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THE NEED OF STUDENTS' AWARENESS ABOUT CO- OPERATIVE PRINCIPLES DURING WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS



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Abstract: Today, with growing competition in educational field, the students have to be very particular regarding their studies as well as presentation of the studied matter in the perfect way. Many times, while going through the answer books of the students at different levels, it is frequently observed that students are not conscious regarding the matter which they write as the answers. There are certain drawbacks in their writings. This paper aims at highlighting those drawbacks with reference to the co operative principles of the well known pragmatician -H.Paul Grice. Co-operative principles play a vital role in pragmatics. Pragmatics is the study of meaning formation in communication, based on context.

Initially, it is necessary to explain that Grice provides the co-operative principles with reference to communication which is generally oral and face to face. Here, with respect to written examinations, we need to consider the students as the senders who transmit their message in the form of the answers. On the other hand; the assessor will be the receiver. The written examination is the way to communication between the students and the assessors. In this sense, it's simple calculation that the score in the written examination depends upon the effectivity of communication between them. The violation of the co-operative maxims as stated by Grice will result in students' poor performance in the written examinations and obviously in poor score.

Keywords: Co-operative maxims, written examinations, communication.

INTRODUCTION:

Application of Gricean maxims to written examinations:

The detailed explanation of Gricean theory of co-operative principles, its maxims and its application to the theory examination is as follows:

As Grice suggests-“Make your conversational contribution such as is required ... by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (p. 173, Logic and Conversation, Grice). It consists of four categories of maxims and sub-maxims:

1.THE MAXIM OF RELEVANCE:

The sub maxim under this maxim is: Make sure that whatever you say (Here-write) is relevant to the conversation at hand.(p.46,Logic and Conversation: Grice) Here, the student needs to read the question properly and draw out its exact meaning. The student is also expected to understand the expectation of the examiner behind asking that specific question and also about its answer. At this stage, the student should take proper decision about the relevant and supportive information for the asked question. No need to say- if your answer is relevant to the asked question, there is positive impression on the examiner which ultimately results in good score.

2.THE MAXIM OF QUALITY:

Do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. (p.46, Logic and Conversation: Grice) This maxim aims at the truthfulness of the information that you have provided as the answer of the asked question. This maxim further claims that the students must have supportive evidences which will confirm the answer. The evidences provided certainly reflect those students' understanding as well as the ability of applying theoretical knowledge to practical matters. In short, truthfulness and evidences increase the quality of students' answers.

3.THE MAXIM OF QUANTITY:

This maxim proposes 'Make your contribution sufficiently informative for the current purposes of the conversation. Do not make your contribution more informative than is necessary. (p.46, Logic and Conversation: Grice) With reference to this maxim, the students are suggested that they should be careful regarding the length of the answer. Lengthy and round about answers usually fail to catch the attention of the examiner. Rather, the length of the answer should be proportional to the marks allotted to the specific question. Being precise and compact, the students can achieve desired impression on the mind of the examiner.

4.THE MAXIM OF MANNER (or CLARITY):

Do not make your contribution obscure, ambiguous or difficult to understand. (p.46, Logic and Conversation: Grice) This maxim is related to the way in which the student has presented his/her matter/information. The students are normally expected to put their information in a logical sequence. The information should have a unity of thought. The answer should have an attractive beginning, a logically perfect middle and a conclusive end.

In short, the cooperative principles with reference to theory examinations can be summarized as follows:

Gricean Maxims of Conversation

Grice came up with the following maxims of conversation. (A "maxim" is kind of like a rule of thumb. But these rules aren't nearly as hard and fast as the Cooperative Principle, as we'll see.)

Quantity-

Make your contribution as informative as required. (Don't say too much or too little.)

Make the strongest statement you can.

Quality-

Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation-

Be relevant. (Stay on topic.)

Manner-

Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity.

Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

Be orderly

Grice suggests that these maxims are not usually observed. So, he distinguishes between 'quietly' violating and openly flouting of a maxim.

Violations are called to be 'quiet'. It is because it is not obvious that the speaker (here the student appearing for written examination) deliberately lies at the time of the utterance/writing. Many times, the speaker/student may supply inadequate information or sometimes he/she is ambiguous, irrelevant or less understandable. In Grice's analysis of dialogues, these violations might affect communication but they do not lead to implicatures. According to Grice, a situation where the speaker flouts a maxim leads to implicatures. During conversation, the listener can easily recognize the observance and violations of these maxims. In case of written examinations, the assessor can easily identify the observance and violation of these maxims, through the diction and sentence constructions used by the student.

CONCLUSION:

The knowledge of cooperative principles will certainly enhance the expressive skills of the students. The maxims of Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner with their various sub-maxims provide the students proper insight to answer the questions asked in theoretical examinations. I hope, this paper will certainly shape the sensibilities of the students who appear for such written theoretical

examinations.

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