



The Role of Turn-taking and Grice's Maxims in *The Killers* by Hemingway

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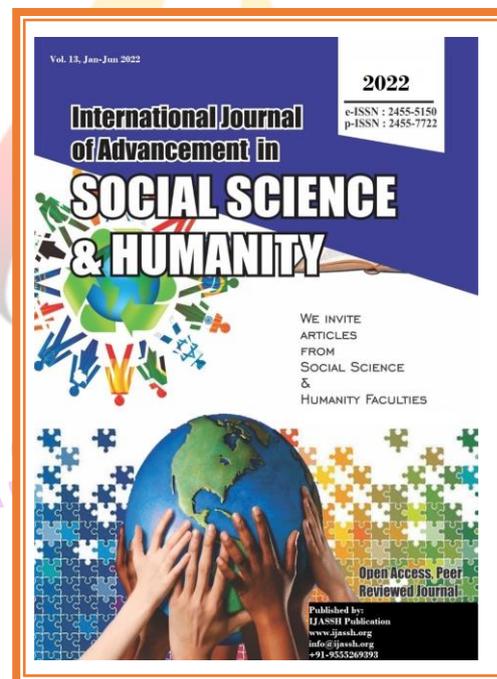
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ABSTRACT

In the story of the killers, Hemingway portrayed the poisonous situation between the hero and his killers. There is no way to convince the killers not to kill, and the strangest thing is that there is no way to convince the dead man to escape. The killers in this story are distinguished and calm to the fullest extent, they committed their crime in their depth before they started the real killing. Therefore, the repercussions that can precede the killing process also end as the dead or the victim becomes. Hemingway's story puts us in the context of the poisonous situation that combines a killer and a dead. It is as if he wants to tell us through his controlled narration of the circular direction of the course of history, especially since he did not address in his story the motives of the killers or the victim's attempt to avoid his destiny.

Keywords: *Turn-taking, theory, speaker, story, meaning*

INTRODUCTION

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) has been believed as one of the most noteworthy writers and novelists of the world. His short stories are specially very noticeable and fascinating. *The Killers* (1927) is the title of a short story which was written by this great writer. It is about the story of how two criminals intend to kill a famous boxer, named Ole Anderson, who has been hiding. The plot is that during prohibition in the 1920s in one winter evening, around dusk, Max and Al as two over-dressed strangers in black go into a restaurant and order something which is not available. Then, Al orders Nick and Sam, the Black cook, to the kitchen, where he ties them up. In the meantime, Max tells George that he and Al have been hired to kill Ole Anderson, an elderly boxer, who, they've heard, eats dinner there every night.

When the boxer doesn't show up in the restaurant, they leave. After these two leave the restaurant, George as the manager of the restaurant sends Nick to inform Ole of what is going to happen to him. Nick finds Ole lying while he has all his clothes on. Nick is really surprised that

Ole does not show any especial reaction to the criminals' showing up. He's tired, he says, of running. Nick leaves and returns to the restaurant, where he tells George and Sam that he's leaving the town because he can't tolerate to see a man waiting, passively, to be killed by a couple of killers. This paper will be the analysis of turn-taking and Grice's maxims in this short story. So, it will be in two parts: one part belongs to the analysis of turn-taking in a selected part and the other part will be the analysis of Grice's maxims. But before starting the analysis, there should be an introduction to the mentioned theories.

TURN-TAKING THEORY

Stylistics as an innovative field of study involves a wide collection of theories which are all very significant. Turn-taking theory that was founded through Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson in "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation" in the journal *Language*, December 1974 is about the rules that the speakers must follow in order to build and allot turns. What is meant by the turn-taking theory is the process through which

the participants in a conversation decide who will speak next.

It is really necessary and significant to know when it is required to have his role in conversation because it helps the progress of talking to be more cooperative. So, the speakers should know the way to distinguish the right role taking and the period of each stop among them. So very important to learn the way the person speaker during somebody else is speaking is related to the issue of overlap. It means that when there is more than one person in a conversation, overlapping or interruption is really probable because two or more people may speak at the same time. Or even, as Wales (2011, p. 429) says, it may happen that one speaker interrupts another ("turn-stealing"). Therefore, it rarely happens that all the rules related to this theory are followed step by step because they are most often disrupted.

