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PRAGMATIC STUDY OF SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA

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Abstract

The pragmatic study of Shakespearean history plays aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the result of the application of the pragmatic techniques to understand the drama and the true intentions and the nature of the characters. Shakespearean history plays were evaluated in terms of social, cultural, historical, and political backgrounds, but this approach towards the drama concentrates on understanding the characterization through the linguistic cues provided in the text. Linguistic cues will prove meaningful if understood along with the social and cultural practices of the time the drama was foregrounded. Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that deals with the study of the intended meaning of conversant with the help of linguistic cues. It emerged as a part of the field of linguistics and it is mainly concerned with the spoken interactions than written text. The term speech acts refer not only to the utterances but the entire context of the utterance. It deals with what is communicated more than said. Context of the utterance here refers to the discourse to which it belongs, paralinguistic features, and any preceding verbal or physical interaction.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Implicature, Maxims, Speech Acts, Drama

Introduction

Shakespeare's History Plays

Shakespeare's history plays were based on the Holinshed Chronicles and were set in medieval English history. Also, Shakespeare's plays depict more of his own time than the medieval society in which they were foregrounded. They are linked and have several things in common such as the rise and fall of Lancaster and York's often termed as the "War of the Roses". Most of the history plays dealt with the civil wars fought for the crown. Shakespeare's plays were written in two series. The first series was written during the first part of his career and the plays are Henry V1, 1,2 and III and Richard III and covers the fall of the Lancaster dynasty.

Although Shakespeare borrowed from different sources, the most prominent is Raphael Holinshed's massive work, *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, published in 1586-87. Although he wrote about the characters two centuries ago from his own time, he made the characters appear familiar to his audiences. The theme of Shakespeare's history plays is mainly focused on questioning the legitimacy of the monarchy and its power. Richard III is one such play that deals with the conflict between Lancaster and York.

Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study is theoretical. Paul Grice's cooperative principles and maxims of quantity, quality,

relevance, and manner are used to analyze the play and the characterization.

History of Pragmatics:

Before the 1970s spoken interactions were treated as chaotic and does not fall under linguistic structuring and classification. Due to the developments in other fields such as anthropology and philosophy and the works of philosophers such as Austin, Searle and Grice, speech acts are also found to have unique structures on their own. As Austin (1962, p.100) says, 'the words used are to some extent to be explained by the "context" in which they are designed to be or have actually been spoken in a linguistic interchange.' Austin mentioned that the meaning of a sentence could be interpreted in terms of 'truth' or 'false'. He called verbal communication a 'speech act' and the latter performs three acts at once.

1. Locutionary – locutionary act is the act of saying something
2. Pre-elocutionary – Perlocutionary act is the act performed by saying something.
3. Illocutionary – It is the act performed in saying something. This refers to the intention of the speaker and what the speaker wants to achieve by the conversation. And it is this illocutionary force of the utterance that determines the act performed.

Linguists mainly concerned only with the literal meaning of the utterances, but Austin argued that the communicative intent of the act and the accomplished act should be analyzed. For example, "It's cold in here" can be interpreted either as a command "It's cold in here, switch on the heater" or just an act of expression. There is always no one to one correspondence between the syntactic structure, semantic meaning, and the intentional meaning of the speaker. Further development in the field is made possible by Paul Grice and his famous cooperative principle.

THE CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

The philosopher H. P. Grice developed a co-operative principle (1967/1987) which, he considers,

underlies successful verbal communication. That is, we assume, under normal circumstances, that these are the ground rules that we observe when speaking and interpreting utterances. (Black 10).

The **co-operative principle** states: *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.* To this he appends four **maxims**, which clarify how the co-operative principle works:

Maxim of quantity

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of quality

Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of relation

1. Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner

2. Avoid Obscurity
3. Avoid Ambiguity
4. Be brief
5. Be Orderly

This is the underlying principle behind any communication. When people speak it is assumed that they are relevant, clear, unambiguous, and provide the right information quantitatively. According to Grice, when one or more of the principles are violated, it is assumed that there is a conversational implicature. To understand or work out the conversational implicature, the listener will rely on the following data (Black 10).

1. The linguistic, social, cultural, and political context of the utterance
2. The CP and its maxims

3. The conventional meanings of the words.

Drama text is chosen for the study since it merely the written script of the spoken interactions between the participants as in real life. The other genres of literature such as fiction, poetry, and prose are not appropriate for a pragmatic study. Pragmatics deals with whether the communicative purpose is achieved rather than concerned with the syntactic and semantically correct sentences. This communicative purpose is termed as the cooperative principle by Paul Grice and other philosophers (Black 10).

