
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Cooperative Principle in Women Groups' Interactions of Anglophone Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

The present study set out to explore the conversational rules in events of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon in order to reveal the communication ethos and interaction patterns inherent in women groups' dynamics. The study adopted the collective case design to explore the conversational maxims observed and flouted in two categories of women associations- development-based associations, which comprised One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB), Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF) and Biwon Self Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU), and faith-based associations, comprising Catholic Women's Association (CWA) and Christian Women Fellowship (CWF). Through random and purposeful sampling techniques and with non-participant observation, unstructured-open-ended interviews and audio recordings, 24 group events were analysed through the latent content analysis. The findings reveal that during events, members of these women's associations adhered more to the maxims of the cooperative principle. Out of a total of 4,257 communicative acts, 4,205 of them were in adherence to one or all of the four maxims, a total percentage of 95.1 adherence as opposed to 4.9% flouting. Of these four maxims, the maxim of relation was the most adhered to (98.8% adherence and 1.2% flouting) and that of manner, was the least adhered to (91% adherence and 9% flouting). A majority of these adherences were done during attempted answer processes while those of flouting took place during negative reaction expressions. These findings reveal that when expressing negative reactions such as threats, criticisms, frustration and anger, members of women's Associations from the Anglophone Cameroon do them indirectly so as to avoid face-threatening one another during meetings. As far as the two categories of associations are concerned, the findings equally reveal that maxims adherence occurred more in faith-based associations than in development-based associations; 96.2% as opposed to 92.6% respectively. This high rate of maxims adherence mirrors solidarity, cooperation, connection, support, closeness and understanding and further supports the argument that communication for women is a primary way to establish and maintain relationships with one another.

KEYWORDS

Cooperative Principle, Communication Practices, Group Interactions, Anglophone Cameroon, Women Associations.

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1. Introduction

An interlocutor speaks not only with his or her own voice, but repeats or resounds, the voice of the master, i.e.; the institution to which he or she belongs, (Mey, 2006, p.788).

The above declaration by Jacob Mey shows that interpreting an individual's utterance does not only entail explaining what words have been used. Rather, how the words were used, where they were used, and why the words have been used in that manner must be taken into consideration. To better appreciate a speech community therefore, it is imperative to have an active conception of how language functions in that community. This includes an understanding of the practices that are said to be the characteristic of that speech community, given that every interaction pattern has its own unique features as evident in women gatherings.

Women's vulnerability, due to their social and cultural status as the dominated sex, has exposed them to so much marginalisation, especially in developing countries, (Kassea, 2006). To wade off this marginalisation, most women are registered members of associations and groups, which have become channels through which intentions and ideas are expressed. To 'outsiders' who are not members of these 'communities of speech' (Hymes, 1974), assigning meaning and functions to behaviours and communicative acts, especially during women groups' interactions becomes challenging. This is obvious, given that communication among women, especially in groups' gathering is multifaceted, as signs such as symbols, actions, gestures, instruments, sounds and colours complement their verbal behaviours during gatherings, (Ewane, Ojongmpot, Mforteh, Onuigbo, 2022).

These conversational tools emblemize communicative acts with multiple functions rendering them difficult to be accessed from 'the outside' and thus mostly misinterpreted. It is imperative therefore to explore these unique and multifaceted communication patterns that characterise post-colonial speech communities such as those of women gatherings from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon, in order to better understand their intentions and ideas expressed and consequently, foster their development and that of humanity as a whole. This is because these women's groups are avenues through which most women; especially in African rural areas assemble to educate one another, to know about what is happening around them and to learn to improve on their economic, spiritual, social and financial welfare, (Kassea, 2006 as cited in Ewane et al, 2022). This can be better achieved through pragmatic theorising- a blend of pragmatics and interaction analysis theories. Hence, in the context of Catholic Women Association (CWA), Christian Women Fellowship (CWF), One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB), Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF) and Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU), and with the aid of Bales' (1957; 1999) Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) framework and Grice's (1975; 1989) Cooperative Principle (CP) theory, this paper articulates that the unique and multifaceted communication practices that characterise women groups' interactions can be better assessed through pragmatic theorising. As will be demonstrated in this paper, the Cooperative Principle has the capability of showing the level of cooperation that exists among interactants. Grice himself has stated that the maxims of the CP are needed to help account for the relation between sense and force, (Grice, 1975 as cited in Cutting, 2003, p. 36).

1.1 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The present study set out to explore the conversational rules in events of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon in order to reveal the communication ethos and interaction patterns inherent in women groups' dynamics.

The objectives guiding the study are:

- To critically examine the CP maxims' adherence and flouting in the interaction of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon (North West and South West).
- To ascertain the extent to which the adhered to and/or flouted CP maxims reveal communication practices and interaction patterns during interactions in women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon (North West and South West).

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 On Interaction Patterns

Most studies carried out on interactions explored language use in Western cultures, indicating how these mirror gender roles. One of such study that has contributed to bringing to lime light issues of men's and women's conversational strategies is Maltz and Borker (1982). Maltz and Borker (1982) examined young children in recreation activities, observing that while boys' activities, which usually involve fairly large groups of at least nine individuals were competitive, had clear goals and were organised by rules and roles that specify who does what and how to play, girls in their activities tend to play in pairs or in small groups with no pre-set and clear-cut goals, rules and roles. In boys' games, an individual's status depended on standing out, being better, and often dominating other players; cultivating in them specific communicative rules which turn out to be the basic rules of communication that adult men employ. That is, the use of communication to assert ones' self and ideas, the use of talk to achieve something, the use of communication to attract and maintain an audience, and the use of communication to compete with others for the 'talk stage' so that others do not gain more attention than one, (Maltz and Borker, 1982 as cited in Gumperz, 2009, p.18). Unlike boys' games which are organised with clear cut goals, girls' games were not structured externally. Players

have to talk among themselves to decide what they were doing and what roles they had. This lack of stipulation for the rules and roles for girls' game, according to Maltz and Borker, enables girls to cooperate and work out problems by talking, thereby cultivating in girls an interest in the process of interaction more than the product; a basic rule of communication that adult women employ, (p.18). These include the use of collaborative and cooperative talk to create and maintain relationships, the avoidance of criticisms and outdoing, or putting each other down, paying attention to each other and to relationships, and interpreting and responding to others' feelings sensitively, (p.21).

Maltz and Borker (1982) explored language use in children's gatherings in western cultures, indicating how these can mirror gender roles. Our study, which is focused on post-colonial settings- women associations in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon, goes further to explore not only how conversational rules are observed and /or flouted during groups gatherings but also what the adherences and flouting of these conversational rules reveal about women communication practices. The interaction patterns prominent in the adherences and flouting of conversational maxims also remain an integral aspect of this study.

