

## Scripted Presentation: The Legend of Grice

*Pragmatics, pragmatics, pragmatics.* What a word, what a subject. A complicated one at that. At just the sound of the word, you probably wished you hadn't bothered coming in today. I see some puzzled faces. Pragmatics?

I'm not going to tell you exactly what pragmatics are, because quite frankly, I don't have the time. So broad and complex, that you would all be fast asleep by my second sentence, "All you need to know, is that pragmatics look at rules, implications, hidden meanings if you wish, of written and spoken language, Today, ladies and gentlemen, we're going to take a look at one tiny aspect of this vast subject. Herbert Grice, commonly known as Paul. Herbert Paul Grice and his co-operative principle.

I'm sure every one of us here knows a Paul. Oh, Paul the postman? The Paul that I'm going to teach you about today wasn't just an ordinary Paul. A philosopher, he studied language day in day out, until eventually he proposed four conversational maxims that arise from the pragmatics of natural language. To put it simply, Paul Grice looked at conversation, and derived 4 rules needed to make a conversation work, otherwise known as the maxims of co-operation.

Take a look at the conversation projected on the board. Do we all agree that Speaker A has said enough about what they're going to do at the weekend without us all wanting to hit him over the head? So let's look at Speaker B. His part looks more like an essay. Would any of you actually stand round and listen to all of that? Your disapproving expressions tell me not. /so lads and ladies, here we have it, Grice's first maxim, quantity. By this, Grice meant that in order to sustain a conversation, you must never say too much about a subject. Rambling, not the best look in Grice's book. So, to condense, the rule states you must say enough but not too much. If you break it you'll either be deemed strange and robotic, or a pure rambling annoyance. The amount of times you've got stuck in the canteen next to the sausage rolls being told about the boyfriend, and exams, and what they're having for dinner tonight; at least now you can give it a name!

Rule number 2 looks at quality. I'm getting paid £100,000 for this speech. If you did believe that then that's flattering! But, it wasn't true. Quality relates to not lying. If what you're saying isn't true, then your conversation is perhaps pointless? Similarly to saying something like, 'The World's ending tomorrow'. You might believe it to be true, but if you have no evidence, then you may be falsely informing your bestie of their fate. That person might just go home and cry, and your reputation will be in the pits won't it? Nobody digs a liar. This stuff is pretty simple isn't it!

For the third of Grice's maxims, let's refer to our second PowerPoint slide. You look at it, and you notice an immediate mistake don't you? The giggles I can hear support that you've spotted it. Speaker A says 'Do you want to go out tonight?' But he doesn't get a yes, or a maybe, he gets 'Scrambled eggs with ketchup'. What in the world does that do to help you look normal? Relevance, my friends, maxim number three. It's pretty self explanatory; the idea that what you say must be relevant to what you're talking about. If you're in a meeting about college hours, and you reply with facts about garden chairs, it's safe to say the conversation might come to a halt, followed shortly by your college contract. Makes sense right?

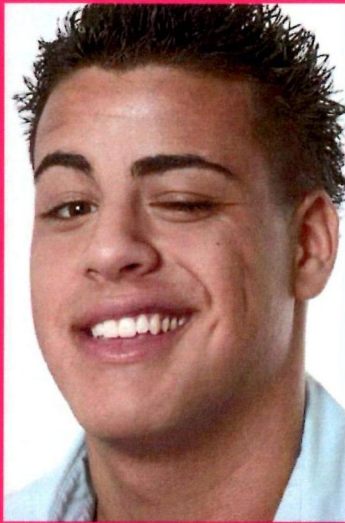
Finally, the big one, manner. Grice stated that you shouldn't be obscure, or hard to understand. As an example, I shouldn't start speaking in Shakespearian to a mate during football. Not only would it make me look like a complete turnip, it wouldn't make much sense to them, the maxim implying that the way you speak should be in context and there should be a mutual understanding between you and your conversationee. Manner also looks at avoiding ambiguity, Say you're in a Media lesson looking at the latest headlines, and your teacher says something along the lines of, 'The police shot the rioters with guns'. So did the police use guns to shoot the rioters or did they shoot the rioters that had guns. You wouldn't know would you? Grice doesn't like ambiguity!

Grice also says that we should be brief, not wordy, similar to maxim one. For example, you don't need 50 words to tell someone you're out tonight. If you do, you probably won't be asked again!

