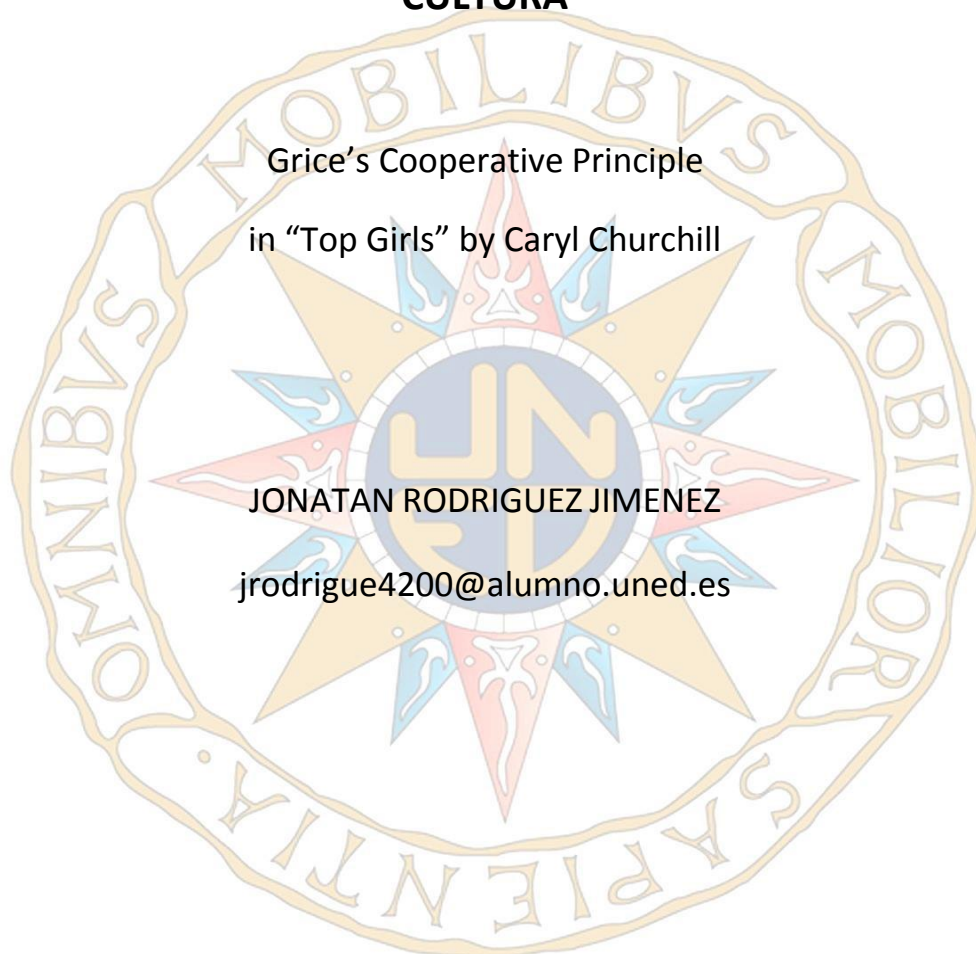




## TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

### GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES: LENGUA, LITERATURA Y CULTURA



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## Index

Abstract	1
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Objectives	4
1.2 Theoretical framework	5
1.3 Reinterpreting Grice's Principles: beyond the CP	7
1.4 Current criticism on the CP	8
1.5 The violation of CP at work	10
1.6 The violation of CP at home	11
2. Methodology	13
3. Analysis of the dialogues	14
3.1 At work	14
3.1.1 Jealousy	14
3.1.2 Sexism	17
3.1.3 Doubt	19
3.2 At home	20
3.2.1 Doubt	21
3.2.2 Accusations	25
3.2.3 Envy	31
3.2.4 Social classes and politics	32
4. Ending	34
5. Conclusions	35
6. Bibliography	37

## **Abstract**

In this document the theory of "Cooperative Principle" by Paul Grice is used as a theoretical basis to analyse the most important dialogues in the play "Top Girls" by Carol Churchill. By doing that, it is found that characters are often not cooperative and break the maxims as a self-defence mechanism to avoid arguments with each other. Besides, it provides information about their personality and evolution throughout the play. Finally, the violation of the maxims also helps to trigger the plot.

### **1. Introduction**

The conversations in daily situations have multiple meanings that go beyond of what people say taking into consideration the literal meaning of the words. Yet, these meanings can be understood due to the context or the shared background.

Paul Grice stated that when following a conversation people want to be cooperative in order to be understood. He called this idea the "Cooperative Principle" and is based on taking into account four maxims: maxim of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner. When people do not follow these maxims and break them they create an implicature, which is the meaning beyond the literal significance of the words (Grice, 1975) .

If these principles are taken into account, it is difficult to claim what communication really is, all the implications it has and the possibilities of it beyond the mere meaning of the words uttered. As one of the most famous linguist, Chomsky (1979) stated:

There is no reason to believe ... that the "essential purpose" of language is "communication". Language can be used to transmit information, but it also serves many other purposes: to establish relations among people, to express or clarify thought, for play, for creative mental activity, to gain understanding, and

so on. In my opinion, there is no reason to accord privileged status to one or the other of these modes. (p. 89)

Communication is not only the action of putting words together to transmit an idea, it is a basic tool for human relationships, to understand each other, and to create and express our feelings.

One of the main problems is the limitation of words. Humans can transmit much more information than what is really inside the meaning of words. What is beyond the literal meaning of words might be the real idea wished to be conveyed.

The following work deals with the mentioned theories put into practise to analyse the play “Top Girls” by Caryl Churchill. The analysis is aimed at understanding the reasons of the characters to break the maxims and not be cooperative, what they really meant when talking, the information readers received about them when they break the maxims and how the observation of the breaking of maxims reflects their evolution as characters. This analysis is placed in two different setting: the family and the job place.

Churchill is a British playwright who based her work on feminist topics and the exploration of social abuse and power. She wrote “Top Girls” in 1982 and won an *Obie Award* for it.

“Top Girls” is a play focused on many topics still discussed in society today. Firstly, the role of women at home and at work. The protagonist, Marlene, is promoted and has to deal with criticism and jealousy from her work colleagues, Nell and Win, and even has an argument with Mrs. Kidd, the wife of Howard, a colleague, who begs her to resign because she thinks that her husband deserves the job more than her just for being a man.

Secondly, success and failure are important issues in the play. Marlene and her work colleagues, who work in an employment agency, are obsessed with becoming more powerful and earning more money. This fact creates tension

between them although they are apparently friends. They mistreated people who they believe are not intelligent. Besides, Marlene has a terrible argument with her sister, Joyce, about the topic because her daughter, Angie, is not intelligent.

They also compare each other in terms of success and failure. Marlene thinks that Joyce's life is a failure since she has not left the neighbourhood and Joyce's thinks the same about Marlene because she has neither social life nor a family of her own.

Finally, social class is also dealt with in the play. Marlene is very critical with which she considers "the working class", for her they are lazy and stupid. A category in which Joyce feels comfortable and, therefore, she does not agree with Marlene. Also, Joyce warns Marlene that her daughter, Angie, who she left with her to seek a career, is not very intelligent, so she might be within this class in Marlene's standard.