Similarly, Nam, Lyons, Hwang and Kim (2009) used Bales (1957) IPA Framework to examine Face-to-face (FTF) and Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) interactions of mixed and homogenous population, with the aim of exploring the impact of team diversity and communication modes on team interactions. After examining the communication processes and profiles of the participants, they found out that homogeneous teams evidenced greater levels of communication during team-based task than the heterogeneous teams. The homogeneous teams used more showing agreement, giving opinions, and showing tension communication patterns compared to the heterogeneous teams. With reference to groups/teams' communication modes, the FTF interaction was associated with greater levels of communication compared to the CMC interaction. The data also reveals that teams interacting using FTF communication modes evidenced more tension communication patterns characterized by greater positive socio-emotional communication, more attempted answers, more questions, and more frequent negative socio-emotional communications, (p.780). This finding, according to Nam et al, (2009) is consistent with the literature on groups' interactions which suggest that diversity, while a performing enabler in the long-term, may inhibit team processes such as team cohesiveness, (p.783).

Another study with a focus on group interaction that lends credit to this study is Beck (2009). Beck integrated Bales' (1957) IPA framework with Scheerhorn, Geist and Teboul's (1994) communicative episodes in business meetings to examine three different meeting contexts: a breast cancer support group, a non-profit service provider organization and a city commission, in order to examine how meeting activities such as coordination and decision-making are accomplished in group interactions. The findings reveal that task and relational messages are used to accomplish meeting activities, portraying how business, public administration, and health advocacy environments are contextually created. While the city commission meetings focused on showing solidarity/seems friendly, demonstrating the importance of concerted, formal effort in boosting others in their efforts during groups' events, the non-profit meetings, on the other hand, focused on release tension/dramatizes; showing the importance of joking and the informal environment during groups' events.

As indicated above, Beck (2009) and Nam, et al (2009) employed Bales' IPA framework to examine communication strategies in Face-to-face and Computer-Mediated Communication in business meetings and organisations, revealing the communication modes used during meeting deliberations and how they are realised. Our study comes in not only to bring out the communication modes (Interaction patterns) realised during meeting deliberations in women gatherings but also what the adherences and flouting of these conversational rules reveal about Anglophone Cameroon women communication practices.

2.2 On the Cooperative Principle

A lot of work has been carried out on Grice's Cooperative Principle's use in everyday interactions. While some of them focused on children's use and recognition of the CP's Maxims ([Bredart, 1984](#); Conti and Camras, 1984; Eskritt, Whalen and Lee, 2010), others have used the CP's Maxims to analyse written works such as letters and news events (Qassemic, Ziabari, Kheirabadi, 2018; Zhang, 2017) and literary texts (Igwe-debia, 2018;). However, there is a paucity of information on works that have examined the CP'S use in face-to-face interactions during meeting, specifically in women associations, the focus of this study.

Among the studies on Grice's CP use and recognition by children are Eskritt, Whalen and Lee (2010). Eskritt, Whalen and Lee (2010) used a game to examine three-to five- year-olds' recognition of Grice's Maxims of Quality, Relation and Quantity, so as to determine the age at which an awareness of the Gricean maxims emerge in children and also to compare their developmental progression. The data revealed that preschool children are sensitive to the violation of the maxims of Relation, Quality, and Quantity, at least, under some conditions. While, in general, the children performed better in the Quantity condition compared with the Quality condition, the 3-year-olds never performed above chance in the Quantity condition. Also, children across age groups were able to pick the Gricean follower or flouter in the Quantity and Quality conditions on the first trial. However, more

than two-thirds of the children chose the Gricean follower in the Relation condition. This finding of children being sensitive to the maxim of Relation, according to Eskritt et al, (2010) is consistent with Sperber and Wilson's (1986; 1995; 2002) Relevance Theory that proposes that, the concept of relevance is so fundamental to communication that it does not require learning, because in communicating, one assumes that the speaker has an intended meaning that is relevant, (Eskritt et al, 2010). In the same vein, Conti and Camras (1984 as cited in Ekritt et al, 2010) examined children's ability to identify statements in stories with two alternative endings that violated the maxims of the CP. They found that 6-8-year-olds were significantly above chance in identifying those statements that violated the maxims, but 4-year-olds were not. Eskritt *et al.* (2010) and Conti and Camras (1984) examined children's sensitivity to the violation of the maxims of CP. Our study on the other hand focuses on adults' interactions and the CP's maxims' adherence and flouting, specifically in women groups from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. The communicative practices revealed in the adherence and flouting of these maxims remain an integral part of this study.

Another study that lends credit to this work is Qassemic, Ziabari and Kheirabadi (2018). Qassemic, et al. (2018) examined a corpus of 120 news reports from the last series of a 2017 Tehran Newspaper in order to determine which types of CP Maxims are abided most and which types are more flouted. The findings reveal that the CP Maxims were more adhered to than flouted during news reports. With reference to flouts, while the maxim of quality was the most flouted one, its highest amount relating to social news, the maxim of relation was the least flouted, the lowest amount relating to cultural news. Qassemic et al (2018) opine that, because news reporters do not always want to express their persuasive force through literal meanings of language, they violate the CP maxims, manipulating words so as to "attract readers' interest and inspiration" (p.72). Qassemic et al's (2018) result is contrary to Zhang (2017). Zhang (2017) employed Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) and Leech's (1989) Politeness Maxims to examine business letters. The findings revealed that because writers of business letters aim to communicate information efficiently and accurately, they abide by both the maxims of the CP and Leech's politeness maxims. However, there were few flouts and these were done minimally. To Zhang therefore, because of the urgency to communicate the right and appropriate information that will enable receivers to better understand the intended message, writers of business letter mostly abide to conversational maxims.

Another study that informs this paper is Igwedibia (2018). Igwedibia employed the CP's threefold pragmatic analysis' maxims to bring out the message behind two of Audre Lorde's poems- "The Black Unicorn" and "From the House of Yemanjá". The findings reveal that the features of the speech context embedded in the poetic lines of these poems help in determining which proposition is expressed by a given poetic line. She further contends that the meanings of poetic lines could be regarded as a function of context, including time, place, and possible words shared by both the poet and readers into the proposition," (2018, p.120). To Igwedibia, although Audre Lorde encodes the message both phonologically (by the sound of the spoken words) and graphically (through marks on a printed page), "whose meanings cannot be easily decoded without particular thought of the context" (p.122), the deeper meaning encoded in the vocabulary creates a pragmatic force within the poem. She suggests that Lorde's poems can only be better read with the use of the cooperative principle's maxims given that when Lorde writes or says something semantically in her poems, "she intends to infer force to the utterance", (p.122).

As illustrated above, Igwedibia (2018), Qassemic et al (2018) and Zhang (2017) are studies carried out on language use in poems, newspapers and business letters respectively, indicating how the maxims of the CP can aid both the writers and readers to appreciate the content of poems, news items and letters. Our paper, on the other hand, deals with face-to-face interactions in women groups' gatherings, demonstrating how the exploration of the adherence and flouting of Grice's CP maxims during meetings, seminars and rallies can aid us in understanding women communication practices and interaction ethos. Grice himself attests that the maxims of the CP are needed to help account for the relation between sense and force, (Grice, 1975, as cited in Cutting, 2003, p. 36). Weiss and Wodak (2003) also opine that language is a social practice, and engaging in action through language use is tantamount to system reproduction.