GRICE'S MAXIMS

The multiplicity of deliberative approaches and their sources, makes us wonder about: the concept of deliberative? And about some of the major concepts, upon which the deliberative field is based? Then search for the source of these concepts? With this, we will try to answer the questions, by presenting some opinions circulating in this context. 1- The concept of pragmatic linguistics: There have been many opinions that dealt with the research foundations and roots that were the primary pillars of contemporary pragmatics. Some of them dated her since antiquity; It used the Latin word pragmatics, and the Greek pragmatics meaning (practical). Some of them trace its foundation to the analytic philosophy of the philosopher Gottlob Frege and

Wengenstein (1). 1-1- Deliberativeism in the West. Pragmatic linguistics is a linguistic trend that is concerned with the study of language and its users, then taking into account the places of communication and the situation of the interlocutors in certain communicative contexts. Pragmatism intersects with different cognitive sciences, which made them theories that have not yet been completed, and their concepts emerged from different sources, which made every researcher know them based on his field of work, and from the angle from which he looks at the language. What resulted in the emergence of definitions that attract pragmatics, "has been defined as: a trend in linguistic studies, concerned with the effect of the conversational interaction on the discourse situation, and this interaction entails the study of all linguistic and rhetorical data related to pronunciation, especially the implications and implications that generate use in the context. These include data: The speaker's beliefs and purposes, his personality, his cultural composition, and who participates in the linguistic event. External facts, including spatio-temporal conditions and social phenomena associated with language. - The common knowledge between the interlocutors, and the effect of the verbal text on them

The second stylistic mechanism in this paper is of the Gricean maxims which are mainly four: quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. According to Kordic (1991), these maxims seek to express "specific rational principles observed by people who obey the cooperative principle" (pp. 31-32). What is meant by each maxim is as Grice (1975, p. 89) discusses:

Quality: Attempt to contribute the truth which mean:

1. *Make no false in your talking*
2. *Do not talk about something you are not sure about*

Quantity: Put what you contribute as the required facts no more than that

Suitability: Must be suitable to the subject

Manner: Be clear, meaning that:

1. No odd in
2. Prevent strange words
3. Sum up in talking
4. Introduce matters in order

So, according to Paul Grice (1913-1988) as the one who first founded this theory, these maxims are introduced to help "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" (pp. 183-98).

Again, just like the rules of turn-taking, it is not easy to follow these maxims all the times because there are some occasions in which the speakers have to flout them. This failure to observe a maxim certainly has a particular meaning; for example, this flouting may be intended by the person who talks in the opposite influence. This extra meaning is called "implicature" that indicate the sense of matter and talk about other matter. The meanings could follow some specific goals like preserving good social relations, losing the sense by false talking and good introducing (cited <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/implicatur e/>).

In fact, Grice developed his theory to describe these implicatures. Moreover, tried to tell the way these meanings are realized. Grice believed that what would lead to the creature of the implicatures was *flouting* the maxims which occurred in the biased talking of the person who do not follow the order and the listener thinks the talking person give other idea. So it Searl mean by *(1975, pp. 265-6) called an "indirect speech act"*.

Analysis of Turn-taking in *The Killers*

The part which will be discussed here belongs to a conversation which is mainly between George as the manager of the restaurant and the two criminals who are ordered to kill the boxer. They are talking about dinner because they have just arrived at the restaurant and want something that is not available. The parts related to George have been underlined, the parts by **Max** are written in bold, and the rest which are by Al is written in *italic*.

Selection 1

George looked at the clock on the wall behind the counter.

"It's five o'clock."

"The clock says twenty minutes past five," the second man said.

"It is twenty minutes fast."

"**Oh, to hell with the clock,**" the first man said. "**What have you got to eat?**"

"I can give you any kind of sandwiches," George said. "You can have ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, liver and bacon, or a steak."

"**Give me chicken croquettes with green peas and cream sauce and mashed potatoes."**

“That’s the dinner.”

“Everything we want’s the dinner, eh? That’s the way you work it.”