The play is divided in three acts. In the first act, there is a fictional dinner party in which Marlene invites famous historical women to celebrate her promotion. The second act is set in the office, where Marlene discusses with her work colleagues and Howard's wife. The third act is set in Joyce's house where they have an argument about their lives, the past choices and the present situation

The division of the play in two settings are very important and realistic as they are where people established countless conversations which provide opportunities to analyse if the maxims are broken. Therefore, the analysis in the following document is also divided in these settings and the main themes aforementioned.

## 1.1 Objectives

The project is based on Grice's "Cooperative Principle" as a tool to analyse language communication among members of a same family and work colleagues. The fundamental question is to determine how people violate the maxims to talk or avoid talking about topics which are compromising and hurt them.

A crucial objective is to observe the manner the characters violate Grice's Principle because it reveals information about their personality, how they feel about the present situation and the way they evolve during the play. Moreover, their development and violations help the play to develop.

In order to do it, an analysis of the most important dialogues in the play "Top Girls" by Caryl Churchill will be carried out. It will determine which maxims (quantity, quality, relation and manner) are flouted by the protagonist and the secondary characters of the story.

The analysis will be done at home setting, that is, when the protagonists: Marlene, her sister, Joyce, and her niece, Angie, which is her daughter in reality, are having conversations in Joyce's house. The dialogues at home provides a myriad of motives to flout the maxims and, in turn, not being cooperative, but the main reason to study it is to find out if they flout the maxims to express their feelings and ideas about their family problems: Marlene abandoned them in pursue of a professional career, Joyce feels overwhelmed and thinks Angie is not a capable person, and the sisters accused each other of their past and present problems. From the analysis of their dialogues, conversational implicatures will be observed and, thus, the real meaning they convey through their words when they have tense conversations.

Another important setting focused on is the office where Marlene works. There, she will have to face criticism and jealousy due to the fact that she has been

promoted instead of a man. Moreover, the maxims she flouts will be observed, and the reasons to not be cooperative so as to deal with the people that judge her, and want her to resign from the position she has just been promoted. Her work colleagues also flout the maxims when they attack her, so they will also be taken into account.

In other words, the project is mainly aimed at analysing and categorising the maxims that are flouted in the conversations between the main protagonists of the play, Marlene, her family and work colleagues, when they express their opinion about important issues in their lives and job. Moreover, another objective is to analyse how the maxim flouted help to characterise the protagonists and develop the plot of the play.

## **1.2 Theoretical framework**

The most important theory this project is built on is The Cooperative Principle by Grice (1975). In this theory the author states that within a conversation people will cooperate to make themselves understood and avoid miscommunication, in other words, to make their message clear and ensure that it is understood. He elaborated the following maxims that people should follow to reach the goals mentioned before:

### **The cooperative Principle**

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

### **The maxim of Quantity**

1. Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purpose of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

### **The maxim of Quality**

Try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

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

### **The maxim of Relation**

1. Be relevant.

### **The maxim of Manner**

Be perspicuous, and specifically:

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

(Grice, 1975, pp. 45-48)

However, Grice acknowledged that not all the times in conversation speakers will follow these maxims, yet it will not mean that they are not being cooperative. When people are not following a principle and are trying to convey a meaning which is not literal in the words they utter, speakers are implicating a meaning which hearers have to infer: these are called *conversational implicatures*. For a good understanding of the conversation it has to be place in a context, and the background information shared by the people might be crucial for their understanding. Let's see an example:

Alan: Are you going to Paul's Party?

Barb: I have work to do.

(Davis, 2014)



In this example Barb is flouting the maxim of quantity and relation due to the fact that she is saying that she has to work, but this information is not required and it has not relation to the question. Still, she is not saying that she is not going but implying it. If the context had been provided and there was shared background information Alan could understand that she might be also implying that she does not want to go for an unknown reason to the readers, and which is not stated but they might know, or she is just being honest and prefers to finish her work because it is more important than the party.

From the basic Cooperative Principle explained by Grice followed a great deal of theories that tried to complement or better them. The following section summarises some of the most important ones.

### **1.3 Reinterpreting Grice's Principles: beyond the CP**

An author who tried to reduce and reinterpret Grice's maxims was Horn (1984). He limited the maxims to the Q Principle and R Principle which were a new formulation of the Relation and Manner maxims respectively:

- The Q principle: Make your contribution sufficient. Say as much as you can.
- The R principle: Make your contribution necessary. Say no more than you must. (p. 13)

A neo-gricean author is Levinson (2000) who establish three principles based on Grice's Quantity (Q1 and Q2) and Manner maxims:

- Q-principle (Q1): Do not provide information which is weaker than the information that you know, unless it will contradict the I-Principle.
- I-Principle (Principle of informativeness, based on Grice's Q2 maxims): bearing in mind the first principle, give as little information as necessary to achieve communication purposes.
- M-Principle (Manner): a statement said in an abnormal manner, is not normal and indicates an abnormal situation.

Geoffrey Leech (1983) added another principle: the Politeness Principle, which is similar to the ones created by Grice. He thought about six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy. Yet, he did not state that these principles were universal, on the contrary, he wanted to make clear that politeness, and, in turn, the way in which these principles might be flouted, is very likely to vary in each different culture. For instance, what might be considerate polite in Spain might be considerate impolite in the United Kingdom. (p. 132)

Other researchers who worked together to go beyond The Cooperative Principle were Sperber and Wilson (1995). They created the Relevance Theory by which Grice's Cooperative Principle is refused and substituted by only the Relevance Principle, which briefly states:

- Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance.
- Every action of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance (p. 260)

Relevance is triggered by the balance between the positive cognitive effects, that is, if the hearer can understand and activate previous knowledge in his mind, and the processing effort he has to undergo to do so. The less effort he makes, the more relevant the information might be and more successful the communication will be.

These authors are ones of the most well known in the field of pragmatics but there are more researchers who are still investigating taken as a basis the Cooperative Principle. The following section reviews some of the most updated articles which are critical to Grice's theory.

#### **1.4 Current criticism on the CP**

Grice's theory of Cooperative Principle is criticized due to his ideal perception of human communication. He took for granted that individuals want to exchange information effectively so as to solve their problems. Yet, he did not consider

that there are times when people do not willingly want to express their real thoughts or, instead, really want to mislead hearers. Therefore, the reasons a person has to participate in a conversation, which might be more than the mere exchange of information, is a key concept in the following or violation of the principles (Kauffeld, 2001). In fact, there might be people who will only follow the principle and be cooperative when they want to achieve an extra-linguistic goal. If they know that being truthful, or saying all the information they have, will give them more opportunities at the job place, then they will follow the principle (Lumsden, 2008).

Moreover, Grice did not contemplate sophisticated social contexts where people might want to be accepted by the rest or where someone must hide information to not hurt people or themselves. Therefore, the Cooperative Principle is too universal and ideal in terms of conversational situations because it does not take into account conflicting interests of conversation's participants, which might force them to not follow the principle (Atefeh, 2013).

