

Analysis of Discourses in Jane Eyre From the Perspective of Pragmatics

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Abstract

Jane Eyre, as an autobiography of the author Charlotte Bronte, which has been credited as an "influential feminist text" by the Penguin edition since it was published in 1847, in London, England. It is a novel about the orphan Jane Eyre's lifetime who experienced lots of difficulties and distress and finally lived a happy life. Many scholars studied the novel from different perspectives, and most of them studied it mainly form the following five aspects: exploring the feminism in the novel; analyzing the characters' images based on Appraisal theory; discussing the protagonists' dual character based on Freudian psychoanalysis; exploring the Christian cultural elements in the novel from the point view of religion and culture; elaborating the real reasons why the two leading characters had a tortuous relationship by applying Ethical literary criticism. While few studied it from the point view of pragmatic theories. Given this, the paper selects typical dialogues from the novel and analyzes them on the basis of Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principle, in the hope of revealing the speakers' conversational implicature and providing an unique visual angle for the appreciation of the novel.

Key words: Discourses in *Jane Eyre*; Cooperative principle; Politeness principle; Conversational implicature

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INTRODUCTION

As an outstanding English writer in the 19th century, Charlotte Bronte has finished many great works in her life, among which Jane Evre is best known to the world. The novel expounds the miserable life of an orphan named Jane Eyre and subtly depicts the mental activities especially when she confronted Mr. Rochester, the one she loved very much. The paper mainly conducts research on the discourses in different plot development phases in the novel from the perspective of Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle. There are 114 conversations connected with the leading character Jane Eyre in the novel, among which 27 are concerned with the Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle. This paper chooses 17 ones closely related to the theme of the novel to analyze. By doing that, the paper aims to further prove that the CP and PP as influential theories of explaining conversational implicatures can create great effects in people's communication. People always violate the Cooperative Principles and Politeness Principle to produce different communicative effects.

The paper consists of introduction, main body and conclusion three parts. Introduction part gives a simple introduction of the author Charles Dickens and the novel, then states the previous researches on the subject as well as the research angle, research goal and method. The body (consists of two chapters) firstly gives a detailed introduction of the theoretical framework, then analyzes the selected dialogues on the basis of Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle respectively. Conclusion part puts forward that people always violates the politeness principle and politeness principle to express their implied meanings in their speech communication. This research provides readers with a new angle to appreciate the novel in terms of the understanding of theme and the analyzing of the characters' image.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past few years, many scholars studied Jane Eyre from different point of view, and most of them focused their attention on the following research aspects: Wang (2010), He (2010) and Fu (2015) analyzed the characters' images in the novel; Guo (2012) and Guo (2013) discussed the protagonists' dual character based on Freudian psychoanalysis; Shi (2012), Zhu (2012), Chen (2013) and Ren (2013) revealed the feminism in the novel; Ren et al. (2014) explored the Christian cultural elements in the novel Jane Eyre, and Yang (2015) discussed the reasons which caused the tortuosity of the two protagonists' relationship from the point view of ethical literary criticism. While few paid attention to the discourse study of the novel from the point view of pragmatics. Different with these studies, the paper studies the discourses in the novel from the perspective of Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle in pragmatics, and aims to further prove that the PP can explain some problems the CP is difficult to solve in people's actual communication.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this part, the analytical framework of the paper -Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principle as well as the sub-maxims will be elaborated in great detail with an example will be given in each submaxim.

2.1 Grice's Cooperative Principle

H. P. Grice believes "Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts." (Hu, 1987). That is in all language communications both the speaker and hearer have the willing to make the conversation be successful by cooperation together. And Grice believes that there must be some mechanisms governing the production and comprehension of these utterances. This is what Grice calls the Cooperative Principle (abbreviated as CP in the following discussion). And Grice divided this principle into more detailed maxims, they are the maxim of quantity, quality, relation and manner.

2.1.1 The Maxim of Quantity

The maxim of quantity means that the speaker should provide enough information in the conversation, neither more nor less than required. This principle contains two aspects: (a) make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange); (b) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required (Liu, 2006).

[1]:

A: Hi, what are you doing?

B: Doing some writing

This conversation happens between classmates A and B, B does not provide A with more detailed information truthfully as for A's question. Which violates the maxim of quantity on purpose. It can be explained as carrying an implicature that the speaker B is not willing to expose what he is doing.

2.1.2 The Maxim of Quality

The Maxim of quality means try to make your contribution one that is true, i.e. (a) Do not say what you believe to be false. (b) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (Liu, 2006).

