



A Study of Conversational Implicature in the Movie “Flipped” Based On Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle

Jie Chen* and Yi Zhang

School of Foreign Studies, Northwestern Polytechnical University, City: Xi'an, China
Postal code: 710129

Corresponding author: chenjie810358141@163.com

Received 24 August 2020;

Accepted 02 September 2020;

Published 11 September 2020;

Abstract

The film “Flipped” has been highly praised since its release, and it has always been on the list of “must see movies”. As a new rising star in linguistics, pragmatics focuses on the analysis of how to understand and use different languages in special contexts, especially in different communication environments. From the perspective of Grice’s cooperative principle and Leech’s politeness principle, this paper analyzes the dialogues in the films, and explores the conversational implicature and implied meanings behind the dialogues. On the one hand, it helps us grasp the characters’ personalities. On the other hand, it may help us better understand the importance of cooperative principle and politeness principle.

Keywords: *Flipped; Cooperative Principle; Politeness Principle*

1. Introduction

Conversation is the most important form of communication in people’s daily life, and how to carry out the most effective communication has been a problem discussed by oratory, rhetoric and linguistics since ancient times. Since the 20th century, with the rapid development of linguistics, the study of conversation has made great progress, and the research perspective is also developing towards diversification. As a new discipline, the rise of pragmatics marks a new stage of linguistic research (Yu Dongming, 2011). Cooperative principle and politeness principle are two important theories in pragmatics, which are widely used to guide verbal communication and interpret conversational implicature. Cooperative principle focuses on describing how people abide by or violate the principle and its norms, while politeness principle mainly explains why people express politeness at the cost of destroying cooperative principle (Wang Ya, 2011).

In terms of movies, as Marcel Gabriel, a famous French movie and television theorist said “film is not only an art, but also a language” (Marcel Gabriel, 1992). Art comes from life, and film is also the reflection of our real life. Then, as the basic form of film art, dialogue plays an important role in presenting the theme of the film, depicting the image of characters, and exerting artistic appeal. Therefore, the film dialogue also reflects the features of daily communication language, and there will be opposition and unity between cooperative principle and politeness principle. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the dialogues in the movie “Flipped” based on the cooperative principle and politeness principle, so as to further understand the conversational implicature of the movie

dialogue, grasp the character characteristics and understand the theme of the movie.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cooperative Principle

The cooperative principle (CP) was put forward by H.P. Grice in 1975 in “Logic and Conversation.” The cooperative principle describes how people interact with one another. As phrased by Grice, it states, “Make your contribution such as it is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.” Though phrased as a prescriptive command, the principle is intended as a description of how people normally behave in conversation. According to Kant’s four philosophical categories of quantity, quality, relation and manner, Grice puts forward four principles of cooperative principle. The first is the maxim of quantity, which includes: (a) make your contribution as informative required; (b) do not make your contribution more informative than is required. The second is the maxim of quality, which includes: (a) do not say what you believe to be false; (b) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. The third is the maxim of relation, that is, make your contribution relevant. The fourth is the maxim of manner, which includes: (a) avoid obscurity of expression; (b) avoid ambiguity; (c) be brief; (d) be orderly. In a word, Grice’s four cooperative principles actually require people to pay attention to the informativity, authenticity, relevance and clarity of conversation in daily communication (He Zhaoxiong, 2011). This kind of conversation is direct and efficient. For a long time, as the guiding

principle of conversational behavior, cooperative principle can be used to explain many language phenomena in daily communication. However, in the actual communication process, the cooperative principle can not always be fully followed. Sometimes, if the conversation is too straightforward, it will lead to the embarrassment and unhappiness of communication, and ultimately influence the actual communication effect. Therefore, sometimes in order to achieve a specific purpose of communication, people often violate the principle of cooperation and express their intention in an implicit and indirect way (He Zhaoxiong, 1999).

2.2 Politeness Principle

In order to explain this phenomenon scientifically, Brown and Levinson further improved and supplemented the cooperative principle and put forward the politeness principle. However, Brown and Levinson's analysis model cannot fully explain all the phenomena related to politeness. Like other theoretical models, the explanation is incomplete. In 1983, Leech put forward the politeness principle (PP) on the basis of two scholars. He revised and supplemented the cooperative principle reasonably and effectively to remedy the limitation of the cooperative principle. This principle states that people deliberately violate the cooperative principle in verbal communication and let the hearer understand the speaker's real intention out of the consideration of politeness. Politeness principle includes the following basic principles. (1) Tact Maxim (in impositives and commissives): (a) Minimize cost to other, (b) Maximize benefit to other. (2) Generosity Maxim (in impositives and commissives): (a) Minimize benefit to self; (b) Maximize cost to self. (3) Approbation Maxim (in expressives and assertives): (a) Minimize dispraise of other; (b) Maximize praise of other. (4) Modesty Maxim (in expressives and assertives): (a) Minimize praise of self; (b) Maximize dispraise of self. (5) Agreement Maxim (in assertives): (a) Minimize disagreement between self and other; (b) Maximize agreement between self and other. (6) Sympathy Maxim (in assertives): (a) Minimize antipathy between self and other; (b) Maximize sympathy between self and other.

