

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the analysis of the informal conversations among teachers of Sekolah Menengah Jalan Cochrane, Cheras. The researcher has attempted to show to what extent the spoken discourse in the data conforms to Grice's Cooperative Principle and the four conversational maxims. This will be complemented with the findings from the questionnaire, observations and field notes. Violations of the Cooperative Principle in general and the maxims in particular and the strategies employed in these violations will also be discussed.

The language used by the speakers display the features of informal talk. All the speakers display fluency and a high level of proficiency in the English language. The use of the particle '*lah*' is common throughout the conversations. This may be due to the informal context of the conversations and the fact that the conversations were conducted when the teachers were having a break from work. In short, they appear to be relaxed during the conversations. The conversations also provide evidence of code switching to Bahasa Malaysia. This is mainly because the participants are comfortable with one another. Code switching also promotes a sense of camaraderie among the participants fostering 'contact' and closeness with one another. The participants appear to be more comfortable with one another and there is little evidence of inhibition and artificiality. There is a smooth flow of conversation which makes the exchanges easy to comprehend. The topics discussed have to do with the school environment and related issues.

4.1 The Shared Background Knowledge of Subjects

As the participants are all teachers, they have the same background knowledge and share similar experiences as teachers in the same school. Their ability to relate to one another as well as share frustrations related to the profession facilitates the flow of conversation. Jargon commonly appear throughout the conversations is readily understood as the participants share the same background knowledge and experience.

4.2 The Context Of The Utterance

The data contains exchanges which centre on issues such as student misbehaviour, late submission of assignments, unco-operative parents, the condition of the staff room, corporal punishment, the *gotong royong* project, the way teachers are treated and the school annual dinner. These are the subjects of common everyday exchanges among teachers. But the conversations also move from issues related to the school environment to other broader social issues such as the dowry system and weddings. The participants seem to generally share the same background knowledge. All the verbal interactions here were face-to-face. In all three settings the participants were sitting close to one another. The close proximity of the participants may also be seen as further evidence of informality and the camaraderie among the participants.

4.3 The Gricean Framework

The Gricean framework is employed in the analysis of the data. The emphasis will firstly be on the identification of instances which illustrate adherence to the Co-operative Principle and the maxims Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner. This will be followed by the identifications and analysis of the said principle and maxims.

The Co-operative Principle requires participants to contribute only as and when is required according to the flow of a conversation. If a speaker contributes more or less information than is required, a violation to the maxim of Quantity occurs. If a speaker does not speak the truth, then a violation to the maxim Quality occurs. To adhere to the maxim of Relevance, only relevant information should be supplied. And lastly if a speaker is to the point, shows clarity and sequential ideas, then the utterances may be said to conform the maxim of manner.

4.4 Findings

4.4.1 Adherence to the Maxims

Generally the conversations did adhere to the Cooperative Principle. The following extracts illustrate this adherence.

4.4.1.1 The Maxim of Quantity

Extract 1: Recording #1: Lines 1-4

- ZJ: These boys ah / you know, I've been
going after them for their projects / they
don't want to pass up / fed up *lah*!
- SK: Which class? / 3R again?
- ZJ: 3R *lah*...

The exchange above shows the frustration of ZJ. In response to the request for the name of the class from SK, the speaker, ZJ gives sufficient information to answer her colleague's question. Though it was a rather short response, it answered the question thus adhering to the maxim of quantity. It provided as much information as was required and no more. The reply was brief and to the point.

The next exchange also reveals how the speaker contributes enough information without being more informative than required.

Extract 2: Recording #1 : Lines 23 -25

SK: I don't agree with the use of cane *lah*...\nSV: {<Agree>}\nAZ: {<Right>}

With the responses, 'agree' and 'right', the listeners, SV and AZ, are acknowledging the views expressed by SK. Their responses represent a form of agreement, a building up of a consensus that points to the emergence of solidarity in the talk. Though the responses are short they show that the listeners are attentive and are able to follow what the speaker is saying. The participants have contributed sufficiently to the exchange thus adhering to the Maxim of Quantity.

The following extract also illustrates how the maxim of quantity is adhered with the speaker giving as much information as is needed and no more.

Extract 3: Recording #2: Lines 196 - 200

F: **Our parents** are O.K *lah*, they are quite helpful.\nKG: Yeah *lah*, they are actually very helpful...\nA: They actually live around here and they keep an eye on the school you know, especially during the school holidays.\nSK: Oh, yeah...

