

Violation of Conversational Maxims in Shona

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Abstract: This paper looks at the infringement of conversational maxim in public conversations in Shona. It probes how the tenets of conversations as proposed by Grice (1975) are at times not observed without being uninformative or being uncooperative. Certain maxims can be ignored or violated yet speakers remain informative, cooperative and polite. The conversations referred to here are daily chats, talks and discussions in which Shona speakers find themselves in. The view taken in this paper is that when people violate maxims, or a maxim, there is one which they will be observing hence triggering implicature or the violation itself is a trigger for implicature. A number of ways in which the maxims are violated were found in Shona and categorized as maxim clash, opting out of a maxim and flouting of maxims. Besides these it was also noted that in Shona speakers show that they are cognizant of the maxims by hedging which shows they are about to violate a maxim. The data was obtained under naturalistic conversation settings and is analyzed within the features of conversation implicature.

Keywords; Cooperative Principle; conversational maxims; implicature; meaning; violation; hedging.

1. Introduction

Speakers always endeavor to contribute meaningful and productive utterances when they partake in conversations in order to further communication in a smooth manner. It is in the same spirit that listeners assume that their conversational partners are having the same beliefs as they do. This analysis of how conversation works is what Grice (1975) describes as endowed in the now famous Cooperative Principle. It is undoubtedly obvious that in any society people converse, chat and gossip about events of the day and personalities of their community. It is also through conversations of similar nature that even some of the most important pieces of information are passed on. In some instances such conversations can be described as imbalanced, that is, cases of reports where one person has a larger chunk in the whole discourse punctuated by questions and probably contributions. In such scenarios, the speakers will be in a dilemma of balancing between being uncooperative (ignoring certain maxims) and being polite. In light of such misgivings, this paper takes Grice's propositions to Shona, a language where they have not been fully studied to see how the underpinnings of his assumptions can be violated and to find out what triggers the violations as well as the intended implicature.

Implicature is an inference that is not a logical entailment.

Under normal circumstances people always want to remain cooperative during conversations and it was noted that in Shona, speakers can actually signal when they want to violate a maxim. They do so by using certain phrases which show non committal or that makes things 'fuzzy' (Lakoff, 1972). Technically this is hedging or the use of hedges and Yule (1996) calls them cautious notes. Hedges are good indicators that speakers are aware of maxims and try to show that they are observing them. This is the only way by which speakers present their propositions as opinions rather than facts (Hyland, 1998:5). In this paper we are going to show how Shona speakers employ hedges to show that they are sensitive to other people's feelings in a conversation and will treat that as a form of violating the maxims.

2. Cooperative Principle

Conversational analysis can best be done in the auspices of Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle (hereafter CP). Since the present study analyses Shona conversations, specifically the maxims of this principle, it is imperative to give a brief outline of the CP. The work of Grice on the CP cannot be understated and the effects cannot be underestimated as evidenced by the ever-increasing interest

on the subject. It led to an avalanche of studies in pragmatics and its development as a separate linguistics discipline (Davies, 2000). As such the subject is discussed in most textbooks in the area and also cited in associated disciplines (Horn, 1992). Such associated disciplines include Discourse Analysis where Grice's work has aroused a lot of debate (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Bavelas et.al, 1990; Davies, 2000).

Just like when people want to play a game they have to agree on a set of rules to govern the game and should abide by them to play fairly. However, these rules can be flouted in different ways resulting in fouls being committed but at times the one who flouts the rule does so for a reason. (A case in point, at the Soccer World Cup in South Africa a Mexican player handled a ball that was goal bound so as to save his team from defeat. The rules were applied and he was sent off but his team went on to win the game). Likewise if communication is to take place smoothly the participants must share the same conventions or some kind of rules that govern the act of communication. According to Grice, there should be cooperation between the speaker and hearer so as to make sense (Yang, 2008:64).