Politeness principle improves the conversational implicature theory and explains the problems that cooperative principle can't explain. Therefore, the relationship between politeness principle and cooperative principle is complementary to each other. When explaining people's communicative behavior, we can combine politeness principle with Grice's cooperative principle. For example, people deliberately violate the cooperative principle, but actually follow the politeness principle, which makes the conversation have a deeper meaning, reflects the specific communicative purpose and pragmatic effect, and shows different pragmatic implications. In Leech's words, the politeness principle can "rescue" the cooperative principle.

3.The Cooperative Principles and Politeness Principles in the dialogues of the "Flipped"

"Flipped" is adapted from the novel of the same name written by Wendelin Van Draanen, directed by Rob Reiner. It was released in 2010, describing the interesting "war" between boys and girls in adolescence, and also a story about growing up. The story starts with the hero Bryce Loski's family moving to the town where the heroine Juli Baker lives. Juli Baker falls in love with Bryce Loski at first sight. However, this is not the beginning of all good things. Juli Baker's approach to Bryce Loski made him feel

uncomfortable. As a result, the conflicts between the two protagonists deepened and the "war" was declared. But after a series of events such as "sycamore tree incident", the attitude of Bryce Loski to Juli Baker has changed obviously. Finally, they let go of the past and fall in love with each other.

This paper will select several dialogues from the film to analyze, to explain how the characters in the film violate the cooperative principle, and how the politeness principle rescue the dialogues, and how these two principles achieve unity in the opposition of dialogues.

3.1 Violation of Quantity Maxim and Relation Maxim, and Remedy with Tact Maxim

Juli: Hi, I'm Juli Baker.

Steven: Hey, hey, what are you doing?

Juli: Don't you want some help?

Steven: No. There's some valuable things in there.

Juli: How about this one?

Steven: No, no, no. Run home. Your mother's probably wondering where you are.

This is the beginning of the film. When the Bryce family first moved to the small town where Juli lives, Juli fell in love with Bryce at first sight and wanted to carry luggage with Bryce in the car. Meanwhile, Bryce's father, Steven, was also in the car. When Julie was ready to help carry one of the boxes, Steven stopped her. When Juli asked "don't you want some help", Steven answered that he didn't need help, and then went on to say "there's some valuable things in there", which violates the quantity maxim: do not make your contribution more informative than is required. Then, Juli pointed to another box and asked if it was possible to carry the box. Steven answered that it was not necessary, and then continued to say, "run home." In this way, it violates two principles: one is quantity maxim, the other is the relation maxim: make your contribution relevant. In such a situation, Steven uses the tact maxim: minimize cost to other, to rescue the conversation and makes up for it: "your mother's probably wondering where you are," which is intended to express that he is worried about Juli's mother looking for her. By this sentence, it not only expresses Steven's true intention, but also saves Juli's face. In fact, Steven's intention is to keep Juli away from his luggage. From this, we can also see that Steven is contemptuous of his neighbor.

3.2 Violation of Quality Maxim and Remedy with Approbation Maxim

Mark: That is so neat. How about that, huh, Bryce?

Bryce: Yeah. Neat.

This conversation takes place when Bryce and his friends watch a snake swallow an egg. Mark sees the snake swallowing an egg. He sighs that this behavior is very quick and asks Bryce for his opinion. But Bryce's answer actually violates the quality maxim: do not say what you believe to be false, but uses the approbation maxim of politeness principle: minimize dispraise of other and maximize praise of other, that is, try to narrow the differences between yourself and others and make remedies. In fact, Bryce actually felt that this scene was very disgusting, and did not feel that the scene was neat. However, in order to save Mark's face, he agreed with Mark's evaluation, which also reflects that Bryce is a timid boy and not good at expressing his ideas, which may be influenced by his father's demanding personality.

3.3 Violation of Quality Maxim and Remedy with Tact Maxim

(1) Bryce: It's pickup day. The cans are in front.

Juli: I know. You need some help.

Bryce: No. Maybe I'll do it later.

Juli: Are those my eggs?

Bryce: Yeah. Yeah, I dropped them.

Juli: They're not broken. Why are you throwing them away? Don't you want them?