The listeners KG and SK use the feedback token ‘yeah’ to express agreement with the views put forward by F and A. The response, ‘yeah’ is sufficient for the current purpose of the exchange. The meaning of the speakers was clear and contributes to the smooth and harmonious flow of the conversation. The term, **our parents**, refers to the students’ parents. It is quite common for teachers in a school to refer to the students’ parents as such. This shared background knowledge has clearly contributed to the flow of the conversation whereby the rest of the speakers understood and continued with the conversation without stopping to ask for clarification.

4.4.1.2 The Maxim of Quality

As discussed in Chapter 2 the maxim of Quality is adhered to when a speaker tries to be truthful and does not give information that is false or that is not supported by evidence. Consider the following extract:

Extract 4: Recording # 1: Lines 86 – 87

- SK: I can’t believe that he actually said that.
And then what happened.
ZR: All went quiet, then they just went on with
the agenda.

SK did not attend a meeting prior to this but was told about an incident pertaining to it. She asked what followed the incident. Since ZR was present during the meeting, she could give correct and precise information in keeping with the Maxim of Quality.

Below is another example of adherence to the Maxim of Quality

Extract 5: Recording #2: Lines 144 – 147

- ZJ: Why can't it be immediately after school?
SK: *Pengetua* has another meeting...\nA: Where?
S: in *Jabatan*...\n

The participants adhered to the Maxim of Quality by giving direct and clear answers to the questions asked. For example, when SK mentioned that the school principal had another meeting, A asked, 'Where?' (with reference to the venue of the meeting). S's response is '*Jabatan*' (Department). S is not only truthful but also gives the appropriate answer to the question. Thus their utterances may be said to adhere to the maxim of Quality.

4.4.1.3 The Maxim Of Relevance

The maxim of relevance is adhered to when a speaker tries to be relevant and makes contributions that are pertinent to the discussion.

This is observed in the following extract:

Extract 6: Recording #2: Lines 240 – 242

- ZR: No choice^{lah} and Pengetua insists that we send a team.
- SK: But they should have notified us earlier.
- KG: Actually this is nothing new. They do this every year ... they notify us last minute.

The speakers are clearly making contributions that are pertinent and in keeping with the topic. ZR had informed SK that she was in charge of training the students for the drama competition which would be in three weeks and that their principal would like them to send a team. SK felt that the people concerned should have informed the school earlier. KG added that this a normal practice where schools are not given much time. The relevance of each response of the participants is clearly observed in the above conversation.

The following extracts may be said to illustrate adherence to the maxim of Relevance. The simple and direct question gets a reply that is clear, unambiguous and relevant.

Extract 7: Recording #3: Lines 352 – 353

WAK: What about you? You gave ah?
SM: No way.

In the above exchange, the speaker asked if SM had given a dowry to her husband. In reply she said, No way.

Let's look at the extract below:

Extract 8: Recording #3: Lines 365 - 366

WAK: So, will you give a dowry ?
SS: Definitely not! @@

The speaker asks if SS would give a dowry to the man she marries. In response she says, 'Definitely not.' Like the exchange in Extract 7 this too is a straightforward, direct and relevant reply to the questions which conforms to the maxim of Relation.

4.4.1.4 The Maxim Of Manner

The maxim of manner requires a speaker to be clear, brief and orderly in his speech and to avoid obscurity and ambiguity.

The following extract illustrates this:

Extract 9: Recording #1: Lines 27 – 31

- SM: So, spare the what...and spoil the kid...
AZ: Rod /
SM: What?
AZ: R-O-D, spare the rod and spoil the child..
SM: Oh, rod.

SM could not quite remember the proverb. AZ supplied SM with the word the latter could not recall and when SM did not quite catch it in the first instance, AZ spelt it out and repeated the whole proverb. Thus, the maxim of Manner was adhered to as it was necessary to be clear. SM finally understood what was meant and repeated the word, 'rod', by way of confirmation to show that it was understood. This exchange supports the maxim of Manner. The utterance discussed above may be said to be in keeping with the Cooperative Principle.

4.4.1.5 **Frequency Counts of Adherence To The Maxims**

The identified and discussed examples so far suggest adherence to the Co-operative Principle and the conversational maxims. It is observed that the maxim of Relevance followed by the maxim of Quantity is more frequently adhered to compared to the other maxims. They make up 66% of the total count in percentage. This is followed by adherence to the maxim of Quality which makes 23% of the total count and evidence of adherence to the maxim of Manner makes up 11% of the total count in percentage.

Adherence To The Maxim	Frequency	Percentage
Quantity	3	33
Quality	2	23
Relevance	3	33
Manner	1	11
Total	9	100

Table 6: The Frequency of Adherence to The Maxims

4.4.1.6 **Summary**

The identified and discussed examples so far suggest adherence to the Cooperative Principle and the conversational maxims. While agreeing or disagreeing with a statement, often words like, ‘Yeah’, ‘Agree’ or ‘Definitely’, is used. As the conversational maxims stand, there may be some degree of overlap. The dividing line between the maxims appears to be rather thin and somewhat blurred at times.