Ladegaard offers an interesting research in which he analyses the conversation between teachers and students that demonstrates that there are times where non-cooperation is the central point of the talk. In one of the examples, a student reluctantly answers questions about his future just to avoid the conversation and finishes it saying that he wants to get rid of the teachers and do something else than attending school, which might be more entertaining. By this example, the author shows how conversations might be based on non-cooperation and, as a consequence, the perfect setting where cooperation among speakers will always take place is biased (Ladegaard, 2009).

Other authors such as Zhanfang and Weichu state that the explanations of the violation are not described extensively and, thus, sometimes they are too vague and general. Furthermore, they theorise that the causes of violation of the principle have not been properly investigated and, therefore, the reasons are subjected to personal reasoning and interpretation, which might lead to countless motives (Weichu & Zhanfang, 2017) .

Taking the definition of the term “cooperation” as a central point in his investigation, Davis states that it has been a misleading word with an ambiguous definition. Yet, researchers have focused too much on it and have even been the major topic of their critiques. He argues that this line of work is a mistake because what Grice was trying to analyse were the implicatures created when violating the maxims. Consequently, Grice’s concern was more focused on the rationality behind the conversations, that is, the reasons and ways to violate the maxims trying to transmit information. Davis contemplates that many authors have tried to give reasons for that process, for example, politeness, efficiency or humour but Grice himself did not clarify the type of motivations behind the rationality. Finally, the author wonders if this term was so important why Grice did not create a Rationality maxim (Davies, 2000) .

### **1.5 The violation of CP at work**

As said before, the settings where conversations will be analysed in the light of the Cooperative Principle, to observe if they are flouted or not, are the family and the job place. In this part of the document some investigations are described as examples of analysis of conversation in those settings.

Tian centres his investigation in business negotiations. He states that the application of the Cooperative Principle is crucial in achieving a successful outcome, for example, to convince a possible client to buy your products, or to reach an agreement to a reasonable discount in a sale. If negotiations are based on arriving to a good outcome for both parts, the Principle must be followed. However, the author also argues that cultural differences must be studied before doing any kind of verbal interaction because what might be informatively necessary to say for an American person, might not be so for a Chinese person. Therefore, business people might be aware of the particular characteristics of the foreign people they are dealing with because, otherwise, they might flout the maxim of quality or quantity, and it might lead to a break up in the negotiations (Tian, 2014) .

Other authors argue that the following of the maxims, especially the maxims of quality and quantity, is very important for the creation of a trustful and positive atmosphere. They highlight the employee's necessity to feel trusted and to know that they are being informed about any possible change in the company. If maxims are violated because they are not informed of the company's activities or they get to know them by other sources which are not the bosses, they are likely to feel underestimated and have negative opinions about the company, which, in turn, will possibly affect how they work and the outcomes of their projects (Omilion-Hodges & Baker, 2014).

### **1.6 The violation of CP at home**

In relation to the violation of the maxims and the implicatures triggered in family settings, Brumark conducts a research where nineteen family dinner conversations are recorded and analysed. The results remark that there are differences between fathers and mothers in the breaking of the maxims: fathers tend to break the maxim of manner for socialising with the children or being ironic to reprimand them, mothers usually are more direct, so they follow the maxim of quantity. In children's case, older ones also flout the maxim of manner for socialising purposes such as telling jokes between them and parents (Brumark, 2006).

In a similar study but taking a fictional setting as background, Tandyo analyses the family conversation between parents and children in some episodes of the series "*Desperate Housewives*". The author finds out that parents usually flout the maxim of quality and manner more often than children. They do it lying with the purpose of keeping the children under control and being able to make them do what they want. In children's case, they do not take the maxims in consideration because they are too young, six years old, and therefore they say anything they have in mind without thinking about people's reaction to their words or with a goal in mind (Tandyo, 2007) . In another study based on this series, Anneke and Helen state that the principal motivation to violate the maxims of quantity and quality are lessening the chance for the hearer to participate in the conversation so they would not ask more question. By doing

this, the speaker's lies will have less chances to be discovered (Anneke & Helen, 2008).

Alba-Juez argues that in familiar conversations people might violate more than one maxim at the time. In one example, taken from the series "*The Golden Girls*" a protagonist makes a comment on how a man sees her, stating that he would see her as very young and vibrant lady although she is old. Her sister replies that she has not even been out with him. The first woman replies that she has experience with men and she is sure about it, to which her sister answers saying that she has no comments to make. Therefore, with the last answer the sister is violating the maxims of manner being ironic and not clear about what she means, and the maxim of quality because she implies that the man will not see her sister as vibrant but cannot be sure about it, and the maxim of quantity because she is not saying all the information she might say about the reasons to not agree with her sister (Alba Juez, 1995).

The flouting of the maxims in family settings is influenced by the relationship of the participants, the shared background, gender and age. Being the first a very important aspect since the more shared information participants have, the more they will break the maxim of manner being ironic about a situation. For example, if they have been to the cinema and they make an ironic comment on the film they are likely to understand each other because they have shared that experience. However, the general conclusion is that sarcastic comments are limited when the conversation participants want to follow the cooperative principle, especially, if they do not have a close relationship, the same background, or there is a big gap between their ages (Eisterhold, Attardo, & Boxer, 2006).

The current state of the matter makes clear that Grice's Cooperative Principle was a breakthrough at the time he created it since it is still a theory used by researchers. Yet, many authors have observed that it could be limited, vague or do not fully describe the huge variables that force a person to flout it. The authors mentioned above have put forward more theories that complement them, for example, the theory of Relevance and Politeness.

The analysis on the conversation of the main protagonists and characters of the play “Top Girls” will be based on the Cooperative Principle, which is flouted at home and at work, and the implicatures made in relation to the problems they have to face. However, some aspects that Grice’s critics used to comment on him will indirectly be taken into account: the context, social characteristics, shared background and personal situation of the people because they have a paramount importance in their decision to violate the maxims.

## **2. Methodology**

The first step was to select a theory which was studied in the subject of pragmatics. The Cooperative Principle from Paul Grice was chosen since it was a cornerstone theory from which many authors developed their work. After that, a suitable document to put the CP into practise was thought in order to analyse conversations and observe how maxims were flouted.

The play “Top Girls” by Caryl Churchill from literature subjects was chosen. It was selected since it was a theatre play and dialogue is a fundamental part of plays. As the Cooperative Principle is observed in people’s dialogue, the reading of the play would provide many conversations and opportunities to observe and analyse if the protagonists flouted the principle and its maxims.

After that, a thorough research was made using the searching engines “Linceo”, “Jstor”, “Science Direct” and “Academia.edu” in order to gain knowledge about the theory, its current status, how it is being criticised and study the authors who developed their theories based on it or taking it into account. Besides, there also was a search in order to find examples of the CP being violated in the settings mentioned before.

Once it was finished, a close reading of the play was done having the CP in mind in order to analyse the maxims that were violated. Then, they were counted and classified into the categories that Grice described: maxim of quantity, quality, relation and manner. After that, the best examples were

chosen that showed how the main characters dealt with their problems at the job and family setting, and how their violation gives information about them, their characterization, evolution and help to trigger the plot of the play.

