, and the receiver forgot the flouted maxim before.

Manipulation:

In the most important case the speaker flout a maxim with the ignorance of the Cooperative Principle and it manifests in the receiver and in the message too. But the

receiver do not notice because the communicator hide the real purpose. In this case he/she manipulate the receiver. If the receiver do not notice the abuse, he/she can come to harmful convictions.

I do not found so many manipulations in the analyzed interview. It is a special dialogue, we can call it 'trialogue', because the conversation takes place between three people (viewers, interviewer, interviewee).

In this situation Mogács Dániel wanted to impignethe viewers, instead of the interviewer. He tried to make the presenter ridiculous, and wanted to dominate due to the violations of the Gricean Maxims. In the manipulation I take only the effects on the viewers into consideration.

'Do not interrupt me Kálmán, please!' Mogács Dániel wants the viewers to feel antipathy against Kálmán Olga. He acts really renitent and he is very popular in that way.

'Very well done Kálmán! You are so logical! After some time you may get an own show.' That is an ironical comment, because she has already had an own show.

'And the rassism again...' *'Are you living the viewers again?'*

'How can I put these chewing gums for you to understand? That's me and in front of me my aim. And when I reach my aim, that's good for me. So we take part in the elections, because we want to win! And not for telling the Hungarian people sorry in the end.' He wants the viewers to believe that Kálmán Olga is stupid, full of rassism, but among the conversation he was the only one who could not cooperate, and deal with the questions.

'I would like to be a politician, because of the huge amount of money!' In this task he implicates that the only attribution of the politicians is the huge amount of money. So that the sentence's effects can be harmful for the receiver, because a politician usually makes efforts to gain money.

B. The judgement of the interviewer

In this part of the dissertation I would like to show you some comments from the Youtube portal. They were written under the interview, so the writers presumably have seen the interview.

'No more questions for who I want to vote...'

'Live stand-up comedy, but very enjoyable!'

'Olga isn't really clever the way I see.'

'Kálmán's style is really irritating, she is very simple.'

'I like that man. This how we should deal with that woman.'

'I think it wasn't a parody, for Kálmán it was serious. Mogács has the form he ever had and Kálmán wasn't able to come to terms with him. She always repeated her silly questions and failed to be humorous, when she realized that this isn't an ordinary interview. But Mogács Dániel is a real cool face!'

From these commentaries I think the viewers sympathyse with Mogács Dániel and they rated negative and ridiculous the fact that she had lost control during the interview against the man. On the other hand Mogács Dániel was who abused the maxims and ignored cooperation and did not satisfied the rules of the dialogues.

It was really instructive for me that it was enough for some people to vote for him and his party. Some of the

people sympathysed with the dominance of Mogács Dániel and the suppression of Kálmán Olga and started to fancy the man (*'That is how we should deal with that woman!'*).

All in all the way I see the judgement of Kálmán Olga in the eye of the viewers is negative, and I think if she had revealed these violations, the situation would have changed somehow.

In the next part I would like to prove that statement.

IV. SOLLUTIONS

In this part of the dissertation I would like to give sollutions and advices for those who have ever lost control against somebody during a conversation. In this case prevention is really important and also very important to recognize the situation and handle these problems sooner or later. I would like to offer some kinds of responding strategies according to the different personalities.

A. Prevention

Choosing the appropriate interviewee is really important. If we know about a person that conversation with him is not easy and not ordinary, it is really useful to get to know with this person. We should look up his personality or watch former interviews. In this way we can get acquainted with his responding strategies. Kálmán Olga should have known about Mogács Dániel that he usually make parodies from the interviews, often speak in an ironical way and violate maxims many times. So all I wanted to tell you here, that prevention is better than cure.

B. Handle with flouted maxims

When a violation of a maxim happens, the interviewer can do two things. His/her first possibility is to take part in the violation. For example in case of an emergence he/she starts to speak about the new topic. It is the easiest way to avoid the end of the conversation. In my opinion Kálmán Olga chose this strategy. She was partner in the violation. She did not reveal the situation, the abuse of the conversation, but she wanted to undergo the conversation as fast as she can. It was a really unpleasant situation for her and the viewers also felt that.

For example:

M.D. First of all can I have your name, please?

K.O. Let's say Gizi, it is egal.

