

**INVESTIGATING GRICEAN MAXIMS IN CONVERSATIONS
AMONG MALAYSIAN WOMEN**

LEE PEI LING

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH
AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

APRIL 2010

UNIVERSITY MALAYA

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

Name of Candidate: Lee Pei Ling (I.C/Passport No: 750907-08-5528)

Registration/Matric No: TGB 070002

Name of Degree: Master of English as a Second Language (MESL)

Title of Dissertation (“this Work”):

Investigating Gricean Maxims in Conversations Among Malaysian Women

Field of Study: Pragmatics

I do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

- (1) I am the sole author/write of this Work;
- (2) This Work is original;
- (3) Any use of any work in which copyright exists was done by way of fair dealing and for permitted purposes and any excerpt or extract form, or reference to or reproduction of any copyright work has been disclosed expressly and sufficiently and the title of the Work and its authorship have been acknowledged in this Work;
- (4) I do not have any actual knowledge nor do I ought reasonably to know that the making of this work constitutes an infringement of any copyright work;
- (5) I hereby assign all and every rights in the copyright to this Work to the University of Malaya (“UM”), who henceforth shall be owner of the copyright in this Work and that any reproduction or use in any form or by any means whatsoever is prohibited without written consent of UM having been first had and obtained;
- (6) I am fully aware that if in the course of making this Work I have infringed any copyright whether intentionally or otherwise, I may be subject to legal action or any other action as may be determined by UM.

Candidate’s Signature

Date

Subscribed and solemnly declared before;

Witness’s Signature

Date

Name:

Designation:

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The most beautiful discovery true friends make is that they can grow separately without growing apart.

~ Elizabeth Foley

This dissertation would not have happened without the help, support and love of numerous people.

To my supervisor Dr. Thilagavathi Shanmuganathan, you have been a pillar of support. Thank you for providing me with invaluable guidance and for guiding me in the right path and for showing me that pragmatics is an interesting field for research.

I am extremely indebted to those friends and acquaintances whose help have been instrumental, by allowing me to record their conversations and contribute to my corpus of natural conversations. Without you, this would have never been done.

To my family and friends, you have been always been at the side-lines cheering me on and encouraging me when I felt at loss or discouraged.

To HSBC Malaysia, for believing in me enough to offer me a scholarship so I may be able to take my studies to the next level.

To God for the strength, grace and courage to persevere in times when I most needed it.

CONTENTS

ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	x

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background of the study	1
1.3	The purpose of the study	2
1.4	Significance of the study	3
1.5	Objectives of the study	5
1.6	Research questions	5
1.7	Scope of the study	6
1.8	Limitations of the study	7
1.9	Conclusion	8

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1	Introduction	9
2.2	Defining Pragmatics	9
2.3	Conversations	11
2.4	Friendship and Women Talk	13
2.5	Discourse features in women talk	17
2.5.1	Repetition	17
2.5.2	Simultaneous and overlapping speech	18
2.5.3	Laughter	18
2.5.4	Minimal responses	18
2.5.5	Hedging	20

2.6	Grice: The Cooperative Principle and Conversational Maxims	20
2.7	The fulfillment and non-fulfillment of maxims	23
2.7.1	Fulfillment	24
2.7.2	Non-fulfillment	24
2.8	Implicatures	26
2.9	Indirectness and implicatures	29
2.10	Pragmatic effects	32
2.10.1	Humor	32
2.10.2	Sarcasm and Irony	33
2.10.3	Echoic Use	34
2.11	Past studies in relation to Grice and women talk	35
2.12	The linguistic scene in Malaysia	37
2.12.1	Malaysian English	38
2.12.2	Code-switching	39
2.13	Conclusion	41

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	42
3.2	Theoretical Framework	42
3.3	The participants	42
3.3.1	Gender	43
3.3.2	Age	43
3.3.3	Number of interlocutors	44
3.3.4	Relationship between the participants	44
3.3.5	Setting	46
3.3.6	Topics	46
3.4	Data collection methods	47
3.4.1	Purposeful sampling	47
3.4.2	The recordings	48

3.4.3	Observation and field notes	49
3.5	Ethical considerations	50
3.6	Data	50
3.7	Data Analysis Methods	51
3.7.1	Transcription conventions in data transcriptions	51
3.7.2	Turns	51
3.7.3	Selection of examples for analysis	51
3.8	Identification of fulfillment and non-fulfillment	52
3.9	Conclusion	53

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1	Introduction	54
4.2	The fulfillment of maxims	54
4.2.1	Discourse features in the fulfillment of maxims	56
4.2.1.1	Repetition	56
4.2.1.2	Simultaneous and overlapping speech	58
4.2.1.3	Laughter	60
4.2.1.4	Minimal Responses	61
4.2.1.5	Hedging	63
4.2.2	Quantitative Data: Maxim Fulfillment	64
4.3	The Non-fulfillment of maxims	66
4.3.1	Indirectness and implicatures	69
4.3.2	Pragmatic effects of non-fulfillment	71
4.3.2.1	Humor	71
4.3.2.2	Sarcasm/Irony	74
4.3.2.3	Echoic Use	78
4.3.3	Quantitative data: Pragmatic effects of non-fulfillment	80
4.4	Other findings: The Malaysian Influence	81
4.4.1	Code-switching	81

4.4.2	Tag questions	84
4.4.2.1	“...or not?”	84
4.4.2.2	“Kan?”	86
4.4.3	The ‘lah’ particle	87
4.5	Conclusion	89

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1	Introduction	90
5.2	The research goals	90
5.3	The summary of findings	91
5.3.1	Fulfillment	91
5.3.2	Non-fulfillment	92
5.4	Malaysian conversations	96
5.5	The perception of the participants	97
5.6	Conclusion	98

BIBLIOGRAPHY	102
--------------	-----

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Transcription Conventions	109
Appendix 2: Conversation 1F	110
Appendix 3: Conversation 2CH	135
Appendix 4: Conversation 3ST	156

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Summary of conversations recorded	45
Table 4.1: Frequency of discourse features in the fulfillment of maxims	65
Table 4.2: Frequency of pragmatic effects in the event of non-fulfillment	80