



The Cooperative Principle in Selected Stories of Agatha Christie: A Pragma-stylistic Study

Prepared by:

Amir Abdelnaby Amir Al-Soghiar

Demonstrator at English Language and Literature Department

Qena Faculty of Arts

South Valley University

e-mail: amirenglish2015@gmail.com

• Abstract:

The current study aims at applying Grice's Cooperative Principle to selected detective stories by Agatha Christie; namely *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and *The ABC Murders*. Through applying the cooperative principle, the researcher aims to point out how non-observance of conversational maxims of the cooperative principle is employed in the concerned detective stories and how employing several types of non-observance of the cooperative principle could contribute to creating such complicated and obfuscating fictional atmosphere in the concerned detective stories. The researcher aims to tackle the reasons for non-observance of the conversational maxims in the detective novels in question. Such reasons could include not several purposes as: serving the objectives of maintaining suspenseful and curious atmospheres through her works, persuading her readers towards the functionality of her distinctive detective stories, and creating less coherent fictional world which drives readers to pursue reading for identifying the true criminal.

• Key Words:

Agatha Christie, the cooperative principle, maxim, Quantity, Quality, Relevance, Manner, conversational implicature, suspense, curiosity.

"المبدأ التعاوني في قصص مختارة لأجاثا كريستي: دراسة برجماتية-أسلوبية"

اسم الباحث: أمير عبدالنبي أمير الصغير

ملخص الدراسة باللغة العربية

جاءت تلك الدراسة بعنوان "المبدأ التعاوني في قصص مختارة لأجاثا كريستي: دراسة برجماتية-أسلوبية"، حيث تقوم الدراسة بتطبيق المبدأ التعاوني للحوار في روايتين من أشهر رواياتها البوليسية وهما: رواية "مقتل روجر أكرويد" *"The Murder of Roger Ackroyd"*، ورواية "الجرائم الأبجدية" *"The ABC Murders"*، لعل الهدف الرئيس لتلك الدراسة هو تطبيق المبدأ التعاوني للحوار على محادثات مختارة من الروايتين محل الدراسة؛ مع الوضع في الاعتبار أن المبدأ التعاوني للحوار من أهم النظريات البرجماتية التي تسعى لاستكشاف مدي مراعاة القواعد الأربع للحوار وهي: الكم، والكيف، والصلة (الملائمة) والطريقة في الحديث، ومن ثم يسعى الباحث من خلال

تلك الدراسة إلى استكشاف مدي مساهمة عدم مراعاة قواعد المبدأ التعاوني للحوار في زيادة مستوى الفضول والتشويق والغموض في إثنين من الروايات البوليسية لأجاثا كريستي. كما تهدف تلك الدراسة إلى معرفة أثر التضمين الحواري الناتج عن عدم مراعاة القواعد الأربع للمبدأ التعاوني للحوار في زيادة مستوى تشويق القراء وفضولهم.

• **الكلمات المفتاحية:**

أجاثا كريستي، المبدأ التعاوني، الكم، كيف، الصلة، الطريقة، التضمين الحواري، لغة التشويق والفضول.

1.0. Introduction:

Detective literature is generally regarded as one of the most important, distinctive, confusing, fertile and complex literary genres. This is mainly based on the fact that it is marked by different styles of writing, techniques and methods of narration which largely vary from one author to another. In most cases, a detective story starts with introducing readers to a crime committed by someone and then most of the characters get involved in searching for the criminal. Agatha Christie's detective stories are not much different in this respect; the only minor difference lies in following a different technique. She was proved to be a gifted writer, who used a set of linguistic, pragmatic, psychological, cognitive, and narrative techniques which are cunningly manipulated for producing such distinctive detective stories. Moreover, Christie relied heavily on pragmatic dimensions for creating such suspenseful detective stories.

Christie is one of the most famous British fiction writers who gained popularity thanks to her astonishing detective stories which are regarded as abstruse and tricky fictional worlds that make readers feel both immersed and lost in such complicated fictional works. However, Christie became famous after the publication of her masterpiece *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926). This detective story could change the common concept of detective novels by surprising readers at the end of the story with showing the narrator to be the real murderer, which no one, even the story's other characters themselves, could not expect.

This study focuses on investigating non-observance of Grice's (1975) cooperative principle in two of the most famous detective novels by Christie, namely *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926) and *The A.B.C. Murders* (1936). Many reputable critics have written about the peculiarities and distinctive crafts of Christie's style, but there are still murky areas that need to be deeply inspected for highlighting further dimensions of her style.

1.1. Purpose of the study:

This study is first sparked off by the observations of the researcher regarding the pragmatic parameters particularly non-observance of the Cooperative Principle which are stylistically manipulated by Christie in writing her detective novels in general and the concerned detective novels in particular. Therefore, this study is mainly designed to apply Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) to selected detective stories by Christie, with a view to investigating provinces of pragma-stylistic dimensions which may make the concerned detective stories look opaque.