The analysis of the dialogues and its implicatures are divided into settings and themes since it reflects the feelings of the characters about their familiar and work situation, and the topics that the author wanted to deal with in the play.

- **At work:** jealousy, sexism, doubt.
- **At home:** doubt, envy, accusations, social classes and politics

### **3. Analysis of the dialogues**

#### **3.1 At work**

The first setting which would be analysed is Marlene's department at the employment agency called "Top Girls". There, people are gossiping about her promotion and showing how they feel about it. Moreover, Marlene has to face a very awkward situation when Mrs. Kidd, Howard's wife, and Angie, Marlene's secret daughter, pay a visit.

##### **3.1.1 Jealousy**

The first ones who talk about Marlene's promotion to the detriment of Howard are Nell and Win. They are discussing how Howard will be feeling after knowing that Marlene is promoted instead of him:

**Nell:** *He'll live.*

**Win:** *He'll move on.*

**Nell:** *I wouldn't mind a change of air myself.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 47)

They are breaking the maxim of quality since they are taking for granted that Howard will be alright but they do not know it for sure. Besides, Nell is also implying that he will not care to change the job because it is something positive



for everyone once in a while. She even affirms she would also want it if was possible.

Nell and Win keep talking about her position at the office showing growing signs of jealousy for Marlene's promotion, especially Win.

**Win:** *I'm all right for the time being. Unless I go to Australia.*

**Nell:** *There's not a lot of room upwards.*

**Win:** *Marlene's filled it up.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 48)

Nell's response is breaking the maxim of relation and quality because her response has nothing to do with Win's statement, but she is taking for granted that she might want to move upwards as Marlene. Moreover, Win is breaking the maxim of manner because her words imply a negative connotation stating that Marlene has "filled" all the better positions and shows that she is jealous about Marlene's promotion. Both characters represent jealousy and hypocrisy at work. Observing the flouting of the maxims they denote a false appearance towards Marlene, when they are with her, they are not the same as when they are alone. They might make comments to her about her promotion but not as harsh as these ones. Moreover, after Marlene's promotion, both characters evolve and change their attitude towards her which can also be seen in the way they interact with Marlene.

In the following dialogue Marlene arrives late and Wins laughs at her.

**Win:** *It's the top executive doesn't come in as early as the poor working girl.*

**Marlene:** *Pass the sugar and shut up your face, pet.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 50)

Win is violating the maxim of manner and quality; because she is being very obscure not saying their name directly but implying that now that Marlene is the boss she will not come as early as the working girls which are herself and Nell. Therefore, now that there has been a change in the position she implies that there will also be a change in the routines although she is not sure about it. It is just a coincidence that Marlene has arrived late the first day after her promotion.

All in all, Win's comment denotes how she has not assimilated Marlene's position.

In Marlene's case, she reacts to Win's cutting humour by breaking the maxim of relation. Marlene's answer implies that she does not care about Win and in fact, her answer has no relation with Win's comment. By doing this, she might be trying to stop the conversation.

Then, it is Nell's moment to show her jealousy to Marlene.

**Nell:** *Not long now and you'll be upstairs watching over us all.*

**Marlene:** *Do you feel bad about it?*

**Nell:** *I don't like coming second.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 52)

First, Nell is violating the maxim of manner because she is implying that Marlene will be the boss in a short time but instead of saying it with direct words she uses the verb "watch" which can be ambiguous and have multiple meanings, for example: see, take care, control. Secondly, she is also breaking the maxim of quality because she cannot be sure about what will happen in the future. Marlene might be in the highest position or not in the future. Finally, with her last answer she is breaking the maxim of relation because her answer does not directly respond Marlene's question but she implies that she feels bad because she has not been promoted instead of Marlene.

These short conversations show how Marlene's situation at the job has changed dramatically. After her promotion she is not an equal to Nell and Win. They have changed their attitude towards her as the violation of the maxims portrays. Therefore, Marlene now feels that her job is not a safe place as it used to be where she could be at ease. On the contrary, now she feels that having a better position might come with undesirable perks such as former friends which have turned into colleague enemies out of jealousy.

The following conversation is crucial in the play. Mrs Kidd arrives at the office to reprimand Marlene and gain back the promotion to hand it to her husband

Howard. The following excerpt shows her jealousy while another one will be dealt with in the sexism section.

***Mrs Kidd:*** *It's very hard when someone has worked all these years.*

***Marlene:*** *Business life is full of little setbacks. I'm sure Howard knows that. He'll bounce back in a day or two. We all bounce back.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 64)

First, Mrs. Kidd is violating the maxim of manner. She is ambiguously saying that her husband deserves the promotion more because he has worked many years at the company. In Marlene's case, she is violating the maxim of relevance since she answers with a general sentence that does not directly mention Howard. Then, she violates the maxim of quality affirming that Howard will understand and recover from it although she does not know it for certain. After Marlene's polite but cold responses, Mrs. Kidd becomes angry and starts attacking Marlene on gender grounds, affirming that a man deserves the job more than a woman. Due to this behaviour, Marlene stands her ground with a much more aggressive and harsh attitude. Therefore, the mutual attacks based on violating Grice's Principle make these characters evolve and change their ways to handle the situation.

### **3.1.2 Sexism**

The two following excerpts are clear examples of sexism and the way Marlene has to face them.

Mrs. Kidd and Marlene are talking about her promotion. Mrs Kidd is saying that Marlene should take Howard more into consideration than other work colleagues when dealing aspects of the company because he's a man.

***Marlene:*** *I'll consult him over any decisions affecting his department. But that's no different, Mrs Kidd, from any of my other colleagues.*

***Mrs Kidd:*** *I think it is different, because he's a man.*

***Marlene:*** *I'm not quite sure why you came to see me.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 65)

Mrs Kidd is violating the maxim of quantity since she is implying that Howard deserves a promotion more than a woman, and he should be consulted more than any other people because he is a man. Yet, she is not giving any reason besides the genre. Marlene's breaking the maxim of relation because her response is not relevant about the topic of the conversation and she is indirectly saying that they are wasting their time.

Then, Mrs. Kidd asks Marlene to resign and the tension rises.

**Mrs Kidd:** *But he's got a family to support. He's got three children. It's only fair.*

**Marlene:** *Are you suggesting I give up the job to him?*

**Mrs Kidd:** *It had crossed my mind if you were unavailable after all for some reason, he would be the natural second choice I think, don't you? I'm not asking.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 65)

Mrs. Kidd violates the maxim of manner implying that Howard will need more the job than Marlene because she does not have a family to support. Also, she violates the maxim of quality because she thinks it is fairer without considering if Marlene is better at the office than Howard. Finally, Mrs. Kidd breaks again the maxim of manner because she ambiguously asks Marlene to give up the promotion. Especially, with the words "*were unavailable*", they can mean many different things but suggest that Marlene resigns in favour of Howard.

Their conversation comes to an end with an abrupt commentary of Marlene when she can no longer put up with the situation.