Bryce: It wasn't me. My dad didn't think it was worth the risk.

Juli didn't leave immediately after she sent the eggs to Bryce again. At this time, Bryce happened to go out and throw the garbage, so Juli found that he not only wanted to throw away the garbage, but also decided to throw away the eggs she had sent. Juli asked Bryce if they were her eggs, and Bryce answered her "Yeah. Yeah." This obviously violates the quality maximum: do not say what you believe to be false, because in fact, the eggs have not been dropped into the trash can and broken. However, in order not to hurt Juli, he chooses to violate this principle and replaced by the tact maxim: to minimize cost to others and make remedies. At the same time, in this dialogue, Bryce's final answer is "it wasn't me. My Dad didn't think it was worth the risk" also violates the quantity maxim, that is, do not make your contribution more informative than is required. Bryce gives more information than the conversation required, which also shows Bryce's irresponsibility and cowardice. After Juli found out that he had been throwing eggs as garbage, he directly shifted the responsibility to his father.

(2) Bryce: Hi. You look nice.

Juli: I heard you and Garrett making fun of my uncle in the library. And I don't wanna speak to you. Not now, not ever.

...

Juli: I'm sorry I was so angry when we first came in. I think everyone had a good time. Your mom was really nice to invite us. See you.

This dialogue happened when Bryce's mother Patsy invited Juli's family to have a dinner together. Before that, Juli had just heard Bryce discuss Juli and her uncle with her friend Garrett in the school library. Bryce wanted to deny that he had liked Juli, so he echoed Garrett's ridicule of Juli's uncle. Therefore, when she was at Bryce's home, Juli ignored Bryce's praise and did not express her gratitude. Instead, she expressed her dissatisfaction to Bryce and said that she did not want to talk to him, which obviously violates the relation maxim of cooperative principle: what you said should be relevant. However, after the dinner, Juli took the tact maxim of politeness principle: to minimize the damage to others, expressed her apology and remedied the previous violation of the cooperative principle, which also shows Juli's character of daring to love and hate, being kind and straightforward.

3.4 Violation of Manner Maxim and Remedy with Sympathy Maxim

Juli: Hi, Bryce. Brought you some more eggs.

Bryce: Wow. Thanks.

Juli: Did your family like the first batch?

Bryce: Do you even have to ask?

When Juli delivers eggs to Bryce, Juli wants to ask Bryce whether his family likes the eggs he has sent before, but Bryce's answer is very vague, "do you even have to ask," which can be interpreted as

like or dislike the eggs she sent. This answer does not explicitly answer Julie's question, which obviously violates the manner maxim of the cooperative principle: avoid ambiguity. Nevertheless, it also embodies the sympathy maxim of politeness principle: to minimize antipathy between self and other, so as to save Julie's face, trying to avoid directly expressing their family's antipathy to her eggs and avoid making her sad. Here we can see Juli's bright, outgoing character, but can also see Bryce's kind and warm-hearted side.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, this paper analyzes the characters' dialogues in the film "Flipped" by applying the cooperative principle and politeness principle, and further interprets the characters' personalities based on the two theories in the film, which is helpful to deeply understand the content of the film and feel its language style and artistic essence. At the same time, through this analysis, we may draw the following conclusions: the use of cooperative principle and politeness principle to analyze the dialogues of characters in the movie can help us better understand the conversational implicature and may also improve our English language understanding level.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank to Professor Yi Zhang, my supervisor in Northwestern Polytechnical University. She not only gives me spiritual encouragement, inspires me not to give up easily, but also helps me a lot to do research.

Conflicts of Interest

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Funding Statement

Sponsored by the Seed Foundation of Innovation and Creation for Graduate Students in Northwestern Polytechnical University, Number: CX2020033

References

- [1] 俞东明. 什么是语用学[M].上海:上海外语教育出版社, 2011:6.
- [2] 王娅. 从合作原则和礼貌原则的角度分析奥普拉·温弗里脱口秀节目[D]. 上海:上海外国语大学, 2010.
- [3] 马赛尔·马尔丹. 电影语言[M]. 北京:中国电影出版社, 1992:3.
- [4] 杨晓燕. 法国电影艺术与会话策略——从《无法触碰》看电影对白中合作原则与礼貌原则的对立统一[J]. 法国研究, 2017, (1): 96.
- [5] Grice, H. P. Logical and Communication[M]. New York: Academic Press, 1975: 307-308.
- [6] 何兆熊. 语用学[M].上海:上海外语教育出版社, 2011:70.
- [7] 何兆熊. 新编语用学概要[M].上海:上海外语教育出版社, 1999:211.
- [8] Leech, G. N. Principles of Pragmatics[M]. London:Longman,1983:132.