The detective world is considered unique for being suspicious and ambiguous. It is worth mentioning that Christie is unprecedented in writing murky detective stories, but rather she is just

one of a long list of writers skilled in such types of fiction. Most of the detective writers, if not all, manipulate different linguistic devices and discourse strategies to make their fictional world difficult to understand. They also depend on technical devices to achieve their main stylistic objectives behind these stories. This aim is based on creating an immersive fictional atmosphere where readers are curious to know what would happen in the denouement through unearthing hidden clues to determine the real culprit in a detective story. Therefore, applying a particular pragmatic approach to the concerned detective stories could assist in investigating how Christie depicted such distinctive works through both observance and non-observance of the cooperative principle. Additionally, the current study seeks to scrutinize how non-observance of maxims of the cooperative principle could maintain such suspenseful fictional atmospheres depicted by Christie in both *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and *The A.B.C. Murders*.

Based on the previously mentioned discussion, the objectives of this study could be proposed as the following:

1. Investigating the role of certain pragmatic dimension; namely manipulation of Grice (1975) cooperative principle and conversational implicature in overlapping the content of the concerned stories with suspense, curiosity and irregularities.
2. Referring to the skill of Christie in generating numerous conversational implicatures through blatant non-observance of maxims of the cooperative principle to add extra levels of meaning through conversations among characters in the detective stories in question.
3. Scrutinizing how often conversational rules are ignored by several characters in the concerned detective stories in such a cunning pragmatic way which, in turn, makes it difficult to determine the real culprit in such debatable and suspicious conversations in the concerned detective stories.
4. showing how the application of Grice's cooperative principle could assist in contextualizing such complicated fictional atmospheres depicted in the concerned detective stories.

1.2. Significance of the Study:

The proposed study would hopefully contribute to various branches of linguistics and pragmatics. It would add to the existing literature on pragmatics in general and both the cooperative principle and conversational implicature in particular. This study hopes to contribute much to the fields of linguistics and literature through providing the reader with new linguistic approaches to detective literature. The researcher hopes that this study would benefit researches specialized in pragmatics, stylistics and researchers interested in Grice (1975) cooperative principle. Thus, this study could be a stepping stone to further research on pragmatics and style of writing detective stories.

Additionally, this study would be a significant endeavor to better understand pragmatic effect of non-observance of the cooperative principle in depicting complex suspenseful literary works such as Christie's detective stories. The researcher hopes that researchers specialized or interested in language and literature, with regard to all their theories and approaches, are going to benefit from this current study. Finally, one wishes to provide readers with new approaches and clues to the mysteries and conversational complexities enveloping the detective world of Christie's detective works.

1.3. Research Questions:

This proposed study hopes to cover the following questions on the concerned detective stories:

1. Are the maxims of CP observed or not in Christie's detective stories?
2. Which maxim or maxims is/are not observed?
3. Which type (e.g. flouting, violating etc.) is most prevalent in the stories?
4. What is the impact of non-observance on the comprehension of these stories?
5. Are all characters equal in the way the maxims are observed or not observed?

1.4. Limitations of the study:

The current study is only concerned with scrutinizing and applying both Grice (1975) cooperative principle and conversational implicature in two of the most famous detective stories written by Christie; namely *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and *The A.B.C Murders*. Thus, the cooperative principle will be applied to selected extracts and selected conversations from the previously mentioned detective stories with the purpose of investigating how non-observance of the conversational maxims of the cooperative principle is utilized by several characters in the concerned detective stories. Therefore, this study is an attempt to scrutinize effects of non-observance of the maxims of the cooperative principle on depicting suspicious fictional atmospheres and debatable perplexing conversations in the detective stories in question.

1.5. Previous studies:

For the convenience of the topic of the current study, this part will review the previous studies concerned with applying Grice's cooperative principle and conversational implicature to

literary discourses including plays, novels, science fiction or other types of literary works. There have been widespread interests in applying Grice's cooperative principle and/or conversational implicature or both of them on different discourses ranging from films and non-literary discourses such as cartoons, science fiction movies, and advertisements to literary discourses including poetry, plays and novels.

Al-Saedi (2005) has attempted to conduct a pragmatic study through applying Grice's cooperative principle to Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. This study has indicated that most characters in this science fiction novel disobey the conversational maxims for particular purposes such as generating implicatures, maintaining suspense in such science fiction atmosphere, and adding an extra level of implied meaning. In addition, this study has focused on determining the most frequent type of non-observance of the conversational maxims which was flouting. Consequently, applying the cooperative principle and the conversational implicature could contribute to inspecting role of such pragmatic approaches in interpretation of literary discourses including science fiction novels such as *The Giver*.

Hallen (2019) has conducted a qualitative study to investigate the relationship between non-observance of maxims of the cooperative principle and characterization in the TV-series *Sherlock*. She has scrutinized how non-observance of the conversational maxims could contribute to identifying personality traits of characters in the TV-series *Sherlock*. Additionally, she has inspected other types of non-observance of the conversational maxims such as violating, infringing, opting-out and suspending. Moreover, she has scrutinized through applying Grice's cooperative principle how detective works such as the TV-series *Sherlock* are mainly designed to maintain suspense and curiosity through non-observance of the conversational maxims. To look at the findings of this qualitative study from a different perspective, she has conducted a survey study to inspect how participants interpret personality traits based on characters' non-observance of the conversational maxims.

