

Analysis of Characters' Utterances in *Pride and Prejudice* from the Perspective of Cooperative and Politeness Principle

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Abstract

Pragmatics is a discipline that studies the use of language, and literary pragmatics is a new paradigm that combines literature and pragmatics. It can be used to appreciate the dialogues of literary works and explore the personality characteristics of characters, which has strong practicability and interpretability. This paper analyzes the characters' conversations in 'Pride and Prejudice' from the perspectives of cooperative principle and politeness principle, shows the various relationships between the speaker and the language form, the personality of the characters and the intention of conversational communication, and explores the deep meaning behind the language.

Keywords

Pragmatics; Pride and prejudice; Cooperative principle; Politeness principle.

1. Introduction

Pragmatics is the study of the use of language or language communication, the study of the use of context to infer semantics or the study of a language how people use sentences to achieve successful communication. This is a subject that studies the practical application of language, focusing on the speaker's discourse meaning and contextual meaning. In recent years, literary pragmatics has gradually emerged as a new paradigm of linguistics and literary research, with the nature of combining social science and humanities, which has also greatly promoted the development of the two disciplines. For the study of literary works, pragmatic scholars mainly use the cooperative principle and politeness principle. This paper selects the classic works in the history of British literature-- '*Pride and Prejudice*', it was created by British novelist Jane Austen. This paper mainly analyzes the dialogue of the characters from the perspectives of cooperative principle and politeness principle, explores the relationship between the speaker and the language form, exposes the speaker's communication intention, and shows how the author portrays the character and exposes the theme of the novel by arranging the dialogue of the characters. The aim is to give some inspiration to the combination of pragmatics and literary works through the pragmatic analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*.

2. Introduction of *Pride and Prejudice*

Pride and Prejudice is written by British female novelist Jane Austen [1]. Jane Austen is one of the most popular writers in Britain in the 19th century. Her novels inherit and develop realistic tradition in the 18th century and prepare for the climax of realistic novels in the 19th century. Out of her own female identity and family background, her works mainly focus on the marriage and life of women in the squire family, and truly describe the world around her with meticulous observation and humorous words. *Pride and Prejudice* mainly tells the love and marriage story of the five daughters of the Bennets. According to the law of England at that time, daughters had no right to inherit property. The Bennets had only five daughters without sons, and Mr. Bennet's property could only be inherited by his distant relative Collins. Therefore, Mrs. Bennet worked all day on the marriage of her daughters, hoping that they could find a rich husband.

The protagonist of the story is the second daughter, Elizabeth. She met Darcy at the ball, and Darcy's arrogance caused Elizabeth's prejudice. There met many conflicts and misunderstandings. Finally, Elizabeth put down her prejudice against Darcy, and Darcy was no longer arrogant. This novel takes daily life as the material, vividly reflecting the conservative British township life and human world at that time. Austen's humorous language and fresh style successfully portrays intelligent Elizabeth, rich but arrogant Darcy, kind Jane, sincere Bentley and hypocritical Collins. There are 61 chapters in this novel. Only seven chapters have no dialogues, and the other chapters have a large number of dialogues, which provides a rich corpus for pragmatic analysis. The discourse meaning and implicit meaning of dialogues are different, which makes it possible for pragmatic analysis.

3. Pragmatic Theories

3.1. The Definition and Development of Pragmatics

In 1938, the American philosopher Charles Morris first used the term "Pragmatics" in his book *Foundation of the Theory of Signs*[2]. This term is created by reference to pragmatism and pragmaticism. Semiotics has three parts: syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Pragmatics studies the relationship between symbols and users. Since the end of the 1930s, Peirce, Morris and Carnap have regarded pragmatics as a part of semiotics, and their research has been limited to philosophy, which is the first stage of the development of pragmatics. From the early 1950s to the late 1960s, the exploration of speech act and conversational implicature theory by language philosophers represented by Hillel, Austin, Searle and Grice made a breakthrough in pragmatics. Their research results basically laid the theoretical foundation of pragmatics. This is the second stage of the development of pragmatics. At this time, linguistic research is still limited to the scope of philosophy. Because the discussion of language by philosophers has prepared the conditions for pragmatics to become an independent discipline of linguistics in the 1970s. After the 1970s, the *Journal of Pragmatics* was officially published in the Netherlands in 1977s, which was a landmark event for pragmatics to become an independent discipline, which played an important role in promoting the development of pragmatics. Pragmatics is a new branch of linguistics, which takes language meaning as the research object. Among the many definitions of pragmatics, two concepts are very basic. One is meaning, and the other is context. It is a knowledge that studies the understanding and use of language. It studies the specific discourse in a specific situation and studies how to use it[3].