2.3 Context

This study is set in the context of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon (South West and North West Regions). These women associations as used in the study are organisation of women with a common purpose and a formal structure, which exhibit the features of group life that typically emerge as a collection of individuals commune to form a group. Hare (1976, as cited in Ewane et al, 2022) proposes that for a collection of individuals to be considered a group, the members of the group should be in interaction with one another, sharing common goals and sets of norms which give direction and limits to their activity. They should equally create a set of roles and a network of interpersonal attraction, which serve to differentiate them from other groups. As stated earlier, two categories of women associations were purposefully sampled to provide data for this study. They are development-based associations which comprise One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB), Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF) and Biwon Self Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU), and faith-based associations comprising Catholic Women's Association (CWA) and Christian Women Fellowship (CWF).

Faith-based associations, as used in this study, are groups formed for Christian women in the Catholic and Presbyterian churches, respectively. Their objectives are geared towards helping women exercise their Christian duties through fellowshiping. Development-based associations, on the other hand, are groups and associations of mostly women, which are apolitical and non-religious inclined. Their main objective is geared towards empowering members economically, so that they can meet up with the basic expenses in life. Although these women associations have diverse objectives, their main goals have been to provide members with the opportunities they need to grow economically, spiritually and materially. Charlton (1984, as cited in Fondze, 2012) had noted the importance of these women associations to the wellbeing of women in his assertion that these women associations are significant not just because they facilitate the implementation of development projects, but because they are traditionally a means for women to enhance their influence on societal issues.

2.3.1 The Catholic Women's Association (CWA).

The Catholic Women's Association, or L'Association des Femmes Catholique (L'A.F.C) - its French appellation, is an apolitical, a non-profit making and lay private association of God's faithful of the Catholic Church in Cameroon, which is governed by canons 321-326 of the Code of Canon Law, (Catholic Women Association, Statutes and Bylaws, 2012, p.1). This association was founded in Buea, on the 4th of May 1963, by Mrs Anna Foncha, the wife of the Prime Minister of the then Southern Cameroons. Today, it is found in all the regions of Cameroon and has branches in Europe and America. It has a membership of over 20,000 women with 1,412 branches, 396 zones, and 109 divisions distributed in 23 dioceses in Cameroon, (Ewane et al, 2022). The main language spoken in the CWA is Pidgin. However, Standard English is the language of interaction at the provincial and national levels of the association.

2.3.2 The Christian Women Fellowship (CWF)

The Christian Women Fellowship is a church group based in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. It was created as a result of the activities carried out by the Basel Missionaries who brought Christianity to Cameroon in 1886, (Yinyuy, 2011, as cited in Ewane et al, 2022). The group got its vigour from intensive Bible studies, prayers and songs composed by the women themselves. It was through these gatherings that the concept of "fellowship" with its different appellations of 'Christian Women's Work', 'Women's Group' or 'Ndola Bito' which in Duala means "the love of women", developed among the women, (Yinyuy 2011, as cited in Ewane et al., 2022, p. 70). As is obtained in CWA, so too is it in CWF, as the main language of communication is Pidgin, although Standard English is allowed. However, in areas where members are uneducated, the local languages are the means of interaction during meetings and gatherings, (G. Besong, personal communication, April 16, 2016). The CWF in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon has a membership of 17,455, in 16 presbyteries, with 287 congregational groups in 64 zones, (Ewane et al, 2022).

2.3.3 One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB)

One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle is a Common Initiative Group (CIG) that is composed of 45 members; 42 women and three men, with the men playing the function of patrons. OHCTB is situated in Owe-Muyuka, in Fako Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. This association that started as a 'njangi' group, where members went to work in farms of individual group members on a rotational basis, was founded in 1994. The aim was that if all the members come as a group to work in one member's farm, the surface area of work done will be more than that of an individual who worked alone. With this objective, the association was created and given the name "One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle", (R. Che, personal communication, October 12, 2015). OHCTB is composed of a merger of women from many indigenous tribes of Cameroon: Bakossi, Bameta, Bangwa, Bamingi, Bakweri, Barondo, Ewondo, Bayangi and Bamileki. Due to the fact that most of the members are illiterates, and given the composition of the group, Pidgin remains the main language spoken during group activities.

2.3.4 Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF)

Cameroon Gatsby Foundation is an assemblage of groups made up of women, registered under a Charitable Trusts set up and supported financially by the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust in the UK. Its main mission has been to assist less privileged people, especially women, by giving them loans with low interest rates. Because CGF groups are made up of representatives of associations (the presidents, the secretaries and financial secretaries of each of the member groups), they are coordinated by field coordinators- employed individuals paid by the foundation. These field coordinators help supervise and coordinate the activities of various groups which are under their jurisdiction. Also, because most members of CGF are farmers and business women, Pidgin is the main language spoken during group activities. Three of the foundation's associations: Muyuka, Buea and Bamenda provided data for this study.

2.3.5 Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU)

Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union is an association of mostly female traders and farmers located in Mankon, Bamenda, in the North West Region of Cameroon. It has 28 members, comprising 6 men and 22 women. This association was created when a group of women observed that it was only by forming an association that financial and material assistance could

be obtained from government agencies and non-governmental organisations. The term “biwon”, a word from Lamnso; an indigenous language spoken in the North West Region of Cameroon, which means ‘because of children’, was chosen as the name of the association, (Ewane et al, 2022, p. 70). The name also serves as a reminder to members of the call by nature to every mother to do whatever it takes to bring up a child. Pidgin is also the language of communication during meeting sessions in BSRFTU.

3. Methodology

This study adopted the collective case design to explore the conversational rules observed and flouted in groups’ interactions of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. The random and purposeful sampling techniques were used to select the population of the study- development-based and faith-based women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. While the random sampling technique was used to select the towns in these regions where data was collected, that is Muyuka, Buea, Limbe, and Kumba (from the South West Region) and Kumbo, Ntambeng, Bamenda, and Mankon (from the North West Region), the maximum variation and critical case sampling techniques were used to select the faith-based and development-based associations whose groups’ activities provided data for this study. Because the maximum variation sampling technique enables the selection of cases “with markedly different forms of the same experience of the same aspects” (Dörnyei, 2011, p.132), it gave us the opportunity to explore the variations and commonalities in the adherence and flouting of conversational maxims in the two categories of women associations. Furthermore, the critical case sampling technique was used to choose the study’s area; the two Anglophone Regions in Cameroon- the North West and South West Regions. This is because the main language of communication in these two regions is English Language and Pidgin. Also, membership in these sampled associations cuts across tribes and regions, as women doing business and living in these localities and those working there are members of these associations.