The CP is principally concerned with the distinction between 'saying' and 'meaning', trying to answer the question 'how do speakers know how to generate implicit meanings and how can they assume that their addressees will reliably understand their intended meaning' (Davies, 2000: 2). Therefore, CP is the basic underlying assumption speakers make when they speak to one another, that they are trying to cooperate with one another to engage in meaningful conversation. According to Davies (2000: 2), the CP is designed to deal with situations like the one below;

1. A: Is there another pint of milk?
B: I'm going to the supermarket in five minutes.

A competent English speaker has little trouble in inferring that there is no milk at the moment and the fact that some will be bought from the supermarket in a short while. After coming across such instances in conversations, Grice proposed the CP and its attendant maxims as a way of explaining the implication process. The CP is given by Grice (1975: 45) as below;

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required at the stage that which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of talk exchange in which you are engaged."

In this, Grice argues for a tacit agreement that exists between the speaker, hearer and all linguistic communications. This agreement should continue to hold even when a speaker manages to convey implicature which is not explicit. Since talking is a purposive and rational behavior made possible through conversational contribution, Grice argues that the CP is a rule of thumb (Yang, 2008). Grice encapsulated the CP in four maxims, generally referred to as Conversational Maxims. We will list the

maxims here as originally outlined by Grice.

2.1 Maxims

Quantity: 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of exchange.

2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality: Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: Be relevant.

Manner: Be perspicuous.

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
4. Be orderly.

According to Yule (1996), it is important to recognize that these maxims are unstated assumptions we have in conversations. The assumption is that people are normally going to provide an appropriate amount of information; we assume that they are telling the truth, they are being relevant and trying to be as clear as they can (Yule, 1996: 37). So we can say that here Grice was suggesting standard behavior in conversations. However even in games where the rules are well stipulated, there are always fouls which constitute unfair play or which renders the game unfair. It is the same with conversations. Davies (2000) notes that when an utterance appears not to conform to this model, we do not assume that it is nonsense, rather we assume that an appropriate meaning is there to be inferred. This brings us to yet another cog in Grice's postulation, namely implicature.

3. Implicature

Grice (1975) notes that in daily conversations people do not usually say things directly but tend to imply or suggest them, that is, the speaker often manages to convey implicature which does not express the information explicitly but the hearer may recognize through implication. According to Yang (2008: 59) implicature is when speakers are able to mean more than what is actually said. Thus, implicature is the additional, unstated meaning which the speaker implies. Implicature works where there is cooperation between the speaker and hearer. This basically sums what implicature is all about and how speakers and hearers of a language get along cooperatively and politely. Therefore, we can say that implicature is a component of the speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is meant in a speaker's utterance without being part of what is said (Horn, 1992). It is when the maxims are either observed or violated that an implicature is triggered. It is important to quickly note that the major focus of this article

is conversational as opposed to conventional implicature. The latter refers to what is meant by linguistic items in an utterance, that is, it is conveyed by the conventional meanings of words. According to Thomas (1995:57), conventional implicature has the same implicature no matter what the context is. Grundy (1995:47) also adds that it is conventional in the sense that i) it does not derive from knowing the rules for talk and ii) it is almost always associated with the same lexical item. The former refers to pragmatic inferences which arise from contextual factors and the understanding that conventions are observed in conversations. So how does conversational implicature work? Grice stipulates that there is a strict order of beliefs and assumptions that trigger implicature;

“S saying *p* conversationally implicates *q* if (i) S is presumed to be observing the maxim or at least the CP; (ii) the supposition that S believes *q* is required in order to make his saying *p* consistent with presumption; and (iii) the hearer H thinks that S thinks it is within H's competence to work out the supposition mentioned in (ii).” (Asher and Lascarides, 2010:29).

Asher and Lascarides (2010) note that this line of inference essentially captures the following; one adds information or content to the interpretation of utterances in order to ensure that any contribution that seem to be violating a maxim is doing so only apparently, rather than for real.