“I can give you ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, liver—”

“I’ll take ham and eggs,” the man called Al said. He wore a derby hat and a black overcoat buttoned across the chest. His face was small and white and he had tight lips. He wore a silk muffler and gloves.

“Give me bacon and eggs,” said the other man. He was about the same size as Al. Their faces were different, but they were dressed like twins. Both wore overcoats too tight for them. They sat leaning forward, their elbows on the counter.

“Got anything to drink?” Al asked.

“Silver beer, bevo, ginger-ale,” George said.

“I mean you got anything to drink?”

“Just those I said.”

“This is a hot town,” said the other.
“What do they call it?”

“Summit.”

“Ever hear of it?” Al asked his friend.

“No,” said the friend.

“What do they do here nights?” Al asked.

“They eat the dinner,” his friend said.
“They all come here and eat the big dinner.”

“That’s right,” George said.

“So you think that’s right?” Al asked George.

“Sure.”

As the underlined parts show, George has about nine turns, Max has about seven turns and Al has also seven turns. Although George has the most turns, he is not the one who initiates the conversation but those two men. It means that they ask George questions and he has to answer them. In addition, after talking about dinner, the topic is changed to the city and its name. This change of topic is done by Max who speaks more than the other, Al. Max is also the one who starts talking or allocates the turns by asking others some questions. His turns are also longer than those by Al and this implies his being more powerful than his friend. However, in some other parts it seems that Al is more powerful because especially at the end of this selected conversation, we see that Al also asks his friend and George questions; or in one part when he answers his friend's question about the name of the town, he doesn't wait for others to speak but he himself starts the conversation by asking, "Ever hear of it?" and in this way, he begins to control the conversation. So, it is concluded here that these two men are of the same power and we cannot say that one is more powerful than the other one. But it is clearly visible that they are more powerful than the third participant that is George.

Selection 2

This second selection is a conversation between Nick as a recurring character in Hemingway's fiction and Ole as the boxer who is intended to be killed by the criminals. The sentences by Nick are underlined and those by Ole are in bold.

Nick looked at the big man lying on the bed.

“Don’t you want me to go and see the police?”

“No,” Ole Anderson said. “That wouldn’t do any good.”

“Isn’t there something I could do?”

“No. There ain’t anything to do.”

“Maybe it was just a bluff.”

“No. It ain’t just a bluff.”

Ole Anderson rolled over toward the wall.

“The only thing is,” he said, talking toward the wall, “I just can’t make up my mind to go out. I been here all day.”

“Couldn’t you get out of town?”

“No,” Ole Anderson said. “I’m through with all that running around.”

He looked at the wall.

“There ain’t anything to do now.”

“Couldn’t you fix it up some way?”

“No. I got in wrong.” He talked in the same flat voice. “There ain’t anything to do. After a while I’ll make up my mind to go out.”

“I better go back and see George,” Nick said.

“So long,” said Ole Anderson. He did not look toward Nick. “Thanks for coming around.”

Nick has six turns while Ole has eight turns. In spite of having more turns in comparison with Nick, Ole seems to be really passive and powerless because it is Nick who just asks and initiates the conversation. This passivity also shows how hopeless and tired Ole is because he

does not make any attempt to escape the killers. In fact, it can be concluded that while Ole's turns are more and he speaks more words by having the longer turns, he is less powerful and this may contrast what we know of the turn-taking rules.

Analysis of Grice's Maxims in *The Killers*

This part belongs to the part in which the two criminals have left the restaurant and George is telling the cook called Sam about their intention. The sentences by Sam are underlined, those by George are in bold, and those by Nick are in *italic*.

Selection

The two of them went out the door. George watched them, through the window, pass under the arc-light and across the street. In their tight overcoats and derby hats they looked like a vaudeville team. George went back through the swinging door into the kitchen and untied Nick and the cook. (Hemingway the killers, 3)

“I don’t want any more of that,” said Sam, the cook. “I don’t want any more of that.”

Nick stood up. He had never had a towel in his mouth before.

“Say,” he said. “*What the hell?*” He was trying to swagger it off.

“**They were going to kill Ole Anderson,**” George said. “**They were going to shoot him when he came in to eat.**”

“*Ole Anderson?*”

“**Sure.**”

The cook felt the corners of his mouth with his thumbs.

