

Humour based on flouting Grice's Conversational Maxims in Ali Douagi's "The Star-Gazer"

Sondes Hamdi

University of Carthage, Tunisia
sondeshamdi@yahoo.fr

Abstract

Attardo (1993) argues that humour in conversation is partly created by flouting or violating Grice's Conversational Maxims. A few studies have probed the validity of this claim by investigating humour in literary texts (Amianna & Putranti, 2017; Al-Zubeiry, 2020). However, to the best of our knowledge, not one study has probed this claim on the basis of a Tunisian literary text. Situated within the theoretical framework of Grice's Cooperative Principle (henceforth CP), this qualitative and descriptive study tries to fill this gap, at least partially, by examining humour in dialogue in Ali Douagi's short story "The Star-Gazer". The text is based on an interactional dialogue between a man and a woman. The study's results suggest that utterances in the dialogue in this story flout the Maxim of Quantity by giving too much or too little information to the hearer, and are found to flout the Maxim of Relation by stating things that are irrelevant to the topic of conversation. Utterances are found to flout the Maxim of Manner by stating things that are long, unclear and ambiguous, but no flouting of the Maxim of Quality is found. The humour in the text is found to be, at least partially, determined by flouting Grice's Conversational Maxims. As such, the study corroborates the claim that humour in conversation is, partly, determined by flouting or violating Grice's Conversational Maxims. It is argued that this work contributes to pragmatics, humour research and literary criticism.

Keywords: humour, Cooperative Principle, maxims, Ali Douagi, "The Star-Gazer".

1. Introduction

Humour is so pervasive in human behaviour that it has triggered the attention of philosophers, sociologists, linguists, etc. Humour can range from a simple joke told among friends to a sophisticated funny text of a theatrical play. Humour research has been arguably influenced by three main theories of humour: Disparagement Theory, Release Theory, and Incongruity Theory. To start with Disparagement Theory, some scholars argue that humour has long been related to scorn, feelings of superiority and disparagement because, as stated by Ermida (2008), humour involves laughing at someone. Thus, it is perceived as an interactive act based on an "asymmetrical relationship between two or more individuals" (p. 15). This asymmetrical relationship creates enjoyment and amusement in those that perceive themselves as superior.

What stimulates humour is the fact of pointing to “a flaw, a deformity or incapacity on the part of the butt of the joke” (p. 15). Schaeffer (1981, p. 3) observes that the fact that humour might represent a potential danger has prompted some researchers to warn against utilizing it. Schaeffer argues that humour might generate “anti-social behaviour” and give a voice to negative emotions, such as conceit and scorn. In the same vein, Aristotle perceived comedy as follows:

Comedy is (. . .) the representation of low men; however, it does not cover all of their faults, but only those that are a species of the ugly. Indeed the ridiculous consists of a fault or a deformity that causes neither pain nor destruction; an obvious example is the comic mask: it is ugly and deformed but it does not express pain (as cited in Ermida, 2008, p. 16).

As shown in this passage from Aristotle’s *Poetics*, the comic is related to what is “ugly” and “low.” Pointing out these flaws will cause enjoyment and amusement in the audience since it would fuel feelings of superiority and pride. In other words, according to Aristotle’s reasoning, we laugh at “low” and “ugly” individuals because we feel a certain joy in the feeling that we are superior to them.

As for Release Theory, some psychological research perceives humour as a strategy utilized by individuals to escape from the frustrations and constraints that society imposes on them. The argument here is that laughter relieves individuals from diverse tensions. Laughter also allows individuals under pressure to satisfy their desires (Ermida, 2008, p. 22). It has been argued that Release Theory is based on two main elements: pleasure and compensation. When individuals laugh, they temporarily free themselves from the constraints that oppress them, and they voice emotions that would otherwise be inhibited (Ermida, 2008).

