

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol1no1.12>

## Cooperative Principle and Inferential Chains of Interpretation: Socio-Pragmatic Approach to Language and Literature Teaching

**Vijay Singh Thakur**

Department of Languages and Translation  
College of Arts and Applied Sciences  
Dhofar University  
Salalah, Sultanate of Oman

### Abstract

The author strongly believes in Black's (2006) remark that Gricean Maxims of conversational cooperation have a considerable degree of relevance for the processing of literary discourse on the innermost level of character-to-character interactions (p. 27). In the backdrop of this, this paper aims to demonstrate how analytical dimension of literary studies can be expanded by involving Grice's (1975) pragmatic stylistic theory of Cooperative Principle (CP) and explores how the fictional discourses could be better understood by reconstructing inferential chains of interpretation along with various issues of inferences in the dialogic discourses of the characters from Vikram Seth's magnum opus *A Suitable Boy* (ASB). The CP contributes to contextualization of the text; provides interpretative possibilities that explain how we draw inferences from conversation; and hints to interpretations of how direct and indirect discourses are manipulated in literary works of fiction. The major findings of this paper suggest that the real value and richness of conversational maxims of Grice lie not in observing but in flouting them and that the major motivation for violating the requirements of these maxims are related to characters' socio-cultural concerns such as politeness, tact, social power and taboos and also to the inter-personal factors like various cross-purposes, attitudes, personal tensions, conflicts, etc. Arriving at pragmatic meanings through the maxims of CP involves effort and increases engagement with the text; therefore, the author strongly recommends that pragmatic stylistic analysis be frequently included as an important pedagogical activity of studying fictional discourses in the teaching of language and literature.

**Key words:** Conversational implicature, cooperative principle, fictional discourse, gricean pragmatics, inferential chains of interpretation, inter-personal pragmatics, politeness strategies

Cite as: Thakur, V. S. (2017). Cooperative Principle and Inferential Chains of Interpretation: Socio-Pragmatic Approach to Language and Literature Teaching. Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies, 1(1). DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol1no1.12>