

Exploring Studies on Cooperative Principle in English Language Teaching: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The zeitgeist of studying CP has attracted scholars, particularly in Indonesia, to scrutinize its application in the ELT context. Previous studies endeavor to approach CP in the ELT through examining classroom interaction and maxim violation and flouting. Yet, limited studies have been attempted to deeply delineate and unravel its implication to culture and the online learning environment. Tapping further into the application of CP in an online learning environment may paint a rosy picture of how people cooperate in an online environment to avoid misunderstanding. This study also suggests an analysis and comparison of CP in the different cultural backgrounds as a promising study especially in Indonesia with its abundant cultural diversity.

Keywords: Cooperative principle, ELT, conversational maxim, culture, online learning environment

Introduction

Communication aims at forming an information exchange. People communicate in order to be understood. People cooperate to construct and convey their intention. This is what Grice (1975) calls as Cooperative Principle (henceforth CP). Grice proposed that one produces utterances to cooperate in constructing meaningful conversation. Talk exchange is formed when there is a cooperative contribution of the speakers in making shared purposes. It is characterized by cooperative efforts that are recognized by participants as mutually accepted purposes (Grice, 1975).

In Cooperative Principles, Grice describes Conversational Implicature that differs from presupposition or entailment. It refers to the implication of on speaker's meaning that is not part of what is explicitly said. Conversations are often divergent from the literal meaning of sentences with linguistic encoding (Feng, 2010). Grice



distinguished speaker-meaning from the sentence's own standard meaning because speakers don't always intend what their phrases signify in the language (Lycan, 2008). Grice argues that speakers can effectively employ sentences to convey meanings other than those intended by the sentence (Davis, 2007).

In his *Logic and Conversation* (1975), Grice developed four conversational maxims. They are maxim of quantity (make your contributions as informative as is required), maxim of quality (make your contribution true), maxim of relation (be relevant), and maxim of manner (avoid obscurity and ambiguity). A participant may fail to fulfill a maxim by violating, opting out, or flouting it. One can violate a maxim that he mislead the conversation. Opting out refers to the unwillingness of the speaker to cooperating with the maxim required. Flouting a maxim means a failure of the participant in fulfilling the maxim without violating or opting out the maxim. When people transgress maxims, there should be an implicature contained in the utterances (He, 2012).

Collaboration between the teacher and the students is essential for a successful classroom interaction. A harmonious atmosphere between teachers and students in the classroom can be produced when teachers are able to apply the major principle of CP and captivate students' attention (Liu, 2017). CP is indispensable in developing better communication in the classroom. To see the quality of their communication, it is needed to analyze their utterance from the perspective of CP.

The cooperative principle has been a widely established study in the ELT context. For instance, the analysis of maxims used during the teaching and learning process (Li, 2015; Liu, 2017; Menjura, 2017; Widyasari, Budiarsa, Sudipa, & Satyawati, 2019; Tan, Wang, & Peng, 2013), thesis guidance (Astuti, Wijayava, Giyatmi, Arumi, & Pratiwi, 2019) and thesis exam (Muhassin, 2019). Non-observance maxims (Agung, 2016; Arofah & Mubarak, 2021; Hidayati, Lukman, Azmi, 2018; Hutahaeen, Purba, & Herman, 2020; Kurniadi, 2021; Nurcholis, Angraini, Safitri, & Putrianni, 2020; Sulviana, 2020; Yatun, 2019; Wahyudi, Yusuf, & Lestari, 2020) also attract considerable attention of researchers. There are also studies regarding the analysis of maxims used in language classrooms interwoven with other variables such as gender (Khayati, Mujianto, & Warsono, 2019) and culture (Herawati, 2013). In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic that shifted face-to-face classroom meetings to online learning, several studies had studied CP in an online learning environment (Dewi & Indriani, 2020; Khusna, 2021).

Despite the limited studies we found in the journals from English-speaking countries, we managed to download myriad studies regarding CP in the Indonesian ELT context. Most of the recent articles related to CP in ELT we found were in the context of Asia, especially Indonesia. This ignited our curiosity that CP must mean something to the Indonesian culture. Cooperative or non-cooperative communication is heavily influenced by a language's culture (Fatmawati, Boeriswati, & Zuriyati, 2019). It is intriguing what makes CP an ever-evolving study in the Indonesian context.