Finally, in relation to the maxim of manner, Grice stated that a conversation should be orderly, and structured. If you're talking about one thing, you don't go back to something else, then jump 2 years into the future, and then come back to your original point. The person you are talking to won't stick around. Chronology is the key!

So there we have it guys! Grice. Herbert, Paul Grice, commonly known as Paul. I hope I have enlightened you in some way about his conversational maxims. I hope this has helped you to understand why you hate talking to that particular person, or why sometimes you get a look funnier than a combination of marmite and apple sauce on toast, There are many other things for you to explore now, things like, what happens when we break the maxims? We already discovered from our second slide that humour is one of them.

So thanks guys, thanks for listening! Learnt something? Definitely. Of relevance to your life? Possibly not. But one of the great theories of language, that's for sure. Thanks for wasting your time listening to me tell you how to talk! I'm sure it was something you weren't already aware of. Adios!



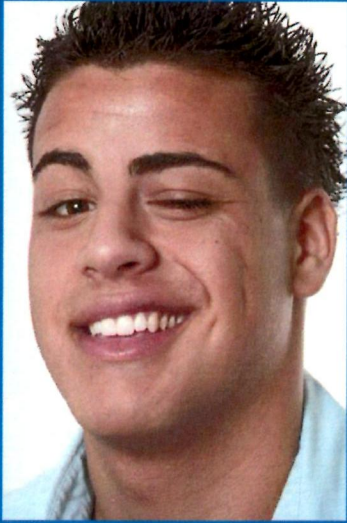
Speaker A

I'm going to play a bit of footie at the park, then I'm having dinner round Dave's.



Speaker B

I'm going to walk home at a 45 degree angle as my house is diagonally opposite, then I'm going to put my hand on my door handle and walk in, then I'm going to throw my bag on the floor and run upstairs, and fret about what to wear. Then I'm going to have fish, chips and peas for dinner with some really nice onion gravy, you know the one you get on the third isle of Tesco Express. Then I'm going to watch a bit of TV and eat some cake, a cherry one. Then I'm meeting Becky and we're going to the cinema to see the new movie they've got showing there. Apparently it's amazing! Then I'll come home.



Speaker A

Do you want to go out tonight?



Speaker B

Scrambled eggs with ketchup.

## **The Legend of Grice: Commentary.**

For my scripted speech, I chose to use Grice and his conversational maxims as my topic. I felt it was one of the most interesting topics in which to sustain the interest of my AS Level English students.

The purpose of my speech was to inform my audience about the maxims in a clear and uncomplicated manner. Hence, structurally I ordered the piece clearly with an introduction, conclusion and scheduled points in between. In order to further meet my informative purpose, I felt that creating a rapport with my audience was crucial, so that their interest was sustained in everything that I was saying, giving me the chance to indeed increase their knowledge. In order to do this, I adopted a light-hearted and at times satirical tone. I included humorous references to gain respect from my audience and keep my register informal, however I was careful not to over-indulge in this technique so focus wasn't lost. Grammatically, I used a variation of sentence types, which I felt was an asset to the piece as it added a vivacious ambience, something important in sustaining my listening audience. In correspondence with this, I ensured that I was addressing my audience directly often, using pronouns such as 'you' and lexis that implied unity; words such as, 'us' and 'friends'. I envisaged a social life to be very significant to my target audience, hence I felt by referring to this I would develop a stronger relationship with them. Furtherly, I made use of rhetorical questions, a feature that I envisaged to be important in enhancing contemplation during an informative speech, and of course encouraging my audience rapport. The use of such questions was a convention that I found to be included in the most successful speeches during research.

Other conventions that influenced my own piece were techniques such as power of three, which I used in my opening line. This occurred frequently in highly influential speeches I studied. I deemed it an important convention in helping my audience remember the mass of information I was telling them. Similarly I used repetition, a further feature vastly included in the style models I studied, in order to reinforce previous information and appeal to my audience's easily lost attentions span.

Finally, study of the scripted speech genre informed me that use of multi-media aids were generally important in speeches. In addresses to the nation, no visual aids were used; of course to keep all attention on the importance of the lexis, however I discovered that in speeches about specific topics with smaller audiences, visual aids are commonplace; allowing variation and an extra stimulus for the audience. As my speech was educational and I wanted the chief focus to be on what I was saying, I used two PowerPoint slides, with examples of a conversation on each, to help reinforce my points and initiate extra enticement for my young audience.

Word Count: 492