

# The Role Of Implicature In Somerset Maugham's Short Story The Fall Of Edward Barnard

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## **Abstract:**

**Background / Objectives:** The use of linguistic cues to convey a speaker's intention has long been studied. Implicature is a sub-topic in narratology and refers to what is suggested in an utterance, even though neither expressed nor strictly implied. It is not only verbal communication that conveys intended meaning but also non-verbal cues that enable a speaker to elicit a response from the listener.

**Methods and analysis:** Implicature was popularized by Herbert Paul Grice, often known as H.P. Grice, a British philosopher of language, and he used the neologisms *implicate* and *implicature*, to show that words can convey more than what is said. The present paper attempts to read Somerset Maugham's short story *The Fall of Edward Barnard* through the application of Grice's influential theory of 'implicature, according to the Four Maxims of Co-operative Principle – Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Relevance and Maxim of Manner. The implicature in the short story has also been analysed through the non-verbal communication under *Kinesics: body language* and *Para language*.

**Findings:** The minute analysis of Somerset Maugham's short story *The Fall of Edward Barnard*, by applying all the four maxims, exposes explicitly the dimension of Maugham's creative genius and elucidates that he delineates a story not just through words but also shows how his characters convey meaning through the use of implicature.

**Keywords:** Maxim of Quantity; Maxim of Quality; Maxim of Relevance; Maxim of Manner; Non-Verbal Implicature; Kinesics; Para Language

## I. INTRODUCTION

### GRICE'S LANGUAGE THEORY

H.P. Grice's paper *Logic and Conversation* (1967) is one of the classic treatises in pragmatics. It served as an attempt to clarify the intuitive difference between what is expressed literally in a sentence and what is merely suggested or hinted at by an utterance of the same string of words. He used the technical term 'Implicature' to distinguish the latter from the former, while referring to the linguistically coded part of utterance content as "WHAT IS SAID". The sum of *what is said* in a sentence and *what is implicated* in an utterance of the same sentence is called the "Total signification of an utterance".

He drew the line between *what is said* and *what is conversationally implicated*. This helps to draw inferences from verbal and non-verbal communication, situation and characters. As another theorist Enquist has said, it helps us to draw conclusions from the speaker/writer's politeness, attitudes, mental state and abilities, ethical and moral status. It also determines the narrative technique – point of view.

Grice notes that conversations are usually to some degree cooperative enterprises. Cooperative Principle stipulates,

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged – including, for instance, the intentions, goals and presuppositions of the conversational participants".

As Grice rightly explains, for better understanding of a text one should know the cooperative principle, i.e. how communication as a two way process involves the encoder and decoder and the medium of the message. In order to arrive at the right meaning of what is communicated, the decoder should know not only the basic maxims, but also how implicatures emanate from violating the maxims. Whereas other communication theories insist that when the Six Cs of communication – Courtesy, Clarity, Conciseness, Correctness, Completeness and Consideration – is violated, it results in breakdown of communication, Grice points out that such violations result in a deeper level of communication. The decoder must know not only the basic elements of communication, but also their deliberate and conscious violation by the encoder to comprehend the message. This is what Grice describes as “total signification of an utterance.”

#### MAXIM OF QUANTITY

- ✓ Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)
- ✓ Do not make your contribution either more or less informative than is required

#### MAXIM OF QUALITY

Try to make your contribution one that is true

Its two more specific maxims are:

- ✓ Do not say what you believe to be false
- ✓ Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

#### MAXIM OF RELEVANCE

- ✓ Be relevant
- ✓ Add new information

#### MAXIM OF MANNER

- ✓ Be perspicuous;
- ✓ Avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity
- ✓ Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- ✓ Be orderly

The present study attempts to apply the Gricean Maxims to the short story of Somerset Maugham, *The Fall of Edward*. It is a variation on the theme of the eternal triangle of love, two men Bateman and Edward close friends falling in love with Isabel, where Bateman remains passive and helpful to Isabel, when he comes to know of the mutual attachment of Isabel and Edward. Maugham uses much dialogue in his narration, especially in his short stories. In the absence of narrated speech, the conversational import requires to be carefully interpreted. The application of Grice's maxims and their violations facilitate a better comprehension of the author's world view.

## II. MAXIM OF QUANTITY

The first instance of violation of the maxim of quantity is apparent, when Bateman returned to San Francisco from

Tahiti. Bateman's father enquired how Edward was and Bateman replied abruptly,

I'd sooner not speak about him.