Scholars such as Bergson claim that “the liberating principle” of humour is similar to dreaming. When individuals laugh, they succeed in detaching themselves from reality and freeing themselves from its rigid logic (Ermida, 2008). On comic emotion, Bergson (1900) states the following:

Deep down, the comic feeling is the tendency to slide down an easy slope. (. . .) We do not seek to adapt or readapt endlessly to the society we belong to. We neglect the attention we should pay to life. More or less, we become distracted: from will, no doubt, even more than from intelligence. Besides, we become lazy, (. . .) which means we are having fun (p. 132).

In this passage Bergson argues that what stimulates amusement and enjoyment in the audience is that the joke allows it to break loose from the rigid constraints imposed by society.

Incongruity Theory stipulates that humour is stimulated by contrast and surprise. Some scholars assert that what stimulates humour is that we suddenly discover “an incongruity” that goes against our initial interpretation. As in a game, the audience looks for a surprising meaning that has not been foreseen. Kant states the following:

(. . .) The joke must always contain something that may deceive. If it brings about no effect, one remembers it again, and as many times as necessary, in a rapid succession of tension and distension which makes one oscillate. This movement (. . .) causes tiredness, but also amusement (which is very profitable for one’s health) (as cited in Ermida, 2008, p. 25).

The aforementioned extract refers to the importance of “tiring” the audience in the interpretative process. The author argues that this “tiredness” is also “amusing” and “healthy.”

Schopenhauer proposes the idea that humour is based on contrast and surprise, stating the following:

In every case, laughter results from nothing but the suddenly perceived incongruity between a concept and the real objects that had been thought through it in some relation; and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity (as cited in Ermida, 2008, p. 26)

In this passage, the author defines laughter as the expression of the audience's "sudden" perception of "incongruity." Attardo (2020) tries to identify humour. He asserts that it is not easy to know how something is funny, or how a text or a specific situation is humorous. He states that historically, several scholars assumed that the presence of "laughter" could determine that the text is humorous. In this study, on the basis of humour research (Attardo, 2020; Nilsen & Nilsen, 2019; Norrick & Dynel, 2009), humour is identified as related to an utterance that stimulates the reader's amusement and laughter. This amusement can be based on the contrast/incongruity between what the reader expects the characters to say and what the characters actually say.

Several scholars (Attardo, 1993; Raskin, 1985) argue that humour can be based on the non-observance of Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) (1975) that stipulates that an utterance should be informative, clear, relevant and truthful for the conversation between interlocutors to be successful. CP is based on four Maxims related to quantity, quality, relevance, and manner (see discussion and examples below).

This work is motivated by several reasons. To start with, several Gricean analyses of literary texts have been done (Gilbert, 1995; Gautam & Sharma, 1986; Herman, 1994). However, to the best of our knowledge, very few have examined how humour emanates, at least partially, from the non-observance of Grice's CP (Amianna & Putranti, 2017; Al-Zubeiry, 2020; Pan, 2012). Second, despite the importance of Raskin's claim that humour is related to the non-observance of Grice's CP, little has been done to probe the validity of this claim in light of literary texts such as short stories. This paper will try to fill this gap, at least partially, by examining how humour is created through the flouting of Grice's Conversational Maxims in the short story "The Star-Gazer," written by the well-known Tunisian novelist, Ali Douagi. Thus, the objective of this paper is to show how humour in Ali Douagi's "The Star-Gazer" is determined, at least partially, by the flouting of Grice's Conversational Maxims.

"The Star-Gazer" is a humorous Tunisian short story taken from Ali Douagi's collection *Sleepless Nights*. It relates the dialogue between a naked woman and a naked man, a star-gazer. Their conversation is related to different existential matters, such as family, ethics, robbery, human existence, happiness, etc. The story ends with the couple passionately kissing each other despite their divergent perceptions of life. The message is that men and women are doomed to love each other despite inevitable differences. "The Star-Gazer" has been translated from Arabic into English by William Granara (1991) whose translation is used in the present study.