What we have attempted to describe is an ideal, standard situation where all factors are held constant and implicature can be manifest hence communication is possible and smooth. However, Yang (2008) notes that there are cases of failure of conversational implicature because of different reasons. The reasons could be of linguistic nature (that is, the linguistic form) or it could be because of failure to understand the speaker's real intentions or the misunderstanding of idioms of the language. We are also not going to be detailing these but suffice to say that conversation implicature can fail.

4. Violating the maxims in Shona conversations

The maxims that we outlined above, or more precisely their violation, forms the basis of inferences that we draw in conversations. Armed with the maxims and enough background information on implicature, let us now look at how they are violated in Shona. The objective is to see what the effects of violations are and try to relate them to the principle of cooperation in conversations. First, it is important that we look at implicature failure which is when there is a misunderstanding between the speaker and the hearer. The most common form of implicature failure noted in Shona is when a hearer fails to interpret idioms of the

language.¹

2. A: James ane ruoko.
James has a hand (*lit*)
“*James is a thief.*”

B: Uri kurevei?
What do you mean?

3. A: Pane arikufemera mugotsi mangu
There someone breathing at my
back (*lit*)
“*I am under pressure.*”

B: Hapana munhu ari kumashure kwako.
“*No one is at your back*”

In both cases there is no specific maxim to pin point as being violated but we can generally refer to this as miscommunication. It is the failure by Speaker B in both cases to interpret the idioms used here that brings about the miscommunication. In other words Speaker B is taking the literal meanings of the utterances. In example 2 the idiom means that someone is a thief while that in example 3 means that someone is putting pressure on the speaker to do something (like getting results or things done quickly). It was noted that it is not idioms only in Shona that bring about miscommunication but generally misinterpretation of figures of speech have the same results. It should also be noted that these violations which involve idioms of Shona are common where one of the speakers is not an L1 speaker of the language. From the data gathered, this was common in conversations between L1 and L2 speakers of Shona.²

The violations of maxims in Shona were classified into three categories, namely; maxim clash, opting out and flouting (after Yang, 2008). The classification of violations or rather non observances of maxims varies from scholar to scholar and is also determined by the nature of data. In this paper violation has been used as the umbrella term to refer to any kind of non observances of maxims. Below is a look at how maxims are violated in Shona.

4.1 Maxim clash

According to Ying (2006), maxim clash (usually between quantity and quality) occurs when the speaker presumably means to observe CP and yet he obviously cannot fulfill one of the two maxims at the same level. Maxim clash is evident in some conversations in Shona and it was noted to go in line with what Ying notes that it is normally the maxims of quantity and quality that clash.

4. A: John aenda kupi?

¹ The glosses given in this paper will be in the following order; first is the Shona version, then the literal translation and finally the intended meaning is given in italics.

² Most L2 speakers of Shona are Ndebele L1 speakers and they would not have mastered well the idioms of the language.

John has gone where
"Where has John gone to?"

B: Abuda.
 He (went) out
"He has gone out."

5. A: Vane mombe ngani?
 They have cattle how many
"How many cattle do they have?"

B: Hadzidariki gumi.
 No more ten
"Not more than ten?"

It is clear that in example 4, Speaker **A** is asking for a specific place or location where John went or at least is. The type of WH question in example 4 is one that asks for a place or location (Mukaro, 2012). Speaker **B** in turn gives a weaker, less informative response thereby violating the maxim of quantity. If Speaker **B** is really not sure of where John is then he cannot say somewhere he is not certain of since that will be violating the maxim of quality. The maxim of quality and quantity clash here and the quantity one is violated. Speaker **B** gives less information, thus violating the quantity maxim but anymore information would have been false so this upholds the quality maxim. Speaker **B** wants and manages to remain cooperative. His response therefore implies that he does not know where John is but he still gives information meaningful enough to ensure smooth conversation.