4.4.2 **Violations of the Maxims**

4.4.2.1 **The Maxim of Quantity**

As discussed earlier, the Maxim of Quantity requires speakers to give enough information in an exchange, not more and not less. By giving more or less information than required for the current purpose of exchange, a speaker may be said to violate the maxim of quantity.

The extract below provides an illustration.

Extract 1: Recording #1: Lines 118 - 124

- SM: <Uhhh> / tell me which are the books
and I will order them for you.
SK: I have already written them down, I will
pass the list to you. When can you expect
them? Take long *ah*? The students are weak *lah*.
AZ: Yeah, we need it quite badly. The students
need a lot of practice *lah*. They are so weak.
They hardly read you know, so it is quite
difficult for us. They don't have any general
knowledge.

In the above extract SM as the library teacher was approached for books. In response SM asks for the list of books and says that she will order them. At first SK contributes by saying that she will pass the list of books to SM and then adds to it by asking when the books can be expected to arrive and whether this would take long. SK then adds that the students are weak This is supported by AZ who says that the students

are weak and that they need practice. It is evident that both SK and AZ contribute more than it is necessary in their responses, taking the stance of trying to convince SM as to why the books are necessary although SM has already agreed to get the books and has merely asked for the titles of the books.

The next example is another illustration of the violation of the Maxim of Quantity. ZJ asks for the format of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) paper. AZ, instead of just supplying her with the required information goes on to air her frustration about teaching the MUET course.

The exchange is given below:

Extract 2: Recording #1: Lines 128 - 133

- ZK: It is difficult to teach MUET ah?
I don't really know the exam format.
What is it all about?
- AZ: We have to teach them the four skills,
listening, speaking, reading and
writing. Actually it is much simpler than
SPM English but I just don't understand these
kids, they just don't want to speak in English.

ZK is unsure of the MUET format and asks AZ about it. It would have been sufficient if AZ mentions the four skills involved but she goes on to explain that it is actually simpler than the SPM English and that the students do not appear to be interested in speaking in English. By giving more information than necessary, AZ may be said to have violated the maxim of Quantity.

In the next extract, the conversation steers towards the role of teachers. Again, there is an evidence of the violation of the maxim of quantity.

Extract 3: Recording #2: Lines 173 – 176

- KG: They are so big already, how to teach manners. It is their parents' job.
Expect us to do everything possible!
- ZR: Yeah, we have to teach, do office work, clean, be a nurse, a *jaga*, police, counsellor...\

The teachers are discussing the behaviour of students and their lack of manners.

KG points out that parents have to take on this responsibility but it is pushed to the teachers instead. ZR agrees with KG and goes on to list out the other responsibilities teachers have to shoulder. The answer, 'yeah', would have been sufficient but by adding, 'we have to teach, do office job...', ZR has given more information than is needed. In doing so, she may be said to have violated the maxim of quantity.

Grice(1975) stated that providing less information than is required also leads to the violation of the maxim of Quantity.

The extract below provides an illustration of this.

Extract 4: Recording #2: Lines 210-214

- H: You think they'll be interested *ah*? Far
from it...
- F: We won't know if we don't try. If we try
and they turn us down then it is a
different story. But on the other hand
they might agree.
- A: {Yeah}
- ZR: {Uhhh / exactly}

The extract provides evidence of the violation of the maxim of Quantity. The violation may be viewed in two ways. Firstly, from the response of F, it would have been sufficient to stop the statement at, 'We won't know if we don't try'. However, by saying, '...if we try and they turn us down then it is a different story. But on the other hand, they might agree...', F contributes more than is required by explaining his statement further. This clearly may be viewed as a violation of the maxim of quantity. Secondly, ZR's response, 'Uhhmm...exactly...', itself shows that ZR has given less information than is needed. Furthermore the utterances have the same meaning and are thus redundant. The second utterance does not in any way add anything to the discussion.

In the exchange below, again the violation to the maxim of quantity is evident.

Extract 5: Recording #2: Lines 216 – 224

- H: Yeah *lah* / now the teachers get blamed
for everything. Students don't do well...
it's the teachers / if they're caught
loitering / again the teachers are to be
blamed...\
- A: They take drugs...\
- H: Come blame the teachers...\
- ZR: Students get molested in the toilet...\
- H: What were the teachers doing? They
should be in school earlier than the
students.