The choice of this short story is motivated by two main reasons. First, "The Star-Gazer" is based on a lengthy dialogue between two interlocutors, a man and a woman. Since this study is concerned with Grice's CP and humour in conversation, "The Star-Gazer" represents a good choice for the present work. Second, this short story is humorous in that the conversational interactions between the two characters stimulate amusement and enjoyment in the reader. This qualitative and descriptive pragmatic analysis of Ali Douagi's "The Star-Gazer" will demonstrate that humour can be determined by the flouting of Grice's Conversational Maxims.

In what follows, we will first provide a succinct description of the study's theoretical framework (i.e. Grice's Cooperative Principle). Then, we will summarise selected studies done on humour as emanating from the non-observance of Grice's CP.

Linguists, such as H. P. Grice, define meaning as divided into two main types: natural meaning and non-natural meaning. Linguistic meaning is seen as a non-natural meaning involving two main subcategories: "what is said" and "what is implicated" (Birner, 2021, p. 44). What is said relates to semantics. What is implicated relates to pragmatics (Birner, 2021). In his

paper “Logic and Conversation” (1975), the philosopher H.P. Grice asserts that the use of a word such as “and” in conversation generally transcends its simple truth conditional meaning of conjunction because the additional meaning is not static; rather, it changes from one context to another (Birner, 2013). In order to consider how context impacts interpretation, Grice identifies a set of “rules” that speakers in conversation should follow because without these rules, conversation will be unsuccessful. These rules represent what H.P. Grice calls the “Cooperative Principle” (CP). The Cooperative Principle (CP) is related to the interlocutors’ attempt to be “cooperative” in conversation so that communication will run smoothly (Grice, 1975). Grice (1975) defines CP as follows:

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 (p. 45).

According to CP, interlocutors in conversation should utter statements that are “appropriate to their conversational context” (p. 42) because conversation can succeed only when both interlocutors are trying to be “cooperative” in their conversation. In order to avoid a conversational interaction in which the speaker misleads the hearer by not observing the Cooperative Principle, Grice formulates four Conversational Maxims as “sub-principles” of the CP (1975). Each Maxim involves one aspect of linguistic interaction and defines what a cooperative speaker should follow in terms of that Maxim:

The Maxim of quantity: say enough, but don’t say too much.

The Maxim of quality: say only what you have reason to believe is true.

The Maxim of relation: say only what is relevant.

The Maxim of manner: be brief, clear, and unambiguous (Birner, 2013, p. 42).

The speaker can develop four different attitudes towards these Maxims. S/he can observe the Maxims (i.e. to “obey” the Maxims), violate the Maxims (i.e. to “fail to observe them,” but to do so “inconspicuously” while assuming that the hearer will realize that the Maxim is being violated), flout a Maxim (i.e. to “violate” it so “intentionally” that the hearer becomes aware of the violation), and opt out of the Maxims (i.e. to completely avoid the interaction). For instance, when a wife tries to have an argument with her husband and he responds by opening the newspaper and beginning to read; he has “opted out” (Birner, 2013, p. 42).

Because the present study aims at showing that humour is, at least partially, created by flouting these Maxims in conversation, the next section will describe Grice’s four Maxims in further detail.

Grice’s Maxim of Quantity involves two sub-Maxims:

A. Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange,

B. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required (Grice, 1975, p. 45).

Grice illustrates the Maxim of quantity with the example of a student who requests a letter of recommendation. The teacher’s letter is the following:

Dear X, I am writing in support of Sally Smith’s application for a job in your department. Ms Smith was a student of mine for three years, and I can tell you that she has excellent penmanship and was always on time for class.

Sincerely,

Betty J. Birner (Birner, 2013, p. 46).

By mentioning too little about the student's skills, this letter implicates that the student is not suitable for the position. This implicature emanates from the flouting of the Maxim of Quantity. This flouting allows the teacher to implicate what he opts not to say explicitly (i.e. Sally is not a good candidate for the job).

Grice describes the Maxim of Quality as composed of the following two parts:

- A. Do not say what you believe to be false,
- B. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (Grice, 1975, p. 46).

This Maxim means that the speaker should say only what s/he believes to be “true.”

