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Content

English Language Teaching in Post-Genocide Rwanda: A Study of Teachers' Observance of the Grice's Cooperative Principle

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to report about how teachers of English in Rwanda implement Grice's cooperative principle in their classrooms, the challenges they face while implementing it, and how they deal with those challenges. The study upon which this paper is based used survey questionnaires, observations, and interviews as methods of data collection. Grounded theory analysis was employed to make sense of the data. Research findings are articulated according to four maxims including quantitative maxim, qualitative maxim, maxim of relevance, and the maxim of manner. They include the fact that teachers struggle with teaching the prescribed curriculum, communicating with students in English, and teaching what is at their students' learning level. The paper concludes by devising implications of the findings for policy and practice.

1. Introduction

Herbert Paul Grice was born on the 13th of March in 1913 and died on the 28th of August in 1988. He was a British educated philosopher of language who spent the final two decades of his career in the United States. He developed conversational implicatures that look at the relation between what people say and what they actually mean in conversation (an approach to speakers and hearers's cooperative use of inference). For example, if a teacher says: Do you want to come to the blackboard? Student: I am taking notes. The conversational implicature which is the implied meaning generated intentionally by the speaker (i.e. teacher) is that the student is not coming. Another example is the following: Some students are ignorant. This example implies that not all students are ignorant.

From conversational implicatures, Paul Grice (1975) came up with the cooperative principle which is the collective name for four conversational maxims enabling effective and cooperative conversation. Those maxims do not prescribe how one should talk but explain the listeners' assumptions regarding the way speakers do talk. They include: *Quality*: speaker tells the truth or is provable by adequate evidence; *Quantity*: speaker is as informative as required; *Relation*: response is relevant to topic of discussion; and *Manner*: speaker avoids ambiguity or obscurity, is direct and straightforward.

Table 1. Four maxims explained

Type of maxim	Brief explanation
Maxim of quantity	Give appropriate amount of information, not too little and not too much. Say enough and no more.
Maxim of quality	Say what is true, do not say what is false.
Maxim of Relation	Be relevant.
Maxim of Manner	Be clear, no ambiguity, and concise to the point. Be brief, orderly and no obscurity.

Grice's cooperative principle was introduced into English language teaching rapidly and achieved good results. It played a great part in breaking up the traditional teaching concepts. As an important theory in pragmatics, the theory of cooperative principle was first introduced to China by Hu Zhuanglin in 1980 and gradually became the mainstream of study of communication at home. In social sciences generally and linguistics specifically, the cooperative principle describes how people interact with one another.

The observance of cooperative principle is context-bound. That is, different cultures, countries, and communities have each their own way of observing and expressing maxims. There might also be an overlap that appears often between the maxims. This being so, it can be difficult to identify which maxim acts because sometimes two or more maxims can operate at the same time. This can't prevent, however, cooperative principle to fulfill its duties in a given society because each society has its ways it proceeds to reach effective communication (Grice, 1975).

In a classroom set up, speakers and hearers may be considered as teachers and students. The study upon which this paper is based investigated how the maxims above were implemented in a secondary school classroom in Rwanda. Attention is now turned to the delineation of the context within which the study took place.

To contextualise the study, we will give a brief background to changes in language policy in Rwandan education. Rwanda, known poetically as the "Land of a Thousand Hills", is a landlocked republic in east-central Africa. Its neighbouring countries include Burundi, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Tanzania. The country was colonised by two European countries, namely Germany from 1894 until 1916 and Belgium from 1916 up until 1962. Rwanda's recent political history has been dominated by a four-year war that started in 1990 and ended in 1994 with genocide. The genocide claimed the lives of more than 800,000 people in only one hundred days (Moghalu, 2005). Discussing the origin and causes of the genocide is beyond the scope of this paper.

As a Belgian colonial legacy, French was used as the sole medium of instruction in Rwandan schools and universities from independence in 1962 up until the end of genocide in 1994. Post-genocide Rwanda saw the introduction of the English language in the country, a move that made sense given the needs of Rwandans who had returned to their homeland after spending more than 30 years in exile in English speaking countries. Indeed, from this time (i.e. 1994) until 2008, Rwanda was a trilingual country with French, English, and Kinyarwanda. The latter language (i.e. Kinyarwanda) was spoken (and is still spoken) by everybody throughout the country and was used in the first three years of primary schooling, while English and French were used from primary four through university.