The data was gathered through non-participant observation, open-ended-unstructured interviews and audio recording, and 24 groups’ events were purposefully selected for analysis. Because we were dealing with transcripts which involved the identification and counting of instances of the observance and flouting of conversational maxims in the context of women associations gatherings, we employed the latent content analysis to analyse the data. This is because we did not only focus on identifying these conversational rules’ adherence and flouting, but the communicative practices and the interaction patterns created in the process of these adherences and flouts were equally considered. The data, therefore, passed through the following latent content analysis procedures: First, with the help of Dr Mbonwuh Hans Fonka, a linguist specialised in Cameroon Pidgin, of the Department of English of the University of Bamenda, audio recorded meetings were transformed into textual forms through broad-based transcriptions. Second, their interaction roles were assigned with the use of Bales’ (1957; 1999) IPA Framework. Third, the conversational rules observed and flouted in the realisation of these communicative acts, with reference to Grice’s (1975; 1989) CP maxims were identified. Lastly, the communication practices revealed in the observation and flouting of Grice’s CP Maxims during these groups’ gatherings were also identified.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

In the exploration of women communication practices in groups’ dynamics of Anglophone Cameroon women’s interaction, Bale’s (1957; 1999) Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) framework has been blended with Grice’s (1975; 1989) Cooperative Principle (CP) theory. While Bale’s (1957; 1999) IPA framework has been employed to assign interaction functions to communicative acts expressed during meetings, rallies and seminars, Grice’s (1975; 1989) CP maxims have been used to label the conversational rules observed and flouted in the realisation of these communicative acts.

3.1.1 Grice’s Cooperative Principle (CP) Maxims

As stated earlier in this study, Grice’s (1975; 1989) Cooperative Principle’s theory has been blended with Bales’ (1957; 1999) IPA framework to examine language use in the interactions of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon. This principle that was propounded by H. P Grice functions as a rule that governs everyday conversation, asserting that all talk exchanges are not random, irrational or disconnected, but follow a general principle; a set of rules which contributors to ordinary conversation are generally expected to follow. According to Grice, in the course of interactions, participants make an unconscious effort to contribute to and collaborate in the conversation as it proceeds, adhering to the principle:

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, (Grice, 1989, as cited in Culpeper et al 2009, p. 214).

The above principle, Grice further hypothesises, is usually in operation for a person to be able to interpret what someone else says, as it directs them to a particular interpretation of what has been said, unless interlocutors receive some indication to the contrary. Four maxims are attached to the above principle of cooperation. They are:

1. Maxim of Quantity (give as much information as is required and no more than is required)
2. Maxim of Quality (do not say what is false or that for which you lack evidence)
3. Maxim of Relation (be relevant)
4. Maxim of Manner (be clear, be orderly and avoid ambiguity), (Grice, 1989 as cited in Lindblom, 2006, p. 152).

While the Maxim of Quantity prescribes that when contributing to any talk exchange, interlocutors have to be as informative as is required; this information should not be too little nor too much, the Maxim of Quality states that speakers should not say things they know are false, at the same time, they should avoid saying things they lack adequate evidence. They are expected to be sincere, saying things they believe are truthful and real. For the Maxim of Relation, Grice prescribes that speakers should say things which are related to what has been said before in the course of the conversation. That is, what they are saying should be relevant to the discussion. And if a speaker's contribution is not related to what is being discussed, he/she should indicate in what way it is not. Lastly, the Maxim of Manner demands that speakers should be brief and orderly. They should avoid obscurity and ambiguity, striving to be clear in whatever they are saying during conversations. The positive reaction communicative act of appreciation from OHCTB below illustrates adherence to all of the above maxims of the CP:

Ai tank wuna plenti sei wuna kam grit wi. Dis mai pikin na God giyam. Ai tank wuna sei wuna don kam join mi fo welkam yi. Meik wi kontinyu fo du so. (I appreciate your visit. Thank you all for coming to join me in welcoming this God-given child. We should continue in that manner).

In this expression of gratitude and appreciation for members' performance at the born-house ceremony (celebration of birth) of her grand-daughter, the vice president of OHCBT is sincere, being informative enough, and her utterance is clear, brief and relevant. Her sincerity is demonstrated in her repetition of the phrase *Ai tank wuna*, an adherence to the maxim of quality. In stating the reason for her utterance; an expression of gratitude to them, she was clear, brief and informative, adhering to the maxims of manner and quantity respectively. Her expression of gratitude was a response to the association's friendly visit to her, an adherence to the maxim of relation.

Grice further advocates that addressees assume that speakers observe the above principle in their use of language, and it is the knowledge of the principle and its maxims which make hearers draw inferences about speakers' intentions and implied meaning. He, however, limits this principle of cooperation to the description of talk exchange that exhibits the following specific characteristics:

- (i) The participants have some common immediate aim.
- (ii) The contributions of the participants [are] dovetailed, mutually dependent.
- (iii) There is some sort of understanding (often tacit) that, other things being equal, the transactions should continue in appropriate style unless both parties are agreeable that it should terminate (Grice, 1989, as cited in Lindblom, 2006, p. 152).

It is evident that interactions in Anglophone Cameroon women associations' gatherings portray characteristic features of Grice's norms. This is because the formation of these associations is usually as a result of some common immediate aim, as most of these groups and associations were created out of women's expressed cravings to commune and redress common issues concerning their welfare. Also, participation in discussions during groups' gatherings are geared towards helping one other overcome challenges, given that most of these associations were created out of such needs. In order that some of the goals and objectives of the different associations are met, members, even in their communicative acts encourage one another, as demonstrated in their adherence and flouting of conversational maxims. Furthermore, membership into these groups and associations is voluntary, with every member having the same status, with equal rights of expression. Even associations like CWA and CWF, which are faith-based, do not compel Christian women to be members. Although women are encouraged to register in these associations so as to function efficiently as Christians, the good behaviour exhibited by devoted members attracts other women into joining them. Lastly, these associations have well-structured organograms. CWA, for instance, has the National Spiritual Director at the peak, who is followed by the National President of the association. The Provincial President follows next before the Diocesan Presidents. These Diocesan Presidents are closely followed by Divisional Presidents, and then come the Zonal Presidents. Branch presidents who are followed by flow members come at the base of this organogram.

3.1.1.1 Conversational Implicature

It is obvious that participants in an interaction strive to abide by the Gricean maxims as far as their day-to-day interaction is concerned. Also, sometimes they intentionally refuse to adhere to these maxims; infringing or opting out of them, or flouting them, but expect listeners to appreciate the meanings implied when these happen. Grice hypothesizes that when speakers manipulate the maxims in this manner, they assume that the hearer knows that their words should not be taken at face value and that they can infer the implicit meaning. It is this meaning conveyed by the speaker and recovered as a result of the hearer's

inference which is known as “conversational implicature,” which according to Grice, “maintains consistency between what is being said and the cooperative Principle,” (Grice, 1989 as cited in Culpeper et al, 2009, p. 214). Hence, one can quietly and unostentatiously violate a maxim and misleads the hearer, for instance, by saying *Na so de mitin don klous fo tudei?* (Is that how the meeting has ended today?), a female member of BSRFTU uses a rhetorical question to express her dissatisfaction in the way members treat *njangi* issues. The utterance is therefore a negative reaction communicative act of criticism of members’ irresponsible behaviour and a response to the financial secretary announcement of *wuna fain mai mimbo. Ai go teikam go haus* (Get my drink. I will drink it at home). Although her question is informative, she is being ambiguous, and not sincere. It is obvious that the defaulters will no longer come. That’s why the financial secretary also announced his departure and the intention of taking home his drink, a signal of the end of the meeting session. So, by asking if this is how the meeting had ended for that day, this member was not being sincere as she was asking a question whose answer she already knew: the meeting has closed, a flout of the maxim of quality.