3.2. Conversational Implicature Theory and Cooperative Principle

Conversational implicature was first put forward by American philosopher Grice, which is the core content of pragmatics. In 1967s, Grice put forward a new theory of pragmatics, namely, the theory of conversational implicature[4], in a lecture at Harvard University. This theory points out that conversation is restricted by certain conditions. Both sides of communication must abide by some basic principles, so that the communication activities can be carried out smoothly. Therefore, Grice put forward the principle that communicating parties should abide by together. He referred to this as the ' cooperative principle ', that is, ' Make your conversational contribution such as is required, the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted propose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are involved. Grice's cooperative principle contains four major principles:

The Maxim of Quantity:

(i) make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.

(ii) do not make your contribution more informative than it is required.

The Maxim of Quality:

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

- (i) do not say what you believe to be false.
- (ii) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

The Maxim of Relation:

Make your contributions relevant.

The Maxim of Manner:

Be perspicuous, and specifically:

- (i) avoid obscurity.
- (ii) avoid ambiguity.
- (iii) be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
- (iv) be orderly [4].

In communication, communicating parties should abide by the cooperative principle to make each other understand what they say, and ensure conversation goes smoothly. However, in actual communication, people sometimes violate these principles intentionally or unintentionally for some purpose. Grice regards this implicit meaning as 'Special Conversational Implicature'. The reason why the speaker adopts this seemingly contrary to the principle of cooperation in practice is to strengthen the communicative effect. In literary works, both sides of the conversation often consciously violate the cooperative principle. Dialogue seems irrelevant on the surface. In fact, the occurrence of these dialogues in a certain context is illocutionary, which helps to promote the development of the story and highlight the personality characteristics of the characters. This paper analyzes the dialogues in the literary works of *Pride and Prejudice* through Grice's cooperative principle, so as to better understand the theme of the works and appreciate the author's excellent language ability.

3.3. Politeness Principle

People's verbal communication is to convey information to influence the addressee and realize the interaction between the two sides. In addition to observe the cooperative principle, maintaining the friendly relationship between the two sides, respecting each other in speech acts and protecting speaker's self-esteem are also necessary conditions for the smooth exchange of information. This requires people to abide by social politeness norms in verbal communication. Grice proposed the cooperative principle and pointed out that the violation of the cooperative principle produces conversational implicature, but Grice did not explain why people should violate the cooperative principle. Later, Leech put forward the 'Politeness Principle' [5] from the perspective of rhetoric and semantics. The politeness principle is a supplement to Grice's cooperative principle. Leech believes that in communication, people violate the cooperative principle for politeness. In 1983s, Leech, a famous British scholar, expounded the important role of politeness in language communication in his book *Principles of Pragmatics*. He first proposed the Politeness Principle, believing that his Politeness Principle and Grice's Cooperative Principle are the two principles followed in communication. Leech's Politeness Principle includes the following six maxims:

Tact Maxim:

- (i) Minimize cost to others.
- (ii) Maximize benefit to others.

Generosity Maxim:

- (i) Minimize benefit to self.
- (ii) Maximize cost to self.

Approbation Maxim:

- (i) Minimize dispraise of others.

(ii) Maximize praise of others.

Modesty Maxim:

(i) Minimize praise of self.

(ii) Maximize dispraise of self.

Agreement Maxim.

(i) Minimize disagreement between self and others.

(ii) Maximize agreement between self and others.

Sympathy Maxim:

(i) Minimize antipathy between self and others.

(ii) Maximize sympathy between self and others [5].

Politeness principle plays an important role in pragmatics. The use of politeness principle to analyze literary works provides a new perspective and direction. Based on the dialogues of characters in *Pride and Prejudice*, this paper specifically explains the role of politeness principle in the analysis and construction of characters in novels and the expression of theme, which will enhance the practical application of politeness principle and have certain significance for pragmatics research.