Nevertheless, since 2008 English replaced French in all Rwandan schools and education levels. Although many Rwandans had studied in French from independence until 1994, situation has been that English has taken precedence over French (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010; Weinstein, et al., 2007). French has also been removed from subjects to be taught in some combinations at advanced level of secondary education (Samuelson, 2010) and is no longer a language of instruction in Rwandan schools.

One of the motives behind dropping French and adopting English as the only language of instruction was that English had become a language of business and trade. The government of Rwanda has tended to associate the switch to English as a teaching language with economic gains. The following comment from the Rwandan Education Board (2014) illustrates this point: Rwanda decided to change from French to English as the medium of instruction…The change has been necessitated by Rwanda's vision for education, business and trade, and regional

and international relations as ICT development propels Rwanda's economy to a middle income status by 2020 (p. 4)

It can be concluded, therefore, that the belief that English is a world language for education, commerce and economic development motivated the switch to English as a medium of instruction (Kristiawan, 2013; Yuliana et al, 2014; Sari et al, 2015; Kristiawan et al, 2016; Hamdani et al, 2017).

These arguments in favour of English were further justified by Rwanda's desire to join both the East African community comprising mainly English-speaking countries and the Commonwealth of Nations. By becoming a member of these English-speaking communities, the country which was traditionally a *francophone* country due to its Belgian colonial legacy and past ties with France moved towards the Anglo-Saxon world in the late 2000s. Some commentators have also pointed to the deterioration of Rwanda's diplomatic relations with France as a potential political argument favouring the ascendency of English over French in the country (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010).

In light of the above, most teachers in Rwanda use English as a foreign language, not as second language, they are not fluent in English and struggle to teach in English (Maniraho, 2013). By undertaking the study upon which this paper is based, we were curious to investigate how Grice's four maxims are implemented in a classroom where English is not mastered by teachers and students. The following research questions were addressed by the study: How do English teachers implement Grice's cooperative principle during English language teaching? What are the challenges faced by English teachers when implementing Grice's cooperative principle during English language teaching? What are the strategies in place teachers use to deal with the challenges encountered?

2. Research Method

Participants comprised 17 teachers of English working in a Nine Year Basic Education school in Rwanda. In total, when the present study was conducted, the school had 994 students. Out of the 17 teachers who participated in the study, three taught in the lower secondary school level (i.e. ordinary level) while 14 taught from Primary 1 through to Primary 6. These participants were chosen because they taught English language and therefore could provide various insights into English language teaching. Three teachers held Diploma in English whilst 14 teachers held Advanced level certificate. The teaching experience of the participants ranged from 3 to 15 years.

In this study, the questionnaire was prepared for 17 respondents. The researcher used these questionnaires because a large amount of information could be collected from a large number of people and questionnaires could be analysed more scientifically and objectively than other forms of research methods. All questionnaires were completed and returned. Questionnaires were given to all 17 teachers.

As the first author was a school-based mentor, he also observed teachers teaching as part of the English mentorship program. The observations lasted one year. For each classroom observation, field notes were taken and were part of the comments and advice the mentor gave to observed teachers. Semi-structed individual interviews were also used as a way of following up insights from field notes and questionnaires. In total, 10 interviews were given.

Ethical considerations applicable in the context were followed. At the commencement of the study, participants were told the aims of the research and their informed consent was obtained. From the beginning of the research, participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study any time.

Grounded theory methods of data analysis, which are consistent with the

principles of interpretivism and symbolic interactionism, were utilised in the study (O'Donoghue, 2007). They allowed describing and understanding human behaviour within the social contexts (Chenitz& Swanson, 1986) of the everyday experiences of teachers of English. The first stage of grounded theory analysis, open coding, was used to commence data analysis.

Open coding for an excerpt from the transcript of an interview held on 20/08/2016 with a teacher of English in addressing Guiding Question 2: What are the challenges faced by English teachers when implementing Grice's cooperative principle during English language teaching?