Delving into studies on CP in the ELT context, this article endeavors to examine the following questions: (1) How is the application of the cooperative principle in ELT Classroom Interaction? (2) What are the non-observance of conversational maxims in ELT context? (3) How does cooperative principle play an important role in text-based ELT online learning environment? (4) How does the



language culture in Indonesia contribute to the trend of studies on cooperative principles?

Method

Literature review is used to analyze article which related to the topic in this study. According to Fink (2005), literature review is a systematic and repeatable method for finding, evaluating, and interpreting the corpus of prior research in a field of study that has not yet been published in peer-reviewed journals or refereed by international scientific organizations. The value of a literature review in research is demonstrated by how well it demonstrates the researcher's in-depth knowledge with the topic (Shah, Ahmed, & Khan, 2018). While Ridley (2012) elaborates that a literature review gives researchers the chance to interact with current research and other field researchers while demonstrating comprehension of an important body of knowledge that supports their own research.

This study seeks to examine previous studies on CP in the realm of ELT. Some other articles that can support the analysis of the articles were included in this study, such as studies on CP and culture. Articles were derived from international and national accredited journals and proceedings published from 2011 to 2021. There were 42 articles reviewed in this study. The selection of the article was also based on the title and relevance of the article. Article searches are carried out using databases such as Google Scholar, Springer, Elsevier, Brill, Wiley, Sage, Taylor & Francis, Oxford Journals, Emerald, Cambridge Journal, IEEE, ProQuest, and JSTOR. The keywords involved were cooperative principle history in Indonesia, Indonesian culture and conversational maxim, Indonesian culture of politeness, cooperative principle in online learning environment.

After collecting articles from the internet, we did the first scanning by visiting the abstract of each article. The articles whose relevance is not in line with the topic of this study were discarded. We chose final article to be reviewed based on the its relevance to the theme of cooperative principle in ELT context in Indonesia. Final article were 42 studies After obtaining the relevant articles to be reviewed, we categorized the articles into four topics of cooperative principles in ELT classroom interaction, studies on non-observance maxims in the ELT context, cooperative principles in ELT online learning environment, and the trend of studies on cooperative principle in Indonesia. We synthesized the findings of the study to find the gap in research that may contribute to the current and future studies of cooperative principle in the English language teaching context.

The flow of descriptions is divided into several themes; (1) cooperative principle in ELT classroom interaction, (2) studies on non-observance maxims in ELT context, (3) cooperative principles in ELT online learning environment, (4), the trend of studies on cooperative principle in Indonesia, and (5) the gap of the literature.

Findings and Discussions

The interaction between teacher and students is essential during the teaching and learning process. When both parties cannot communicate well, the goal of the teaching process cannot be achieved. A successful classroom interaction depends on the cooperation between both the teacher and the students. To see the quality of



their communication, analyzing their utterance from the perspective of CP is needed. The analysis of CP focuses on maxims. This study looked for maxims used during the teaching and learning process (Li, 2015; Liu, 2017; Menjura, 2017; Widyasari, Budiarsa, Sudipa, & Satyawati, 2019; Tan, Wang, & Peng, 2013), thesis guidance (Astuti, Wijayava, Giyatmi, Arumi, & Pratiwi, 2019) and Thesis exam (Muhassin, 2019).

The cooperative principle is one of the criteria to examine oral communication in the classroom context which measures the cooperation between teacher and students. Li (2015) believes that an active, and harmonious atmosphere appears when CP is used properly in classroom interaction. When teachers and students have good interaction, the teaching and learning problems can be identified and can be fixed immediately. Furthermore, students can improve their interests, confidence, exchange their ideas, learn new knowledge, and skills in the process of cooperative learning. Implementing good CP has a positive advantage in developing students' oral communication when they can cooperate in having communication with the teacher.