The Maxim of Relation, also known as the Maxim of Relevance, mainly means that one's answer should “be relevant” (Grice, 1975, p. 46). This Maxim is related to the relationship between the current utterance and the textual or situational context. This Maxim implies that the speaker's utterance must be related to the context. In other words, the utterance must relate to what has been mentioned before it in the discourse and/or what is happening in the situation (Grice, 1975).

The Maxim of Manner is based on the following sub-Maxims:

- Avoid obscurity of expression,
- Avoid ambiguity,
- Be brief,
- Be orderly (Grice, 1975, p. 46).

The sub-Maxim “Be orderly” implies that the utterance should introduce the events in the same order in which they occurred (Birner, 2013).

To illustrate the violation of the Maxim of Quantity and the Maxim of Relation, Birner (2013) gives the example of a letter of recommendation requested by a student, Sally, to her teacher who writes the following:

Dear X, I am writing in support of Sally Smith' application for a job in your department. Ms Smith was a student of mine for three years, and I can tell you she is a fine mother, a terrific practical jokester, and has my genuine admiration for her abilities in table tennis.
Sincerely,
Betty J. Birner (p. 56).

The Maxim of Quantity is flouted since the letter gives too little information about Sally's qualities and qualifications. The Maxim of Relation is flouted because the letter focuses on "irrelevant" qualities related to motherhood, table tennis competence, etc. Grice argues that violating/flouting these Maxims generates an implicature because these “violations” “invite the hearer to infer that the speaker meant more than what they semantically said” (Grice, 1975, p. 46).

Pragmatics defines two types of implicature: (1) conversational implicature, and (2) conventional implicature. CP-related implicatures are conversational implicatures. They are “context-dependent.” Conventional implicatures, however, are context-independent. They do not depend on the Maxims and on the context. Conventional implicature is shaped by the use of connectives, such as “even,” “nevertheless,” “so,” “therefore,” “yet,” and “for” (Birner, 2021).

This section will summarise a selection of studies done on humour as emanating from the non-observance of Grice's CP in conversations in literary genres, such as comedies.

Amianna and Putranti's descriptive study (2017) identifies violations of the Maxim of quantity, the Maxim of quality, the Maxim of Relation, and the Maxim of Manner in the American comedy *How I Met Your Mother*, known for its "eccentric" humour. IMDB asserts

that this comedy is rated 8.4 out of 10 stars for its humour. In these "violations," the characters are found to "intentionally" mislead the hearers by producing misleading implicatures in the conversational interaction. The "flouting" of Conversational Maxims is performed in *How I Met Your Mother* when the characters do not intentionally deceive the hearers, but expect the hearers to find the intended message. Intentionality is inherent to literary works. In that literary texts intentionally enact situations and dialogues resembling real-life. The study's results suggest that humour in *How I Met Your Mother* is stimulated in three different ways: (1) the violating and flouting of Conversational Maxims involving an "incongruity" between the audience's expectations and what is actually uttered in the conversation; (2) the violating and flouting of conversational Maxims involving hostility towards the hearer; and (3) the violating and flouting of Conversational Maxims involving an emotional release that can arouse the audience's laughter.

Al-Zubeiry's study (2020) purports to examine the violation of Grice's Maxims in the Arabic Egyptian comedy *Madrasat AlMushāghibīn* (School of Troublemakers). It shows how violating Grice's Maxims creates the text's humorous effects. The play is downloaded online. All the utterances that are followed by laughter from the audience are transcribed. These utterances are carefully analysed. The violations of the maxims are identified and categorized. The results suggest that the characters' conversational interactions in the comedy violate Grice's Conversational Maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The violation of Grice's Maxims is based on the characters' use of overstatement, personification, misleading conventional-coded expressions, and breaking communication rules. The study also shows that cultural and background knowledge contributes to an understanding of the humorous implicatures.

Pan's article (2012) describes verbal humour as a genre of "linguistic interaction" that humans experience in everyday conversation. Pan's paper purports to probe the linguistic basis related to language humour within the theoretical framework of Grice's CP. This paper also aims to shed light on the correlation between humour and the violation of Grice's CP. The author argues that the lack of required information creates humour in the same way as providing more information than required. Pan argues that deviating from the topic, distorting the implicated meaning along with the use of exaggerated expressions and ambiguous statements create humour.