Table 2. Interview and Open Coding

Interview transcript	Open coding
I have realised that not having enough English dictionaries is a challenge because it can prevent from giving appropriate amount of information. I also see that shame and fear are challenges that we face,we fear to be laughed at by our colleagues. When I don't approach them I may remain with my wrong information I believe that not having enough time to prepare our lesson plans is a challenge that lead us to giving what isnot fully relevant, we are overloaded We prepare English questionnaires rushing because the school does not give us enough time for concentration	Lack of dictionaries undermine the implementation of quantitative maxim Teachers fearing their colleagues Teachers' lack of confidence prevents them from seeking help from colleagues Qualitative maxim compromised by teachers' lack of confidence to seek help from colleagues Teaching what has not been prepared violates the maxim of quality Teacher work overload

After open coding, the 'open-coded' data were then analysed using the 'analytic induction' technique. The analytic induction technique then led to the formulation of general statements or propositions in relation to the three research questions. Attention is now turned to the presentation of findings.

3. Results and Discussion

How do English teachers implement Grice's cooperative principle during English language teaching?

Participants in this study reported that they implemented the Grice's quantitative maxim by teaching what is at their students' ability level and by following English curriculum the way it is prescribed. These are the two important contributions of Grice's cooperative principle on English language teaching at the school that featured in the study. Indeed, teachers implemented the cooperative principle by making sure the amount of content prescribed in the curriculum is covered, by prioritising the meeting of deadlines for covering all the content, and by teaching to the plan in order to achieve what they had planned at the beginning of the year. On this, one teacher who participated in the study stated: "I follow the English curriculum the way it is prescribed so as to teach what is enough and finish the syllabus on time. I deliver the whole content instead of jumping between chapters".

Regarding the implementation of the qualitative maxim, the study's results suggest that students improved their pronunciation skills in English. This is a major contribution of Grice's cooperative principle on English language teaching in the case studied. The researcher also observed that some students were not afraid to tell their English teacher that they understood or didn't understand the lesson taught. This is a positive finding regarding the implementation of Grice's qualitative maxim.

As far as the relevance maxim is concerned, the findings showed that English teachers avoided going out of topic and helped students understand what they had

planned to teach. Avoiding to go off topic resonates with the maxim of relevance. There was a common perception among teachers that "a good teacher does not deviate significantly from the topic while teaching" and that teachers need to teach what is related to English during English lessons.

Participants in the study also revealed that they implemented the manner maxim by encouraging students to give better responses, setting non-ambiguous test questions, setting exam questions commensurate with students' ability level, asking questions related to what the English teacher had taught, and developing students 'confidence in their teacher. Attention is now turned to the presentation of the results for the second research question.

What are the challenges faced by English teachers when implementing Grice's cooperative principle during English lessons?

Most of the participants in the study being reported here indicated that they faced challenges associated with the implementation of each of the four maxims. Regarding the concerns connected with the implementation of the quantitative maxim, for example, the study revealed that English teachers did not have enough English dictionaries, that teachers did not have enough knowledge in English , that the school administration was not interested in the learning and teaching processes, and that many students did not revise their lesson at home. In addition, results suggest that parents had an apathy when it came to the formal education of their children and their presence at school, that some students did not understand the question because of their poor knowledge in English and their laziness, that students and teachers come late to school, that students did not make a written lesson plan, and that the school did not have a computer lab. These are the challenges that English teachers faced whilst implementing Grice's cooperative principle. Each of these

challenges had a negative impact on the amount of content taught and of the English used in the classroom, hence a relationship between the challenges highlighted and the maxim of quantity. For example, because most of the teachers did not have enough knowledge in the English language, they tended to escape some English chapters, thus violating the quantitative maxim.

With respect to the challenges regarding the implementation of the qualitative maxim, the study revealed that some teachers taught a given concept in a wrong way and felt shame to seek help from other teachers, that the school did not have enough English dictionaries, that using English in classes was infrequent, and that some students did not have ownership of their learning.