Equally, one can ‘opt out’ from both a maxim and the Cooperative Principle. A meeting member who says *I no get eni tin fo tok* (I don’t have anything to say) when asked to justify her late coming is opting out of the quality and quantity maxims. Furthermore, one might have a clash of maxims. Paltridge (2010), attests that this is typical in academic writings where people are often faced with balancing saying as much as is possible about something (adhering to the Maxim of Quantity) with saying only as much as they really have evidence for (adhering to the Maxim of Quality).

Given its ability in outlining the accepted features of successful cooperative communication irrespective of their syntactic appearance, this theory of talk exchange will complement Bale’s (1957; 1999) IPA framework to bring out the interaction ethos of groups and associations activities of CWA, CWF, CGF, BSRFTU and OHCTB. The maxims most adhered to and flouted during events and what they reveal about Anglophone Cameroon Women’s interactions remains the focus of this study. Grice himself has stated that “we need these maxims to help account for the relation between sense and force,” (Grice, 1975 as cited in Cutting, 2003, p. 36). Leech (1989) equally recommends that the knowledge of these maxims of conversation enables one participant in a conversation to communicate on the assumption that the other participant is being cooperative.

3.1.2 Bales’ Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) Framework

Bales proposes that in order to make meaning out of behaviours and the conditions in which they take place, these behaviours have to be broken down to component parts known as single acts of communication or expressions (Bales, 1957 as cited in Ewane *et al.*, 2022). He further posits that while these acts function separately as single communicative intentions, they can equally be grouped under headings with reference to their communicative function in group dynamics, into what is termed the problem-solving process or procedure. This problem-solving process usually commences with Questions, followed by Attempted Answers, which are then followed by Negative Reactions and lastly Positive Reactions, “visualised as a system of interaction in time and between members” (Bales, 1957, as cited in Ewane *et al.*, 2022 p. 73). Questions, according to Bales are a group of behaviours employed by speakers in demanding for orientation, opinion, suggestions and inquiries during discussions in meetings. They function to elicit response from the addressee, thereby giving a push to the smooth flow of interaction during groups’ discussions. Attempted answers are suggestions, opinions and orientations which are behaviours that function to provide answers so as to clear doubt and questions raised during interactions. Furthermore, negative reactions are behaviours that express disagreement, anxiety, fear and antagonism. They are utterances and communicative acts which represent actors’ dislikes and constraints during group discussions. Lastly, Positive reactions are communicative acts of expression of solidarity, satisfaction, agreement and camaraderie by members during group discussions, (Bales 1957, as cited in Ewane *et al.*, 2022).

During meeting deliberations in interactions of Anglophone Cameroon women associations, communicative acts were realised to accomplish the above problem-solving procedure of Questions, Attempted Answers, Negative Reactions and Positive Reactions. In the course of accomplishing this procedure, maxims were adhered to as well as flouted. For instance, in response to a question interaction pattern; when asked to justify her late coming in an event, an OHCTB meeting member said *“I no get eni tin fo tok”* (I don’t have anything to say); adhering to the maxim of relation but flouting the maxims of quality, quantity and Manner, given that her answer seemed obscure, not truthful and less informative. The section that follows presents these communicative acts and the conversational maxims observed and flouted in their realisations in seminars, meetings, rallies and conferences organised by Anglophone Cameroon women associations. This has been accomplished with the use of Bales (1957; 1999) IPA framework and Grice’s (1975; 1989) Cooperative Principle’s theory.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

The present study set out to explore the conversational rules in women associations’ interactions in order to reveal the communication practices and interaction patterns inherent in groups’ dynamics of women associations. Specifically, it examined the CP maxims’ adherence and flouting in the interaction of some selected women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon (North West and South West). Furthermore, it sought to ascertain the extent to which the adhered to and/ or flouted

CP's maxims in the interactions of women associations from the South West and North West Regions of Cameroon replicate women communication practices and interaction ethos.

The data reveals that in the accomplishment of the problem-solving process of Questions, Attempted Answers, Negative Reactions and Positive Reactions, members of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon adhered to as well as flouted the CP maxims. A total of 4,257 communicative acts were expressed in the 24 events sampled for this study. Of this number of communicative acts, 1,500 of them were expressed in events held in CWF, 1,496 of them were used in CWA events, 757 of them were used in CGF events, 323 were those of OHCTB, and 181 of them were those from BSRFTU. Table 1 illustrates this distribution.

Table 1
Communicative Acts in Anglophone Cameroon Women Associations' Events

S/N	Associations	No of Communicative Acts
1	Christian Women Fellowship (CWF)	1,500
2	Catholic Women Association (CWA)	1,496
3	Cameroon Gatsby Foundation (CGF)	757
4	One Hand Cannot Tie a Bundle (OHCTB)	323
5	Biwon Self-Reliance Farmers and Traders' Union (BSRFTU)	181
Total	5	4257

4.1 Grice's CP Maxims adherence in Women Associations' Interactions from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon

The findings reveal that in the accomplishment of the problem-solving procedure of Questions, Attempted Answers, Negative Reactions and Positive Reactions, members of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon adhered more to the maxims of the cooperative principle. As tables 2 and 3 show, out of a total of 4,257 communicative acts, 4,205 of them were in adherence to one or all of the four maxims of the CP, a total percentage of 95.1 adherence and 4.9% flouting. Of these four maxims, the maxim of relation was the most adhered to, with 98.8% adherence and 1.2% flouting in all the activities held in these women gatherings. The maxim of quality was the second with 95.9% adherence and 4.1% flouting. While the maxim of quantity came third with 94.8% adherence and 5.2% flouting, that of manner was the fourth and the least adhered maxim with 91% adherence and 9% flouting. These rates of adherences and flouting of the CP's maxims in the various associations' events have been tabulated in tables 2 and 3, and Figures 1 below.

