

The Adaption of Grice's Maxims in Wole Soyinka's Discourse in *The Strong Breed*

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Introduction

Herbert Paul Grice (1913- 1988) is an English philosopher of language. It was 1967 when he introduced his Maxims in his lecture on Logic and Conversation. To Grice, each conversation is based on two parts; between speaker and hearer. In this communication both of sides should obey the rules. To him, when people communicate with each other, their communication is based on the mutual dialogue and rules. Grice called these rules co-operative principles. Grice's basic idea is that, "Participants in a conversation try to maintain certain standards in their communicative behaviour; therefore, utterance is interpreted with those standards in mind" (Feleman 2982). To him, this standard consists of four maxims. Accordingly, each maxim carries the particular idea that in each part of the conversation shares between addresser and addressee:

Paul Grice suggested that when conversing with each other, humans say what is necessary for the purpose of the talk; they carry out talk that has mutual communicative ends for all concerned and therefore follows his so-called cooperative principles....According to this principle, when conversing, you should 'make your 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. (Gregoriou 146)

This descriptive study tries to apply the Grice's maxims on a play by Wole Soyinka *The Strong Breed*. Although other studies centre on Grice's principles in a different way in order to find in which part do not obey the principles and lack of

rules, this study tries to find in which parts the writer (Wole Soyinka) obeys Grice's Maxims. That is why this research centres on the dialogues to obtain the adoption to Grice's principles. In fact, the main purpose of this study is to explore the cases of adoption Grice's maxims in Soyinka's play. Akiwande Oluwole "Wole" Babatunde Soyinka is one of the Nigerian celebrated writers who *The Strong Breed* is one of his masterpieces. In this play, the writer concentrates on the traditional belief of Yoruba's people. The people who live in this village believe that before arriving at each New Year one strong person as a carrier should sacrifice in order to carry the people's sins. The idea of the carrier was one of the dominant belief which controlled the people living style. They believed that if one person carried their sins before arriving at the New Year they could purify by the carrier. That is why before the beginning of each New Year the tribe's headmaster tries to find a strong person as a scapegoat to carry the People's sins. In this regard, this research attempts to focus on the characters conversations in all parts of the play to find which part of the drama adapts to Grice's Maxims. Regarding this idea, it tries to find which mutual conversations carry the maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner.

1. Grice's Principles

Paul Grice the English language philosopher claims that an ordinary conversation is based on interactional dialogues which share between speaker and hearer. To him, the construction of each conversation is based on four principles. Grice classify these principles to four Maxims. As a matter of fact, Grice's maxims belongs to the study of pragmatic which concentrates on sentences, contexts, and the situation where the speaker uses of them. In this regard, according to Yule which quoted by Gregoriou,

Pragmatics is concerned with the study of the meaning as communicated by one human and interpreted by another. In contrast to the study of syntax (how sentences are put together) and semantics (what words and sentences mean and how these relate to the world), pragmatics is the study that actually allows humans into the equation, since it involves an analysis of the relationship between linguistic forms and the users of these forms. (143)

Overall, Grice's maxims carry four labels; Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner, that each of these items has a particular characteristic. The purpose of Grice's maxims is that to depict conversation should unambiguous. Grice claims that, in

ordinary communication, we presume that two sides do not realise it, but their mutual conversation helps them to understand the issue. As a matter of fact, to him, each questioner and answerer should be concentrated on the relevant words to create meaningful conversation. At this point, Grice in *Studies in the Way of Words* given an interesting example.

Suppose that A and B are talking about a mutual friend, C, who is now working in a bank. A asks B how C is getting on in his job, and B replies, *Oh quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet.* At this point, A might well inquire what B was implying, what he was suggesting, or even what he meant by saying that C had not yet been to prison. The answer might be any one of such things as that C is the sort of person likely to yield to the temptation provided by his occupation, that C's colleagues are really very unpleasant and treacherous people, and so forth. It might, of course, be quite unnecessary for A to make such an inquiry of B, the answer to it being, in the context, clear in advance. It is clear that whatever B implied, suggested, meant in this example, is distinct from what B said, which was simply that C had not been to prison yet....(Grice 24)

To Grice, the conversational meaning of the words is useful to convey the idea between speaker and hearer and also, helping to determine what is said in reciprocal conversation. Hence, Grice concentrates his notion on four principles in order to depict how the collection of words transfer and distinguish between the characters. In this regards, he categorises his principle to four items. To him, each category carries some of the characteristics that convey the purpose of the words which used in each dialogue. Standing to this point, Grice lists his principles to four maxims.

Maxim of Quantity relates to the quantity of information to be provided, and under it fall the following:

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Under the maxim of Quality try to make your contribution one that is true – and two more specific maxims:

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
 2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- Under the category of Relation, I place a single maxim, namely, "Be relevant."...