1.6. Methodology:

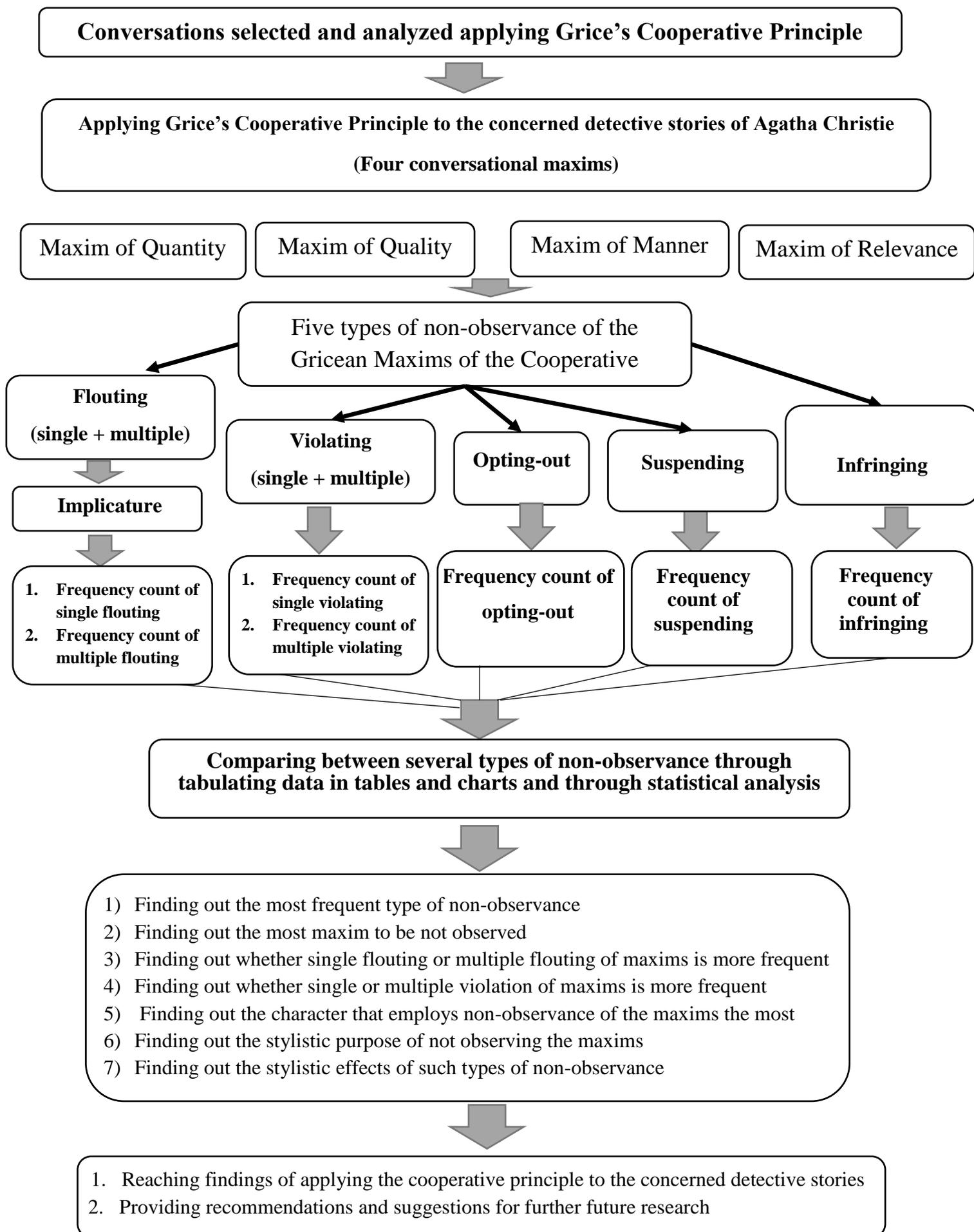
1.6.1. Data collectuion:

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has chosen two of the most famous detective stories written by Christie namely, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and *The A. B. C. Murders* to apply Grice (1975) cooperative principle to unearth how both observance and non-observance of the cooperative principle are utilized stylistically by the writer in question to produce such distinctive detective stories. The researcher has selected certain conversations from the concerned detective stories written by Christie to elucidate how several characters in the concerned detective stories do not observe maxims of the cooperative principle for particular purposes. The selected data and conversations under scrutiny have been carefully selected as they are full of cases of single or multiple non-observance of maxims of the cooperative

principle. Additionally, such conversations are so debatable, full of arguments, extra levels of meaning, ambiguities, mysteries, contradictions and incongruities.