The answer should have been a straight forward 'well' or 'not well' but Bateman's words implicate that he did not have good tidings about Edward. It also implies that he was hesitant to drop the bombshell.

After Bateman had travelled down to Tahiti and seen Edward, Bateman expressed surprise that Edward was content to live in a rented room 'clean and cheap'.

'If I remember right those weren't the points that seemed most important to you when you lived in Chicago.'

'Chicago!'

'I don't know what you mean by that, Edward. It's the greatest city in the world.'

'I know,' said Edward.

Edward had also been an ardent lover of Chicago but his enigmatic response implies that his opinion about Chicago had changed and his cryptic words violate the submaxim of quantity "make your contribution as informative as is required". It also indicates that Bateman was sensitive to disparagements about the city he loved and also that he noticed some change of attitude in Edward.

Bateman finds Edward to be a changed man and since he made no mention of returning to Chicago, he enquired

'When are you coming back to it?'

'I often wonder,' smiled Edward.

Here, he is violating the maxim of quantity by not being adequately informative but implies that he had decided not to return to Chicago.

While they were having a drink at Bateman's hotel, Arnold Jackson approached them and Edward introduced him to Bateman. He was Isabel's uncle, whose acquaintance Edward had been asked to steer clear off. Jackson invited them both for dinner at his house that evening and Bateman learned that Edward was very well acquainted with Jackson, who had taken another wife there. Bateman felt repulsed that Edward had picked up an acquaintance with the despicable man. Bateman remonstrated to Edward,

'I don't see how any decent man can have anything to do with him.'

'Perhaps I'm not a decent man.'

This hedging implicates that Edward's sense of honour had changed and that he had fallen into the ways of Jackson too easily and was not ashamed of being called one.

Edward and Bateman were invited to dinner at Jackson's house and had a swim in the sea. Bateman was rather taken aback by the light-heartedness of Edward. After their bath in the sea, Jackson joined them and enquired Edward if he had not brought a pareo (a native garment) for Bateman.

'I guess he'd rather wear clothes,' smiled Edward.

He does not elaborate the reasons why not, but this implicature indicates that Edward knew that Bateman was a city man, who would feel self-conscious about native garments. It also implicates that he did not want to embarrass his friend.

After Jackson left them alone that night, Bateman blurted out,

'When are you coming back to Chicago?' he asked, suddenly.

For a moment Edward did not answer. Then he turned rather lazily to look at his friend and smiled.

‘I don’t know. Perhaps never.’

Here again the super-maxim of quantity “make your contribution as informative as is required” is violated, as Edward did not tell a direct answer but hedged by using the word ‘perhaps’.

Bateman tried to convince Edward that Jackson was a bad influence, which was afflicting him; Edward retorted saying that he had found a good friend in Jackson and commented,

Perhaps even the best of us are sinners and the worst of us are saints. Who knows?’

‘You will never persuade me that white is black and that black is white,’ said Bateman.

‘I’m sure I shan’t, Bateman.’

Here Edward implicates that he did not feel the need to convince Bateman to change his opinion about Jackson and that he would continue his friendship with him.

During their conversation, Edward impressed Bateman by elaborating on his initial plans for Tahiti and the money he would earn by executing them. Bateman was excited and said,

‘But go ahead, Edward,’ cried Bateman, springing up from the chair in excitement. ‘You’ve got the ideas and the capacity. Why, you’ll become the richest man between Australia and the States.’

Edward chuckled softly.

‘But I don’t want to,’ he said.

Edward’s response is unexpected as he again violates the maxim by not giving sufficient information as is required “for the current purposes of the exchange.” This implies that he would not be content with earning money alone.

When Edward advised Bateman to marry Isabel, suddenly it dawned on Bateman if Edward was giving up Isabel for Bateman’s sake, but Edward answered,

‘No, Bateman, I have learnt not to be silly and sentimental here. I should like you and Isabel to be happy, but I have not the least wish to be unhappy myself.’

This shows that he was impervious to losing Isabel and also that he had other plans that would make him happy.

### III. MAXIM OF QUALITY

After returning to Chicago, when Bateman recounted his meeting with Edward, Isabel became resigned to Edward’s defection and removed her engagement ring from her hand. After trying to comfort her, Bateman induced courage and said ‘Isabel, you know I wanted to marry you the very first day I saw you,’ he cried passionately.

‘Then why on earth didn’t you ask me?’ she replied.