[2]:

A: Really? When did he get married?

B: Two years ago.

A: With whom?

B: I think he married a tiger.

This conversation happens in a school gathering, A and B once were classmates in high school. They are talking about their classmate C. It is clearly that B violates the maxim of quality, because no one will marry a tiger. Maybe the speaker means to say that the wife has some characteristics of the tiger and maybe she is not gentle and bad-tempered.

2.1.3 The Maxim of Relation

Be Relevant (Liu, 2006).

The maxim of relation demands the speaker provides information closely connected with the ongoing conversation, that is, to say something be relevant. While in daily life, people always violate the maxim of relation to produce some extra conversational implicatures.

[3]:

A: May I know the truth?

B: Mary is here.

In this example, the speaker B violates the maxim of relation obviously. He says something has nothing to do with the question, but it is easy for the hearer A to assume that B does not want Mary know the truth or it is not convenient to tell the truth when Mary is here, so A does not persist in asking for the question.

2.1.4 The Maxim of Manner

Maxim of manner means the speaker should say something in a clear manner, that is to be perspicuous. This principle contains four aspects: (a) Avoid obscurity of expression; (b) Avoid ambiguity; (c) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity); (d) Be orderly (Liu, 2006). While in daily life, people sometimes use ambiguous words to produce extra conversational implicatures.

[4]:

A: Will you go with me?

B: Maybe I will.

In this example, B violates the maxim of manner and gives a very obscure answer to A's invitation. In this example, he answers A and actually expresses his unwillingness. In simple terms, the CP implies that we should say something true in a relevant and clear way, as well as informative enough. While people always violate the principle and express some implied extra meanings.

2.2 Leech's Politeness Principle

English linguist Leech puts forward the Politeness Principle (abbreviated as PP) so as to rescue Grice's CP which only explains how conversational implicature is produced but does not explain why people tend to express opinions indirectly and implicitly. So PP is proposed to make up the shortage of CP when CP fails to offer a reasonable explanation. And in some cases, people also violate the politeness principle on purpose to express some extra meanings.

(a) Maxim of Tact

i Minimize cost to other.

ii Maximize benefit to other.

(b) Maxim of Generosity

i Minimize benefit to self.

ii Maximize cost of to self.

(c) Maxim of Approbation

i Minimize dispraise of other.

ii Maximize praise of other.

(d) Maxim of Modesty

i Minimize praise of self.

ii Maximize dispraise of self.

(e) Maxim of Agreement

i Minimize disagreement between self and other.

ii Maximize agreement between self and other.

(f) Maxim of Sympathy

i Minimize antipathy between self and other.

ii Maximize sympathy between self and other.

(Liu Runqing, 2006)

[5]:

Would it be possible to lend me your computer?

Please lend me your computer!

You must lend me your computer!

Maxim of Tact explains why people tend to use the first two expressions while the last one is rarely used. The reason is that the politeness is decreased greatly.

[6]:

Do have another cup of tea!

Please have another cup of tea!

Would it be possible for you to have another cup of tea?

The maxim of Generosity requires us to be generous to others. The first two expressions show the speaker's generosity more clearly, so it seems more polite and acceptable to others than the last one expression.

[7]:

what a wonderful dancer you are!

What an awful dancer you are!

The maxim of Approbation explains why the expression "what a wonderful dancer you are" is better than "what an awful dancer you are".

[8]:

A: What a clever boy you are! You get full marks in this competition.

B: Thanks. My coaches teach me these.

Thanks. The questions are not hard.

Yes. How smart am I.

The maxim of modesty explains why people tend to use the first two expressions while the last one is never used. Because this utterance openly violates the maxim of modesty.

[9]:

A: This book is really exciting, don't you think so?

B: Yes, it is.

I'm sorry, I can't go along with you.

No, it's tedious.

The maxim of agreement requires us to attempt to soften it in various ways if expressing disagreement is inevitable. So, the expression 'I'm sorry, I can't go along with you' is more acceptable than 'No, it's tedious.'

[10]:

A: Yesterday I fell off the bicycle and hurt my leg.

B: I'm sorry to hear that, are you all right now?

It's unfortunate that you hurt your leg.

It is your business.

The maxim of sympathy explains why people tend to use the first two expressions rather than the last kind of expression. It is out of politeness to others to establish and maintain a harmonious relations in society.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the plot development, the novel can be divided into four parts: the heroine Jane Eyre's miserable childhood in Gateshead Hall; the tough life in Lowood Institution; the spiritual awakening in Thornfield; and the maturity in Moor House.