Through the following figure, the researcher provides an outline of procedures for data collection and analysis in the two detective stories in question as well as providing an outline of the approach used in this study:

Figure (1): Procedures of data collecting and analysis (the researcher's figure)



1.6.2. Approaches used in this study:

This study aims to investigate both observance and non-observance of Grice's (1975) cooperative principle in selected detective stories written by Christie to decipher reasons for non-observance of the four conversational maxims of the cooperative principle. The following section is concerned with reviewing the approach adopted through this study; namely Grice's (1975) cooperative principle.

1.6.2.1. Grice's Cooperative Principle:

The cooperative principle as a pragmatic description of the mechanism of conversation was first proposed by H. P. Grice (1975). Grice was a language philosopher who was interested in both ordinary language philosophy and how logic is blatantly related to both participants' thoughts and their way of expressing utterances. In his famous work '*Logic and Conversation*' published in 1975, Grice firstly introduced the cooperative principle. Grice's (1975) cooperative principle proposes that participants in a conversation should be cooperative conversationally through observing four conversational maxims which are: Quantity, Quality, Relevance and Manner. Thus, Grice's cooperative principle is proposed as: "Make your conversational contribution such as in required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (as illuminated in (Thomas, 1995, p. 62).

1.6.2.1.1. Non-observance of conversational maxims of the cooperative principle:

The following section is concerned with providing a discussion of the five main types of non-observance of the maxims of the cooperative principle through providing examples to showcase how each type of non-observance is different from the other types of non-observance of the conversational maxims.

(1) Flouting a maxim:

This is the most frequent type of non-observance of conversational maxims of the cooperative principle. Flouting a maxim means blatantly or intentionally not observing a particular maxim of the cooperative principle for the main purpose of generating a conversational implicature. In flouting a conversational maxim, the speaker/interlocutor wants the hearer to move from the level of the semantically expressed meaning to the level of a further implied meaning. The expressed meaning, in this way, is a part of the implied meaning or it could be the complete opposite of the expressed meaning based on the context.

(A) Flouting caused by a clash of maxims:

Flouting caused by clash of maxims takes place when a speaker/participant blatantly flouts a particular maxim for the sake of observing/not flouting another maxim because the speaker is confronted with the difficulty of observing all maxims. Thus, a speaker chooses to flout a particular maxim while s/he does not flout another maxim. To illuminate this point well, the researcher would like to refer to an applicable example to delineate how flouting caused by a clash of maxims could occur in real life situations:

Context: speaker (A) and speaker (B) are two sisters talking about speaker (B)'s fiancé:

Speaker (A): Do you, really, like him?

Speaker (B): **He is very kind and sensible.** (The researcher's example)

The aforementioned example makes clear the point that speaker (B) is confronted with a clash of two maxims; namely the maxim of Quantity and maxim of Manner. Speaker (B) could simply answer "Yes" or "No" based on her affection to her fiancé, but speaker (B) chooses to flout the maxim of Quantity to observe the maxim of Manner. There are various sub-types of such flouting caused by a clash of maxims. For example, a speaker may be as informative as required but says something for which s/he lacks adequate evidence. In other words, such speaker flouts the maxim of Quality for the sake of observing/not flouting the maxim of Quantity.

(B) Flouting one of the conversational maxims of the cooperative principle:

As explained before, the maxims of Quantity, Quality and Relevance are concerned with what is said while the maxim of Manner is concerned with how it is said. The maxim of Manner is flouted when the speaker is overtly obscure, ambiguous or gives long-winded answers or when the speaker is blatantly refusing to be orderly (Thomas, 1995, p. 71). The following example attempts to elucidate how flouting the maxim of Manner could take place in real life situations.

Context: speaker (A) and speaker (B) are two close friends who are talking about each other's opinions about their fathers:

Speaker (A): Is your dad a person who cares for his family?

Speaker (B): **I do not know if this is clear at all, but my dad is very extravagant. He is supposed to save for our future.** (The researcher's example)

As the previously mentioned example illustrates, speaker (B) is obviously vague in his reply to speaker (A)'s question. Additionally, speaker (B) does not avoid the obscurity of expression as

s/he uses a hedge which make his/her utterance ambiguous. Furthermore, speaker (B), is neither brief nor orderly in his conversational exchange. Thus, speaker (A) could generate a conversational implicature that speaker (B) is not satisfied with the wasteful behavior of his/her father.

1) Multiple flouting of conversational maxims:

In some conversations, an interlocutor could flout more than one maxim simultaneously; that is, a speaker could potentially be less cooperative conversationally through abruptly not observing more than one maxim for the main purpose of generating a conversational implicature to add an extra level of implied meaning. There are two sub types of multiple flouting of conversational maxims: multiple flouting of two conversational maxims and multiple flouting of three conversational maxims.

(2) Violating a maxim:

(A) Violating single conversational maxims:

In contrast to flouting a maxim which means not observing one of the maxims of the cooperative principle blatantly and intentionally, violating a maxim means that the speaker attempts conversationally to mislead or to be liable to mislead or misdirect the hearer for the main aim of misleading the hearer. The purpose of violating a maxim could be to tell a lie, mislead or deceive conversational participants deliberately. Thus, it could be claimed that violating a maxim is a covert breaking of one of the maxims of the cooperative principle while flouting a maxim is an overt breaking of the maxim as the speaker shows his intention to cooperate blatantly in flouting a maxim to encourage his/her conversational participant to generate a conversational implicature.