A closer look at example 4 brings to light another dimension to the cooperative principle. Since Speaker **B** is not sure about the information he is about to give he could have opted to satisfy both maxims by declining to give any information. The answer that satisfy both maxims would be *Handizivi* "I do not know." By this answer Speaker **A** would have satisfied the quality maxim by not saying that which he is not sure of and on the other hand the quantity maxim would not have been violated because no information is given. However, the speaker chose to uphold the quality maxim while violating the quantity maxim because it is polite. In as much as *Handizivi* would be the perfect answer it is impolite and sound very uncooperative. While *abuda* violates one maxim it is more polite than *handizivi* regardless of its faithfulness to both maxims. This is so because politeness and relevance are super maxims and have been suggested to determine the forms of other maxims. As such they are considered first before others. In this case politeness has been upheld while the quantity maxim was being violated. This is evidence to some sort of ranking of the maxims (borrowing from the Optimality Theory where there are ranking of constraints based on importance).

In example 5, the maxim of quantity is again violated in favor of the quality one. The implication is that Speaker **B** is not sure how many cattle 'they' have hence would not want to give information he believes to be false (upholding

the quality maxim). However, he gives a ceiling number which is not informative enough to fulfill the maxim of quantity. By avoiding saying the exact number Speaker **B** observes the maxim of quality. What we are saying here is not peculiar to Shona but was also noted to apply to English in a similar fashion.

6. **A** is driving to Meredith's place and asks **B**
 A: Where does Meredith live?
 B: Nevada.

Since Speaker **A** is already driving to Meredith's place then it means he is requesting specific details of the house, in terms of street and number. The possible implicature here is that Speaker **B** does not know where exactly Meredith lives. Scholars, like Levinson (1983) and Horn (1984), predict that the maxim of quality is always accorded a privileged status based on the fact that it is very hard to see how any other maxim can be satisfied without observing this maxim. Lewis (1969) calls it a convention of truthfulness hence it is rated above all other maxims.

4.2 Opting out

As has already been highlighted, implicature is a result of either violation or observance of a maxim. Important to point out is the fact that it is not always the case that when someone violates a maxim they are willingly being uncooperative. The above violation (maxim clash) has shown otherwise. From the outlook opting out seems to be an instantiation of being uncooperative but as the examples from Shona show the opposite is true. Thomas (1995:75) defines opting out as a situation when a speaker "chooses not to observe a maxim and states an unwillingness to do so."

7. A villager is from meeting the village head and a fellow ask him;
 A: Kwakadii kwawabva?
 How is where you from
"How was (it) where you are from?"

B: Hazvitauroki.
 It is unspeakable
"I cannot say anything."

8. John is unhappy and a friend asks him;
 Friend: Chii chirikukunetsa mazuvano?
 What is trouble days these
"What's troubling you these days?"

John: Haa, hazvina basa.
 Uh, it does not matter
"Uh, It's personal."

In both examples, it is clear that the maxim of quality is being violated. In example 7, Speaker **B** cannot, for reasons best known to him, give a detailed account or rather explicit information about the meeting. Speaker **B** knows that he should be cooperative and adhere to the maxim of quantity but in this situation he finds it impossible to do so and he states his unwillingness to observe it. The implicature of Speaker **B**'s response could be that he had a tough time in the meeting or the details of the meeting should not be divulged. The same can also be said for example 8 in which Speaker **B** indirectly declares his willingness to say what is troubling him hence openly violating the quantity maxim. The implicature the hearer can infer here is that whatever is troubling Speaker **B** is personal and probably confidential. From these examples we can also note that from another angle the violation signals lack of cooperation on the hearer but it is done politely.

4.3 Flouting

While other categories of violations of maxims seem to work with selected maxims, flouting was noted to be more widespread in Shona. For example, we have seen that it is normally the maxim of quantity that is violated in favor of the one of quality in maxim clash and in opting out. From the data obtained in Shona it shows that flouting occurs with all maxims, in other words all maxims can be flouted. When flouting a maxim the speaker is not on a misinformation drive but wants the hearer to look for the conversational implicature, which is an inferred meaning. This means that when a speaker flouts a maxim he expects the hearer to notice it and know that there is something intended. It should be emphasized that even with the flouts there is still effective communication. Maxims can be flouted for different reasons such as to create humor or irony as well as to avoid an uncomfortable situation. Let us now analyze how maxims are flouted in Shona.