**Mrs Kidd:** *You mustn't tell him I came. He's very proud.*

**Marlene:** *If he doesn't like what's happening here he can go and work somewhere else.*

**Mrs Kidd:** *Is that a threat?*

**Marlene:** *I'm sorry but I do have some work to do.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 65)

Marlene violates the maxim of manner by answering the provocations with an ambiguous sentence where she says "what's happening here" instead of saying

promotion. And she refers that he should leave the job if he doesn't like it. At the end, to stop the conversation, she flouts the maxim of relation because she does not directly answer Mrs. Kidd's question.

Through the whole conversation Mrs. Kidd turns from being polite and violating just the maxim of quantity to be a person who makes direct, impolite commentaries that tried to diminish Marlene's capacities and skills to deal with the promotion. Although Mrs. Kidd's aim was to convince Marlene's to resign and tries to do so by breaking the maxim of quantity and manner, she realises that she has not any possibility at all. Then, she starts being much more rude and ironic. However, at the end of the conversation she is ashamed of herself and begs Marlene to not tell Howard that she was at the office.

In Marlene's case, her evolution while the conversation is happening is very clear. At first, she is very polite and respectful. She knows how to handle the situation although it is becoming an attack to her. By breaking the maxim of relation, she tries to avoid the conversation and put it to an end. Yet, she has to resort to breaking the maxim of manner and be ambiguous to state that Howard should find another job if he does not agree with the new situation. Therefore, the violation of the maxims shows how Marlene becomes a more secure person who does not hesitate in warning Mrs. Kidd about Howard losing his job. Now, Marlene knows that due to her promotion she will have to deal with unpleasant situations not only related to work but to social and gender issues.

### **3.1.3 Doubt**

Angie, Marlene's secret daughter, is a recurrent topic in the play. Marlene and her sister Joyce share their doubts about Angie's abilities to become a mature person able to work and have a fulfilling personal life.

In this conversation, Marlene expresses her doubts about Angie's intellectual capacities and future career at the office.

**Win:** *She wants to work here.*

**Marlene:** *Packer in Tesco more like.*

**Win:** *She's a nice kid. Isn't she?*

**Marlene:** *She's a bit thick. She's a bit funny.*

**Win:** *She thinks you are wonderful.*

**Marlene:** *She's not going to make it. (Churchill, 1982, p. 73)*

Marlene breaks the maxim of relation three times in order to say that she thinks that Angie is not very intelligent and would not fit in a competitive business world. First, she does not directly answer Win's comment on Angie about the idea that she works at the agency, she suggests that she might end up working as a packer at Tesco, a famous supermarket franchise in the UK, so she implies that Angie is more likely to do a supposedly easier job than theirs. Then, she does not respond to Win's question about whether Angie is nice or not, she says that she is "thick", that is another pejorative word to say "stupid" but it has multiple meanings, so she is also breaking the maxim of manner. Finally, her last answer has nothing to do with Win's comment and reinforces her doubts about Angie's future.

The way Marlene's respond to Win's questions shows very deep worries about her supposed niece. At this moment, readers do not know that they are mother and daughter although Angie suspects it. Yet, by Marlene's conversation these suspicions are evident and might confirm it. Moreover, Marlene's violations of the maxims in relation to her daughter show another side of her personality. She shows herself as a very insecure and doubtful person in relation to her daughter. She might be feeling regretful and helpless about it so she looks like a different person compared to her attitude towards job-related matters.

### **3.2 At home**

The second analysed setting is Joyce's house where the conversation among the family member happens. There, Marlene, her sister Joyce and Angie, the supposedly secret daughter of Marlene talk about the past choices, their parents and Angie's future. Their conversation is full of anger, self-pity and

reprimands to each other showing how bad they feel about the way their shared life has evolved.

By talking and showing that they really love each other after all, they managed to establish a long and meaningful conversation. However, the final sister's conversation is very cold and distant. Therefore, the ending is very open and readers do not know if the sister will be able to forgive their past's decisions and be a family again.

The analysis of the conversations is divided into themes since they reflect the real topics about which the conversations revolve.

### **3.2.1 Doubt**

One of the first scenes where Angie shows her doubts about her real mother is at the beginning of the play, in her conversation with Kit.

**Angie:** *I think I'm my aunts' child. I think my mother's really my aunt.*

**Kit:** *Why?*

**Angie:** *Because she goes to America, now shut up.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 42)

Angie is violating the maxim of quality because she is stating that her aunt Marlene is her real mum but she has no evidence to affirm that. Moreover, she is breaking the maxim of quantity because she might have some information about that fact but she is not willing to share it with Kit. Finally, she breaks the maxim of relation because she answers something which is not relevant for the conversation. She might imply that she does not want to talk anymore about it although she had to take it out of her chest.

In this conversation Angie is showing her doubts and is also characterized as not being a very intelligent person. She does not know the reasons why she suspects that Marlene might be her mother, it is just a hunch but she is not able to express in words what she feels. Instead, she breaks the maxim of relation to

avoid the conversation being deeper. Angie shows that she is a very sentimental and passionate kid but also her lack of intelligence and immaturity.

Another important issue in the family is the sisters' doubt about Angie's intelligence. In the following excerpt, Joyce does not hesitate to comment it with Kit, which is unusual, due to the fact that Kit is just a child and Angie's friend.

**Joyce:** *And Angie is simple, is she? She's not simple.*

**Kit:** *I love Angie.*

**Joyce:** *She's clever in her own way.*

Kit is breaking the maxim of relation since her answer has nothing to do with Joyce's question. Yet, she is showing his maturity and instead of asking why she just answers that she loves Angie. Therefore, she is also breaking the maxim of manner because she implies that they are friends and she does not care if she is simple or intelligent, she loves her the way she is. Moreover, she is also breaking the maxim of quantity because with just three words she is implying much more information than necessary.

Joyce is breaking the maxim of quantity and manner because she admits that Angie is clever in her own way but that sentence is very ambiguous and does not give a clear idea about whether she really thinks so. On the contrary, it has a negative connotation and implies that Angie is peculiar and has an intelligence which is out of the normal standards. Besides, if she thinks Angie is clever in any kind of way, she should have given more information to explain herself, therefore, she is also violating the maxims of quantity.

In this conversation, Joyce is showing her personality. She is a very insecure person trapped by the past and the burden of raising Angie. She was not prepared for it and the fact that she lost a baby during pregnancy makes it even more difficult. To make matters worse, she puts all the blame on Angie and Marlene. For this reason, although she loves them deep inside her heart, she is unable to show this love and shows anger and doubt instead.



The following dialogue is between Marlene and Angie. Angie doubts about Marlene's feeling for her, while she is expressing her admiration for her aunt. Angie's immaturity and idealisation of Marlene is reflected in her commentaries. She has a great memory of Marlene coming to visit and giving her a dress. However, she does not consider that Marlene did not visit her very often. She is so willing to discover the reality and idealises Marlene so much that everything related to her is extraordinary.