(B) Multiple violation of conversational maxims:

In some conversations, a speaker may violate more than one maxim through attempting conversationally to mislead or to be liable to mislead or misdirect the hearer for the main aim of misleading the hearer. The purpose of multiple violating of conversational maxims could be to tell a lie, mislead or deceive conversational participants deliberately.

(3) Opting-out a maxim:

This kind of non-observance of the conversational maxims of the CP means that a speaker or a participant in a conversation does not obey the concerned maxim through indicating his/her unwillingness to cooperate conversationally in the way a maxim requires. Thus, it could be claimed that a speaker/interlocutor shows his/her intention not to cooperate in the way a maxim

requires when opting a maxim. In other words, the speaker shows reluctance to cooperate as the maxim requires in case of opting-out one of the conversational maxims of the cooperative principle.

(4) Infringing a maxim:

This kind of non-observance of the conversational maxims of the cooperative principle “stems from the speaker’s imperfect linguistic performance rather than from any desire on the part of the speaker to generate a conversational implicature” (Thomas, 1995, p. 74). Thus, examples of infringing a maxim could be a foreign speaker who starts to learn a language, or children who do not have full mastery of the language or people who suffer from articulation deficiencies (Thomas, 1995, p. 74). In addition, one of the reasons for infringing a maxim is that the speaker could suffer from some kind of linguistic impairment. Such impairments could be due to being drunk, excited or because the speaker is unable to speak clearly as the four maxims of the cooperative principle require. Moreover, External factors such as intoxication could be one of the possible reasons which may cause a speaker/interlocutor in a conversation to infringe a maxim.

(5) Suspending a maxim:

Suspending a maxim as one of the types of non-observance of maxims of the cooperative principle is based on the social and cultural norms unlike other kinds of non-observance. Thus, it could be claimed that suspending a maxim is a “culturally-specific” (Thomas, 1995, p. 77) type of non-observance of the conversational maxims. In other words, when suspending a maxim, an interlocutor in a conversation refrains from observing a conversational maxim for particular social and/or cultural considerations. Examples of suspending a maxim are various and culturally specific such as refraining from mentioning names of dead people in some oriental cultures. Additionally, refraining to mention the name of the famous Shakespearian tragedy “*Macbeth*” through replacing it with the culturally-specific title “*The Scottish Play*” (Thomas, 1995, p. 77) because it is commonly and culturally believed that mentioning the name “*Macbeth*” brings bad luck is another famous example of suspending a maxim for culturally-specific reasons.

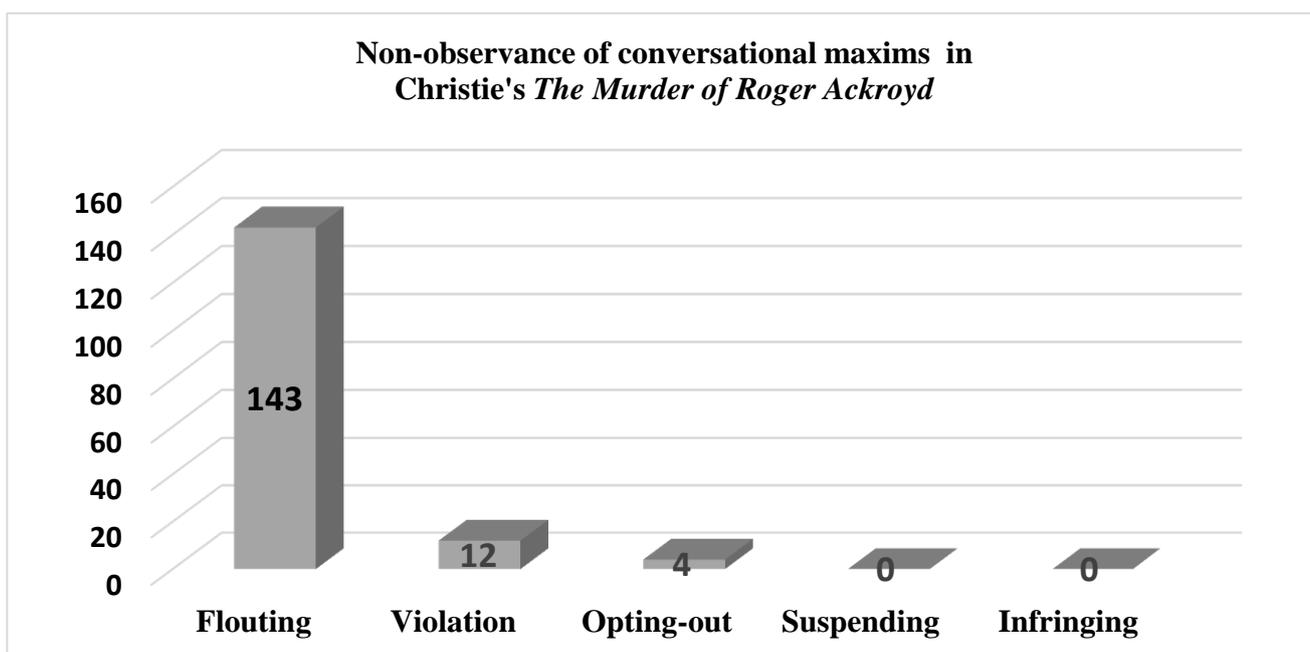
1.7. Discussion:

In the following section, the researcher aims to illuminate which conversational maxim is most commonly not observed and which is the most frequent type of non-observance as well as showing which character employs the most commonly used types of non-observance of the conversational maxims in the detective stories. Additionally, this chapter aims to explain the effect of generating several conversational implicatures due to flouting maxims in the concerned detective stories. For the purpose of discussing application of the cooperative principle to the detective stories in question, the researcher tabulates non-observance of the conversational maxims in tables and charts as well as showing the stylistic purposes for not observing the conversational maxims.

Table (1): Non-observance of conversational maxims of the cooperative principle in Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*

Total number of non-observance	type of non-observance					Total
	Flouting	Violation	Opting-out	Suspending	Infringing	
	143	12	4	0	0	159
Percentage	89.93 %	7.55 %	2.52 %	0 %	0 %	100 %

Chart (1): Non-observance of conversational maxims of the cooperative principle in Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*



In short, it could be pointed out that all maxims of the cooperative principle are flouted in Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* either in cases of single flouting or cases of multiple flouting of such conversational maxims. Moreover, flouting the conversational maxims is the most common pattern of non-observance of the cooperative principle with a frequency count of 89.93% in the concerned detective story. such flouting, whether single or multiple, is directed to serve the stylistic purposes of culminating curiosity and suspense of both characters and readers. What is of particular interest is that Hercule Poirot, who is supposed to be a very cooperative character conversationally, is the character who performs most cases of non-observance in general and flouting in particular. The reason for numerous cases of non-observance of conversational maxims by Hercule Poirot could be that Christie employs him stylistically to generate several conversational implicatures in such a cunning way which make readers so immersed and curious to read the concerned detective story attempting to find solutions for the fictional puzzles presented in the obfuscating detective story in question.

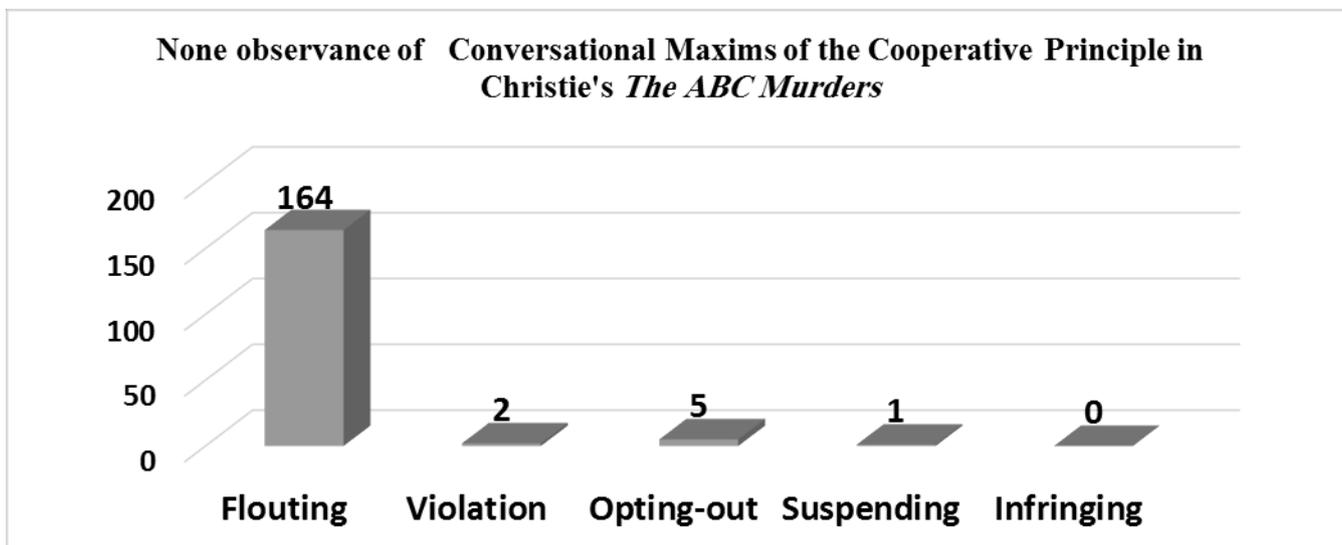
In Christie's *The ABC Murders*, applying Grice's cooperative principle indicated other findings, which are different, to some extent, from the results of applying the cooperative principle on Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. The most common employed type of non-observance of the conversational maxims in Christie's *The ABC Murders* is flouting where flouting the maxim of Quantity is the most prevailing pattern of non-observance of the cooperative principle. This is because most involved characters in the concerned detective story flout the maxim of Quantity through being more informative than is required which, in turn, is performed through tautology, reiteration, repeating particular ideas as well as through focusing on explaining extremely detailed information. As a result, there are many conversational implicature which are generated because of flouting the maxim of Quantity in the concerned detective story. Additionally, Christie's *The ABC Murders* is longer and rather more complicated than Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*; therefore, it is stylistically and pragmatically pointed out that blatant flouting of certain conversational maxims, particularly the maxim of Quantity, is purposeful to maintain the complicated fictional atmosphere of the concerned detective story as well as serving to increase readers' suspicions about several suspected parties in this complicated detective story.