4.3.1 Maxim of quality

9. Two friends are walking at a deserted community shopping centre and one pointing at the only functional shop says;

A: Ngatitengei chingwa muchitoro umo.

Let's buy bread in store that
"Let's buy bread from that store."

B: Madhongu amera nyanga.

Donkeys have grown horns
"There can never be bread in that store."

10. A boy talking to a girl;

Boy: Ndiwe nyenyedzi yangu.

It is you star mine
"You are so beautiful and important to me."

In example 9, Speaker **B** flouts the quality maxim so flagrantly that **A** can infer that there must be a special reason for being so uncooperative. Donkeys do not and will never have horns so Speaker **B** is imploring Speaker **A** to infer that there can never be bread in that shop. The response also shows that Speaker **B** may have tried to buy bread for a long time from the same shop but without ever finding any. The major tenet of the quality maxim is to avoid falsehoods. However, in example 10 the linguistic meaning is a lie (a star is a natural phenomenon happening in the extraterrestrial) which means the maxim has been flouted. If taken into context then we can infer the boy implied that the girl, just like a star showing brightly at night, is beautiful. It can also be noted here that in Shona the quality maxim is flouted in order to exploit it in achieving figures of speech like irony and metaphor. Example 10 above is a good example of metaphor in Shona.

4.3.2 Maxim of relation

11. Two people talking to each other
 and the other one says;

A: Kune musangano mangwana.

There is meeting tomorrow (*lit*)
"There will be a meeting tomorrow."

B: Ndirikuenda kuHarare nhasi.

I am going to Harare today (*lit*)
"I will not be able to attend it."

12. A villager talking to another says;

A: Sabhuku havachagoni kutonga.

Headman can't lead anymore (*lit*)
"The headman cannot lead perfectly."

B: Tingachienda zvedu kumba here?

Can we go home now? (*lit*)
"We might be heard talking about the headman."

There 'having a meeting tomorrow' and 'going to Harare today' are not related at all. Superficially Speaker **B** (in example 11) is being uncooperative by flouting the relation maxim which compels him to give relevant information. In the conversation Speaker **A** has to infer that Speaker **B** is implying that he will not attend the meeting because he is travelling to Harare and will definitely not be back in time for the meeting. It is the belief in Speaker **A** that Speaker **B** is saying something relevant in the conversation that he can understand the implication and also consider this to be a purposeful and smooth exchange. In example 12, if it is true that the headman is failing to lead then Speaker **B** is implying that (i) he does not have anything to do with it, (ii) fears victimization or (iii) the headman or a potential mole is within earshot. So far we can say that a maxim can be flouted for reasons which are not to be interpreted as being uncooperative.

4.3.3 Maxim of manner

13. At a scene after a fight, a conversation below ensues;

A: Chii chambonyatsoitika?

What really took place

“What really took place here?”

B: Mumwe abaya mumwe nebanga,
vauya vari vaviri asi vamwe vanga
vachimhanya.

Other stab other with knife, they came
two but others were running

*“One stabbed the other, they were two
on arrival but others were coming
running.”*

14: Parent asking daughter who is going out;

Parent: Uchadzoka nguvai?

You return what time?

“When will you be back?”

Daughter: Ndichatanga ndarukwa

musoro, ndozonotenga dhirezi asi
ndinenge ndambopfuura ndichidya,
ndozodzoka.

I first get plaited hair, then buy dress but
will have found something to eat, then I
come back.