According to Liu (2017) who investigates the context of learning by applying the principles of cooperation during the teaching and learning process in the classroom, and the relationship of working principles between teachers and students, selecting appropriate way and method should be considered by the teachers in stimulating students to cooperate in the process of interaction in the classroom. That is, when the teachers can apply the major principle of CP and attract students' attention, the harmonious atmosphere between teachers and students in the classroom can be achieved. Furthermore, the teacher can improve the learning outcome if they cooperate with the students during the classroom interaction.

The findings of Widyasari et al. (2019) show that the application of CP in the classroom setting happens based on the context of teaching and learning and formal situations. The CP found in the classroom interaction between teachers and students is dominated by quantity maxim, quality maxim, relevance maxim, and manner maxim. This condition indicates that both teachers and students well cooperate in interaction and link each other in delivering and understanding the material. Furthermore, they claim that conducting CP in the Indonesian context creates an effective and efficient atmosphere in the teaching process. This finding is in line with Liu (2017) who asserted the important role of CP in ELT classroom interaction. The interaction runs effectively because the teachers can cooperate with students by considering the teaching method which stimulates students active in participate in class discussion. Moreover, the cooperation of students in classroom interaction shows that the understanding and application of CP is useful to build effective communication.

The issue of how the teacher and students flout the maxims of communication was also studied. For instance, Menjura (2017) focuses on how communication is carried out in the language classroom. The language classroom interaction is not easy in a foreign language context. The teacher is better to select suitable strategies in fostering students in learning a language. The analysis also shows that maxims of quality and manners are mostly flouted by the teacher and students in classroom interaction. This violation happens because English is a foreign language and when



they get problems in communication, they often use their mother tongue. Besides, they think that English is seen as a requirement to graduate from school.

In line with Menjura (2017), Muhassin (2019) investigated the types of maxim violation in thesis exams and the maxim of conversation most violated by students. This research finding shows that the types of maxims violated by the students in the thesis exam are maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The violations happen in exaggerated information, untrue information, irrelevant information, and confusing information. This study analyzed 13 utterances and placed quantity maxims as the most violated with 5 utterances (38.46%), and then followed by 4 utterances (30.76%) of relation maxim. Meanwhile, the third position of most violated maxims with 2 utterances (15.38%) by the students, were quality and manner maxims.

Research conducted by Tan et al. (2013) and Astuti et al. (2019) investigated the application of CP at the university level. Tan et al. (2013) focused on the application of CP on students listening comprehension. The research aims to help the students to figure out the communicative intention of the speakers successfully. The research finding showed that the use of pragmatic theory was useful for college students in listening comprehension. This study also suggested English college teachers equipped students with the relevant knowledge of pragmatics like CP and the principle of relevance. Furthermore, the teacher who used the linguistic theory can develop the college English students to achieve the learning goal. While Astuti et al. (2019) counted obey maxims and violated maxims of thesis guidance. The finding showed that from 87 dialogues data which had a quality maxim, 54 data (62 %) belong to obeying quality maxim and 33 data (37.9%) violating quality maxim. Moreover, the violating of quality maxim consists of material, methodology, and writing.

Previous studies discussing CP in ELT classroom interaction consistently proposed the essential of CP in developing better communication in the classroom. The studies also revealed that EFL learners can cooperate effectively when the teachers elaborated on some methods in the teaching process. This condition indicates that the application of CP in the classroom can be separated from other theories of methods. Moreover, the studies also revealed that in developing harmonious classroom interaction, the teachers should consider learning context, situation, and suitable strategies in stimulating students to cooperate in communication. In addition, the violation maxims produced by EFL learners indicated that the teachers studied more related to the application of CP in the classroom context.