In this chapter, some discourses will be selected from each part and they are analyzed from the perspective of the violation of CP and PP. By doing that, the speakers' implied meaning will be exposed to the readers and the theme of the novel will also be exposed clearly.

3.1 Violation of Cooperative Principle in Jane Eyre

In *Jane Eyre*, there are 114 conversations between the protagonist Jane Eyre and other characters, the paper selects 16 conversations as study materials in which 9 ones are related to the CP and 7 ones are related to the PP.

3.1.1 Violation of the Maxim of Quantity

The maxim of quantity demands people provide enough information as is required in the conversation, neither more nor less. While people often violate this maxim, they always express their conversational implicatures by two ways: providing more information than required and less information than required. Putting it simply, that is overstatement and understatement. [1]:

...... Are you afraid now in daylight?"

"No; but night will come again before long: and besides,—I am unhappy,—very unhappy, for other things." (Bronte, 2007)

This dialogue happened between the good apothecary Mr. Lloyd and Jane Eyre when the man was called to see her after she fainted in the red-room. There is no one she could confide in about her grievances in Gateshead Hall, so when Evre suffered so many unfair treatments and realized that finally there was someone could talk to, she could not control her emotion and could not help pouring out her heart to the apothecary. Obviously, in this conversation Eyre provided more information than needed which openly violates the maxim of quantity. She said "I am unhappy, very unhappy, for other things", in this way. Eye could talk to the man for more things to relieve her feelings and may get the good man's sympathy. Therefore, the violation of the maxim of quantity would somehow yield better results in people's communication.

[2]:

"And what do the women do?"

"I knawn't, was the answer. Some does one thing, and some another. Poor folk mun get on as they can." (Ibid.)

This dialogue occurs between Jane Eyre and a woman in a shop. After Jane slipped away from the Thornfield. She was standing in the position of one without a resource, without a friend, without a coin in that time, so she asked the woman what do the local women usually do to test if there is a job she could take on. While the woman said "Some does one thing, and some another" which actually violates the maxim of quantity because the speaker doesn't provide the listener any useful information she needed. By violating the maxim of quantity, the woman aims to express her boredom and hope Jane can leave the shop right away. Actually, this is also corresponding with the theme of the novel—critical realism, people's indifference to the weak group.

"And this is Jane Eyre?What the deuce have you done with yourself this last month?"

"I have been with my aunt, sir, who is dead." (Ibid.)

This dialogue happens between Jane and Mr. Rochester when they have fallen in love with each other but haven't commited to a romantic relationship. Jane has been away for a long time to look after her aunt and now she just came back. Mr. Rochester asked Jane in an anxious mood what did she do in the last month, Jane answered she has been with her aunt. And in addition to it, she also added with the information "who is dead", which violates the maxim of quantity. Obviously, she means to ease his irritation caused by her long absence, because Mr. Rochester had just given her but one week's leave of absence.

3.1.2 Violation of the Maxim of Quality

The maxim of quality demands speakers say what is true, but not want he or she believes to be false or lacks adequate evidence. While in our daily life, people always violate the maxim of quality to produce extra implied meaning.

[4]:

He looked at me for a minute.

"And a little depressed," he said. "What about? Tell me."

"Nothing Nothing, sir. I am not depressed." (Ibid.)

This dialogue happens between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester. Jane realized that Mr. Rochester loses his heart to Miss Ingram and felt depressed so slipped away from the dinner party. When Mr. Rochester asked the reason why she was depressed she just said *'nothing, nothing'*. Which violates the maxim of quality because she said something untrue. It can be inferred that Jane has her own pride and esteem, so it's reasonable she is not willing to express her depression and reveal the real reason to the man in case it loses her face.

[5]:

"Jane, you understand what I want of you? Just this promise— 'I will be yours, Mr. Rochester.'"

"Mr. Rochester, I will not be yours." (Ibid.)

This dialogue occurs between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester. Mr. Rochester was accused of a bigamist who has had a living wife, which made Jane feel depressed and desperate, and also caused a great estrangement between their relationship. Mr. Rochester explained to Jane and wanted to seek a promise from Jane "I will be yours", while Jane refused to give the promise and expressed her willingness to the man. Obviously, the answer breaches the maxim of quality openly because she has forgiven the man in her mind and reacted in this way just out of the self-esteem and independence in her character.

3.1.3 Violation of the Maxim of Relation

If the speaker violates the maxim of relation, he may say something which has nothing to do with the on-going conversation. By violating this maxim, there's always extra conversational implicature produced.