These studies show that flouting or violating Grice's Conversational Maxims contributes to the text's funniness. The present study will show that flouting Grice's Conversational Maxims also accounts for humour in Ali Douagi's short story "The Star-Gazer."

2. Results and discussion

This section comprises two main parts. The first will present the results obtained from data analysis. The second will discuss these results.

2.1. Results

This section will present a Gricean analysis of eight examples selected from the short story in order to show that flouting Grice's Conversational Maxims contributes to the humour in the text. The Arabic examples are first presented in Latin transcriptions. Then, a literal translation is provided, followed by Granara's translation.

Example (1)

Hiyya: qul ...ṣalasta ṣanta ...râ'ī ṣannujūm?

Huwwa: ṣanâ huwwa

Hiyya: mâ řat'abaka wa athqala kâhilaka řatta ja'alaka lâ tarâhâ?
Huwwa: řat'abatni řarrâha (Douagi, 1996, p. 25).

She: Say...not-you gazer stars?

He: I he

She: What exhaust-you and weigh-it burden that make-you not see-it

He: Exhaust-me the-inactivity.

She: Say, aren't you...the star-gazer?

He: Yes, I am

She: What has made you so exhausted and burdened that you can't see them?

He: Inactivity has done this to me (Granara, 1991, p. 37).

In the example above, the man is not obeying the Maxim of Quantity. "Yes, I am" is an answer that is too brief and less informative than is required. The woman can see that he is a star-gazer. Her question is a request for more information. However, the man conveys to her the message that he has not much to say to her. Thus, what creates humour here is an incongruity that manifests itself in two ways. First, there is an incongruity between the woman's courage in starting a conversation in the dark with a man she does not know and the two-word short reply she receives in return. The second incongruity is related to what the reader expects the man to say and what actually happens in the dialogue. This incongruity surprises the reader and arouses amusement.

Example (2)

Hiyya: wa mâ řanta řâni'un řal-řâna?

Huwwa: ...řinnî lâ řajidu řal-waqta lařillâ řařna'a shayřan.

Hiyya : řata'rifu řal-řabajadiyyata?

Huwwa: dhâka mimmâ lâ řazâlu řadhkuruhu

Hiyya: řuktub... (Douagi, 1996, p. 25).

She: And what you doing now?

He: ...I no find the-time to I-not-do a-thing

She: Do-you-know the-alphabet?

He: This of-what not I-remember-it

She: Write...

She: What are you doing now?

He: I don't have time to not do anything

She: Do you know the alphabet?

He: As far as I remember

She: Write...(Granara, 1991, p. 37).

In this example, the man flouts the Maxim of Manner. The woman does not obey the Maxim of Relation. The straightforward answer to the woman's question "what are you doing now?" would be "I am gazing the stars." The woman can see what he is doing. Her question is a request for more information. However, the man provides an unclear and ambiguous answer stating that he is always busy. He flouts the Maxim of Manner, implicating that he does not want to tell much about what he is doing. The woman's question about the "alphabet" deviates from the topic of conversation. She implicates that she can discuss more interesting topics. The flouting of the Maxim of Manner and the Maxim of Relation in this dialogue accounts for the text's funniness. The characters are uncooperative in their interactions. Their answers are either irrelevant to the topic of conversation or ambiguous. This lack of "cooperativeness" between the man and the woman is funny. It stimulates the reader's amusement.

Example (3)

Hiyya: *ƙuktub...*

Huwwa: *ƙalâ tarayna ƙaɗɗalâma yashmalunâ?*

Hiyya: *ƙanâ?...ƙanâ lâ ƙarâ ƙaɗɗalâma fiɗɗalâmi!!*. walakin ghannî.