The discussion here is mainly about how teachers are blamed for everything including the misbehaviour of students. They seem to get the far end of the stick. The violation of the Maxim of Quantity is seen here especially in the statement made by H. The statement, '...now the teachers get blamed for everything...', tells us that teachers are under fire but the speaker goes on to explain the different reasons why teachers are blamed. This is an instance where the speaker gives too much information, much more than is necessary. For the above reason, the utterance may be said to be in violation to the maxim of Quantity.

Extract 6: Recording #2: Lines 227 – 229

- ZR: O.K before I forget, these are the teachers
who will be in charge of drama this
year.
SK: Me again!
H: Yeah, because you are hardworking, you
are single, you have a lot of time...\

In Extract 6, when SK found out that she was placed in charge of drama, she protested mildly at being chosen again as the teacher advisor. H in response instead of simply agreeing or supporting the statement chose to explain why SK has been chosen. H goes on to give more information than is required thus violating the maxim of quantity.

Extract 7: Recording #3: Lines 276 – 278

- SM: What about the annual dinner?
SS: Which hotel?
PS: Last year, it was Legend Hotel, the year
Before Pan Pacific.\

The above conversation again illustrates the violation of the maxim of quantity. Here the question which was asked was simply, 'Which hotel?', to which the response was : 'Last year, it was Legend Hotel, the year before...'. All this detail is unnecessary, not called for and clearly does not answer the question asked. For this reason, the response may be said to have violated the Maxim of Quantity.

Examples of the violation of the maxim of Quantity is further explored in the extracts below:

Extract 8: Recording #3: Lines 313 - 314

SCK: Yeah..., who is this?

SM: My brother...last time handsome *lah*
but now under stress, he is not well.

Extract 9: Recording #3: Lines 326 - 327

AA: This one is your mother , is it?

SM: Yeah, yeah the one beside her is my
husband.

In both the discussions above (Extract 8 and 9), the teachers are looking through a wedding album of a colleague. SCK points to a photo and asks who the person was. It would have been sufficient for SM to just answer, 'My brother'. However she goes on to say that her brother was once handsome but not now as he is under stress and therefore not well. Giving more information than is needed in this way may also be said to violate the maxim of quantity.

In extract 9, AA asks SM if the one in the photograph is her mother. The required response in this case would have been either a , 'Yes' or a 'No'. SM did agree that the person in the photo was her mother, but went on to identify the person beside her mother as her husband. No one had enquired who the person beside her mother was. In this case SM is giving more information than required. This again may be seen as a violation of the maxim of Quantity.

Extract 10: Recording #3: Lines 316 – 317

- AA: All these real gold *ah*?
SM: Of course lah. The bride's mother must
Have collected all these for her daughter
...only daughter so she can afford it.

The discussion in Extract 10 is about the gold the bride was using. AA asked if the gold the bride was using was real gold. A simple answer of either a 'Yes' or a 'No' would have sufficed but the speaker added that the bride's mother would have collected the jewellery all these years for her daughter. She goes on to say that since the bride is the only daughter obviously the family could afford to spend more on gold jewellery. The speaker by providing much more information than was needed may be said to have violated the maxim of Quantity.

4.4.2.1.1 Summary

The discussion above has attempted to provide instances of the violation of the maxim of quantity in the conversations. Nine out of the ten extracts show that speakers gave more information than was needed. In one instance the speaker violated the maxim by providing less information than was required. Thus the overall tendency appears to be for speakers to provide more information than is needed.

4.4.2.2 **The Maxim of Quality**

Grice’s maxim of quality requires a speaker to tell the truth. A speaker should not say something with inadequate evidence. If the utterance is found to be false, then the maxim of quality is violated. Though this maxim appears to be one which is easily adhered to, the situation in which the speaker is in may contribute to the violation of this maxim.

The extracts below show how the violation of the maxim of quality occurs

Extract 11: Recording #1: Lines 17 – 22

- AZ: Don’t give face / they are scared of Z what...
- SK: [Because he carries a *rotan*.]
- SV: And he uses it!
- SK: But we are not allowed to use the cane...
- SM: He is the discipline teacher / allowed.
 Anyway he says we will end up in Tanjung
 Rambutan if he doesn’t.

The participants are exchanging views about the use of cane and how the students are afraid of Z because he not only carries the *rotan* but also uses it. SM then mentions that, ‘we’, meaning the teachers will end up in Tanjung Rambutan (which is where a mental asylum in Perak is located) if Z does not use the cane. Tanjung Rambutan is a loosely used expression to indicate that one is in danger of losing one’s sanity. SM obviously does not have adequate evidence to support the statement. Even though the

students' behaviour could cause stress on teachers, the speaker has obviously exaggerated the issue. For this reason his response may be said to have violated the Maxim of Quality.