**Angie:** *That was the best day of my life.*

**Marlene:** *So how long are you planning to stay?*

**Angie:** *Don't you want me?*

**Marlene:** *Yes, yes, I just wondered.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 62)

Both Marlene and Angie flout the maxim of relation since their answers are not connected to the previous questions. Marlene asks Angie how long she is going to stay implying that she is worried about it and she's got things to do instead of taking care of her. This comment is pivotal in the play since it shows that Marlene is a really workaholic person who places her job before any other aspect of her life. Her "niece" has come to pay her a visit and she is just thinking about getting rid of her because she has many important tasks to do.

Angie answers if she does not want her, implying if Marlene does not love her. Again, Angie is showing that she might not be very intelligent but she is a very empathic and intuitive person. She is able to feel other people's feelings very quickly.

Moreover, Angie also violates the maxim of quantity because, although she does not mention it, she might be implying that her admiration is not only due to the fact that Marlene is a successful woman who gave her a present, but also because she knows that she is her mother in reality.

At Joyce's house one of the first arguments starts due to Joyce's attack to Marlene stating her doubts about Marlene's knowledge of Angie's behaviour.

This happens when they find out that Angie has set up the familiar meeting lying to both of them.

**Marlene:** *Why should I think she was lying?*

**Joyce:** *Because she's like what she's like.*

**Marlene:** *How do I know/what she's like?*

**Joyce:** *It's not my fault you don't know what she's like. You never come and see her.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 76)

Joyce is breaking the maxim of manner and quantity in her description of Angie. First, she implies that Marlene should have suspected something because of the behaviour of Angie, and accuses Marlene of not knowing how Angie is. Yet, she does not explain Angie's personality. Moreover, she does that in a very ambiguous way because her sentence can have any meaning that you attached to them. Thus, she is also breaking the principle of manner. She could have developed more her idea about what Angie is like but she does not do it.

Breaking both maxims Joyce is showing her anger towards her sister because she feels that she has been alone all these years without her support. Besides, she also wants to highlight how good she has been to Angie because she really knows the way she is in contrast to Marlene, who does not know anything about her. By breaking the maxim of manner she shows herself as not being a direct person. On the contrary, she talks ambiguously and she struggles to talk clearly about the topics which hurt her. In Marlene's case, she is showing her innocence in relation to Angie's attitude because she believes her and she is also portrayed as a person who wants to gain back her family.

The doubts about Angie's intellectual capabilities are also discussed between both sisters. In fact, it is the only point in common that they have. Marlene asks Angie about what she wants to be but Joyce does not let her answer and does it herself.

**Marlene:** *What do you want to be?*

**Joyce:** *She hasn't an idea in her head what she wants to do. Lucky to get anything.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 77)

Joyce is violating the maxim of manner because she is stating that Angie is not intelligent enough to get any kind of job given her aptitudes. She implies that with a very ambiguous and obscure sentence which would be difficult to understand if readers had not previous knowledge about Joyce's opinion on Angie. Again, Joyce is characterised as a very difficult person to reach to. She never says her opinions in a clear way and people around her have to interpret what she says. Moreover, the fact that she does not let Angie answer shows how anxious she feels about everything related to her. She feels overwhelmed by the situation because Angie is not a child anymore and bringing her up is becoming more and more difficult.

In another part of the conversation around Angie's future, Joyce breaks the maxim of manner and quality implying in a very obscure way and without proof that she cannot see any positive future life for Angie. On the contrary, to her mind Angie will have the same kind of life that their parents had. They were dedicated to making ends meet and raising them up with a lot of effort. Moreover, they were unable to see the world due to their circumstances and felt trapped in their town.

**Marlene:** *You run her down too much. She'll be all right.*

**Joyce:** *I don't expect so, no. I expect her children will say what a wasted life she had. If she has children. Because nothing's changed and it won't with them in.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 96)

Although both sisters share their doubts about Angie, Marlene is a much more positive person than Joyce. As she has managed to have a fulfilling career and move out of town, she might think that it is possible for Angie to do the same. However, Joyce has replicated their parent's life and has a very negative outlook about Angie's future life.

### 3.2.2 Accusations

Both sisters are constantly accusing each other of their past choices and life development. The tension between them is palpable from the very beginning of their meeting.

**Joyce:** *I don't mind seeing you.*

**Marlene:** *Great, I feel really welcome.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 77)

Marlene is breaking the maxim of manner being very ironic to Joyce's comment. She means the opposite she says and implies that Joyce is not making her feel comfortable because she's saying that she does not want to see her but don't mind seeing her. Also, Joyce is breaking the maxim of manner being ironic and hypocritical since she does mind seeing her sister. By breaking the maxims, both sister show how they resort to irony when they have to face an important situation in their life. They are still too hurt to confront each other and try to resolve their differences. Yet, this is the first step to open their hearts in the next pages.

Joyce is a very insecure and resentful person. She tends to blame all her problems on other people, especially her sister because she left Angie to her when she was a baby. One of the first times when Joyce accuses Marlene of her disgrace is when they talk about the lack of Marlene's visits to Angie.

**Joyce:** *You're the one went away, not me. I'm right here where I was. And will be a few years yet I shouldn't wonder.*

**Marlene:** *All right. All right.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 77)

Joyce is breaking the maxims of manner and quantity. She is feeling pity for herself and at the same time accusing Marlene for her situation in a very obscure way. She is blaming Marlene because she left and she stayed but mentions it using other words. By saying that Marlene left she is implying that her problems started due to that fact. Again, she is very ambiguous and Marlene has to try to read between the lines when she is talking.

Moreover, the maxim of quality is violated because she affirms that she will be in the same house for many years but that is something that she cannot assure. Joyce's negativity overflows and she is portraying herself as a victim of the world. The maxims she violates support it and reinforce her perspective.

In Marlene's case, she violates the maxim of relation with a brief and unrelated answer to avoid any confrontation. It shows how fed up with the situation she is and how she also feels helpless to change it. As with Angie, the personal relationship with her sister is an aspect of her life in which she is not in control, so she uses the maxim of relation to avoid the topic for the time being.

Both sisters agreed on accusing Angie of setting the meeting without consulting any of them. Joyce takes advantage of the situation to make a very cynical comment.

**Marlene:** *You didn't tell your mum you asked me down.*

**Angie:** *I wanted it to be a surprise.*

**Joyce:** *I'll give you a surprise/one of these days.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 77)

Marlene is very clear now and she tries to talk to Angie directly. She is solving the problem and making the situation clear. In fact, she is starting to feel that she needs to face the situation and be a family again. Angie breaks the maxim of quantity because her response is giving much information than necessary. She could have answered with just one word but instead she gives the reasons to not tell anyone although Marlene has not asked why. Her response denotes her childish behaviour and her eagerness to be a united family.

In Joyce's case, she is violating the maxim of manner and quantity because her comment implies having information that she is not willing to share, and she says that it in a very ambiguous way without explaining herself about what she means by "surprise". She continues showing herself as a very obscure person who does not talk clearly, she even uses her cynicism and irony with Angie, who is a child and cannot understand her words and is unable to interpret them.

Now, it is Marlene's who accuses Joyce of being too passive and staying at the same town because she opted to do that instead of taking risks and move on. Marlene is becoming more and more active in her relationship with her sister. She is sick and tired of letting her be the one who attacks all the time and she starts reprimanding Joyce.