Huwwa : *ƙatawaddîna ƙan ƙaɗɗaka?*

Hiyya: *ƙawaddu dhâlîka kakulli ƙimraƙa*

Huwwa: *ƙidhan ƙa'irîni ƙibra ƙakhizuki bihâ* (Douagi, 1996, p. 25).

She: Write...

He: Not you-see the-darkness it-engulf-us?

She: I? Not I-see darkness in darkness!! But you-sing

He: Do-you-want that I-laugh?

She: I-like that like each woman

He: So you-lend-me a-needle I-poke-you with-it.

She: Write...

He: Don't you see that darkness is engulfing us?

She: Me? I don't see darkness in the dark! But sing!

He: Do you want me to laugh?

She: I'd like that like any woman

He: Then give me a needle to poke you with (Granara, 1991, p. 37).

It is clear that the interactions between the man and the woman in this dialogue are based on the flouting of the Maxim of Relation. For instance, the man's answer, "don't you see that darkness is engulfing us?," flouts the Maxim of Relation by being irrelevant to the topic of conversation, i.e. writing. The straightforward reply to the woman's request to write would be "I cannot write in the dark." A second violation of the Maxim of Relation occurs in the woman's request to sing. A straightforward request would be "since we cannot write in the dark, let's sing." A third violation of the Maxim of Relation is related to the man's utterance, "do you want me to laugh?" when the woman asks him to "sing." The man's reply deviates from the topic of conversation, i.e. singing. Humour arises here when the interlocutors seem to be conversationally uncooperative, as they do not stick to the topic and mention things that are not related to what has come before. This flouting of the Maxim of Relation stimulates amusement in the reader because it creates a certain incongruity between what the reader expects to hear from the character and what the character actually utters. This incongruity is built on a contrast that surprises the reader and stimulates amusement.

Example (4)

Hiyya: *ƙawaddu dhâlîka kakulli ƙimraƙatan*

Huwwa: *ƙidhan ƙa'irîni ƙibratan..ƙakhziki bihâ* (Douagi, 1996, p. 26).

She: I-like that like each woman

He: So you-lend-me needle...I-poke-you with-it.

She: I'd like that like any woman

He: Then give me a needle to poke you with (Granara, 1991, p. 37).

The man's utterance "then give me a needle to poke you with" flouts the Maxim of Relation by being irrelevant to the topic of conversation, i.e. women's love of laughter. Here, the woman incites the man to appreciate her femininity as a woman who loves laughter. Her utterance is an invitation to the man to say more positive things about her as a woman. Contrary to the woman's

expectations, the man deviates from the topic of conversation and asks her to lend him a needle to poke her. He conveys to her the message that he is not interested in the topic. The laughter aroused by this utterance is related to the incongruity between what the reader expects the man to say to the woman and what he actually says.

Example (5)

Huwwa: ʕalâ taskuʕīna?

Hiyya: ʕawa taskutu ʕalmarʕa?

Huwwa: mâ ʕajmala hâdhâ ʕannūr... (Douagi, 1996, p. 28).

He: Not you-keep-quiet?

She: Do keep-quiet a-woman?

He: How beautiful this light...

He: Aren't you going to keep quiet?

She: Does a woman ever keep quiet?

He: This light is so beautiful... (Granara, 1991, p. 40).

In the example above, the man and the woman are not obeying the Maxim of Quantity and the Maxim of Relation. The straightforward factual answer to the man's question "aren't you going to keep quiet?" would be "yes" or "no." However, much more is communicated by the woman. She answers the question by another question based on the gender stereotype that women are too inquisitive and talkative to keep quiet. Her long utterance implicates that she is not going to keep quiet since she is a woman. The man's utterance "this light is so beautiful" flouts the Maxim of Relation as this utterance is not related to the topic of conversation. The straightforward answer to the woman's question about "women keeping quiet" would be "yes" or "no." Here, the man deviates from the topic because he does not want to openly express his opinion. He flouts the Maxim of Relation by describing the beauty of "the light." The contrast between "women keeping quiet" and "this light is beautiful" surprises the reader and creates amusement.