In that case Mogács Dániel did not keep with the maxim of relevance and he used the emergence to handle with it. The question was if they won the elections would they really politiccate.

The interviewer could have handled this situation if she had made the maxim explicit and reveal the fact that it is not connected to the real topic and not the real purpose of the interview.

For example:

M.D. First of all can I have your name, please?

K.O. I don't know why it is important. Please answer my original question!

We can reveal, to all of the flouted maxims. In case of the maxim of quantity we can say that the information is not enough, or too much. In case of the maxim of the manner we can ask to formulate clearer. In case of the relevance, to answer the original question. In case of a

spectacular emergence (chewing gum situation) we can reveal to the hidden information, which he/she wants to dissemble with this foulted maxim. When the viewers are involved in the situation, the interviewers can feel it uncomfortable, because they want to impress the viewers.

In case of a manipulation if Kálmán Olga had asked *'Do you want to beat me or the viewers? Do you seriously expect from the people of seventh district to finance the paintball parties?'*, she would have got relevant pieces of information. It is possible that her popularity would have fallen, but this would have been expected from her. The viewers are not interested in the humorous chewing gum situation, they are interested in the relevant pieces of information, because they will vote for him, if they find him a good leader.

If the interviewee did not have any aims with this interview, he only wanted to be likeable and humorous with the violation of the Cooperative Principle and maxims, in this case we can point to this fact too.

Example: *Be honest, why did you admitted to come here, in this show? Speaking of your party and your winning chances, to convince the viewers, or to ignore cooperation and communication and try to make me ridiculous in the eye of the viewers?*

In this case the hardest managing is better and to involve the viewers is also important. The interviewee would like to be suitable for the viewers, so we can turn back the unpleasant situation.

Example:

M.D. I left my chewing gum in my mouth, but I'd like to....

K.O. Okay, we can continue this interview in that way. I ask you something and you emerge from my answers, or ignore the communication. But I think you owe to the people who are watching you in that moment to give them relevant answers about the party, the program, the chances and the future of themselves. So I ask you again: can you give me normal answers or do we stop this interview right now?

The way I see, it would have been a better answer than this: *'Glue it on the table!'*

C. Follow-up managing

If the violation has already happened, and no handlings were used, we can use the crisis communication. That

means that in case of another conversation Kálmán Olga can reveal the faults and flouted maxims and she asks the re-speaking of the problems.

V. 6. SUMMARY

Every people can get into a situation, when he/she loose the dominance against the partner, and lead the conversation with the violations of the maxim sin a really unfair way. I think many of you have ever experienced that.

In the beginning of the interview Kálmán Olga did not recognize the real situation and she were not able to tackle the problems of the flouted maxims, and insultations.

She did not stand on her right later, when it would have been expected from her. She would have taken control during the interview, but in the end Mogács Dániel was, who won the dominance and the sympathy of the viewers.

In my dissertation I revealed that the violations of the maxims are really significant and important, because if we do not make them explicit during an interaction, we can easily lose control. It is extremely important during a conversation in the media. It is an educator medium, and it would be really important to make conversations, which broadcast a real value.

I showed some violations in a television interview and I also showed that the interviewer's answers were not very capable for getting the domination and control. After that I gave her sollutions and I revealed the importance of these responding strategies. I think they can change the judgements often viewers, because they see that this presenter do her best, and work very well.

Because handle with the Gricean Maxims is a theoretical knowledge, but it is the mayor part of the presenters' practical work.

VI. REFERENCES

- [1] Reboul, A. és Moeschler, J. (2005): *A társalgás cselei*, Bp.: Osiris
- [2] Austin, J. (1962/1990): *A szaván fogott szó in Tetten ért szavak*. Bp.: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- [3] Grice, H. P. (2011): *Társalgás és logika in Tanulmányok a szavak életéről. (27-42.o.)* Budapest: Gondolat.
- [4] Zentai, I. (2006): *Meggyőzőestechnika és kritikai gondolkodás a mindennapi gyakorlatban*. Budapest: Medicina Könyvkiadó Rt.
- [5] Kálmán Olga interjúja Mogács Dániellel az Egyenes beszédben - Youtube videó, 2010. (keresve 2012.10.05.) [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBva2g3evGk>]