Table 2
Rate of Adherence to the CP Maxims in the Five Women Associations

S/ N	Associatio n Type	No of acts	CP's Maxims adherence								Total	
			Quantity		Quality		Manner		Relation			
			Frequenc y	%	Frequenc y	%	Frequenc y	%	Frequenc y	%	Frequenc y	%
1	CWF	1,500	1,444	96.3	1,463	96.6	1,409	93.3	1,490	99.6	5,806	96.8
2	CWA	1,496	1,415	94.6	1,445	96.6	1,391	93	1,473	98.4	5,724	95.6
3	OHCTB	323	310	96	307	95	285	88.2	321	99.4	1,223	94.6
4	CGF	757	701	92.6	710	93.8	636	84	743	98.1	2,790	92.1
5	BSRFTU	181	167	92.3	159	87.8	153	84.5	178	98.3	657	90.7
Total		4,257	4,037	94.8	4,084	95.9	3,874	91	4,205	98.8	16,200	95.1

Figure 1
Rate of Adherence to the CP Maxims in Women Associations Interactions



As represented in tables 2, 3 and figure 1, maxims adherence and flouting were not evenly distributed in the different associations' events. With reference to the individual associations' events, the result reveals that of the five associations, the highest adherences to any or all of the four maxims of the CP occurred in CWF. This association's events recorded 96.8% adherence to all of the four maxims, with the maxim of relation being the highest adhered to (99.6%) and that of manner the least adhered to (93.3%). CWA came second with 95.6% overall adherences, with the maxim of relation scoring the highest (98.4) and that of manner the lowest (93%). OHCTB was the third with 94.6% adherence. The maxim of relation equally recorded the highest adhered to maxim and that of manner the lowest, 99.4% and 88.2%, respectively. While CGF was the fourth with 92.1% overall adherence, with 98.3% for relation and 84% for manner, BSRFTU came last with the lowest rate of overall maxim adherence- 90.7%, with the maxim of relation equally scoring the highest (98.3%) and that of manner the lowest (84.5%). The findings also reveal that in events with higher levels of diversity such as congress, rallies, and seminars attended by delegates, adherence to maxims is usually high. This also obtains in solemn events such as retreats; all of these were of faith-based. On the contrary, maxim flouting was high in branch and group meetings; most of them were those of development-based, with BSRFTU topping the list. Communicative acts 1, 2 and 3 below illustrate these maxims adherences in the expressions of positive reactions, questions, and attempted answers interaction patterns in CWA, CWF and OHCTB, respectively.

a) Communicative Act 1

Papa eleh yaya toh. Papa eleh yaya toh.

Papa Monsi eleh, yaya toh (Father welcome! Father welcome. Father Monsignor welcome!)

Context: CWA, Gate of Heaven Divisional Congress and 50th Anniversary Celebration of CWA.

Communicative act 1 is a positive reaction interaction pattern exhibiting adherence to the four maxims of the CP; that of quantity, quality, manner and relation. In this expressive sub-act of solidarity and camaraderie, the congress participants are demonstrating their love, admiration and respect for their Spiritual Director, Monsignor Lucas Sanusi. In response to the divisional president's complaint of *Ivin wen Fada kam in, wi no meikam as if wi si hi*, (We don't care even with Father's arrival), members sang this welcome song, adhering to the maxim of relation. The message is brief and orderly- father you are welcome, father Monsi you are welcome, an adherence to the maxim of manner. Also, they are being truthful and sincere in their expression of joy and admiration, given that the Rev. Fr is their Spiritual Director appointed by the bishop. By saying Papa Monsi, you are welcome, they are being sincere, an adherence to the maxim of quality. Lastly, the song is informative enough, a declaration of acceptance, an adherence to the maxim of manner.

b) Communicative Act 2

Mami seketri, hau moch Kumbo zoun getam aut of dat 200,000frans weh dem alokeitam fo Bui? (Mami secretary, what is Kumbo Zone's share from the 200000frs allocated for Bui?)

Context: CWF, CWF Executive Meeting, Bui Presbytery.

Communicative act 2 also exhibits adherence to all of the four CP maxims. This is a question communicative act in which the divisional president of CWF, Bui Presbytery is demanding a restate of the money allocated for CWF Kumbo with regards to the national project of the association. By identifying the person to whom the question is directed to (the secretary of the association who keeps the record of events of the association), the specific zone (Kumbo Zone), and the money in question (200,000frs allocated for Bui), the president is being informative, relevant and orderly, thereby adhering to the maxims of quantity, quality, manner and relation.

c) Communicative Act 3

Na so wi don tok sei as wi deh hie so, meik wi put rapa fo boks den wi de fain blaus, no bi so? (Did we not conclude that the wrappers will be kept in boxes while we are searching for the right blouse?)

Context: OHCTB

Communicative act 3 is an attempted answer communicative act in which the president of OHCTB reacts to members' demonstration of impatience. The association has just purchased a new fabric for members, but members could not wait for the appropriate occasion to start using the fabric. In order to persuade them to be patient so that the appropriate top is selected for the wrapper, she performed this sub-act of conviction, persuading them to wait until the blouse with the appropriate colour is selected. In this attempt to convince members to wait for the appropriate top to be selected for the 'wrapper' which was shared to them, the president is being truthful, adhering to the maxim of quality. The decision was unanimously taken by the whole assembly, and she is just reiterating it, an adherence to the maxim of quantity and relation. She does this in clear terms without being ambiguous, an adherence to the maxim of manner.

4.2 Grice's CP Maxims flouting in Women Associations Interactions from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon

Table 3
Rate of CP Maxims flouting in the Five Women Associations

S/N	Association Type	No of acts	CP's Maxims flouting									
			Manner		Quantity		Quality		Relation		Total	
			Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	BSRFTU	181	28	15.5	14	7.7	22	12.2	3	1.7	67	9.3
2	CGF	757	121	16	56	7.4	47	6.2	14	1.9	238	7.9
3	OHCTB	323	38	11.8	13	7	16	5	2	0.6	69	5.4
4	CWA	1,496	105	7	81	5.4	51	3.4	23	1.6	260	4.4
5	CWF	1,500	91	6.7	56	3.7	37	3.4	10	0.4	194	3.2
Total		4,257	383	9	222	5.2	173	4.1	52	1.2	828	4.9

As illustrated in table 3 above, maxim flouting during interactions in women associations' events was minimal. A total of 828 maxims flouts (4.9%) took place during discussions in the women events. The highest number of these flouts occurred in development-based associations; with BSRFTU recording the highest, that is 9.3% flouting with the maxims of manner and quantity scoring the highest flouts- 15.5% and 12.2% respectively. CGF came second with 7.9% overall flouting and 16% for manner, the highest. While OHCTB was the third with 5.4% overall, and manner scoring the highest rate of flouting, CWA came fourth with 4.4% overall. As is obtained in the other associations, of the four maxims, that of manner recorded the highest rate of flouting- 7%. The least flouts of maxims occurred in CWF, that is 3.2%. With reference to individual maxims, the most flouted of the four maxims was that of manner, with an overall percentage of 9. The second was the maxim of quantity. It recorded 5.2% flout overall. This was closely followed by the maxim of quantity that recorded 4.1% flout. The maxim of relation was the least flouted maxim of all the maxims during events. There was just a 1.2% flout of this maxim.

The data equally reveals that nearly all maxim flouts done in these women associations' events took place during negative reaction expressions. These findings reveal that when expressing negative reactions such as threats, criticisms, frustration and anger, members of women Associations from the Anglophone Cameroon do them indirectly so as to avoid face-threatening one another during meetings. This confirms Maltz and Borke's (1982) observation of women and girls' use of collaborative and

cooperative talk to create and maintain relationships, and to avoid criticisms and outdoing, or putting each other down. This is evident in communicative act 4 below.