Example (6)

Hiyya: ʕannūr lahu lawn! Wahwa fariḥun bihi, lâ yadrī ʕal-meskīn ʕannahu 'alâ hâdhâ ʕannūr sayaktashifu ʕal-ghurabâʕu makâna ʕal-kanzi, wa sayahṭafiḏūna bihi khuṣṣiṣan ʕidhâ kâna lahum ʕamkinatun yaḏa'ūnahu fīhâ.

Huwwa: liakun (Douagi, 1996, p. 28).

She: Light has a-color! And-he happy with-it, not he-know the-poor that must this-light will-they-discover strangers a-place of-treasure, and will-they-keep it especially if they had places they-put-it in-them.

He: Whatever!

She: Light has color! He is so happy with it. This poor man does not know that in this light, strangers will discover where his treasure is. They'll keep it, especially if they have places to put it.

He: Whatever! (Granara, 1991, p. 40).

The woman's utterance flouts the Maxim of Manner by being long, unclear and ambiguous. Here, different terms are evoked, such as "color," "happiness," "poverty," "light" and "strangers." What makes the utterance unclear and ambiguous is that the link between these different terms is not made clear to the reader. The logical reply to the woman's long utterance about "color," "happiness," "poverty," "light" and "strangers" would consist of the man's "informative" utterance reflecting his own opinion about the same matters. However, much less is communicated by the man. His answer, "whatever," flouts the Maxim of Quantity by being

too brief and not informative enough for the hearer. The man's one-word reply to a twenty-eight-word utterance provides too little information to the hearer. This flouting allows the speaker to implicate what he opts not to say explicitly. The mismatch between the woman's long utterance and the man's too brief reply creates humour. Also, the contrast between what the reader expects the man to say and what he actually says creates a certain incongruity that surprises the reader and amuses him/her.

Example (7)

Hiyya: law kunta tuħibbunī lafa'alt

Huwwa: ʕatajidīna ladhathan fī taʕlīmī ʕiyyâka?

Hiyya: ʕalam ta'idnī bitark ʕal-kalâm? (Douagi, 1996, p. 34).

She: If you-were you-love-me you-would-do-it

He: do-you-find pleasure in I-hurting-you to-you

She: Not-you promise-me of leaving talk?

She: If you love me, you'll do it.

He: Do you find pleasure in my hurting you?

She: Didn't you promise to stop talking? (Granara, 1991, p. 47).

The straightforward factual reply to the woman's suspicion about the man's love would be "I do love you." However, the man opts for the reply "do you find pleasure in my hurting you?," flouting the Maxim of Relation. As such, he states irrelevant things that are not related to what has been mentioned before. The implicature here is that he does not love her. The humour emanates from the incongruity between "love" and "hurt." The man replies to a love-related statement by a hurt-related utterance.

Example (8)

Hiyya: ʕalam ta'idnī bitarki ʕal-kalâm ʕnnī ʕakrahuka wa ʕakrahu kulla mâ huyya laka...wa ʕawaddu taħtīmahu taħtīman ħatta jismī ba'damâ wahabtaka ʕiyyâhu, ʕanâ ʕakrahuka wa ʕakrahu fīka nafsī, liʕannī liʕannī ʕa'buduka liaʕnnī...

Huwwa: ʕimraʕa! (Douagi, 1996, p. 34).

She: Not you-promise-me to-leave talk I-that I-hate-you and I-hate all that it to-you... and I-want destroy-it destruction till body-my I-give-it to-you I hate-you and I-hate in-you myself because-I because-I I-worship-you because-I...

He: A woman!

She: Didn't you promise to stop talking? I hate you and all that you have. I want to smash it all, even my body after I give it to you. I hate you and I hate myself in you. Because...because ... I worship you because...

He: Women! (Granara, 1991, p. 47).