**Marlene:** *You could have left.*

**Joyce:** *Who says I wanted to leave?*

**Marlene:** *Stop getting at me then, you're really boring.*

**Joyce:** *How could I have left?*

**Marlene:** *Did you want to?*

**Joyce:** *I said how, how could I have left?*

**Marlene:** *If you'd wanted to you'd have done it.*

**Joyce:** *Christ.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 85)

Firstly, Marlene is violating the maxim of quality because she is stating that her sister could have left town if she had wanted to but she has no proof to say that. Therefore, Marlene is affirming something without real evidence.

Secondly, Marlene is also violating the maxim of quantity because she does not give all the information she might have when Joyce asks her how she could have left. Instead of giving details saying that Joyce might have gone to live with her or that she might have given her a job, she just mentions that the only reason needed to leave was willingness. Finally, Joyce violates the maxim of relation saying "*Christ*" which has nothing to do with the conversation but helps her to stop it.

This excerpt is very important because both characters show her evolution. Marlene has taken a much more active role and decides to attack her sister and her choice of living in town. Before, she just heard what Joyce said and did not reply but now she does not want to be silent anymore. Joyce opts to be much more passive and resort to the maxim of relation to avoid any further argument while in the past conversation she was much more ironic and harsh.

Another source of accusations is the relationship they have with their mother. Joyce's reprimands Marlene for not seeing her enough. By trying to be ironic and breaking the maxim of manner, Joyce shows her anger and discontent with Marlene in relation to her lack of visits to her mother.

**Marlene:** *I came up this morning and spent the day in Ipswich. I went to see mother.*

**Joyce:** *Did she recognise you?*

**Marlene:** *Are you trying to be funny?*

**Joyce:** *No, she does wander.*

**Marlene:** *She wasn't wandering at all; she was very lucid thank you.*

**Joyce:** *You were lucky then. (Churchill, 1982, p. 86)*

Marlene breaks the maxim of relation by answering the question with another question which is not relevant implying that it is obvious that her mother would recognise her. In this case, Marlene is showing how she has evolved and tries to not let Joyce reprimands her without answering back. She recognises the irony in Joyce's words and wants to solve any problem that she might have. Joyce violates the maxim of manner with her ambiguous commentary. She says that Marlene is lucky to have been recognised by their mother, she implies that it has been such a long time since she last visited her that it would be normal if her mum did not recognise her. She continues being an obscure and indirect person.

Both sisters also blame each other of taking advantage of the situation years ago. Marlene accuses Joyce of being happy to have Angie since she could not have a child, and Joyce accuses Marlene to be egoist and leave the town as soon as possible without taking care of her child. In fact, they believe that everyone was winning with their past decisions but the reality is the contrary.

**Joyce:** *You couldn't get out of here fast enough.*

**Marlene:** *Of course I couldn't get out of here fast enough. What was I going to do? Marry a dairyman who'd come home pissed?*

**Joyce:** *I don't know how you could leave your own child.*

**Marlene:** *You were quick enough to take it.*

**Joyce:** *What does it mean?* (Churchill, 1982, p. 88)

Both are breaking the maxim of manner. Firstly, Joyce is being ironic and means the contrary of what she says. She blames her sister for leaving the town very quickly. In response, Marlene's says that her other option to "marry the dairymen who'd come home pissed" was not the best solution. What she really means is that staying in town would have not made her happy since there were not many future options either personally or professionally. She also accuses Joyce of being quick to take Angie. She might be implying that she was happy to have Angie as a daughter and, consequently, she has no right to blame her for leaving because both ended up winning.

Finally, Marlene also breaks the maxim of quality affirming that Joyce was happy because she could not have a child but she cannot be sure about it.

**Marlene:** *You couldn't have one so you took mine.*

**Joyce:** *I didn't know that then.*

**Marlene:** *Like hell, married three years.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 88)

These two parts of the conversation portrays a very rude and harsh Marlene. She resorts to violating the maxim of manner and quality to criticise her sister and even humiliate her stating that she could not have a child and was so desperate that she accepted to raise Angie. Marlene has left behind her passive attitude which was based on avoiding conflicts by breaking the maxim of relation, in fact, now she wants to face her familiar problems and solve them although it means hurting others.

At a moment of the conversation written below, Marlene is so fed up with the situation that she offers Joyce to take Angie and leave if Joyce doesn't love her. This radical response is an absolute proof that she is not a passive person anymore. On the contrary, she wants to control her familiar issues as much as she controls the situation at the job place.



**Marlene:** *Because I'll take her, wake her up and pack now.*

**Joyce:** *You wouldn't know how to begin to look after her.*

Joyce is breaking the maxim of relation since she does not answer Marlene's suggestion. Besides, she is also breaking the maxim of quality because she has no evidence to affirm that Marlene would not know how to take care of Angie. Joyce is still very resentful and angry so she is incapable of seeing how her sister is eager to change the situation between them. She is stuck in her past and unable to evolve although the moment requires it.

### 3.2.3 Envy

Envy is a crucial topic in the play. Joyce feels envious of Marlene's life because she has been able to leave the town and fulfil a professional career. Marlene knows how Joyce feels and it becomes a source of discussions.

**Marlene:** *So it's your mother is it, your child, you never wanted me round, you were jealous of me because I was the little one and I was clever.*

**Joyce:** *Here we go.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 87)

Joyce violates the maxim of relation and manner. Her answer to Marlene's accusation is not relevant and ambiguous. She might be implying that Marlene has repeatedly told her that over the years and she is tired of hearing it. Here, Joyce is the one who does not want to continue with the discussion. Unlike in the past when she was the person breaking the maxim of manner to be ironic and attack others, now she mainly breaks the maxim of relation to avoid any further confrontation. On the contrary, Marlene is being clear about her emotions. She feels that Joyce is envious and says it to her. She also thinks that Joyce feels that their mother and Marlene's daughter are only hers and that Joyce does not want her around the family.

Money is also an important element of envy between the sisters. Joyce thinks that Marlene is successful moneywise due to the fact that she is not worried about looking after Angie, and thus, can focus on her career.

**Joyce:** *Turned out all right for you by the look at you. You'd be getting a few less thousands a year.*

**Marlene:** *Not necessarily.*

**Joyce:** *You'd be stuck here like you said.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 88)

Joyce is breaking the maxim of quality because she is affirming a fact on which she does not have any evidence. She supposes that Marlene will be less successful but she tells her that it is not necessarily true. Joyce is again being active and attacking Marlene. Yet, now she is not being very ironic but describing situations that she cannot prove.

Both sisters are characterised as very passionate women who attack each other by being ironic and harsh with their commentaries. At first, Marlene tries to avoid confrontation and solve their problems but in the end she changes her role and is as ironic and rude as Joyce. In her case, she is a more lineal character who bases her comments on ironically attacking her family. In very specific moments, she listens and avoids the arguments.

### 3.2.4 Social classes and politics

Their vision about the social classes and politics is a source of conflict too. Joyce feels part of the working class but Marlene has a negative opinion on them due to her employment. There, she has to deal with people who might be too demanding in terms of jobs although they are not qualified for it.