*“I will first get my hair done, and then
proceed to buy a dress after passing
through having lunch, and then I will
come back.”*

Speaker **B** in example 13 is not committing to the maxim of manner. Speaker **A** wants a brief, orderly account of what transpired but Speaker **B** fails to do so instead giving an incoherent, ambiguous and obscure response. What Speaker **B** could be implying by being noncommittal is that he is also not clear of the chronology of events nor does he know the any names of the people involved. The most probable action to be taken by Speaker **A** is to go on and ask someone else. Example 14 is a case of prolixity as opposed to being brief. The parent just wants to know when the daughter is coming back; meaning a specific time, but the daughter gives the whole unnecessary itinerary. The implication is that the daughter will come home late. This we can infer from the number of activities she lines up. Thus we can say Speaker **A** flouted the manner maxim (specifically the “be brief” super-maxim) so as to try and justify her coming home late.

4.3.4 Maxim of quantity

15. A man at a funeral says to the bereaved:

A: Ndozvinoita upenyu.

That is what life does (*lit*)

*“Life is full of ups and downs but you
have to pick up and go on.”*

16. A brother asking his sister:

A: Muto unobikwa sei?

Soup is prepared how (*lit*)

“How is soup prepared?”

B: Unovhenganisa madomasi

nemvura pamoto.

You mix tomatoes and water on the
Stove.

“I do not have time for that.”

The requirement for this maxim is that you should give information enough to be understood in the context, it should not be too much or too little. In example 15, the speaker is violating this maxim by just giving a statement that might call for a ‘so what?’ question. However, this statement is pregnant with implications. It is a way of comforting, because it happens to everyone in life and at the same time we can infer that it is an encouragement to move on. The quantity maxim was flouted but the implication has a rich meaning, which the hearer also should infer. In example 16 from the surface one can think that Speaker **B** is uncooperative because there is more to preparing soup than mixing tomatoes with water on the stove which Speaker **B** does not state. So the implication is that she does not want to teach the brother how to prepare soup. This kind of implicature is also possible in certain cases where humor is intended.

5. Hedges

Hedges are not normally treated as violating maxims but rather they are viewed as trying to make things difficult to understand and to confuse. Yang (2008) notes that hedges enhance the flexibility of the speaker’s utterances and bring specific metaphorical effect. It is within this flexibility that the speakers show their consciousness to the different maxims before they can violate them. As Halliday (1994) puts it, hedges are the area of meaning that lies between ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ It is clear from the definitions that hedges are a violation of the CP but they are treated as a communicative strategy. For the purpose of this article, since it focuses on violation of maxims, we are going to list some of the phrases that are used as hedges in Shona. These phrases are treated as evidence for the speakers’ cognizance of the rules that govern communication while they also state their non observance. These hedges are also going to be treated as pragmatic markers that attenuate or weaken the strength of an utterance thereby violating one or more maxims. In doing so hedges also serve certain functions including face preserving/reduce face loss, disapproval, seeking agreement and also showing that the utterance is not something universally true but an opinion subject to further negotiation. Below are some of the phrases that show that Shona speakers know that they have to be

cooperative.

5.1 Consciousness to the maxim of manner

17. Handizivi kana zvichinzwisika
asi.....
*"I am not sure if this is understood
but..."*

18. Handizivi kana zvakajeka
asi.....
*"I am not sure if this is clear
but..."*

19. Zvinotivhiringidzei asi.....
"It is a little bit confusing but..."

In all the above Shona speakers are very conscious that whatever they say is not anywhere near clarity. They are certain that the information is either difficult to understand (example 17) or it is not clear (example 18). In example 19 the speakers makes it clear that whatever he is about to say is 'confusing' but still he wants to continue as shown by the use of *asi* "but." The conjunction just demonstrates the speaker's sensitivity to his violation of the maxim and also its implications. The nature of the hedge therefore helps in identifying the maxim that is about to be flouted.