In this negative reaction communicative act of complaint and criticism, a member from CWA, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom branch, Ntambeng is expressing her disapproval of the misconduct of a recalcitrant member during the divisional congress; adhering to the maxim of relation. However, she is flouting the maxims of quantity and manner so as to avoid being confrontational, given that the said member who committed the offence was a new member.

d) Communicative Act 4

Som of wi membas dem no bin biheiv wel. (Some of us did not behave properly).

Context: CWA, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom branch meeting, Ntambeng.

Although her utterance is relevant and with evidence as discussions were centred on matters arising from the previous minutes; where the idea of members' misbehaviour in the last divisional congress was raised, it is not informative enough. By not stating the name of the specific member from their branch who did not behave properly, this member is not being informative enough, flouting the maxim of quantity. She is not also clear. She is being ambiguous, a flout of the maxim of manner. The question an outsider is forced to ask here is who did not behave well and what does she really mean by '*no bin biheiv wel*'?

Euphemistic statements were equally used by members of these women associations to reduce the forces of their complaints and criticisms, thereby flouting some maxims. For instance, in communicative act 5 below, a CGF member from another sector member group was criticising another member association- Menchum Women. Menchum Women committed an offence during the 'Born House' ceremony of the coordinator's baby. It was their turn to provide food for the occasion. They prepared the food but most of the members did not attend the ceremony. At that moment, the meeting was debating on the type of punishment to be meted on Menchum Women. In this negative reaction communicative act, which also functions as an attempted answer, a member was describing the group's behaviour, an adherence to the maxim of relation. The word '*olweis*' indicates that this member group's behaviour has become a habit, an adherence to quality. However, her utterance is not clear and informative enough, a flout of the maxims of manner and quantity, respectively. It is not clear what she means by *olweis get rizin fo ol tin*.

e) Communicative Act 5

Menchum Wimen dem olweis get rizin fo ol tin (Menchum women always have an explanation for every act)

Context: CGF

4.3 The CP Maxims and Communication practices in Anglophone Cameroon Women Associations' Interactions

During events, members of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon produced thought units. These thought units were employed to carry out the problem-solving process of Question, Attempted Answers, Negative Reactions and Positive Reactions, which according to Bales (1957) comprise the interaction pattern in small group discussions. The data reveals that there was high rate of maxim adherence in the accomplishment of these thought units during discussions in these women gatherings, demonstrating that the members of these women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon made their contribution towards meeting discussions such as was required; at the stage at which they occurred, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they were engaged, adhering to Grice's (1975) couching.

The results show that a total of 4,257 thought units were produced during interactions in the 24 meeting events sampled for this study. 2,996 of these thought units, a percentage of 69.7 were of faith-based associations and 1,261 of them, a percentage of 31.3 were of development-based associations. The findings reveal that a majority of these thought units were used to carry out attempted answers communicative acts, that is 1,478 of them, a percentage of 34.7. The second most frequently used thought units were those of positive reactions, 1,264; 29.7%. While negative reactions thought units came third with 863, a percentage of 20.3, those of questions were the least used with 652 and 15.3%. Table 5 and Figures 2 and 3 illustrate this result.

Table 5
Frequency of Thought Units in Women Associations' Interactions

S/N	Women Association	Thought units	
		frequency	%
1	Faith-based	2966	69.7
2	Development-based	1261	31.3
Total		4257	100

Figure 2
Frequency of Thought Units in the Problem-Solving Process in Women Associations' Interactions

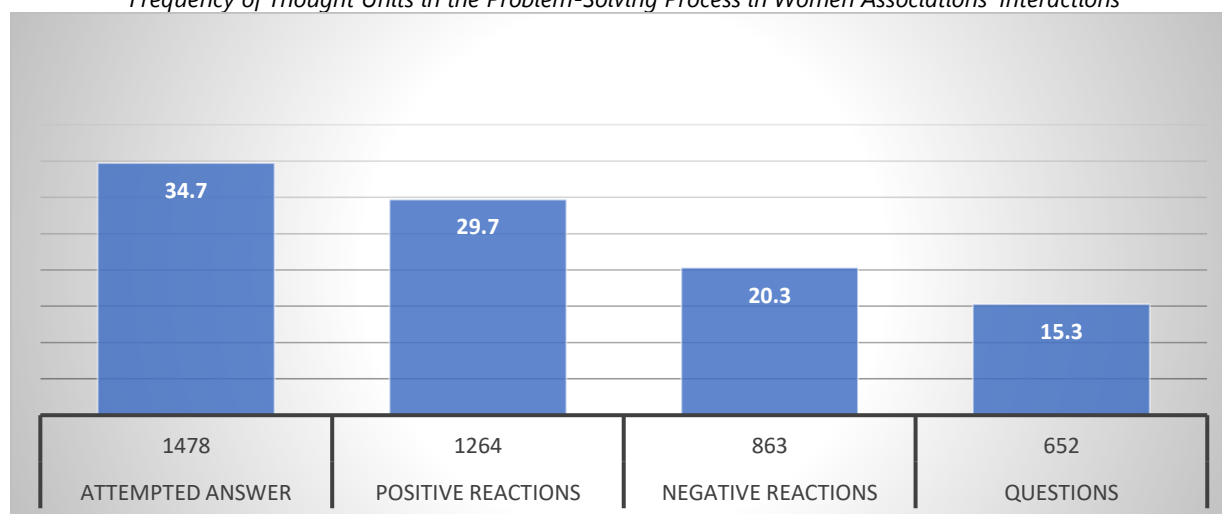
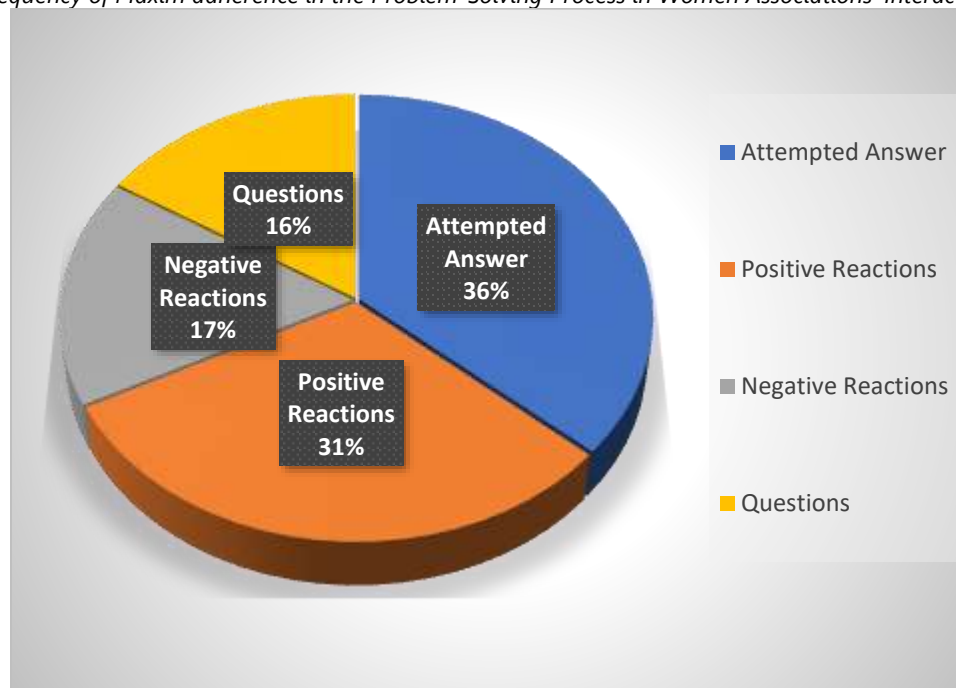