As far as the relevance maxim is concerned, participants stated that not having time to prepare lessons, an overloaded teaching timetable, a different interpretation of the history of the country, not having enough dictionaries, and the   lack of confidence to seek help from colleagues were some of the challenges affecting the qualitative maxim. Furthermore, participants reflected that some English teachers took too much time to address student misbehaviours and paid little attention to the quality of instruction.

With reference to the implementation of the maxim of manner, the study revealed that some English teachers prepared English questions carelessly, that some English teachers did not approach their colleagues, that there were   no enough English dictionaries in the school, and that there was frequent student and teacher absenteeism.

The above challenges affecting teachers while teaching English in Rwanda should not be overstated. Indeed, overemphasising the concerns of teachers may obscure tangible strategies they are adopting to deal with the challenges they encounter. It may also result in an overly negative picture of primary education in post-conflict Rwanda being

painted. While it is true that teachers who participated in the study being reported here encounter the complex problems already highlighted, they also have school-based strategies for dealing with these problems. Attention is now turned to describing these school level strategies.

What are the strategies in place teachers use to deal with the challenges encountered?

Schoemaker (2011) says that people cannot learn without mistakes. Making mistakes is unavoidable in the process of learning. Teachers tried to correct students' communicational mistakes and false statements in the classroom. Similarly, students were encouraged to understand that learning occurs through mistakes and that they should not be ashamed by the mistakes they made while learning English.

When applying the relation maxim in oral English learning, teachers stated they endeavored to set oral activities that connect with learning and increased students' knowledge and communication skills. Teachers in this study also pointed out that during discussion in the classroom they gave set of keywords around the topic then made students think of some related information. This allowed students to figure out some related words and sentence patterns they had learned in the past.

Other strategies shared by participants in the study point to doing things clearly and orderly. On this, teachers mentioned that they tried to prepare lessons that are concise, clear, and are without ambiguity. They encouraged students to observe discipline and stop poor behaviours which could disrupt the smooth delivery of the lesson. Furthermore, teachers confessed that they watched their words when discussing controversial issues in the class. They did this to avoid confusion and to implement the maxim of manner effectively.

The study's findings suggest that teachers' eagerness to teach what is at the student's ability level and to not deviate from what is prescribed in the English curriculum resonate with Grice's cooperative principle. This concurs with Cutting (2008)'s assertion that the quantity maxim is about giving the right amount of relevant information. Similarly, the study revealed that although teachers face difficulties in teaching pronunciation, they try their best to ensure students pronounce English accurately. This concurs with Mai Zhou(2009)'s view that implementing Grice's cooperative principle can make people improve on the accuracy of pronunciation of any language.

Furthermore, the maxim of quantity requires that a speaker be as informative as is required for the current purposes of communicative exchange. Ideally, teachers in the classroom should not make their contribution more informative than is required. The challenge was that teachers had to repeat certain information in various ways. On this, when students seemed not to understand teachers had to paraphrase a message and find a suitable wording. For some advanced students, teachers confessed that they provided more information than is required, the danger was that these students felt bored. Thus, the reality of classroom discourse shows that teachers are more likely to breach Grice's maxim of quantity repeatedly (Grice, 1975).

English teachers also stated that they avoided going out of topic while teaching and helped students to understand what they had planned. This was about the maxim of relevance and aligns with Green (1989,p.103)'s statement that in written discourse, each sentence is intended to say something necessary, true and relevant to accomplishing some objective in which the text producer and the intended audience are mutually interested. Nevertheless, the challenge in the study being reported here was that certain exercises, tasks, or role plays worked well with some students whereas other groups did not find those activities relevant at all.

It is important at this juncture to discuss the limitations of Grice's cooperative learning. John Flowerdew (2013) pointed out limitations of Grice's cooperative principle such as not dealing with interpersonal meaning, not allowing for variation according to activity/genre and culture, the fact that there may be overlap in the maxims, the fact that the maxims are different in nature, and the fact that there may be a range of possible interpretations of the maxims. The cooperative principle only deals with the exchange of information, with ideational meaning ,and neglects the important interpersonal dimension. Some authors have expanded Grice's model to include politeness. For example, if people are conversing, Grice's cooperative principle considers only providing ideas regardless of hierarchical ordering where politeness may be involved.