[6]:

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"Miss Eyre, are you ill?" said Bessie.

"Take me out! Let me go into the nursery!" was my cry. (Ibid.)

This dialogue occurs between Jane Eyre and Miss Bessie. Jane Eyre was confined to the red-room by her aunt, the room was so bleak and gorgeous that Jane felt oppressed and suffocated. So she rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort. When Miss Bessie asked if she felt ill, she did not give a corresponding answer but cried with "take me out! Let me go into the nursery!" which has little to do with the question. By violating the maxim of relation, the unfair treatments Jane suffered and her emotional instability is presented to us clearly, which is consistent with the theme of the novel—critical realism.

[7]:

"...You are still bent on going?"

"It has struck nine, sir." (Ibid.)

This dialogue happens between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester. They have been chatting for a long time, and Jane deemed it useless to continue this discourse because she did not know Mr. Rochester well about his character and felt a kind of uncertainty in his character, at least, beyond its present reach. So when Mr. Rochester asked where she will go, she gave the answer which has little to do with the question. She openly violates the maxim of relation in the hope of indicating that she is not wiling to talk to him any more without destroying his self-esteem.

3.1.4 Violation of the Maxim of Manner

If the speaker violates the maxim of manner, he may says something ambiguous,obscure or out of order to produce conversational implicatures.

[8]:

"Then you are going to be married, sir?"

"Ex-act-ly—pre-cise-ly: with your usual acuteness, you have hit the nail straight on the head." (Ibid.)

This conversation happens between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester. They have had some feelings to each other in that time but haven't commit to a romantic relationship, when Jane asked if he is going to be married soon, the man employed ambiguous way to pronounce the words more pronounced in order to emphasis this information. It is clearly that the ambiguous pronunciation violates the maxim of manner. And by violating this maxim, Mr. Rochester's implicature is produced, he also has a kind of pride and self-esteem at his core, so he means to arose her jealousy and stir up the emotions.

[9]:

"Then, you could dare censure for my sake?"

" I could dare it for the sake of any friend who deserved my adherence; as you, I am sure, do." (Ibid.)

This conversation happens between Jane and Mr. Rochester. When Mr. Rochester asked if Jane could stand with him and ignore other's reproaching and rebuke, she did not response with a straightforward and clear word, but give a more complicated sentence in an ambiguous way, which breaches the maxim of manner on purpose and aims to reveal the speaker's personal principles and characters. Because they did not commit to a romantic relationship at that time and it seemed at her core, there is a kind of so strong self-esteem that she is not willing to be controlled or cheated by anyone.

3.2 Violation of Politeness Principle in Jane Eyre

In this part, 9 dialogues are selected from the different plot development phase of the novel and they are explained in great detail form the perspective of the violation of the Politeness Principle.

3.2.1 Violation of Tact and Generosity Maxim

The tact maxim demands people pay attention to the benefit or cost of others, that is other-centered. Conducted by this maxim, people should increase the benefit and decrease the cost of others, speakers should consider more for the hearer rather than himself when they are in communication. And actually the generosity maxim is not need to be distinguished from the tact maxim. Because they all deal with the question of benefit and cost, and they just differ in whether othercentered or self-centered. The generosity maxim pays much attention to the self and it demands the speakers increase the cost and decrease the benefit of himself but consider much for the hearer.

[10]:

"You examine me, Miss Eyre," said he: "Do you think me handsome?"

..... "No, sir." (Ibid.)

This dialogue takes place between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester when he asked if Jane think of him handsome, Jane responded with a negative word "No" immediately which violates the maxim of tact, because it seems that she did not think about the feelings of Mr. Rochester. Actually, which reflects the speaker Jane's honest and sincerity and precisely because of it the man loves her so much and treats her in a way different from other ladies.

[11]:

"You munnut think too hardly of me," she again remarked.

"But I do think hardly of you," I said; and "...you ought not to consider poverty a crime." (Ibid.)

This dialogue happens between Jane Eyre and the old servant Hannah in Moor house. The woman Hannah refused to give Jane shelter previously when Jane begged for help. So the woman now explained to Jane and hoped she can understand her and does not think of her hardly. While Jane responded with "But I do think hardly of you" which violates the maxim of tact, because it seems that she neglects the feelings of others again. Actually, she thinks of her hardly not because the servant refused to give her shelter, but because she considered poverty a crime, which destroyed Jane's self-esteem. By violating the maxim of tact, Jane means to emphasis something to the woman and defend the pride and self-esteem in her character.

