



An Animated and Narrated Glossary of  
Terms used in Linguistics  
*presents*

# Cooperative Principle



## Definition

The Cooperative Principle (CP) is a principle of conversation postulated by H. P. Grice (1975).

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



## Motivation

Read this:

*I would like some salt please. This kitchen does not store harmful chemicals.*

Did it make any sense? **NO!!**

Obvious connection between the sentences missing.

Slide 3



## Motivation



I would like some salt please.

This makes better sense WHY?

This kitchen does not store harmful chemicals.

Slide 4



## *Ideas of the CP*

According to Grice,

- Conversations do **not** normally consist of a series of **disconnected remarks** and
- are characteristically, to some degree, **cooperative efforts**.
- Each participant **normally recognizes** in conversations, to some extent, **a common purpose**.
- Given that conversation is a **rational** and **purposive** behavior, it is possible that there is a generally accepted principle which each participant is **assumed** to observe in conversations.

Slide 5



## *Conversational Maxims*

Grice has elaborated the CP in four sub-principles, called **conversational maxims**.

1. Maxim of Quantity
2. Maxim of Quality
3. Maxim of Relation
4. Maxim of Manner

The CP together with its attendant four maxims are used as bases for explaining an interesting conversational phenomena: **implicature**.

Slide 6



## 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.