Finally, under the category of Manner, which I understand as relation not (like the previous categories) to what is said but, rather, to how what is said is to be said, I include the supermaxims – "Be perspicuous"- and various maxims such as:

1. Avoid obscurity of expression
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
4. Be orderly.(Grice 26-7)

To that end, Grice's Maxims concentrate on the collection of words in form of sentences, phrases, words, which convey the idea between addresser and addressee. To him, these words should carry some of the characteristics, such as Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner. Grice argues that each speaker during in each dialogue should obey the principles to transfer his idea. Grice claims that, for best mutual conversation the speaker should tell the truth, use of useful information, discussion to the relevant topic, and conveys his/ her idea directly.

2. Textual Analysis

The Strong Breed, a play which the events occur in Africa; the continent where is full of myth, superstitious, ritual, folklores. Soyinka in this play illustrates the real picture of dominant belief of Yoruba, a village in heart of Africa. In this village people believe that they never purify from their sins for arriving at each New Year, unless one person sacrifices in order to carry the people's sins. Eman a person who lives in Yoruba for twelve years, and works there as a teacher decides to hang as a scapegoat, but his fiancée Sunma urges him to change his decision and leaves the village. These events are based on the several mutual conversations between the protagonist and other characters by the writer, that convey four Grice's Maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relevant and Manner). With reference to, this paper focuses on the dialogues which are adapted to Grice's principle.

From the beginning part of drama, all conversations which transfer between the characters focus on this issue and also, Grice's Maxims can be applied on them. To mention a few, the conversation between the Girl and Eman from the beginning

part of the play not only carry the Maxim of Relation but also carries Maxims of Quality, Quantity and Manner; because in this mutual conversation Eman and Girl as a speaker and hearer they do not lie and also use the words which are related to the subject matter, gives needed information, and they avoid ambiguity. Moreover, according to this study, this short conversation carries four Maxims.

1. Girl: Is the teacher in?
2. Eman (*smiling*): No
3. Girl: Where is he gone?
4. Eman: I don't really know. Shall I ask?
5. Girl: Yes, do
6. Eman (turning slightly): Sunma, a girl outside wants to know.... (Soyinka 1275).

In this mutual conversation which shows by numbers the questioner and answerer use of proper, clear, true, relevant in order to convey their ideas. Maxim of Quality is first Grice's principle which proposes the speaker tells the truth and do not say something lack of evidence. Since this study tries to find the mutual conversations in *The Strong Breed* which are adhered to Gricean Maxims, that is why it tries to find the adoption dialogues. In another part of Soyinka's discourse the conversations which transfer between Eman and his fiance (Sunma) about Ifada (an idiot boy), is based on the collection of words that do not tell the lie. For example, Sunma expresses her idea and feeling about Ifada honestly and directly:

1. Eman (*amazed*): What ...? I said Ifada, Ifada.
2. Sunma: Just tell him to go away. Let him go and play somewhere else!
3. Eman: What is this? Hasn't he always played here?
4. Sunma: I don't want him here. (*Rushes to the window.*)
Get away, idiot. Don't bring your foolish face here anymore, do you hear? Go on,

Go away from here...

5. Eman (retraining her): Control yourself, Sunma. What on earth has got into you?

(*Ifada, hurt and bewildered, backs slowly away*). (Soyinka 1274)

The second Grice's maxim is Maxim of Quantity which focuses on the quantity of information. Grice in this principle emphasizes on the helpful number of the words. In this regard, another part of the play that chooses for this rule is the conversation between Eman and Sunma that they talking about something which belongs to a sick girl. :

1. Eman: It must belong to that sick girl.
2. Sunma: Do n't touch it.
3. Eman: Let's keep it for her.
4. Sunma: Leave it alone. Don't touch it, Eman.
5. Eman (shrugs and goes back): You are very nervous.
6. Sunma: Let's go in. (Soyinka 1277)

The dialogues between the characters which are specified by the numbers depict how the conversation between the characters conveys maxim of quality. From number one to six all part consist of proper words which carry the quality of maxim. In view of previous maxims, the third one is the maxim of relation that in this part Grice concentrates on the amount of the words and sentences, to relate to the subject. To him, in each mutual conversation, that transfer between speaker and hearer the words and sentences should connect to the same subject. That is to say by another conversation between Eman and Sunma which express their emotions to each other.

1. Sunma: I was only scared by that thing. There is nothing else.
2. Eman: I am not blind, Sunma. It is true I would not run away when you wanted me to, but that doesn't mean I do not feel things. What does tonight really mean that it makes you so hopeless?
3. Sunma: It is only a mood. And your in difference to me ...Let's go in. (Soyinka 1278)

With this in mind, this research look at the last one principle (Maxim of Manner). In this principle, Grice points out that, the speaker should say clear, brief, and in an orderly manner. In light of this rule, the mutual communication must obey the principle to convey the idea clearly and orderly. With reference to the maxim of the manner, the further mutual conversation between Eman, Sunma , and Jaguna (Sunma's father and tribe's headmaster) about Ifada illustrate the traces of this principle.