Studies on Non-observance of Conversational Maxims in ELT Context

Besides analyzing observance maxims in ELT Classroom interaction, some researchers also revealed non-observance maxims in ELT Context. Non-observance maxim happens when people do not obey the rules of the maxim. They failed to follow the maxim for several reasons, such as not telling the truth because the speaker did not want to hurt the listener's feelings or express something hilarious, or the speaker did not have the skill to speak effectively. In other words, what speakers said and what speakers wanted to express are not the same thing, called hidden meaning. It is divided into five: flouting, violating, infringing, opting out a



maxim, and suspending a maxim. Studies of non-observance maxim have been carried out by Agung, 2016; Arofah & Mubarok, 2021; Hidayati, Lukman, Azmi, 2018; Hutahaeon, Purba, & Herman, 2020; Kurniadi, 2021; Nurcholis, Angraini, Safitri, & Putrianni, 2020; Sulviana, 2020; Yatun, 2019; Wahyudi, Yusuf, & Lestari, 2020).

Agung (2016) focused on violating students' responses toward teacher's questions in TEFL class. The result shows that when students responded to the teachers' questions, they violated the maxim of quantity, quality, and manner. However, he did not explain why the students violated the maxim. It is in line with previous studies (Arofah & Mubarok, 2021; Kurniadi, 2021; Wahyudi, Yusuf & Lestari, 2020; Yatun, 2019;) that the violated maxim of quantity frequently happens in the classroom conversation. Arofah and Mubarok (2021) also found flouting the maxim of relation in teacher-student conversation. While Yatun (2019) also added that besides quantity, infringing the maxim and violating the maxim of relevance also happened at conversation. However, she only did the observation once, so there is no generalization in finding.

Interestingly, Wahyudi, Yusuf, and Lestari (2020) also revealed four effects during teacher-students interaction in the classroom; the effects are: the students become flurry toward the information given by the teacher, the students become not understand the lesson, the class becomes rowdy and noisy, and the teacher becomes ignored. However, the researcher did not state the theory related to the effects of flouting or finding from previous research. Thus, the readers do not know and understand the ideal concept of the effect of flouting in the classroom conversation.

Another study was also done by Hidayati, Lukman, and Azmi (2018), who analyzed the maxim and the violation between teachers and students during the teaching and learning process. They revealed different results, and it is found that maxim of quantity and violated maxim of manner has mostly happened in the classroom. The research above used descriptive qualitative research method, but unfortunately, they only display the data regarding how many utterances and percentage of the maxim, violation, and flouting without explaining and discussing in detail the reasons and suggestion of its finding.

Meanwhile, another study by Hutahaeon, Purba, and Herman (2020) found that the violated maxim of relevance was the highest percentage happened in the eighth grade of Junior High. However, in results and discussion, the researchers did not display the conversation sample entirely; only the answer or violation response was stated. Thus, the readers do not know the complete conversation and identify that the sample displayed was correct and appropriate.

Furthermore, small in-depth research done by Nurcholis et al. (2020) did not only found the flouting maxim in the proposal seminar of English Education Study Program, Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu situation but also explained in detail the reason why the students did the flouting of maxim. The most dominant maxim which flouted by students was a maxim of quantity with a percentage of 42.85% and identified 21 times.

In addition, Sulviana (2020) found the sample violation maxim in the EFL Classroom of English Education of FKIP of Universitas Islam Makassar. However, the study did not describe the percentage of each violated maxim that happened. This research did not analyze why the violated maxim happened. It is proved by the



discussion only rewrite the type of maxims and sample of conversation without giving detailed information, and it was not supported by relevant previous research. Also, this research happened in a classroom situation, but the previous research was given in social and marketing situations.

Classroom interaction occurs when teacher-students or students-students exchange their ideas, and it covers classroom activities such as turn-taking, questioning and answering, negotiating, and giving feedback. Non-observance maxim, especially violating, flouting, and infringing of maxim mostly happens in classroom interaction because of contextual and background knowledge of the speakers and hearers. Based on the previous studies, most researchers only focus on revealing the kinds and percentage of observance and non-observance maxims in the classroom. However, the important thing is to know why the non-observance happens, so the teacher will know to choose the appropriate method, media, or learning material suitable.

Cooperative Principles in ELT Online Learning Environment

COVID-19 has compelled the government to impose a study-from-home policy that shifted classroom face-to-face learning into online learning. This also impacts students' interaction since the nature of face-to-face and online interaction are poles apart. The patterns of classroom interaction is disrupted during the COVID-19 outbreak (Muthuprasad et al., 2021; Wut & Xu, 2021). Thus, studies related to students' interaction, particularly from the point of view of CP is essential to provide new insight on the application of CP in an online learning environment.