We can always notice the contrast between what Men pretend to be and what he is, between what he speaks in front of others and what he thinks. This is basically the difference between the deceptive appearance and hidden purpose, and this is one of the characteristic features of Shakespearian drama and it essentially talks about the theme of appearance versus reality. As in real life, in drama, the characters depict how reality and appearance diverge from each other. Asides and double-meaning words are the devices that stand as the best example of this feature of Man. Therefore, in this aspect drama is no way different from real-life conversations (Black 10).

Pragmatic study of selected speech acts from Richard III:

RICHARD.

Brother, good day. What means this armed guard
Does that wait upon your Grace?

CLARENCE. His Majesty, Ten'ring my person's safety, hath appointed This conduct to convey me to the' Tower.

RICHARD. Upon what cause?

CLARENCE: Because my name is George.

RICHARD:

Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours:
He should, for that, commit your godfathers.
O, belike his Majesty hath some intent
That you should be new-christened in the Tower.
But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know?

The question asked by Richard reflects that he is shocked to see his brother being taken along with an

armed guard, but he was the reason behind it and was expecting this to happen concerning his soliloquy presented at the beginning of the play. Here Richard has violated the maxim of quality. This flouting of the quality maxim indicates a conversational implicature which is that he wants to appear innocent and supportive to his brother, Clarence.

Here Clarence's use of irony in the reply flouts the maxim of quantity and relation, therefore this action suggests a conversational implicature of his relatively innocent and humorous nature. Even though he is aware that he is being imprisoned, he was able to deal with it patiently which is the standard implicature out of his flouting of maxim of relation.

In response, Richard also flouts the maxim of quantity, relation and quality in order to substantiate his innocence towards the action.

RICHARD. Well, you won't be locked up for long;
I will free you or I'll take your place.
In the meantime, be patient.

This statement of Richard does not flout any maxims. But the statement is the irony and it has an implied meaning of death to Clarence by the phrase, "I will free you" and Richard will take Clarence's place as the next for the throne. The most important point to be noted here is that not only flouting of maxims indicates implicatures, even the cooperative principle achieved without the flouting of maxims involves conversational implicatures.

RICHARD.

Then never was man true.
Then no man was ever true.

ANNE.

Well, put up your sword.
Well, put away your sword.

RICHARD.

Say, then, my peace is made.
Then tell me that we are friends.

ANNE.

That shalt thou know hereafter.
You will know that afterward.

RICHARD.

But shall I live in hope?

But can I have hopes?

ANNE.

All men, I hope, live so.

I hope that all men have hope.

RICHARD.

Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

Agree to wear this ring.

ANNE.

To take is not to give. [Puts on the ring]

Taking is not giving.

Anne's change of attitude towards Richard is implied when she flouts the maxim of relevance by responding to Richard by saying that all men have hopes instead of a direct answer. She cannot respond directly to Richard's proposal even though she wanted to, since she was a widow and Richard is responsible for the killing of her husband. The cultural and social conventions of the Royal family restrict Lady Anne to convey her desire directly. Therefore, she flouted the maxim of relation and quantity to express her desire. Anne's desire towards Richard is the conversational implicature here. The same reasoning applies, when she hinted in her response that Richard will get to know about the state of mind later.

RICHARD

They do me wrong, and I will not endure it:
Who are they that complain unto the king,
That I, forsooth, am stern and love them not?
By holy Paul, they love his grace but lightly
That fill his ears with such dissentious rumors.
Because I cannot flatter and speak fair,
Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive and cog,
Duck with French nods and apish courtesy,
I must be held a rancorous enemy.
Cannot a plain man live and think no harm,
But thus his simple truth must be abused
By silken, sly, insinuating Jacks?

RIVERS

To whom in all this presence speaks your grace?

RICHARD

To thee, that hast nor honesty nor grace.
When have I injured thee? when done thee wrong?
Or thee? or thee? or any of your faction?

A plague upon you all! His royal person, --
Whom God preserve better than you would wish! --
Cannot be quiet scarce a breathing-while,
But you must trouble him with lewd complaints.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Brother of RICHARD, you mistake the matter.

The king, of his royal disposition,
And not provoked by any suitor else;
Aiming, belike, at your interior hatred,
Which is your outward actions shows itself
Against my kindred, brothers, and myself,
Makes him to send; that thereby he may gather
The ground of your ill-will, and so remove it.

Richard flouts the maxim of manner to express his anger and disgrace towards queen Elizabeth and her brothers. By flouting all the four maxims in the above conversation, he was trying to prove himself innocent and make others responsible for the condition of the king.

In contrast, Queen Elizabeth did not flout any maxims, and outwardly stated his intentions and behavior towards her and her brothers.