3.2.2 Violation of Approbation Maxim

The approbation maxim is other-centered which demands the speakers try their best to say some pleasant and beautiful words to the hearer in order to establish a harmonious atmosphere or maintain a friendly social relation or out of polite to others.

[12]:

"You know I am a scoundrel, Jane?" ere long he inquired wistfully....

"Yes, sir." (Ibid.)

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This conversation happens between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester when there is an estrangement between them. Mr. Rochester was accused of bigamist, which annoyed Jane greatly and made her feel desperate. As a victim of the previous marriage, Mr. Rochester also felt depressed very much. When explained to Jane and asked for her forgiveness, he asked if Jane think of him a scoundrel Jane reacted with "Yes", which violates the maxim of approbation openly. In fact, we are required always to say something beautiful to please others, which Jane means to express her anger and self-esteem in an unusual way.

3.2.3 Violation of Modesty Maxim

The modesty maxim is self-centered which demands the speakers dispraise themselves and do not self-boast in order to maintain a peaceful atmosphere with the hearer.

[13]:

"You are a beauty in my eyes, and a beauty just after the desire of my heart,—delicate and aerial."

"Puny and insignificant, you mean. You are dreaming, sir, ..." (Ibid.)

This conversation happens between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester. They have commited themselves to a romantic relationship at that time. When Mr. Rochester complimented Jane on her appearance with the words "beauty" "delicate" and "aerial" Jane contradicted him with the negative words "puny" and "insignificant" which reflects the modesty or inferiority in Jane. She doesn't like flattery especially from Mr. Rochester.

3.2.4 Violation of Agreement Maxim

The agreement maxim deals with the relationship between self and other which means that the hearer should always agree with the speaker's ideas rather than disagree with them. It can help to crate a more harmonious atmosphere between the hearer and the speaker.

[14]:

"Would you like to drink, or could you eat anything?" "No, thank you, Bessie." (Ibid.)

The dialogue occurs between Jane Eyre and Miss Bessie. Jane was confined to the red-room by her aunt and fainted in the room. Now she was rescued from there and got consciousness again. When Miss. Bessie asked if she wants to eat or drink something, she refused with "No" which openly violates the maxim of agreement. Actually, maybe she refused the kindness because out of fear or the pride or self-esteem in her character. In this way, Jane means to express her independence and perseverance to the people who bullied her. It can be seen clearly that Jane lived a miserable life in her childhood which is corresponding with the theme of the novel again.

[15]

"...Well then, on that mercenary ground, will you agree to let me hector a little?"

"No, sir, not on that ground;..." (Ibid.)

The conversation happens between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester. Mr. Rochester inquired if Jane allows him to

hector a little on the mercenary ground, Jane expressed disagreement with the expression "No", which violates the maxim of agreement. The pride and self-esteem in her character force her to refuse this requirement. So by violating this maxim the speaker Jane means to seek an equality between their relationship, which also reflects the feminism in her thought.

3.2.5 The Application of Sympathy Maxim

The sympathy maxim also copes with the agreement maxim which suggests that people should express same feeling or emotion to the speaker. That is, to congratulate him when he is happy and to comfort him when he is sad. By doing that, a more harmonious atmosphere or a more intimate relation is created.

[16]:

"Oh aunt, have pity! Forgive me! I cannot endure it let me be punished some other way! I shall be killed if—"

"Silence! This violence is all most repulsive;" and so, no doubt, she felt it. (Ibid.)

The discourse takes place between Jane Eyre and her aunt Mrs. Reed. Jane was confined to the dark red-room and was tortured by the gloomy and strange environment. Finally she could not bear it any more and cried out a prayer for forgiveness and help. Naturally, it is reasonable to forgive the faint and helpless girl but her aunt reacted with a cold word "Silence" which violates the maxim of sympathy. It can be seen that Jane lived a very miserable life in her childhood, which reflects the theme of the novel again—the author's critical realism.

CONCLUSION

The paper selects 16 conversations from the novel Jane Eyre, then classifies and analyzes them on the basis of Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principle in Pragmatics. Although there is deficiency in selecting examples, they are selected on a relatively scientific method, which guarantees the scientificity of the study. Part 3 case study makes us come to the conclusion that the Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle as influential theories of explaining conversational implicatures can produce different communicative effects in people's speech communication. Generally, the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle play an important role in appreciating literary works, they help to deepen the understanding of characters' conversational implicatures as well as their literary images as well as the theme of the novel.

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