In the example above, the woman flouts the Maxim of Quantity. The man does not obey the Maxim of Quantity and the Maxim of Relation. The woman utters a series of long clauses, flouting the Maxim of Quantity by being overinformative. She implicates that she has much to say because her heart is full of contradictory emotions. The logical reply to the woman's emotional utterances would be "don't worry, I love you!." The man's reply, "ʕimraʕa" (woman), is, however, too brief and irrelevant. It is brief compared to the woman's long utterances. It is irrelevant to the topic of conversation. The woman speaks of "talk," "hate," "body," "worship," "love," etc. The man responds by a one-word utterance: "woman." The man's utterance is based on the gender stereotype that "women are women" and that it is difficult to understand them.

This flouting allows the man to implicate what he opts not to say explicitly. In this dialogue, the man and the woman seem disconnected from each other because they are not cooperative in their interactions. The man responds to the woman's long emotional utterance by a one-word utterance based on a gender stereotype. This lack of "cooperativeness" between the man and the woman stimulates the reader's amusement. Also, the incongruity between what the reader expects the man to say after the woman's long emotional utterances and what the man actually says adds to the text's humorousness.

2.2. Discussion

The analysis of "The Star-Gazer" further shows that Gricean analysis of literary texts is needed in order to identify the text's "incongruity" that contributes to its funniness. For instance, this study has demonstrated that the characters' utterances flout the Maxim of Quantity by giving too much or too little information. Also, in this short story, the utterances are found to flout the Maxim of Relation by stating things that are irrelevant to the topic of conversation. The characters' utterances are found to flout the Maxim of Manner by stating things that are long, unclear and ambiguous. No flouting of the Maxim of Quality was found in this short story. According to this Maxim, the speaker should not say anything that is "false" and for which s/he has no "evidence." The humour in the text is determined by flouting Grice's Conversational Maxims, which creates a certain incongruity in the dialogue. This incongruity surprises the reader.

Humour in this short story is found to be related to the incongruity or "contrast" between what the reader expects the character to say and what the character actually says. This incongruity emanates from the flouting of the Conversational Maxims in the characters' interactions. Nilsen and Nilsen (2019) confirm the pervasiveness of incongruity in literature by stating that "All of the arts, including music and literature, are based on incongruity" (p. 58).

Unlike the results of Amianna and Putranti's study (2017), this study shows that humour in "The Star-Gazer" is not stimulated by an exchange of hostility among characters nor by emotional release triggering laughter in the reader. Rather, a mismatch between the reader's expectations and what is actually uttered by the characters is found to account, at least partially, for the short story's funniness.

It is worth noting that humour in this story should not be confined to flouting Conversational Maxims only. The text is also funny because it involves an "abnormal" spatial and temporal setting wherein a naked man and a naked woman who meet for the first time start to converse about serious matters in the dark. The whole text is built on a certain incongruity between what these characters do and say and what the reader usually does and says in real life. The story's end is funny because it has a "surprising effect:" after all the discrepancies in their perception of life expressed in their conversational interactions, the two characters end up "embracing in a long kiss that makes them shiver from their nakedness (Douagi, 1996, p. 35).

3. Conclusion

The objective of this research was to show how humour in Ali Douagi's "The Star-Gazer" is created by the flouting of Grice's Conversational Maxims. Situated within the theoretical framework of Grice's Cooperative Principle, this study has provided a Gricean analysis of eight examples selected from the short story. The results suggest that the characters' utterances flout the Maxim of Quantity by giving too much or too little information to the hearer. Also, in this short story, the utterances are found to flout the Maxim of Relation by stating things that are irrelevant to the topic of conversation. The characters' utterances are found to flout the Maxim

of Manner by stating things that are long, unclear and ambiguous. No flouting of the Maxim of Quality is found in this short story.

This research work contributes to pragmatics, humour research and literary criticism. In fact, it has been argued that several Gricean analyses of literary texts have been done, as reflected in the works of Gilbert (1995), Gautam & Sharma (1986), and Herman (1994). However, to the best of our knowledge, very little has been done on humour emanating from the non-observance of Grice's CP. Thus, through a Gricean analysis of "The Star-Gazer," this research contributes to pragmatics and humour research by showing that flouting Grice's Conversational Maxims contributes to the text's funniness.

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