This dialogue violates the sub-maxim “Do not say what you believe to be false”. It was evident from their first meeting that Isabel had always been more interested in Edward of the two men. Though she knew that Bateman was in love with her, she had never thought of him. Now, these words indicate that she was willing to set aside her love for Edward and take up what Bateman was willing to offer her. Through these words she also implies that all through their acquaintance she had been unaware of Bateman’s love for her, which was not true. Another implication is that maybe she

would have accepted his proposal, if she had ever suspected of Bateman’s intentions. This raises the doubt of her love for Edward and also indicates that she was fickle and was not steady in her love. The present implication is that she had switched preference and had decided to take up what best she could get.

Grice says that irony can violate the maxim of quality. To Bateman’s enquiry when he was returning to Chicago, Edward responded,

“Chicago?”

The ironical tone perplexed Bateman. From his tone, it is implied that the city now does not hold the same venerable position that Edward had accorded it earlier. Only later does Edward explain that his opinion about “the dark, grey city, all stone—it is like a prison—and a ceaseless turmoil.” had changed.

When Edward introduced Bateman to Arnold Jackson, Bateman became confused and his white face revealed that he recognized Arnold. Seeing his disconcerted countenance, Arnold said,

‘I daresay my name is familiar to you.’

His ironical tone indicates that Jackson was aware that Bateman knew he was Isabel’s uncle, who had served in the penitentiary for seven years and had then moved down to Tahiti.

Later Bateman argued with Edward that he could not like Jackson as he was a disreputable person. But Edward counteracted by saying that Jackson had taught him how to live. Bateman was angered and ‘broke into ironical laughter’ and said,

‘A fine master. Is it owing to his lessons that you lost the chance of making a fortune and earn your living now by serving behind a counter in a ten-cent store?’

Repetition of ironical statements is also a violation of the maxim of quality. The statement,

“He’s nobody’s enemy but his own.” appears twice in this short story, once in relation to Arnold Jackson and the other when Isabel comments about Edward’s defection. This shows that the former, with his influence over the latter, had changed Edward’s outlook of life in. These words not only imply that Edward was spoiling his life of his own volition, but also shows his resignation not come back to Chicago.

Isabel realized that she had lost Edward and she resolved to make the best of the situation by accepting Bateman’s proposal.

And as he held her in his arms he had a vision of the works of the Hunter Motor Traction and Automobile Company growing in size and importance till they covered a hundred acres, and of the millions of motors they would turn out, and of the great collection of pictures he would form which should beat anything they had in New York. He would wear horn spectacles. And she, with the delicious pressure of his arms about her, sighed with happiness, for she thought of the exquisite house she would have, full of antique furniture, and of the concerts she would give, and of the *thés dansants*, and the dinners to which only the most cultured people would come.

Through this implicature the author tries to bring out the irony of their marriage. It brings out the practical side of her character and implies that she had consented to marry

Bateman to continue to have the kind of sophisticated life that she had been accustomed to. It also shows how Bateman too thought of having a marriage of convenience.

#### IV. MAXIM OF RELEVANCE

Bateman was mortified to find Edward working in a humble position as a salesman in a trader's store in Tahiti. During the course of their conversation at the hotel, Bateman expressed his surprise that Edward could have sunk so low in position. Edward nonchalantly answered that since he had been fired from his previous job, he was satisfied to earn just enough to keep his body and soul together. Bateman was surprised and uttered that Edward wouldn't have been so content two years ago. To this, Edward replied enigmatically,

We grow wiser as we grow older.

This violation of relevance implies that his temperament had undergone a drastic change; it also means that he had gained a lot of experience in the past few years, which had mellowed him and that he was no longer the man Bateman knew till a few years ago and that all of Edward's ambitions had changed.

Bateman tried to convince Edward that 'By doing his duty, by hard work, by meeting all the obligations of his state and station.' every man would get his reward. But Edward did not heed it and said that his view of the world had changed. Bateman blurted angrily if he had learnt them from Arnold Jackson and Edward enquired,

'You don't like him?'

Instead of replying directly to Bateman's question, Edward used "obscurity of expression". This implies that Edward knew that he had slipped from his high standards due to the influence of Jackson, but was hesitant to acknowledge it openly.

Bateman was chagrined that Edward had an understanding of Bateman's love for Isabel, when Edward said that Bateman was better suited for Isabel.

'I wish you had ordinary clothes on,' he said, somewhat irritably. 'It's such a tremendously serious decision you're taking. That fantastic costume of yours makes it seem terribly casual.'

Bateman was upset to be caught out on his pretense and in his perturbation, he suddenly and irrelevantly blamed Edward's casual attire for his incomprehensiveness.