In the following extract, the speakers are discussing the difference an air conditioner would make to the staff room. They claim that it will lead to a more conducive working environment and they finally conclude that they are being treated badly.

Extract 12: Recording #1: Lines 56 - 62

- AZ: *Kalau ada* air con kan bagus!
ZR: Yeah /to work...\
AZ: mark books...\
SV: do our work in peace.
AZ: <Yeah *lah*> cannot do work in this heat.
SM: Can't wait to go home!
ZJ: We teachers are treated badly *lah*.

The speakers are stating something with inadequate evidence. They are obviously just making a generalization. About 90% of the schools in Malaysia are not air - conditioned. Though air conditioning would help to create a more comfortable working environment, there is no reason to say that one cannot do any work without it and, most of all, to claim that the teachers are treated badly because of this. This may clearly be viewed as violation of the maxim of quality. In this instance, speakers not only say something which may not be true but may have also said something for which they lacked adequate evidence.

The following extract again provides further evidence of the violation of the maxim of quality.

Extract 13: Recording #1: Lines 81 - 84

- SM: The parent stood up and said angrily,
asked why the teachers need an air con
when they don't do anything!
- SK: So mean!
- ZR: Yeah, we come to school and shake legs and
his son gets educated by remote control.

The speakers are discussing the last Annual General Meeting of the Parent - Teacher Association of the school. A parent had apparently stood up to deny the request for air conditioner units by teachers as it was claimed that teachers do not do anything so they do not deserve it. This infuriated the teachers. ZR responded by saying that the teachers 'shake legs' in schools, meaning that they do not do any work and that students get educated through remote control.

The element of sarcasm in this exchange will be discussed later in this chapter. To reiterate, this statement may be seen as a violation of the maxim of quality as it is saying something which manifestly is not the case. In addition, the speaker has not provided any evidence to support her statement.

The next example also shows a violation to the maxim of quality. Again there is no truth in the utterances. The speakers are discussing the disappearance of some of the computers and SM who expresses in exasperation claimed that David Copperfield has taken it. She goes on to explain that she really does not know where the computers are. David Copperfield is a well known illusionist who was able to make the Statue of Liberty in America 'disappear' for a few seconds. This knowledge has come in handy for the speaker who used it to her advantage to claim that she does not know how the computers could have disappeared.

Extract 14: Recording #1: Line 101 - 107

- ZJ: Our school building is very old *lah*.
But I thought our library had computers
what.
ZR: Yeah, how many times we bought
computers for the library, but yeah *lah*
where are they/ don't see them.
ZJ: Somewhere over the rainbow...@
SM: The computers are not there anymore,
David Copperfield took it.

The above discussion then brought about the following exchange where it was mentioned that the issue related to the computers should not be discussed openly as the speakers were afraid that someone would hear of it. The speakers, ZJ, SV AND SM, claimed that it was a sensitive issue. This put an end to the discussion. SM and SV also

mentioned that the walls and chairs have ears (meaning someone might hear of it). Metaphor is cleverly employed here to convey meaning.

Extract 15: Recording #1: Lines 112 - 116

- ZJ: [OK OK sensitive issue / censor / censor...@]
SV: {@ @ OK OK}
SM: Yeah, yeah the walls have ears...
SK: @
SV: the chairs too...

ZJ tried to put an end to the conversation by saying that what they were talking about was a sensitive issue and by using the word, ‘censor’, she attempts to bring the conversation to an end. SM and SV added that walls and chairs have ears thus they should not speak about the issue so openly lest someone hears of it. Walls and chairs obviously do not have ears but represents a form of language play involving the use of personification. This has resulted in an exploitation or flouting of the Maxim of Quality giving rise to an implicature. The listeners have no problem inferring what is meant. This means that although the maxim of Quality has been flouted, the overall Co-operative Principle has been observed.

Prior to the following exchange, the issue of dowry was discussed. This led to the speaker asking if one of the male staff members in the school was not married because he was waiting for a fat dowry. Shared knowledge prompted a speaker to state that in his case, he had to give the dowry so as to get a bride.

Extract 16: Recording #3: Lines 367 - 371

SCK: You think PS is waiting for a fat dowry ah?

SM: Do you think so?

AA: @ What do you all think?

SS: In his case he has to give the dowry ...

All: @ @

There is no evidence for believing what SS says is true. It is just her opinion and reflects a negative view of the staff member in question. Though the participants may share some knowledge about the person they were talking about, this does not allow them to make any claims. For this reason the utterance may be said to flout the maxim of Quality.