**Joyce:** *What good's first woman if it's her. I suppose you'd have liked Hitler if he was a woman. Mrs. Hitler. Got a lot done, Hitlerina. Great adventures.*

**Marlene:** *Bosses still on the workers' faces? Still Dadda's little parrot? Haven't you learned to think for yourself? I believe in the individual. Look at me.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 93)

Both violate the maxim of manner. Joyce compares The Prime Minister with Adolf Hitler implying that she is very rigid and not helpful with the working class. She also implies that Marlene would like it only because it's a woman. By doing this comparison Joyce is also reinforcing her self-image of a victim of the world. She does not like the politics of the government because they do not help the working class enough. As with the family, Joyce feels that life has treated her unfairly.

Marlene also breaks the maxim of manner by comparing Joyce with a parrot referring that she is still repeating what she heard from their dad and does not think for herself. She feels fulfilled in her professional career which has been based on working hard and breaking chains, especially for a woman. For this reason, she shows pride and feels identified with politicians who support entrepreneurs who create companies. Marlene feels part of this group and attacks Joyce because she considers her to be passive and think that the government should help her as though it was her parents. On the contrary, Marlene thinks that Joyce should work harder to find a better job but she forgets that Joyce has familiar obligations that prevent her from doing that.

When Marlene gives her opinion about the working class, the confrontation reaches a very stressful moment.

**Marlene:** *I hate the working class. Which is what you are going*

**Joyce:** *Yes, you do.*

**Marlene:** *to go on about now, it doesn't exist anymore, it means lazy and stupid. I don't like the way they talk. I don't*

**Joyce:** *Come on, now we are getting it.*

**Marlene:** *like beer guts and football vomit and saucy tits, and brothers and sisters.*

**Joyce:** *I spit when I see a Rolls Royce, scratch it with my ring/ Mercedes it was.*

**Marlene:** *Oh very mature. (Churchill, 1982, p. 95)*

Joyce violates the maxim of manner when she says “*getting it*” to refer in a very ambiguous way that Marlene is now being honest. Marlene also violates it when she states “*very mature*” but implies something completely opposite. This is almost the end of the conversation and now Marlene shows her real thoughts about the topic without hesitation. In the past, she might have avoided giving her opinion but now she feels entitled to do so. Also, the fact that she works with low class people who are not willing to work in a position according to their qualifications makes her even more furious.

The conversation comes to a sudden end when Angie is mentioned.

**Marlene:** *If they're stupid or lazy or frightened, I'm not going to help them get a job, why should I?*

**Joyce:** *What about Angie?*

**Marlene:** *What about Angie?* (Churchill, 1982, p. 96)

Joyce asks Marlene if she would not help Angie after Marlene's opinion about the working class. She is violating the maxim of quality and manner. The first one is broken because she is implying that Marlene will not help Angie because she is lazy and stupid and Marlene has stated that she would not help a person like that. Yet, she does not know it for sure because it might be the case that Marlene would help Angie, she is her daughter after all. The second one is violated because by asking this question, Joyce, in a very obscure and indirect way, implies that Angie is stupid and lazy.

Then, both sisters do not continue talking about the topic. It seems that mentioning Angie, which is the only single one aspect on which they share their opinion, makes them calm again and stops the arguments.

#### **4. Ending**

The end of the conversation is very clarifying in terms of characterisation and evolution. It reveals that after all the arguments and reprimands Joyce is a linear character who has not taken any of Marlene's thoughts into consideration.

For her, it is still her fault that she is not happy and stuck in town. She shows it being very direct and harsh in her commentaries. In Marlene's case, she has finished being very rude and makes the final effort to make peace with her sister. Yet, it seems to be a situation impossible to amend.

**Marlene:** *I didn't really mean all that.*

**Joyce:** *I did.*

**Marlene:** *But we're friends anyway.*

**Joyce:** *I don't think so, no.*

**Marlene:** *Well, it's lovely to be out in the country. I really must make the effort to come more often. I want to go to sleep.*

Joyce gets blankets for the sofa.

**Joyce:** *Goodnight then. I hope you'll be warm enough.*

**Marlene:** *Goodnight, Joyce.*

**Joyce:** *Not, pet. Sorry.* (Churchill, 1982, p. 97)

In this excerpt it can be observed that Marlene does not violate the maxim of manner anymore. She is now calm and returns to her old habit of breaking the maxim of relation to avoid any confrontation; she mentions the countryside to change the topic. This action shows that she has said everything she needed to try to solve her familiar problems but it has been so difficult, tiring and emotionally demanding, that she prefers to step back and leave it as it is for the time being.

This reaction has to do with her being exhausted but also with Joyce's final behaviour, she does not want to make peace and is very negative when Marlene says that they are friends and family after all. Moreover, Joyce breaks the maxim of manner when she takes blankets for Marlene and says that she hopes that Marlene will be warm enough. She is implying that Marlene is used to being in the city where it is not as cold as in the countryside and therefore would not feel as comfortable. Apart from that, it might be a final attack by which she implies that Marlene is unable to go back to town because she has not been there for many years and will not fit anymore.

The end is very sad due to the fact that the situation has not changed at all. Even though both characters have brought their feelings and ideas to the table, it has not been enough to better their familiar relationship.

## **5. Conclusions**

After the analysis, one of the main conclusions is that is that each single character flouts the maxims as a defence mechanism when dealing with an issue that hurts them. Therefore, breaking the maxims is as though a shield to protect themselves and a way not to harm others.

It can also be stated that the breaking of the maxims help to give information about the characters in the play such as their personality and evolution. For instance, Marlene is a very laid-back person who just decides to break the maxim of relation to avoid any kind of argument. However, she has to change it and be more direct and ironic violating the maxim of manner to stand her ground and try to solve her problems.

It has been also proved that the breaking of the maxims triggers the development of the play. For example, when Marlene is attacked by her colleagues about the promotion she starts changing her attitude and she realized that she needs to be more direct and harsh. Moreover, the rude comments of her sister when she is at her house makes the conversation evolve. Then, they start the argument about their lives but it was initiated by the breaking of the maxim of manner.

The evolution of Marlene observed in her breaking of the maxims to fight against prejudices and stereotypes is a reflection of the society she was living in at the time. In the eighties women were starting to enter the job market and they have to deal with sexism and personal attacks, especially if they were in high positions.

The author shows the difficulties of both women: the ones that remained in town working for the family and the ones who broke the idea that it was their only

possibility. Although both sufferings are portrayed, Joyce's lack of evolution and happiness clarifies that the author was in favor of women being equal to men at the jobs and in society. She depicts Marlene as a fighter and a character who evolves and wants to make a change in her life. On the contrary, Joyce is stuck and she does not evolve or changes her attitude.

To sum up, this work is an example of how people interact with each other in many different ways and purposes in mind. Most of the times, the characters express their opinion in uncooperative ways although they are understood. Thus, the Cooperative Principle is not followed but an effective communication is accomplished thanks to the implicature that the hearers understand.

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