Furthermore, the cooperative principal does not allow for variation according to activity/genre and culture. Various authors have also criticized Grice for failing to consider how operation of the cooperative learning might vary according to genre and culture. To take a cultural example, in some cultures, the maxim of quality might be applied differently to others. In some cultures, for example, for reasons of face, if you are invited to a social function, it is appropriate to accept an invitation, even if you do not plan to attend. Thus, while this might be considered as a violation of the quality maxim in some cultures, in others it might be interpreted as an implicature. To take account of cultural reality, Clyne (1994) went further to suggest the rewording of three of the four cooperative principle maxims.

Moreover, there may be overlap and more than one maxim may apply to a given utterance. Thomas (2000) gives the following example from Shakespear's Hamlet.Polonius: What do you read, my lord? Hamlet: words, words, words. In this example, Hamlet flouts the maxim of quantity in not giving enough information to Polonius, but he also flouts the maxims of relevance in not giving the sort of answer that would be required for such question. Indeed, Thomas claims that relevance is still there. Cutting (2008) stated that the quantity maxim can be understood as giving the right amount of relevant information, the quality maxim can be restated as giving sincere relevant information and the maxim of manner can be modified as giving unambiguous relevant information.

It is also important to highlight that the four maxims do not seem to operate at the same level. The maxim of relevance can be seen to be operating all of the time. Thomas(1995) claims that the maxim of quality is the most straight forward, arguing that an utterance is either true or not, but how does one measure to what degree an utterance is sincere? The maxims of quantity and manner are again imprecise. How does one judge what is the right amount of information or what is what is the right level of clarity and brevity? In addition to this, what a student responds to his/her teacher is internal response, it might be difficult for teachers to measure the degree of truthfulness on the part of students.

Lastly, Grice's cooperative principle requires that hearers clearly recognize when an implicature is intended. This is not always the case since there may be a range of interpretations for a given utterance. Surely, there is a range of interpretations of the maxims, it might be found that these four conversational maxims can be applicable to some extent but are not applicable in all contexts.

Implications of the study for practice

The requirement of quantity is trying to provide necessary information and not to offer redundant information. This means make your contribution as informative as is required and do not make your contribution more informative than it is required. Therefore, the core of quantity maxim is providing necessary information. It follows

that teachers in Rwanda should organise the content reasonably and properly in order to meet lesson objectives. Also, teachers in Rwanda need to focus on the content and lesson objectives and avoid discussing sensitive topics that are most of the time beyond the scope of the subjects they teach. Another implication of the study is that teachers need to guide students during in-class presentations. That is, if students are to present about different topics in class, teachers should give them guidelines to follow and ask them about the moral lesson they drew from the topic. This will help students be as informative as it is required.

4. Conclusion

It will be recalled that the overarching aim of the study was to investigate how teachers of English in the school studied delivered their lessons in light of the Grice's cooperative principle. It was found that some English teachers do not approach their colleagues fearing to be underestimated and do not welcome students' mistakes. According to Ehrman (1996), we learn by developing self-confidence. The study's findings suggest that teachers need to teach all the prescribed curriculum, seek help from colleagues whenever they experience difficulties, and welcome students' mistakes in the classroom.

Other contributions of the present study relate to the need for teachers to manage their time, teach what is at students' ability level, emphasise the use of the correct pronunciation, and guide students in their presentations and topical discussions. This will result, it is held, in students' developed confidence and improved learning outcomes.

The researcher observed that Grice's cooperative principle was not properly implemented inasmuch as some English teachers worked because they saw the school headteacher. Also, some students did not tell the truth about their understanding of the lesson taught. Indeed, they avoided telling teachers if they did not understand the English lesson taught. This is problematic given that truth telling is a cornerstone for being successful in every society. It follows that the contribution of Grice's cooperative principle to effective teaching of English in the school studied was minimal and need to be improved through formal teacher professional developments and reflective practice meetings. Nonetheless, the study suggests that Grice's cooperative principle is a tool that teachers can base their teaching on in the school studied, in the whole country and in other parts of the world.

Acknowledgment

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