4.4.2.2.1 Summary

There are five examples of floutings or violation of the maxim of quality. Though all the examples may focus on the speakers making statements with inadequate evidence, they are not really making false statements. The speakers are merely trying to convince the others of their arguments and make use of a variety of language devices to make their point and also to keep the conversation going.

4.4.2.3 **The Maxim Of Relevance**

The violation of the maxim of Relevance may be said to occur when one makes a response or observation which is not relevant to the topic being discussed. This can occur when a speaker abruptly changes the subject or overtly fails to address the other person's intention in asking a question. This means that the utterances are not relevant to the current exchange. Examples of utterances which flout the maxim of Relation by changing the subject or failing to address the topic directly are often seen in conversations.

The extract below is an illustration:

Extract 17: Recording #2: Lines 186 - 190

- F: I go to church on Sunday, I definitely
 can't come *lah*... \
- ZR: Come after church...
- KG: Z said, they have divided us into groups.
 The uniform body will also be there to
 help us.
- A: Next day off or not?

In the above exchange, F says that she cannot come for the *gotong royong* because she had to go to church. Though ZR's response was relevant, KG's response was totally irrelevant to the exchange. KG responded by stating that they had been put in groups and that the uniform body would be assisting them, a totally different topic to begin with. The next response, A's question, 'Next day off or not', is also not relevant.

Both KG and A have violated the maxim of Relevance as their responses are not on the topic under discussion. In fact, their responses represent attempts to change the topic of discussion.

In the next extract, again one observes the maxim of relevance being flouted when the speaker fails to stay within the topic of discussion.

Extract 18:Recording #2:Lines 156 - 157

- F: I heard the meeting will be long, you know !
SK: Oh dear, I have an appointment today!

A relevant reply in this case would have been , 'Is that so'.. But the listener failed to stay within the topic Instead she appears to be worried about her appointment which she fears she may not be able to keep or be late for.

In the following extract the topic of discussion is the speaker's brother until a colleague interjects with a totally different topic altogether which has no bearing to the subject being discussed.

Extract 19: Recording #3: Lines 313 - 316

SCK: Yeah...who is this?

SM: My brother / last time handsome lah but now /
he is under stress, he is not well...

SCK: Eh, handsome what still!

AA: All these real gold ah?

The maxim of Relevance may be said to have been violated in this context because the topic of discussion has been abruptly changed. The same goes for the utterances in the extract below. Again, it is evident that the Maxim of Relevance has been violated by AA abruptly changing the subject with the utterance , ‘This one is a proposed marriage or what?’.

Extract 20: Recording #3: 330 - 332

AA: Ala / show lah, we’ll judge!

SM: SS knows him, ask her lah...he is actually a
very good man / you’ll like him.

AA: This one is a proposed marriage or what?

4.4.2.3.1 Summary

There are altogether four examples of the violation of the maxim of relation. One shows features of failing to address the other person’s goal in stating something, while in the other three the speakers abruptly attempt to change the subject of discussion.

4.4.2.4 The Maxim of Manner

The maxim of manner requires that contributions to conversations be orderly, perspicuous and brief. Grice(1975) also stated that one should avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity. In other words, speakers should not be unclear in their utterances.

The extract below provides evidence of a clear violation of the maxim of manner.

Extract 21: Recording #2: Lines 210 - 214

- H: You think they'll be interested ah? Far
 from it ...
F: We won't know if we don't try. If we try
 and they turn us down, it is a
 different story. But on the other hand,
 they might agree.
A: {Yeah}
ZR: {Uhhh / exactly}

Prior to this conversation, the discussion was on whether the parents will lend a hand in helping the school with the *gotong royong* project and to take care of the school at night. The point F is actually trying to make is that they should approach the parents for help. F believes that if the teachers do that at least, they can claim that they have tried. He also believes that there is a strong likelihood that the parents would help.

The utterances of A and ZR seem to indicate agreement with the view expressed. However, their non-verbal language suggests that they did not quite understand the point F was making. They shook their heads and frowned after they heard the comment made by F. The utterance, 'We won't know if we don't try. If we try and they turn us down, it is a different story. But on the other hand, they might agree' may be said to violate the maxim of manner for three reasons. Firstly, it is not brief. It is a rather long-winded statement. Secondly, the points are not presented in an orderly manner. F could have said, 'Unless we try, we may not know if the parents are willing to help'. This not only is brief information but also to the point and orderly. And thirdly, the comments may be a little obscure and difficult to follow. But in spite of some degree of flouting of the maxim of Manner the listeners were able to infer what was meant in the context of the utterance and their shared background knowledge.

The next extract also provides evidence that the maxim of manner has been violated.