4. A Pragmatic Analysis of Character Dialogues in *Pride and Prejudice*

There are many classic cases of using linguistic theories in the novel *Pride and Prejudice*, which are mainly reflected in the fact that the characters will intentionally or unintentionally violate the cooperative principle and the politeness principle to achieve better communicative effects.

4.1. Cooperative Principle Analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*

In proposing the Cooperative Principle, Grice states that both parties should abide by the four principles so that the communication can proceed smoothly. As an ironic writer, in a large number of character dialogues of *Pride and Prejudice*, we can see many phenomena that violate the cooperative principle. The writer's arrangement of character dialogues in this way helps to depict the character's personality characteristics and achieve unique language effects. Violation of the principle of cooperation is showed as follows:

4.1.1. Violation of the Maxim of Quality

At the beginning of the novel, Austin proposes a "truth" (Example1) --"It is a truth that universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" [1] This sentence violates the quality maxim. Obviously, this sentence is not the "universal truth" accepted by all people. The author points out the theme of the novel--marriage. This ironic opening also lays the tone of humor and irony in the book. The first chapter of the novel is basically a dialogue between the Bennets around the 'new rich bachelor'. There are also examples of violations of quality maxim.

Example2.

Mrs. Bennet: "My dear Mr. Bennet," replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them."

Mr. Bennet: "Is that his design in settling here?"

Mrs. Bennet: "Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes."

Mr. Bennet: "I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better; for, as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party."

Mrs. Bennet: "My dear, you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be any thing extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty." [1].

Mr. Bennet said that his wife is more beautiful than his five daughters. This sentence is to say that self-knowledge is false, which obviously violates the quality maxim and has a strong irony. First of all, It is obviously false that a mother of fifty is more beautiful than her daughter of twenty. Secondly, Mr. Bennet has no way to prove that Mr. Bingley is fond of his wife of fifty. so, this sentence is not based on reality. Mr. Bennet 's violation of the quality maxim is irony, aggravates the conflict between the husband and wife, and shows the distinct personality characteristics of the characters.

4.1.2. Violation of the Maxim of Quantity

Example3.

Bingley: "She is the most beautiful creature I have ever beheld. But her sister Elizabeth is agreeable."

Darcy: "Perfectly tolerable. Not handsome enough to tempt me. Return to your partner and enjoy her smiles." [1].

The first acquaintance between the protagonist Darcy and Elizabeth is at a ball. Mr. Bingley took his friend Darcy to the ball. Mr. Bingley was cheerful and elegant, and he danced with different female partners. On the contrary, Mr. Darcy was indifferent and arrogant. He only danced with Bingley 's sister, which was a rejection of others. At the ball, when Darcy and Bentley discuss their partners, Darcy 's words obviously violate the maxim of quantity. When Bentley says "Elizabeth is agreeable ", according to the cooperative principle, Darcy only needs to answer 'Yes, she is.' or 'No, she isn't', while he says "Perfectly tolerable. Not handsome enough to tempt me. "His answer goes beyond enough information, fully demonstrating Darcy's arrogance at this time and causing Elizabeth's prejudice. The arrogant Darcy and the warm Bentley also form a sharp contrast. The violation of the quantity maxim here is helpful to portray the characters.

4.1.3. Violation of the Maxim of Manner

Both sides of verbal communication should be clear and concise in communication to avoid obscure and difficult to understand. Violation of the maxim of manner will make the communication produce Implicit meaning. In *Pride and Prejudice*, there is a lot of dialogue between the Bennets. Mr. Bennet is a person who likes to sarcasm others, while Mrs. Bennet is a moody, less educated person. So, Mr. Bennet also often sarcasms his wife. Some of his words violate the rules of the cooperative principle and show the huge personality differences between the husband and wife.

Example4.

Mrs. Bennet: "Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.

Mr. Bennet: "You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it." [1].

In this conversation, Mr. Bennet can simply answer yes or no, but he answers with a tedious answer "if you want to say I'd like to hear ", which violates the briefness in the maxim of manner. In fact, Mr. Bennet is not interested in the topic that his wife says. In order not to make his wife angry, he says if his wife is willing to say, he can listen. But his wife is unresponsive and speaks for herself. This helpless emotional discourse is full of irony, which also reflects Mrs. Bennet 's moody and nagging personality characteristics. It also reflects that this mother is difficult to cultivate every daughter. Therefore, the back also leads to the different fates of her five daughters.