RICHARD

But he, poor soul, by your first order died,
And that a winged Mercury did bear:
Some tardy cripple bore the countermand,
That came too lag to see him buried.
God grant that some, less noble and less loyal,
Nearer in bloody thoughts, but not in blood,
Deserve not worse than wretched Clarence did,
And yet go current from suspicion!

Richard mentions that the first messenger who carried the order for the death sentence was like God Mercury, who was fast and the one who carries the reverse order was like a crippled man walking slow. He violates the maxim of quality and quantity. He also hinted indirectly at punishing the queen and her brothers instead of Clarence. Due to the Royal social conventions and his intention to be always under the goodwill, he flouted the maxim of relation. The standard implicature is, Rivers, Grey, Dorset, and Queen Elizabeth are the ones needed to be punished who are less noble, less loyal, and have bloody thoughts. This can be understood concerning

the conversation between Richard and Elizabeth's allies in Act 1. Therefore, the flouting of maxims alone cannot be used for interpretation.

RICHARD

Madam, have comfort: all of us have cause
To wail the dimming of our shining star;
But none can cure their harms by wailing them.
Madam, my mother, I do cry you mercy;
I did not see your grace: humbly on my knee
I crave your blessing.

DUCHESS OF YORK

God bless thee; and put meekness in thy mind,
Love, charity, obedience, and true duty!

RICHARD

[Aside] Amen; and make me die a good old man!
That is the butt-end of a mother's blessing:
I marvel why her grace did leave it out.

This is the first occurrence where Richard was not flouted any maxims and participated in the conversation relevantly and in the right manner. Even then, the conversation is the willful act of Richard to hide his evil deeds under the skin of grief. Here is another example to demonstrate that cooperative principle alone is not enough for the full interpretation of the conversation and identifying the intentions of conversant.

The Duchess intentionally left the blessing "die as a good old man" in order to make Richard understood that she is not happy with his actions. This action of flouting with the awareness of the participants also has implicatures beyond what is conveyed.

Richard's asides and soliloquies are more helpful in finding the right direction for interpretation. The conversational implicatures and the true intentions of the characters are best identified with the help of these dramatic elements. The flouting of maxims is evident from the use of asides and this is the playwright's way of character revelation for better interpretation. The usage of double meaning words is one of the finest examples of flouting quality maxims.

PRINCE EDWARD

I fear no uncle's dead.

RICHARD

Nor none that live, I hope.

Richard's response to the Prince seems to be relevant and the communication was co-operative except for the flouting of quality. He intentionally mentioned that to hint Prince about his upcoming death. This is the conversational implicature.

RICHARD

If I thou protector of this damned strumpet--
Tellest thou me of 'ifs'? Thou art a traitor:
Off with his head! Now, by Saint Paul I swear,
I will not dine until I see the same.
Lovel and Ratcliff, look that it be done:
The rest, that love me, rise and follow me.

Richard cleverly manipulated Hastings's speech and pushed him to execution. He flouted the maxim of quality and quantity and manners to implicate that Queen Elizabeth is a traitor and for executing Hastings. Lord Buckingham along with Richard flouts the maxim of quality throughout the play to deceive people around them. Richard's speech with Lord Mayor depicts the intentional flouting of maxims and does not suggest any conversational implicature for the listener.

In Act III, Scene 7, Richard flouts the maxim of quality, quantity but no relation and manner to suggest an implicature that he does not want to be crowned as King, but Richard's true intention is to become King.

Conclusion

The findings of the pragmatic study are as follows,

1. Flouting of maxims can be intentional
2. Flouting of maxims can be associated with cultural and social conventions
3. Non-flouting of Maxims can also be intentional

The flouting of maxims aids in establishing the relationship between the conversant and the flouting of quantity maxim can happen when the conversant uses metaphor or any figures of speech.

Most of the time, King Richard III flouts the maxim of quality and this indicates the immorality in his character. A character who always flouts the quality maxim can be understood as treacherous.

A character can flout a maxim with the knowledge of the participant and it also underlies an implicature.

Flouting of maxims of quantity is carried out to substantiate the intended meaning of the characters.

Flouting of the maxims alone cannot be taken for interpreting the conversations between the participants in the play. Through the study, it is clearly understood that the interpretation of the conversation between characters requires the social and cultural conventions, a conversation between the characters from the first acquaintance or in other words the relationship between the characters in question. When the conversation involves the use of metaphors or figures of speech, the maxim of quantity is violated.

Characteristic elements of the genre such as soliloquy and aside are also needed to fully understand the intention and the full meaning behind the dialogue. Therefore, the pragmatic study alone with the maxims are not enough for interpreting the conversations.

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