



An Animated and Narrated Glossary of
Terms used in Linguistics
presents

Maxim of Manner



Saying something

Suppose some person
made the utterance U in
some discourse.

Two aspects of U:

- i. the propositional
content of U
 - True/false?
 - (In)sufficient information?
 - Relevant?
- ii. the delivery of U
 - clear/vague/ambiguous?
 - happy/sad/excited



Did the man like the smell?

Definition

When engaged in conversation, the Maxim of Manner requires you to **be perspicuous**.

Includes (but not restricted to)

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



H.P. Grice (1975)

H.P. Grice

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Basic Idea

- The Maxim of Manner is **related to how something is being said in the conversation**.
- It is one of the four conversational maxims that are part of the **Cooperative Principle**.
- Grice proposes this maxim as an explanation for a certain kind of regularity in conversational behavior with respect to the way information is provided at each turn of a conversation.

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Example

Let's begin by considering two propositions:

P1: Laura ran to the pier.



P2: Laura jumped.



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Example

Logically,


$$P1 \ \& \ P2 = P2 \ \& \ P1$$

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Example

What did Laura do when she heard that Lauri's boat had arrived?

Laura ran to the pier and jumped.



One finds this bewildering. Why?


Because the Maxim is violated.

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Example

What did Laura do when she heard that Lauri's boat had arrived?

Laura jumped and ran to the pier.



One finds this conversation normal. Why?

Because the Maxim is observed

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Example

Logically,

$$P1 \ \& \ P2 = P2 \ \& \ P1$$

But *being orderly* in the presentation of information is important in conversations. This is an effect of the **Maxim of Manner**.

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Violation

What did Laura do when she heard that Lauri's boat had arrived?

Laura ran to the pier and jumped.



Deliberate and apparent violation of maxims is called "flouting".

We do not expect the Maxim to be violated.
Flouting must be motivated.

Inferences obtained from flouting of maxims are called **implicatures**.


The woman in red may be implicating that *Lauri is Laura's nemesis*.

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Scope of Manner

Violations of the Maxim of Manner can take many forms:

- Order of presentation of information
- Vagueness and ambiguity
- Volume and pace
- Choice of words
- Attitude
- Even facial/gestural expressions

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The End

Wee, Lian-Hee and Winnie H.Y. Cheung (2009)
An animated and narrated glossary of terms used in Linguistics.
Hong Kong Baptist University.