Table (2): Non-observance of Conversational Maxims of the Cooperative Principle in Christie's *The ABC Murders*

Total number of non-observance	Flouting	Violation	Opting-out	Suspending	Infringing	Total
	164	2	5	1	0	172

Percentage	95.36 %	1.16 %	2.90 %	0.58 %	0	100%
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Chart (2): Non-observance of Conversational Maxims of the Cooperative Principle in Christie's *The ABC Murders*



As indicated through the above mentioned table and chart, the most prevalent sub-type of non-observance of the conversational maxims in Christie’s *The ABC Murders* is flouting either in cases of single flouting or cases of multiple flouting of such conversational maxims. What is of particular interest in the concerned detective story is that there are no cases of single flouting of the maxim of Quality or the maxim of Relevance while such maxims are flouted in cases of multiple flouting as indicated before. Therefore, it could be pointed out that flouting is the most frequent type of non-observance with a frequency count reaching (95.36 %) which is stylistically employed to culminate the fictional atmosphere of the concerned detective story to increase readers’ curiosity and suspense. Moreover, flouting is the most frequent type of non-observance to make readers generate numerous conversational implicatures which, in turn, could make readers more immersed in reading the text of Christie’s *The ABC Murders*.

Compared to Christie’s *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* through which its plot advancement and its complicated fictional atmosphere are based on numerous cases of violating conversational maxims by Dr. Sheppard (the narrator and the real culprit) in particular, violating conversational maxims is rarely attested in Christie’s *The ABC Murders* as violating has a frequency count of only (1.16%). Thus, despite its complex fictional atmosphere based on committing several alphabetical murders, violating conversational maxims is not highly applicable to Christie’s *The ABC Murders*.

Opting-out of the maxim of Quantity only is also employed to increase the level of readers' curiosity as interlocutors show their unwillingness to cooperate conversationally as the maxim of Quantity requires. Thus, it could be pointed out that while opting-out certain conversational maxims is very rarely attested in Christie's *The ABC Murders* with a frequency count of just (2.90 %), such sub-type of non-observance is significant pragmatically as it increases readers' curiosity and suspense through delaying significant details maintaining readers' curiosity, suspense and their obfuscation till solving enigma of the concerned detective story.

In Christie's *The ABC Murders*, suspending certain conversational maxims is rarely attested as indicated before. This type of non-observance is attested in only one conversation with a frequency count of (0.58 %) as Arthur Hastings has suspended the maxim of Quantity in the concerned situation as he has refrained from observing the maxim of Quantity for particular considerations i.e. politeness considerations in order not to seem too rude to his friend and in order not to embarrass Hercule Poirot with his proposition.

Finally, In the selected detective stories written by Christie and which are analyzed conversationally through this study, it is noticeable that the conversational contributions of particular characters such as culprits and/or witnesses as well as the detective himself i.e. Hercule Poirot are inappropriate i.e. such characters do not observe maxims of the cooperative principle for specific reasons and for performing certain stylistic effects as indicated through this study.

• **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, conversation plays a significant role in developing plot and depicting characters for detective fiction. Characters in detective fiction deliberately do not observe the cooperative principle in their conversations, especially the maxim of Quantity and the maxim of Manner. The characters' non-observance of the cooperative principle guarantees the mystery, suspense, curiosity and several implicatures throughout a detective story, while at the same time leaving one possible clue after another to the reader till the final solution of the case. As a result, the plot moves forward in conversations, especially through the non-observance of the four maxims of the cooperative principle. Throughout the present study, Grice's cooperative principle in Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and Christie's *The A.B.C. Murders* has been investigated, analyzed and showcased through applying patterns of non-observance of conversational maxims of the cooperative principle on the detective stories in question. Besides, characters' thoughts, feelings, disposition and attributes are gradually revealed through conversations in detective fiction. In short, with the help of Grice's theory of cooperative principle and conversational implicature, conversations get interpretation from a pragmatic conversational perspective, and the functions of conversation in plot advancement, stylistic obfuscation and characterization of detective fiction are fully demonstrated at the same time.