1. Jaguna (*speaks as he enters*): We know he is here.
2. Eman: Who?
3. Jaguna: Don't let us waste time. We are grown men, teacher. You understand me and I understand you. But we must take back the boy.
4. Eman: This is my house
5. Jaguna: Daughter, you'd better tell your friend. I don't think he quite knows our ways. Tell him why he must give up the boy.
6. Sunma: Father,...

7. Jaguna: Are you going to tell him or are n't you?
8. Sunma: Father, I beg you, leave us alone tonight...
9. Jaguna: I thought you might be a hindrance. Go home then if you will not use your sense.
10. Sunma: But there are other ways...
11. Jaguna (*turning to the men*): See that she gets home. I no longer trust her. If she gives trouble carry her. And see that the women say with her until all this is over.
(*Sunma departs, accompanied by one of the men*). (Soyinka 1279)

In this regard, the following mutual dialogues between Eman and Sunma are other examples which consist of words and sentences that transfer the idea of Grice's Manner. In this part, Sunma tries to convince Eman to leave the village in order to save his life unambiguously. Accordingly the mutual conversation between the addressee and addresser consists of the short, clear, and orderly. Hence the numbers from one to ten carry these characteristics.

1. Eman: I am going to the village ...I shan't be back before nightfall
2. Sunma: (*blankly*): Yes.
3. Eman (*hesitates*): Well what do you want me to do?
4. Sunma: The lorry was hooting just now.
5. Eman: I did n't hear it.
6. Sunma: It will leave in a few minutes. And you did promise we could go away.
7. Eman: I promise nothing. Will you go home by yourself or shall I come back for you?
8. Sunma: You don't even want me here?
9. Eman: But you have to go home have n't you?
10. Sunma: I had hoped we would watch the new year together – in some other place. (Soyinka 1276)

Above all, it seems that Soyinka conveys his idea by a collection of words and sentences which all of them use in a proper way. Indeed, Soyinka depicts the reality of African society by the quantity of information (Maxim of Quantity), Quality of information (Maxim of Quality), Relevant words (Maxim of Relation), and clear Manner (Maxim of Manner).

Conclusion:

This study indicates that Gricean maxims have potential roles in the Soyinka's play. A through analysis of the character's conversations reveal that how Soyinka depicts and conveys his idea by Grice's maxims. As a matter of fact in all parts which mentioned by this study Soyinka carries out Grice's Maxims and also, the traces of four principles find in characters dialogues clearly. To illustrate this point the dialogues between Sunma and Eman are adapted four Grice's Maxims. The discussion between these characters are based on Maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner, the reason why the mutual words and sentences that they used in order to convey their idea had some characteristic. For instance, they obey the principles in communicating effectively to each other by contribution true, informative, relevant, brief, orderly and avoidance of obscurity, and ambiguity. As a matter of fact all conversations were based on the rules. Although, Soyinka in *The Strong Breed* tries to reveal the reality of African society where the dominant belief shapes their living style, this study finds and depicts the adoption of Grice's Maxims along sides. In addition to in this play, Soyinka creates the tragic situation by a reciprocal conversation between the characters. Accordingly, he not only depicts the reality of Yoruba's people life but also the traces of Grice's maxims is visible. Since Grice argues that, each dialogue should obey the rules to convey people's idea clearly, Soyinka's discourse carries this notion in order to show African superstitious belief intelligible in order to communicate with his reader clearly. Last of all, the finding of adoption in this research is opposed to other studies which they try to find the lack of Grice's Maxims in a particular literary work.

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Summary

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This study tries to find the adoption of Grice's Maxims in Soyinka's discourse in *The Strong Breed* (1962). In addition to, it seeks to find in which mutual conversations of all parts of drama the writer obeys Grice's principles. Soyinka in this drama depicts how ritual and superstitious beliefs cover the social life. In Yoruba the village where the events occur; the villagers believe that before each New Year one strong and strange person should sacrifice to purify the society for arriving in New Year. This idea conveys among the characters by reciprocal conversation. Since this play focuses on the real social issue, this paper attempts to concentrate on the conversations in order to find in which dialogues the writer adapted discourses of his characters by Grice's Maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relation, Manner). Regarding these principles, centre on discourses's principles this research tries to find the characteristics of these Maxims. As a matter of fact, Maxim of Quantity centres on an equal amount of words which convey the idea in a proper way. In Maxim of Quality Grice concentrates on the truth that the dialogues should be taken correctly and truly. To Grice another principle is Maxim of Relation with regard to the relationship between the subject and content. Besides, Maxim of Manner converges on four avoidances; to mention a few, obscurity, ambiguity, briefly and orderly. With reference to these principles this research attempts to apply these Maxims on *The Strong Breed* in order to find adoption of reciprocal conversations by Soyinka. Regarding it tries to look for the dialogues which obey Grice's Maxims.

Keywords: Grice, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Manner, Soyinka, Discourse, *The Strong Breed*