Extract 22: Recording #3: Lines 397 - 400

- SCK: Sure...can't have the cake and eat it too, you know.
You want something, you must pay for it,
otherwise you don't get it. Things don't come
free. If free I also want...can just go, right or not.
- AA: I don't know what you are blabbering about lah.
OK lah got class.@

The topic of discussion prior to this was about the school dinner. It appears that lack of funds may result in the dinner being held at the school canteen. The teachers are unhappy at this prospect. SCK felt that the teachers could pay part of the cost of the dinner so everyone could enjoy it at the hotel. He goes on to say, 'You can't have the cake and eat it too'. If one wants quality, he seems to suggest, one has to pay for it. He also points out that things do not come free. The speaker conveys a lot of ideas and speaks very fast giving rise to obscurity that is making it difficult for listeners to follow his meaning.

This is evident in AA's response, she claims she does not understand what SCK is talking about. His ideas are also not presented in an orderly manner. For these reasons his utterances may be said to have violated the maxim of manner.

4.4.2.4.1 Summary

The two examples given show that the speakers ideas are quite obscure to the listeners. The context of the situation and prior background knowledge may have helped the listener in making the right inferences as to the meaning of the speakers. But in reality, the utterances may be said to have violated the maxim of manner.

4.4.2.5 **Frequency Counts of Violations**

Violation of The Maxims	Frequenc y	%
Quantity	10	48
Quality	5	24
Relation	4	19
Manner	2	9
Total	21	100

Table 7: The Frequency of Maxim Violations

The frequency of violation of the five maxims was counted and recorded. The results are tabulated and presented in Table 7. It is interesting to note that the maxim of quantity seems to be the most violated maxim with a total of 10 out of 21 violations of the maxims. That accounts for nearly 48% of the violations in data. Nine out of the ten violations or approximately 43% of the violations occurred when the speakers said more than was necessary in the particular context of their utterances. The tenth violation occurred when the speaker said less than was required in the exchange.

There are five violations of the maxim of quality out of a total of 21 examples. This represents about 24% of the violation in the data obtained. In general, it may be said speakers violate the maxim of relevance by abruptly changing the subject of discussion and not being in line with the topic of conversation. The violation of the maxim of relation comes next with about 4 out of 21 violations from the data. This forms 19% of the data.

Lastly, the maxim which is least violated is the maxim of manner. It can be seen that 9% of the data violates the maxim of manner.

4.4.3 Language Play In the Violations of Maxims

Often in conversations, Malaysian speakers tend to be careful not to hurt or embarrass the person with whom they are speaking. As such the individual's speech is often constructed in such a way that it does not cause any ill feelings whatsoever. Often to save face a participant may engage in exaggeration, overstatement, understatement and repetition and other similar strategies. He may also latch on to the conversation. He may also employ literary devices such as personification in conveying the message. This often results in the flouting the maxims. But these do not disturb the Co-operative Principle as the listeners are able to infer the deeper meaning of what is said.

4.4.3.1 Superfluity

The Collins Cobuild English Dictionary defines superfluity as, ‘...superfluity of something, there is more of it than is needed’. When a speaker contributes more than is required or necessary in a conversation, then the feature of superfluity is evident.

This is seen in almost 90% of the data on violations of the maxim of quantity. In extract 1, recording #1, lines 96-98, one of the speakers requests for some books. Even though it was agreed that the books would be ordered, the speaker goes on to explain why the book is needed. This is a very common feature of Malaysian conversations, where a speaker tries to explain everything, to the point of magnifying the contribution to the conversation.

Extract 2, Recording # 1, Lines 118 - 124 is another example of superfluity. The question which was posed was mainly about the format of the MUET paper. Instead of answering the question to the point, the speaker talks about the students attitude towards the English language. This clearly has led to the violation of the maxim of quality.

4.4.3.2 Obvious Exaggeration

When a speaker exaggerates, he is obviously blowing things out of proportion. He is amplifying the issue. This a common feature in the Malaysian context. Generally an issue tends to be blown out of proportion or exaggerated to achieve dramatic effect in

order to make a point. Often the phrases, 'you know', 'and then ah', are used widely to exaggerate an issue. When this happens, a speaker contributes more information than necessary to a conversation hence violating the maxim of quantity.

Extract 5, Recording #2, Lines 216 - 224, illustrate this point. The first statement was that teachers get blamed for everything. This contribution served to open Pandora's Box by inviting other speakers to say what they felt about teachers being blamed for everything.

Another example of exaggeration which led to the violation of the maxim of quality is seen in Extract 2, Recording #1, Lines 56 - 63 Here, because there was no air-conditioning, the speakers claim that they could not work well and they finally concluded by saying that teachers are treated badly. This violates the maxim of quality as there is no adequate evidence to support the statement.