Throughout the current study, it has been proven that:

- Non-observance of the maxim of Quantity helps to increase and culminate level of suspense and perplexation. In the same vein, suspense is well-built and readers' curiosity is roused through conversation among characters in detective stories.
- Non-observance of the maxim of Manner is purposeful in the concerned detective stories to increase the stylistic obfuscation through depicting ambiguous fictional atmospheres for both characters and readers.
- Flouting the maxim of Quantity is the most employed type of non-observance of conversational maxims in the two detective stories in question.
- Multiple flouting the maxims of Quantity and Manner is the second employed type of non-observance of conversational maxims in both Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and *The ABC Murders*.
- Flouting the maxim of Manner is also employed in the concerned detective stories in question as a pragmatic technique to culminate ambiguity and perplexation through using figurative language as well as through not speaking clearly nor straightforwardly to generate conversational implicatures which, in turn, culminates readers' suspense, curiosity and their perplexation.
- Flouting the maxim of Quality is rarely employed in the two detective stories in question.

- Flouting the maxim of Relevance is rarely employed in the two detective stories in question.
- Both culprits in Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and *The ABC Murders* have violated the maxims of Quantity and Quality more than flouting those maxims as they tended to misdirect their interlocutors through telling lies rather than implying extra levels of meaning through generating conversational implicatures.
- The maxim of Quality is violated for the main purpose of misdirecting readers through saying something which is totally not true or because of saying something for which the speaker lacks adequate evidence.
- The maxim of Quantity is violated when the speaker is so much discrete through being less informative than is required to misdirect readers. This is highly applicable to the narrator, Dr. Sheppard in Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* as he was so much discrete in his conversational contributions to conceal his real identity as the real criminal of Roger Ackroyd.
- Concerning violating the maxim of Quantity, people who give too little information risk their interlocutors not to be able to identify what they are talking about because they are not explicit enough.
- Non-observance of the maxim of Quantity helps to add more complexity to the crime committed in a detective story written by Christie by providing much more or even less information than required.
- Infringing conversational maxims is not attested at all in the two detective stories in question as there are no conversational contributions which prove that a speaker is unable to speak perfectly because of his/her imperfect linguistic performance in either one of the detective stories in question.
- Opting-out the maxim of Quantity is employed in the two concerned detective stories when interlocutors show their unwillingness to cooperate as the maxim of Quantity requires to culminate suspense of interlocutors and readers.
- Suspending the maxim of Quantity is only attested in Christie's *The ABC Murders* as Arthur Hastings has tended to employ this pattern of non-observance in order not to embarrass his interlocutor, Hercule Poirot.
- Through this study, the texts of selected detective stories by Christie are treated as a series of communicative acts where conversational participants cooperate conversationally through observing and/or not observing rules of conversation such as adjacency pairs, topic selection, turn taking and through observance and/or non-observance of the cooperative principle. Thus, the Gricean maxims of the cooperative principle are investigated through an extensive in depth conversational analysis.

- When analyzing a literary discourse conversationally, further considerations and further contextual criteria must be taken into consideration in order to reveal the different interpretations. In the same vein, the text of a literary discourse such as the selected detective stories by Christie is treated as a complex series of conversational acts.
- It is noticeable that the conversational contributions of particular characters in the selected detective stories are inappropriate i.e. such characters do not observe maxims of the cooperative principle.
- The non-observance of the conversational maxims of the cooperative principle results in culminating and maintaining the suspenseful atmosphere of the concerned detective stories.
- It is difficult for readers in Christie's detective stories to move from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning because of employing several types of non-observance of conversational maxims simultaneously.
- Multiple flouting and multiple violating of certain conversational maxims is less attested than single flouting and single violation of conversational maxims in the two detective stories in question.
- Employing multiple flouting and multiple violating of certain conversational maxims is purposeful to culminate obfuscation through maintaining readers' curiosity and suspense.
- Applying Grice's cooperative principle (1975) could contribute to providing an applicable pragmatic framework to scrutinize how suspense and curiosity are maintained through employing certain types of non-observance of the conversational maxims in detective stories.

- **Suggestions for further research:**

The current study is based on scrutinizing Grice's cooperative principle to two detective stories written by Christie's; namely *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* and *The ABC Murders* through making an in-depth conversational analysis to illuminate extent of employing several types of non-observance of conversational maxims of the cooperative principle. Such patterns of non-observance include single flouting, multiple flouting, single violating, multiple violation, opting-out, suspending and infringing some conversational maxims. Thus, it is recommended that further research could focus on scrutinizing language of suspense in selected detective stories by Christie in order to identify parameters of attracting readers' attention to pursuing reading certain detective stories written by Christie. Moreover, further researches could be concerned with comparing between the writing style of Christie and the writing style of another famous author of detective fiction through applying other pragmatic approaches such as Searle's Speech Act Theory (1975) and/or Leech's Politeness Maxims (1983).

Finally, further researches could focus on making conversational analysis based on rules of conversation such as turn taking, adjacency pairs, turn length, topic control and topic selection to illuminate how such conversational notions are applicable and manipulated in certain detective stories for culminating suspense and curiosity of readers. Moreover, further studies could adopt another perspective through applying the Theory of Speech and Thought Presentation to scrutinize how employing several patterns of speech and thought presentation could be stylistically and cognitively employed for creating such complicated fictional atmospheres as those which are depicted in several literary works including detective fiction.

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