Studies on CP in an online learning environment underline the situation resulting from the emergency remote learning to curb the spread of the virus. Dewi and Indriani (2020) who deciphered the utterances made in an online interaction at EFL classroom urged that external factors, such as an unstable internet connection or interference from the surrounding environment, and internal factors such as anxiety can cause EFL students to violate the maxim in the online classroom. Online instruction hinders student-to-student and student-to-instructor interactions, especially in terms of affective and cognitive social presence (Wut & Xu, 2021).

CP in the online learning environment is pivotal since communication appropriateness should occur not only in a face-to-face environment but also in the online environment. Different from the direct conversation when the speakers can acknowledge tone and gesture, in online environment, particularly in text-based communication, CP is harder to form. Although in capturing intonation, facial expressions, and body language one can use emoticons (Li & Yang, 2018), they do not guarantee to reduce ambiguity. Adebola (2018) disclosed that the rate of obscurity from the topic of conversation was extremely high in WhatsApp texts of university students. Despite Li and Yang (2018) particularly delineating that positive emoticon are used to create a positive atmosphere in socio-emotional settings they have yet to perfectly mirror non-verbal signs in face-to-face communication. Therefore, CP in the online learning environment, especially in the form of text-based communicate is essential to help people communicative effectively even without a visual cue.



The Trend of Studies on Cooperative Principle in Indonesia: The language and Culture

A plethora of studies investigated CP in Indonesia, especially in analyzing movies (Andy & Ambalegin, 2019; Putri & Apsari, 2020; Sari, Nuraini, & Muthalib, 2019; Serlin, 2018). However, there is a scarcity of recent studies describing CP in the international ELT context. Most international studies discussing CP were related to novel/story (Mangilaya, 2020; Thakur, 2016), Facebook conversation (Ayunon, 2018), presidential election (Jakaza, 2013), and professional relationships (Howard, Griffin, & Arth, 2021). The trend of analysis of CP in Indonesia is due to its culture that is closely related to the use of the cooperative principle, conversational implicature, and pragmatism.

In the Indonesian context, despite being difficult in understanding and correctly interpreting what their counterparts are trying to say, due to the notion of harmony, the listener frequently accepts confusing statements and rarely expresses displeasure with contradictions (Herawati, 2013). Sari et al. (2020) described that there is an indicator in Indonesian society and culture, particularly in Javanese culture, that the longer a speech is, the more courteous it is. In Malay Riau culture, it is suggested that the culture of niceties makes people provide more information than is asked in small talk to form familiarity (Fatmawati et al., 2019). Sari et al. (2020) further proffer that in the Indonesian language community real-time speaking activities, obscurity, and ambiguity are natural and quite common. Hence, it is illuminated that ample studies of CP in ELT in the Indonesian context may be due to its indirect and ambiguous language.

The cultural reality and language are inextricably linked. CP is a universal regulation that participants of a conversation from different cultures have to follow (Herawati, 2013), or unless, communication will not occur successfully. It has something to do with one's social and cultural background. Especially for high-context (HC) that Hall (1976) described as an internalized message with the very little explicit part. Indonesia, as a high context culture (Saputri & Saraswati, 2017), especially in Javanese culture, has indirect and ambiguous communication. To sustain relationships, it's best to keep feelings hidden. It is in contrast to western culture with a frank display of feeling (Lulu, 2019).

Different cultures may describe a different way of communication. Communication that is raised in the relevant culture also varies according to cultural variances (Shi, 2014). Lulu (2019) is proffered as an example of English and Chinese culture in terms of the use of CP. Lulu asserted that there are pragmatic differences in the CP use of English and Chinese that resulted in different thinking modes. Chinese highlight indirect euphemism while western tends to be straightforward. Lulu added that western people have a linear thinking mode with practical, direct, and frank linguistic content. On the contrary, Chinese are inclined to use circular thinking with ambiguity with euphemism, implicit, and indirect language. Individualistic societies consider talking bluntly as a feature of honesty. Therefore, it is not surprising that the analysis of CP is ever-evolving in Indonesia considering the high-context culture its people adhere. Description of CP in Indonesia from time to time is highly anticipated.