4.4.3.3 Latching

Malaysian speakers often do not refute the views expressed by fellow speakers in a conversation. This often is due to the fact that they do not want to hurt the other person's feelings or, perhaps, or to embarrass other participants in the conversation. Often, even if one disapproves of something, speakers will brush it off by latching on to the conversation through non-committal utterances such as , 'Hmm', 'Yeah', 'Aha', 'Yes ah', 'Ya lah' and so on.

This is illustrated in Extract 4, Recording #2, Lines 211 - 212. The speaker's utterance is in a very long - winded attempt at emphasizing the importance of approaching parents for help. Prior to this, the discussion centered around parents and whether they would be interested in helping the teachers. They had differing views on whether parents would actually be willing to help them. Responses such as, 'Yeah' and 'Hmm', do not actually represent full agreement. The speakers appear to be just latching on to the comment and going along with the view expressed in order to be polite. This then led to the violation of the maxim of quantity.

4.4.3.4 Personification

Often in everyday conversations we give life to inanimate objects. This is quite common in the Malaysian culture and is especially evident in *pantun* and poems. This is carried through in our daily conversations just to add colour, effect and to inject humour to our conversation. But the use of such literary devices may also result in the violations of the maxims and give rise to implicatures. This is evident in Extract 5, Recording #1, Lines 112 - 116. The speakers are discussing something which is considered quite confidential. When they realize this, they start joking about it by not only stopping themselves from talking about it but by adding that the 'walls and chairs have ears'. Walls and chairs are inanimate objects thus they do not have ears. This utterance therefore involves the metaphorical use of language where listeners have to go beyond the surface meaning in order to infer the underlying meaning of the speaker.

4.4.3.5 Sarcasm

Sarcasm has also been involved in the violations of the maxims. In extract 4, Recording #1, Line 107, when one of the speakers was asked where the computers in the library were, she remarked sarcastically that David Copperfield had taken it. There is obviously no literal truth in that utterance. It provides evidence of a speaker using sarcasm to make a point.

4.4.3.6 Summary

An attempt has been made to show that language play can result in the violation of the maxims. The literary devices employed by the participants may be used knowingly or unknowingly with particular effects on the verbal interactions. Such floutings give rise to conversational implicatures. The listeners appear to be able to infer the underlying meaning of what is said. They seem to realize that the speakers do not literally mean what they say in their utterances.

The analysis of the data also suggests that our rich culture has seeped into the style and manner of spoken discourse. Participants often employ the use of figurative language to convey their meaning directly, indirectly, overtly or covertly. By means of particular utterances they do a variety of things such as warn, pacify or even scold other participants. Speakers may in doing so violate the maxims.

4.4.4 Findings From The Questionnaire

Only about 163 questionnaires of the 350 questionnaires which were distributed around the schools were returned to the researcher. Out of the 163 questionnaires which were returned, only about 138 which make up about 85 % of the questionnaires were completed satisfactorily.

The respondents who completed the questionnaire were quite cooperative and answered all the questions thoroughly; taking time and care in formulating their responses. All the respondents stated that they always use verbal language to communicate.

To the question of which form of language was used more in their daily lives, all 138 respondents stated that they use verbal language. This accounted for about 100% of them which then lent weight to this research as the researcher obtained the data from the target group which makes this data valid.

About 110 which make up about 80% of the respondents answered that they generally speak spontaneously in a conversation while the rest, about 20% of them said otherwise. This shows that about 80% of the respondents are relatively uninhibited in a conversation and participate freely in the discussion. This is consistent with the findings of the analysis.

Out of the 138 respondents, 56 or 41% stated that they did not consciously follow any rules when they speak, while the rest which make up 59% of the total respondents said they did follow a set of rules while speaking.

Some of the rules that they said that they adhered to are given below:

1. They try not to offend others while speaking.
2. They often express anger or annoyance in an indirect manner or negative emotions.
3. They try not to dominate a conversation.
4. They employ polite means to convey their meaning.

The findings above indicate that being polite in a conversation is of utmost importance to the participants. Often this adherence to politeness in a conversation results in some violation of the maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. This is done often indirectly and covertly by strategies such as superfluity, exaggeration, understatement, latching and other kinds of figurative language.

About 80% of the respondents said that they often went along with the flow of a conversation. They said they discussed different issues at all times and did not stick to just one topic. On the other hand, about 5% stated that they always stayed within the topic of discussion and hardly steered away from it.. The rest of the respondents, about 20% stated they often agree with the other speakers on related issues.

Essentially, the findings from the questionnaire were consistent with those arrived from the analysis of the data from the audio recording.