#### V. MAXIM OF MANNER

Maxim of Manner is violated when the speaker uses ambiguous words. One such instance can be spotted when Edward elaborated on the plans he had for making his stay in Tahiti more profitable. Bateman was excited over the ambitious plans and imagined that Edward would become 'richest man between Australia and the States.' But disconcertingly, Edward said,

"But I don't want to."

Bateman was exasperated with Edward's reply but it implicates that Edward was content to drift along with the tide of life as he was no longer driven by ambition.

Co-operative Principle stipulates that the speaker should "Be Brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)" to convey his intended meaning to the listener/reader. Having understood what type of man Arnold Jackson was, Bateman did not want to accept Jackson's invitation to dinner at his home. So, to soften his refusal he used prolixity in his reply,

'It's very kind of you, Mr Jackson,' said Bateman, frigidly, 'but I'm here for so

short a time; my boat sails tomorrow, you know; I think if you'll forgive me, I won't come.' (prolixity)

Another instance of such a violation can be seen, when Bateman enquired Edward what was to become of Isabel, if Edward did not come back to Chicago. Edward said,

'Isabel is infinitely too good for me. I admire her more than any woman

I have ever known. She has a wonderful brain and she's as good as she's beautiful. I respect her energy and her ambition. She was born to make a success of life. I am entirely unworthy of her.'

These words imply that though he had loved Isabel and contemplated marrying her, he had later realized that she was too self-sufficient to need the love of a man. On the other hand, when he talked of Eva, Arnold Jackson's daughter, he implied that his chauvinism would be gratified to look after a girl who was the contrast of Isabel. When Bateman enquired if Edward loved Eva, he said

'I don't know,' answered Edward reflectively. 'I'm not in love with her as I was in love with Isabel. I worshipped Isabel. I thought she was the most wonderful creature I had ever seen. I was not half good enough for her. I don't feel like that with Eva. She's like a beautiful exotic flower that must be sheltered from bitter winds. I want to protect her. No one ever thought of protecting Isabel.'

I think she loves me for myself and not for what I may become. Whatever happens to me I shall never disappoint her. She suits me.'

These two instances of violation are sufficient to show the true character of Edward, who felt neglected with a self-reliant woman, but felt his masculinity in the company of a helpless woman. This long dialogue also leaves us guessing, if he was using the girl Eva as a means to an end, to live in Tahiti.

When Bateman narrated these incidents to Isabel, she became resigned and slipped off the wedding ring from her finger. She accepted his proposal of marriage and said,

'Poor Edward,' she sighed.

These words are an example of the violation of the sub-maxim 'avoid ambiguity'. Here, we are left to guess whether she still loved Edward and had only accepted Bateman as a second choice or if she sympathized with Edward for foolishly choosing a less comfortable life at Tahiti.

#### VI. NON-VERBAL IMPLICATURE

Non-Verbal communication enables a speaker to express much more than actual words can. Research has showed that more than 50 % of communication is only through the various mediums of gestures, facial expressions, time, space and voice. These have been variously classified as Kinesics, Proxemics and Para Language. Let us explore a few

instances, where non-verbal implicature is inherent in this short story.

## VII. KINESICS

Kinesics literally means body movements. A message is communicated by a number of factors like facial expressions, eye movements, and gestures. In this short story, there are many instances where facial expression, eye contact and gestures are used by the characters to convey implicature.

After Bateman returned to Chicago, his father asked him how Edward was.

Edward was silent for a moment, and his handsome, sensitive face darkened.

His silence and the darkening of his face implicate that he did not have good news about Edward. His facial expression indicates that he had not succeeded in his mission to bring back Edward.

After going to Tahiti, Bateman made enquiries about Edward to a youth and was astounded when people recognized Edward as Arnold Jackson's nephew. When he was walking alongside the youth, he suddenly noted that the young man spoke English with a different accent. When he realized that the young boy was a half-caste,

"A touch of hauteur involuntarily entered into his manner".

This non-verbal communication implies that people are never free of racism and proves that even Bateman was a prey to this snobbishness.

Jackson invited Bateman to dinner and Bateman tried to decline that offer. But Jackson brushed aside his objections, and

"He (Arnold) nodded and walked away before Bateman could say another word".

This gesture shows his forceful character. He never took no for an answer and always got what he wanted from other people.

After dinner, Jackson led Bateman to a window and Bateman was abashed by the beauty of the scene, which lay before him.