The Gap of the Literature

Being cognizant of the importance of CP in weaving cooperation in communication, studies on CP should not only elaborate on CP implementation, it should also examine the implications. Several voids are expected to be addressed by future studies are in terms of interpretation of research findings by previous studies, comparison of CP in a different culture, and analysis of text-based online communication.

Most studies regarding CP only describe the percentage of occurrence of maxim violations or other non-observance maxims. Many researchers fail to relate their study with previous studies (Irawati, Saukah, & Suharmanto, 2018). Further studies are expected to elaborate the implications of the percentage after calculating the maxims. Conversely, Wasito, Syah, and Harahap (2017) proffer that Indonesian EFL learners have interpreted the results and referred to other studies in the discussion study. Yet, the analysis was lack of links to another context that may enrich the interpretation and implication of the study. Beyond the objective description, the researcher should be attempted to seek to provide real insights into the problem (Dobakhti, 2016) and the gist of results for comprehension (Bavdekar, 2016). Language is not solitary; it should be incorporated with culture to be appropriately used. The percentage must mean something, particularly in the context of the language culture. Therefore, the analysis should establish a link between the use of language and socio-cultural background.

Reflecting upon the review or articles, especially those written in the context of Indonesian society, a comparison of CP in different cultures in Indonesia is necessary. Describing the tendency of the use of CP in certain cultures will not only enrich understanding toward various cultures in Indonesia but also raise awareness on forming cross-cultural cooperation. Recognizing cultural differences, students can make accurate interpretations and appropriately respond to persons or events in the conversation (Ratnasari, 2018). Not only comparing cultures in Indonesia but future studies are also expected to compare the language culture of Indonesia and other countries, especially countries with different language characteristics and tendencies. For instance, comparing Indonesia, as a high-context culture and countries with low-context culture will be beneficial in understanding how people react. Different cultures make people react differently to the complex message (Hall, 1990). In addition, further study on complete observance and non-observance maxim that include the reasons on why students do it is required. The study should also involve the differences in classroom interaction in schools in rural and urban areas as well as teachers' methods or media used to overcome non-observance maxims in the ELT context.

The final depiction of the gap goes to the analysis of text-based communication in the online learning environment. Understanding text-based language requires more effort than spoken language. Text-based communication has no non-verbal cues such as tone and gesture that ease the interlocutor in understanding meaning beyond words. Thus, miscommunication has a bigger chance to occur in text-based communication (Kelly & Miller-Ott, 2018). Hence, a study on CP in text-based communication is required to signify textual analysis of abstract meaning and the way people cooperate online to avoid miscommunication. Despite widespread



attention to text-based communication, textual analysis of CP in an online learning environment remains underrepresented.

All in all, the classroom is the miniature of society where students learn and adapt to applicable norms in society. The classroom is a place to empower students with cross-cultural understanding (Ratnasari, 2018). By implementing proper communication in the classroom, students can figure out how to think, talk, and behave. The mastery of appropriate communication does not only help students mingle with society, but also form characters that pay attention to other people's intentions and feelings. After all, education does not only function to unceasingly help students comprehend knowledge, but also character.

Conclusion

This study is a theoretical effort in constructing understanding on studies related to CP and ELT. Classroom as a miniature of society should be able to adapt and prepare students to be ready to mingle in society with accepted norms. Hence, the way the members of classroom cooperate meaning has a significant contribution to their thinking, behavior, and utterances. By having knowledge of CP that is applied and analyzed in the ELT context, the future direction can be estimated to maintain or reform effective and appropriate communication, methods and curriculum, especially for foreign language study. Further studies that integrate CP with culture and online settings serve as a fertile ground for the advancement of studies of CP and ELT. Since the studies included in this article were derived from the last ten years, future studies are expected to unravel studies on CP and ELT from time to time to examine the trends of CP analysis and see the connection that may infer the sociocultural reality at different times span.

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