Figure 3
Frequency of Maxim adherence in the Problem-Solving Process in Women Associations' Interactions



As indicated earlier in this study, there was 95.1% adherence and 4.9% flouting of the CP maxims in all the groups' events. And as figure 3 illustrates, a majority of these adherences were done during attempted answers processes (36%) and positive reactions processes (31%). While Negative reactions recorded 17% adherences, questions recorded 16% adherence. As far as the two categories of associations are concerned, the findings reveal that maxims adherence occurred more in faith-based associations than in development-based associations; 96.2% as opposed to 92.6% respectively. With reference to faith-based associations, CWF recorded a higher level of maxim adherence than CWA; 96.8% as opposed to 95.6% respectively. In development-based association activities, the highest adherences to the CP maxims occurred in OHCTB meetings; 94.6%. CGF came second with 92.1%. BSRFTU came third with 90.7%. This high rate of maxims adherence mirrors solidarity, cooperation, connection, support, closeness and understanding, validating Woods' assertion that communication for women is a primary way to establish and maintain relationships with others (Wood, 1994, as cited in Verderber, 1995, p.21).

Among the four CP maxims, the maxim of relation recorded the highest adherence in the two categories of associations, with 98.8%. This is in accord with Grice's prescription that speakers should be relevant during discussions. Hence, members of these women associations adhered to Grice's prescription by always saying things which were related to what was being discussed

during deliberations. Also, in situations where members' ideas differed from those of others, they most often made efforts to persuade members to agree with their suggestions. Communicative act 3 above, illustrates this. This confirms the claim by Hall and Langellier (1988, as cited in Wood, 1994) that to maintain equality, women's speech more characteristically follows an interaction pattern in which different voices weave together, building on each other's ideas to create a conversation.

The maxim of quality was the second most regularly adhered maxim during events in these women associations, an overall percentage of 95.9, with 97.1% adherence in faith-based associations and 93.3% adherence in development-based associations. Grice prescribes in this maxim that conversationalists are expected to avoid saying things they lack adequate evidence, as they are expected to be sincere, saying things they believe are truthful and real. The result of the high rate of adherence of the maxim of quality during discussions reveals a spirit of solidarity and cooperation among members. Although some members flouted this maxim, it was not intended for deception. Rather, most of the flouts of quality were intended to express ideas indirectly. For instance, when taken in its literal sense, the expression *Lo don kach loya! Lo don kach loya!* (The lawyer is guilty! The lawyer is guilty) by the president of OHCTB is false, given the fact that the said president wasn't a lawyer. However, in using this metaphor, the president is indirectly apologising to the whole assembly while accepting her fault and punishment for coming late in the meeting.

The maxim of quantity was another minimally flouted maxim with 94.4% adherence overall. Specifically, quantity maxim recorded 95.4% adherence in faith-based events and 94.4% adherence in development-based associations' events. During meetings, members made their contribution as informative as was required, adhering to this maxim. However, in situations where the information was too much or less, it was intended for a purpose, as was with the use of the understatements in communicative act 4 above. By saying *Som of wi membas dem no bin biheiv wel*, this member of Seat of Wisdom Branch, Ntambeng was not being informative enough. However, she was avoiding a confrontation with the culprit who was a new member, flouting the maxim of quantity. This is an important feature of women communication, in which to demonstrate support for each other, they express understanding and sympathy with friend's situation or feelings by hedging their criticisms. This tentativeness in communication according to Woods, leaves open the door for others to respond and express their opinions.

The maxim of manner, though not as high as the other three maxims, also recorded a substantial rate of adherence. There was an overall 91% adherence to this maxim in the 24 meeting events sampled for the study. With regards to the two categories of associations, while faith-based associations recorded 93.4% adherence, those of development-based recorded 85.2%. This findings in the adherence of the maxim of manner reveals that interactants during events in CWA, CWF, OHCTB, BSRFTU and CGF made minimal use of ambiguity and obscurity of expression. Rather, they were brief and orderly when presenting their arguments. This findings in the adherence to the maxim of manner further support the argument that communication for women is a primary way to establish and maintain relationships with others.

5. Conclusion

The present study set out to explore the conversational rules in women associations' events from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon in order to reveal the communication practices and interaction patterns inherent in groups' dynamics of women associations. Specifically, it examined the CP maxims' adherence and flouting in the interaction of women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon (North West and South West). Furthermore, it sought to ascertain the extent to which the adhered to and/ or flouted CP's maxims in the interactions of these women associations reveal women's communication practices and interaction ethos. The data reveals that there was a high rate of maxim adherence in the accomplishment of thought units during discussions in these women gatherings, demonstrating that the members of these women associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon made their contribution towards meeting discussions such as was required; at the stage at which they occurred, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they were engaged, adhering to Grice's (1975) couching. With reference to the individual associations' events, the result also reveals that of the five categories of associations, the highest adherences to any or all the four maxims of the CP occurred in congresses, executive meetings, rallies, jubilee celebrations, retreats and seminars organised in faith-based associations, with CWF topping the list. On the contrary, the highest rate of maxim flouting occurred in development-based associations' events, with BSRFTU topping the list. With reference to individual maxims, the most flouted of the four maxims was that of manner, and the least was that of relation. Most of these maxim flouts took place during negative reaction expressions. These findings reveal that when expressing negative reactions such as threats, criticisms, frustration and anger, members of women Associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon did them indirectly so as to avoid face-threatening one another during meetings. This confirms Maltz and Borke's (1982) observation of women and girls' use of collaborative and cooperative talk to create and maintain relationships and to avoid criticisms and outdoing, or putting each other down. This findings in the adherence and flouting of conversational maxims in the interactions of women associations further support the argument that communication for women is a primary way to establish and maintain relationships with one another.

This study used Grice's (1975; 1989) Cooperative Principle (CP) Theory and Bales' (1957; 1999) Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) theory to explore the conversational rules in order to reveal the communication practices in groups' dynamics of women faith-based and women development-based associations from the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon during meetings, rallies, congresses, retreats and seminars. It will be interesting to examine what politeness strategies accompany interaction patterns during these events.

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