"Arnold Jackson stood staring in front of him, and in his eyes was a dreamy softness. His thin, thoughtful face was very grave. Bateman, glancing at it, was once more conscious of its intense spirituality".

This facial expression showed that Jackson, who was notorious, was surprisingly a lover of nature and beauty, and that this might have rubbed off on Edward, who was willing to give up the hectic city life and be content to stay in Tahiti and just love and enjoy nature's beauty.

After Edward had emphatically said that he was not coming back to Chicago, Bateman enquired 'And what about Isabel?'

Edward walked to the edge of the veranda and leaning over looked intently at the blue magic of the night. There was a slight smile on his face when he turned back to Bateman.

His smile implies that he was unconcerned about Isabel and also when he said that he was not worthy of her, we find his complacent smile is an expression of the fact that he had realized this long before.

After emphatically refusing to come back to Chicago and marry Isabel, Edward led Bateman into a twin bedroom and promptly lay down.

In ten minutes Bateman knew by his regular breathing, peaceful as a child's, that Edward was asleep. But for his part he had no rest, he was disturbed in mind, and it was not till the dawn crept into the room, ghostlike and silent, that he fell asleep.

This gesture of falling asleep immediately shows that Edward's mind was firmly made up and that he was happily resigned to staying in Tahiti so that in his old age he would be content to "be able to look back on a happy, simple, peaceful life." On the other hand, Bateman's restlessness shows that too much had happened for him to accept them calmly and that his sojourn had given him unexpected experiences.

When Bateman and Isabel were talking about Edward's decision, Bateman was rather confused with the reaction of Isabel.

But perhaps Isabel had keener intuitions than he knew, for as he went on with his tale her eyes grew colder and her lips closed upon one another more tightly. Now and then she looked at him closely, and if he had been less intent on his narrative he might have wondered at her expression.

Isabel's reaction shows that she was taking everything in her stride and she proved that Edward's surmise of her stolid character was rather true. Her expression also implies that she had expected the worst and was not overly worried on being proved that her convictions were right.

Isabel asked if the daughter of Jackson, whom Edward had decided to marry, had any resemblance to her; Bateman replied that no one could resemble Isabel. At this, Isabel 'smiled slightly at his words.' This smile is enigmatic as it implicates either that she accepted the intended compliment or that she gave recognition to Bateman's adoration for her.

After Bateman had recounted everything except that Edward was planning to marry Eva,

She slipped the ring off her finger and placed it on the table.

This gesture implies that she now was convinced that everything between Edward and herself was over and that she had accepted the inevitable.

## VIII. PARA LANGUAGE

Closer to actual verbal (oral) communication and always accompanying body language is paralanguage. Paralinguistic is the systematic study of how a speaker verbalizes his words/speech. It includes articulation, pronunciation, rate, pitch, volume, pauses and other vocal qualities.

During their conversation, Bateman referred to Edward that Chicago was the greatest city in the world. Edward said, "I know" and the pitch of Edward's voice was such that Bateman quickly noticed that Bateman was rather implying the opposite to his opinion.

When Jackson invited Bateman to dinner in his house, Bateman refused it stiffly and the frigidity in his voice and this voice variation indicated the depth of his hatred towards Jackson. When Arnold told 'strange stories of the past',

Bateman, mortified and exasperated, at first listened sullenly, but presently some magic in the words possessed him and he sat entranced. The mirage of romance obscured the light of common day.

His first reaction of sullenness shows that he resented Jackson, but his second reaction of sitting entranced shows that unwillingly he had succumbed to the charisma of Jackson's recounting. This also implies that Jackson's charm was too potent and this was how Edward had been hooked.

## IX. CONCLUSION

The present analysis illustrates that one cannot understand the whole of Maugham by remaining a passive reader. The first impression we get from the reading of Somerset Maugham's stories, is that he is providing us a photographic representation of life as it is, without any serious message. But when Grice's Maxims and Implicatures are systematically applied to analyse Maugham's text, we get a glimpse of his perfect understanding of human nature and its essentials for true happiness. *The Fall of Edward Barnard*, for example, suggests from its title that there is a fall of Edward from the high society life of Chicago, of which Isabel is the best representative. But life in Tahiti proves a contrast to it, and in a sense questions the value systems of Chicago, the city. It promises a deeper level of happiness in terms of a more relaxed life in close affinity with nature and sympathetic understanding of fellowmen. So, *The Fall of Edward Barnard* is only apparent not real, and in his sympathetic understanding, Edward as well as the author does not question

other people's pursuits. The irony of life is best captured by the working out of the implicatures of the conversations in the story.

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