The Cooperative Principle and Its Maxims:

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Introduction:

- H. Paul Grice introduces us to the cooperative principle in conversations that every participant is expected to observe.

- The cooperative principle is put forward by H. Paul Grice in 1975.

- It can be formulated as “make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purposes or the direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.”
For a successful conversation:-

1) Each participant must make a contribution’

2) The contribution should be appropriate to the topic of conversation.

3) Allow others to speak and make your contribution at the proper stage.

4) Respect the direction.

H. Paul Grice expands the idea of the cooperative principle in terms of four important maxims and their sub-maxims.
Maxims:-

A maxim is a short statement that expresses a general truth, principle or rule that needs to be followed.

H. Paul Grice introduces the maxims as:

a) the maxim of quantity
b) the maxim of quality
c) the maxim of relation
d) the maxim of manner
Maxim of Quantity:

- Under this category of maxim the term “quantity” refers to the quantity of information that must be provided in a conversation. Or in short:
- “Give the right amount of information”.
- Grice has the following two maxims:
  1) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of exchange.
  2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
For example:

In a college if someone asks, “Who is that girl with John?”, a cooperative reply would be, “That’s his new girlfriend Maria.”

An uncooperative reply would be “A girl” or “That’s Maria Wilfred born in London on 14th Feb, 1980, a niece of Rupert Wilfred”. The first answer is too brief, while the latter is too long one.
Maxim of Quality:

- Grice puts a super maxim under this category of quality is “Try to make your contribution one that is true”.

- In short, it is “Be truthful”.

- Then Grice introduces two specific maxims under this category are:
  
  - a) Do not say what you believe to be false
  
  - b) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
For example:

If A asks B the name of an unfamiliar animal such as a leopard, B should reply truthfully.

B should not say-

“It is a dog”. or

“It is a lion” if he knows that it is a leopard.

There has to some amount of trust in the truthfulness of what is being said.
Maxim of Relation:

- Grice places a single and short maxim: “Be relevant.”
- The category of relevance relates to the relevance of information.
- This is important principle in conversation which tells us that everyone makes contribution to the conversation that are relevance.
- If someone A in a conversation were to asks B,
  - A: “What is for dinner?”
  - B would reply, “Chicken and roti.”
  - “Flowers are beautiful.” would be an irrelevant utterance.
Maxim of Manner:

- The maxim of manner differ from the other three maxims. It does not deal with what to say in a conversation but how to say something in a conversation.

- In other words, “Be clear and orderly”

- Grice introduces the maxim with a supermaxim, “Be perspicuous”. Then he goes on to introduce another sub-maxims.

  a) Avoid obscurity of expression.

  b) Avoid ambiguity.

  c) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

  d) Be orderly.
In the above maxims, the term “perspicuous” refers to an ability to express idea clearly, so that they are understood very easily.

The term “prolixity” refers to the use of too many words to express an idea.

So here, the insistence is on not showing off your knowledge of words but on trying to get your message through successfully.
Thank You
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