5.2 Consciousness to the maxim of relation

20. Zvingaita kunge zvisina musoro
asi.....
"It may seem senseless but..."

21. Handizivi kana zvakakosha
asi.....
*"I am not sure if this is
important but..."*

22. Hameno kana zvichienderana
nezvirikutaurwa asi.....
*"I do not know if it is related
to what has been said but..."*

In the above examples the speaker is using hedging to give a disclaimer to what he is about to say because he either know or believe it is not related to the purpose of the exchange. The conjunction *asi* is again called on to make the hedge fit in well into the discourse. A closer look will also show that in example 21 and 22 the maxim of quality is also violated by the speaker saying something that he confess not to have knowledge of.

5.3 Consciousness to maxim of quantity

23. Ndisingatendereri....
"Without beating about the bush..."

24. Ndisingapedzi nguva....
"Without wasting time..."

25. Muchidimbu.....
"In short..."

The maxim of quantity is violated when the speaker choose to say he wants to save time by not giving more details (example 24) or by just giving a summary of the account (example 25). It was also noted that in Shona even when people do not have enough detail about what they are saying they still want to put a proposition. They do so using different phrases or sentences which act as hedges.

5.4 Consciousness to maxim of quality

26. Sekuona kwangu....
"As I see it..."

27. Sekuziva kwangu....
"The way I know it..."

28. Handinyatsoziva hangu asi...
"I am not so sure but..."

29. Fungidziro yangu ndeyekuti.....
"What I suspect is..."

All the above are hedges used in Shona to acknowledge violating the quality maxim. It is clear that the speaker wants to violate a maxim because they say before doing so. The use of the conjunction *asi* "but" in most of these hedges shows that the speaker knows that what they want to say violate a maxim but they still want to say it. If one is not clear then according to the maxim of quality they should not say something. In example 28 the hedge shows that the speaker is not clear but the following conjunction means he still wants to say something.

These hedges are not just used randomly and for no purpose. Example 22 above serves to preserve face or to reduce face loss in the event that the utterance is deemed to be irrelevant to the conversation. It also serves to seek agreement from the hearers. Hedges were also noted to be used to show disapproval in Shona conversations. From example 27 we may deduce that the speaker by saying, "as I know..." he is trying to disapprove the previous contribution by giving what he knows which he thinks is the right one. The function of example 26 is to show that the utterance is an opinion and not a fact therefore it is subject to further discussion.

6. Conclusion

This article set out to analyze the different ways and forms by which conversational maxims are violated. It is clear that the message people intend to convey is not wholly contained in the words they use but depends on the hearers' interpreting it taking into account context and the

implicated meaning. We have managed to show how Shona speakers violate the CP through non observance of its attendant maxims. This has been achieved, in part by outlining different hedges used when speakers violate certain maxims in Shona. However, this should be understood within the broader fact that it is when a maxim is violated that the implied meaning becomes clear (Davies, 2000). Shona speakers violate maxims for a reason. It is also important to note that there is an ongoing debate on CP in general and maxims in particular. For example, Grice is accused for not making the maxims sufficiently clear to make the theory testable since it requires the understanding of the underlying logic of how beliefs, goals and discourse interact (Asher and Lascarides, 2010:29). Scholars like Keenan (1976) goes on to conclude that Grice's maxims are trivial, naïve to the point of simple mindedness and cannot apply to phatic communion and other non-informational exchanges. It is in light of these accusations that the maxims should be treated not as prescriptions for ethical actions but rather as default settings shared by all speakers which enable them to interpret implicature which lies at the heart of pragmatic enterprise (Bach and Harnish, 1979). It is only if the speaker is operating, and presumes the hearer is operating, with such principles as defaults that she can expect the hearer to recognize the apparent violation of the maxims as a source of contextual inference (Levinson, 2000). Despite the findings of this article, this area remains a fertile one warranting further investigation in this language; particularly in the wake of follow up theories to Grice's (like Relevancy Theory of Sperber and Wilson, 1986). Shona still remain little researched in the field of discourse analysis hence need for more studies.

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