4.1.4. Violation of the Maxim of Relevance

In the process of conversation, both sides of the conversation should have the intention of cooperation and establish the necessary discourse connection around a theme, otherwise it

may be irrelevant and violate the maxim of relevance. When the literal meaning of the speaker's utterance is inconsistent with the real meaning, the listener needs to use the context to infer the speaker's real intention.

Example5.

Darcy: "That is exactly the question which I expected you to ask. A lady's imagination is very rapid; it jumps from admiration to love, from love to matrimony, in a moment. I knew you would be wishing me joy."

Miss Bingley: "Nay, if you are so serious about it, I shall consider the matter as absolutely settled. You will have a charming mother-in-law, indeed, and of course she will be always at Pemberley with you." [1].

The above dialogue shows that when Darcy praises Elizabeth's charming eyes, Miss Bingley immediately talks about Elizabeth's family background. Miss Bingley's answer has nothing to do with Darcy's topic, which obviously violates the maxim of relevance. However, this seemingly unrelated answer contains abundant connotations. Her implied meaning indicates that Elizabeth is from a humble family, and Elizabeth's mother is vulgar and ignorant. If Darcy wants to accept Elizabeth, he must accept these realities. It also shows that Miss Bingley does not hope Darcy like Elizabeth, because Miss Bingley likes Darcy and wants to marry Darcy. Therefore, Miss Bentley's violation of the relevant maxim is out of her own selfishness and her own purpose.

In a word, through the above analysis, it is shown that using the cooperative principle in the pragmatic theory to analyze the dialogues of *Pride and Prejudice* can more accurately understand the psychological and personality characteristics of the typical characters in the works and their different marriage values. In this way, we can have a deeper understanding of how the author uses ironic tone and humorous language to show her rational thinking and critical attitude. We can better appreciate Austen's unique artistic techniques such as shaping characters, describing scenes and arranging plots, and truly understand the essence of Austen's works.

4.2. Politeness Principle Analysis of *Pride and Prejudice*

Jane Austen is good at using language in her novels, which plays a great role in improving the level of her works. Her dialogue not only conforms to the character's personality, but also likes to use irony, so that readers can not help but smile. Politeness principle is put forward by Leech, which is the supplement and perfection of cooperative principle [4]. In his view, people violate the cooperative principle for the sake of politeness. Cooperative principle shows that the two sides of communication should respect each other and maintain politeness, which is of great significance to the analysis of politeness and impoliteness in literary works. The use of politeness principles in pragmatics to analyze the conversations of characters in this novel not only interprets politeness principles more vividly but also enables readers to understand the essence of language more deeply.

4.2.1. The Violation of Tact Maxim and Approbation Maxim

Example6.

Bingley: "Come, Darcy. I must have you dance. I hate to see you standing about by yourself in this stupid manner. You had much better dance."

Darcy: "I certainly shall not. You know how I detest it, unless I am particularly acquainted with my partner. At such an assembly as this, it would be insupportable. Your sisters are engaged, and there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with."

Bingley: "I would not be so fastidious as you are, for a kingdom! Upon my honour I never met with so many pleasant girls in my life, as I have this evening; and there are several of them, you see, uncommonly pretty."

Darcy: "You are dancing with the only handsome girl in the room."

Bingley: "Oh! she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld! But there is one of her sisters sitting down just behind you, who is very pretty, and I dare say very agreeable. Do let me ask my partner to introduce you."

Darcy: "Which do you mean?" and turning round, he looked for a moment at Elizabeth, till catching her eye, he withdrew his own and coldly said, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt me; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men. You had better return to your partner and enjoy her smiles, for you are wasting your time with me." [1].

At the ball, Mr. Bentley wants to persuade Darcy to invite his female partner to dance, but Darcy says "there is not another woman in the room whom it would not be a punishment to me to stand up with. His implied meaning is that other women do not deserve to dance with him and have a derogatory meaning to other women. Later, Mr. Bentley praised Elizabeth's beauty, hoping that Darcy could invite Jane's sister Elizabeth to dance, but he said that Elizabeth was tolerable, but not beautiful enough to attract him to invite her to dance. Darcy's words do not take into account the feelings of the 'third party' Elizabeth, violating tact maxim and approbation maxim at the same time. His words were just heard by Elizabeth in the corner, and naturally, she would have a prejudice against Darcy at the beginning of their acquaintance. The first appearance of Darcy's "pride" and Elizabeth's "prejudice" echoes the title of the novel.