“They all gone?” he asked.

“**Yeah,**” said George. “**They’re gone now.**”

“I don’t like it,” said the cook. “I don’t like any of it at all”

“**Listen,**” George said to Nick. “**You better go see Ole Anderson.**”

“*All right.*”

“You better not have anything to do with it at all,” Sam, the cook, said. “You better stay way out of it.”

“**Don’t go if you don’t want to,**” George said.

“Mixing up in this ain’t going to get you anywhere,” the cook said. “You stay out of it.”

“*I’ll go see him,*” Nick said to George. “*Where does he live?*” (Hemingway the killers, 4)

The cook turned away.

The conversation is mainly between George and Sam who was tied up by one of the criminals in the kitchen. Now that they have left the restaurant, he is talking with George but it is clearly evident that he is scared to death because he speaks too much and asks a lot of questions. He also repeats what he has said twice which signifies the flouting of the quantity maxim. Actually, this kind of flouting shows how frightened and excited he is that he can't stop talking. In one point it is also George who flouts this maxim when he repeats a phrase twice:

“**They were going to kill Ole Anderson,**” George said. “**They were going to shoot him when he came in to eat.**”

In the following part of the conversation, we also see that while George and Nick are talking about the necessity to inform Ole about the criminals' intention, Sam utters such an irrelevant sentence which is an example of flouting the maxim of relevance. This example also signifies his being too much excited and scared because we know that in these cases people are unable to think in a proper manner and instead talk continuously.

“You better not have anything to do with it at all,” so he said. “You better stay way out of it.” Hemingway the killers, 4)

Final conversation

Did you see Ole ?”

“Yes,” said Nick. “He’s in his room and he won’t go out.” Hemingway the killers, 9)

The cook opened the door from the kitchen when he heard Nick’s voice .

“I don’t even listen to it,” he said and shut the door.

“Did you tell him about it?” George asked.

“Sure. I told him but he knows what it’s all about.”

“What’s he going to do?” Hemingway the killers, 10)

“Nothing.”

“They’ll kill him.”

“I guess they will.”

“He must have got mixed up in something in Chicago.”

“I guess so,” said Nick.

“It’s a hell of a thing!”

“It’s an awful thing,” Nick said.

They did not say anything. George reached down for a towel and wiped the counter.

“I wonder what he did?” Nick said.

“Double-crossed somebody. That’s what they kill them for” Hemingway the killers, 10)

“I’m going to get out of this town,” Nick said .

“Yes,” said George. “That’s a good thing to do

“I can’t stand to think about him waiting in the room and knowing he’s going to get it. It’s too damned awful.”

“Well,” said George, “you better not (Hemingway the killers, 10)

The last conversation between Nick and Horah summed up the inevitable fate of the hero. The dialogue was in short sentences that reflected the fear for Oli and the failure of the desperate attempt to save his life. The sentences did not need extensive explanation, repetition of sentences, or clarification of what would happen. Everything was clear, Oli is a fugitive from a past in which he committed a crime and no longer wants to escape. He is ready to receive punishment at will and without coercion. This is what Nick wanted to say in his last sentence that he is terrified and does not want to wait to hear the painful news and George agrees with him There is no longer hope. Leave the village so that Oli's fate does not hurt you.

CONCLUSION

The writer is one of the greatest American stories writers. *The Killers* is the title of

story by him in which I am going to analyze the turn-taking theory and Grice's maxims. These two theories are among the most useful mechanisms in stylistics which should be followed in a conversation but there are most often some failures and they may be flouted by the speakers, resulting into some implicatures. The analysis of turn-taking theory was done in two excerpts. The first one showed that the two killers were more powerful than the restaurant's manager because they were the ones who asked questions, started the conversation, or changed the topic. The second selection but was in contrast with the usual rules of this theory because although Ole had more turns and spoke more, he was passive and less powerful. In fact, he would just answer the questions asked by Nick. The third selection belonged to the conversation between Sam and George and it showed how Sam was so frightened and excited that he could not stop talking and repeating his utterances, resulting into flouting the maxim of quantity.

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