4.2.2. The Violation of Modesty Maxim

Mr. Collins became the parish priest because of the help of the noblewoman Catherine. And according to the law at that time in England, he was able to inherit Mr. Bennet's estate. Mr. Collins had much money and a good work. Therefore, he wanted to have a suitable wife. Later, he chose Mr. Bennet's second daughter, Elizabeth, to be his wife. Here's what he proposed to Elizabeth.

Example 7.

Mr. Collins: "Perhaps I may state my reasons for marrying. Firstly, that it is the duty of a clergyman to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, I am convinced it will add greatly to my happiness. And thirdly, that it is at the urging of my esteemed patroness, Lady Catherine, that I select a wife. My object in coming to Longbourn was to choose such a one from among Mr. Bennet's daughters, for I am to inherit the estate and such an alliance will surely...suit everyone." [1].

Mr. Collins' words of proposing to Elizabeth seem to impolite. First of all, he believes that it is the duty of the priest to set a marriage example in the parish, and as a priest, he has the obligation to set a good marriage example. What's more, a good marriage can make him happier even without love. He implicitly expressed that proposing to Elizabeth was a kind of charity to her, and he had a high attitude in the process of proposing marriage. Last but not least, he wants to listen to his noble woman Catherine's suggestion and choose a wife. Each reason makes people feel his pride and show off, violating the norm of modesty. This is also fully able to reflect his arrogance and shallow ignorance.

4.2.3. The Use of Approbation Maxim

Example 8.

Jane: "He is just what a young man ought to be sensible, good humoured, lively; and I never saw such happy manners! --so much ease, with such perfect good breeding!"

Elizabeth: "He is also handsome, which a young man ought likewise to be, if he possibly can. His character is thereby complete." [1].

The scene takes place at a ball where Bannett Jane and Mr. Bingley meet. After dancing, Jane and Elizabeth praise Mr. Bingley, who is handsome and well-educated. Jane and Elizabeth abide by Approbation Maxim. Jane not only revealed the good feelings for Mr. Bingley, but also can reflect Mr. Bingley is a good-looking and respectful gentleman.

4.2.4. The Use of Generosity Maxim

Example9.

Elizabeth: "I hear such different accounts of you as puzzle me exceedingly."

Darcy: "I hope to afford you more clarity in the future." [1].

This happened during the second conversation between Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth. Elizabeth directly expresses Darcy 's character in her heart. In fact, Elizabeth misunderstood Mr. Darcy, but Mr. Darcy did not directly refute. From his answers, we can find that Mr. Darcy is a polite gentleman, reflecting his politeness and self-control. Darcy follows the generosity maxim well.

4.2.5. The Use of Sympathy Maxim

Because of the rain, Jane fell ill on the day of her dinner with Bentley. Concerning for Jane, Elizabeth decides to visit her, so she goes a long way to visit the sick Jane. Bentley, Darcy and Bentley's sister give different evaluations.

Example10.

Miss Bingley: "She did indeed, I could hardly keep my countenance. Her hair so untidy, so blowsy!"

Binley: "It shews an affection for her sister that is very pleasing."

Darcy: "They were brightened by the exercise." [1].

Miss Bentley's evaluation is to exaggerate the disgust of Elizabeth as much as possible. and her words are very rude and hasn't any sympathy, she completely contrary to the sympathy maxim, while Mr. Bentley and Mr. Darcy's evaluation not only contains sympathy, but also praise, complying with the sympathy maxim.

5. Conclusion

Pride and Prejudice has become famous a novel loved and circulated by Chinese and foreign readers. Due to ingenious application of pragmatics, it shows a more profound and true emotion and philosophy. Analyzing the characteristics of the language in the novel from the perspective of cooperative principle and politeness principle can depict the characters and show the plots of the story more vividly, which reveals the deeper meaning that the author wants to express. In a word, Pride and Prejudice uses a large number of dialogue conversation materials between characters and creates plenty of pragmatic dialogue conversation scenes to depict a distinctive character image. It highlights the author's mastery of pragmatic skills and theories, and provides a new way to appreciate the literary works.

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