

An Analysis of Conversational Implicature in Persuasion Based on Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle

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Abstract: In the actual communicative language, people sometimes deliberately violate the Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle in order to produce Conversational Implicature for the sake of conversation. Dialogue in literature, as a special conversation, can also be analyzed by pragmatic theory. Persuasion is Jane Austen's last novel, which tells the story of a young man and woman from different backgrounds who are reunited after a difficult time and finally come to a happy ending. This novel has been studied from different perspectives over the years. In China, some scholars have explored the paradoxes of self-concern and altruism in Persuasion from the perspective of emotional recognition; some scholars have studied the image of the navy in Persuasion; some scholars have focused on the feminism and gender relations embodied in the novel; and some scholars have discussed the marriage model in Persuasion. Foreign scholars have mainly focused on the analysis of the novel's characters and the study of the romanticism and feminism in the novel. However, few scholars have explored the conversational implicature of the dialogues in Persuasion. Therefore, this paper intends to explore and interpret the conversational implicature of some dialogues in Jane Austen's Persuasion from the perspective of Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leach's Politeness Principle, aiming to reveal the personality of the novel's main characters, Anne and Winterworth, and other characters, so as to help readers better understand the novel's theme.

Keywords: Cooperative Principle; Politeness Principle; Conversational Implicature; Jane Austen; Persuasion

1. Introduction

Jane Austen (1775- 1817) was one of the most famous English women novelists, and the most important woman writer in 19th century Britain. In all her life, she wrote a total of six novels, and all of them are proved to be very successful. Sense and Sensibility (1811), Pride and Prejudice (1813), and Mansfield Park (1814), Emma (1815) were published in succession from 1811 to 1817. The last two, Northanger Abbey (1817) and Persuasion (1818), were published for Jane Austen by her brother after her death from illness. Her short and legendary life also provided the best material for films such as The Regrets of Jane Austen, Becoming Jane Austen.

Her novels mainly focus on the marriage and life of women in rural gentry families. With women's unique and meticulous observation and lively and funny words, she truly depicts the small world around her, especially the marriage and love disturbances between gentlemen and ladies. Her humorous novels are full of comic conflicts and popular with readers. They often ridicule people's stupidity, selfishness, snobbery, and blind confidence and other despicable and ridiculous weaknesses through comic scenes. (Wang Xing, 2009)

In honor of Jane Austen, the iconic festival, Jane Austen Festival, is held each September. A Jane Austen Center has also been built on 40 Gale Street Road and preserves the costumes and furnishings of the era. The Austen House in Jordon displays several items of Austen's belongings. It is clear that Jane Austen is significant to all times.

Austen was unmarried all her life and had a well-off family. Jane Austen lived a relatively affluent life until the age of ten, but then her family fell on hard times and her father could not afford the expensive tuition for his eight children. However, her father respected her hobby and bought her a lot of paper and

brushes to practice drawing. She also got along well with her brother, who took her to meet many bankers, businessmen, publishers, painters, actors and other people, which provided her with a wealth of material for her later works.

Jane Austen's novels contain British country life, the inner thoughts of all kinds of people, and various small details of life, which is a very interesting channel to understand British social life and British culture. She put her own life experience and her own careful observation into her novels, which are true, delicate and have gained a lot of people's love. *Persuasion*, Jane Austen's last novel published in 1818, is written with more thought and emotional depth than the previous novels like *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. It is a touching love story written in a humorous and witty tone with a unique and delicate touch. Therefore, it is considered by many critics as Austen's best novel.

Persuasion, written in the last days of Austen's life, depicts the love story of the heroine Anne and her ex-boyfriend Wentworth, who finally get back together with each other after breaking up. At the age of nineteen, the noble lady Anne falls in love with the young officer Wentworth and was engaged to him. However, her father, Sir Walter, and her godmother, Lady Russell, disliked Wentworth's lowly status and lack of property, and strongly opposed the marriage. Anne accepted Lady Russell's advice and painfully broken off the engagement with her sweetheart. Eight years later, Wentworth, who had been promoted to colonel for his outstanding service in the war, returned home and was reunited with her brother-in-law, General Croft, and her sister, who had become Sir Walter's lodger. In the subsequent interactions, colonel Wentworth once again found Anne's selflessness, kindness, and steadfastness unmatched, and Anne found the courage to love repeatedly in her self-*Persuasion*. In the end, they found that their reunion was happier than the first time they fell in love, and so, after many twists and turns, they finally came together successfully. The emotions in the novel are controlled and sincere, like a beautiful classical music, allowing the emotion of loving only one person in a lifetime to flow slowly through the novel.

This novel told a love story like the first love

in teenage years, which has touched the reader's hearts again and again for a hundred years. It was worth mentioning that the story of this novel was somewhat similar to the emotional experiences of Austen's youth, except that the happy ending only happens in the novel. In real life, Austen met her true love at the age of twenty, but due to the opposition from their parents, they eventually broke up. The man eventually married a noble girl, and Austen remained unmarried for all her life. Perhaps Austen arranged a happy ending for the novel in order to make up for the regret of her losing love due to accepting *Persuasion* from her parents in her youth. Therefore, the fidelity that cannot be obtained in real world can only be dreamed in the fictional world. *Persuasion* as a successful novel of Jane Austen, attracted many attention in literary circle. Many scholars have studied it from various perspectives over the years. This chapter will then introduce the researches on *Persuasion* both at home and abroad.

Many foreign scholars studied Jane Austen and her novel *Persuasion*. Some scholars analyzed the feminism conveyed in *Persuasion*; some scholars analyzed romanticism in the novel; some scholars analyzed the nationalism in *Persuasion*; some scholars analyzed the narrative method in *Persuasion*, etc. [1]

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar co-authored the book *The Madwoman in the Attic*. In the book, they presented the idea that Austen was an anti-feminist. They argued that the fact that most of the female characters in *Persuasion* were often forced to be silent and submissive. In addition, they always tried to behave with grace and poise, which was evidence of Jane Austen's support for female silence and submissiveness, and the subconscious orientation of women to cater to an unequal gender consciousness.[2] Julia Brown also argues that Jane Austen holds feminist ideas in her novels, pointing out that Austen was heavily influenced by the early feminists.[3]

In addition to those analysis of feminism above, there also appeared researches from other perspectives. Knox-shaw, in his work *Jane Austen and the Enlightenment*, adopted a theoretical perspective of new historicism to interpret Austen's *Persuasion*. In his opinion, *Persuasion* not only provided a description of the objective and realistic environment of Britain in the late 18th and early 19th centuries,

but also accurately reflected the spirit of that times. [4] Harold Bloom pointed out that Jane Austen's *Persuasion* was romantic in nature, insisting that Austen's *Persuasion* borrowed some romantic elements from Wordsworth's romantic viewpoint. In Anne Mellor's opinion, *Persuasion* made Austen a mother of the nation.[5] Lanser held that Anne's consciousness was expressed by the narrative technique of free indirect discourse.[6]

Domestic scholars have studied *Persuasion* from a variety of perspectives, including values, stylistic features, romantic elements, feminine consciousness, family sentiments, spatial narrative and gender relations, etc.

Qin Lu analyzed the values in *Persuasion* from a feminist perspective, pointing out that Austen's *Persuasion* was a work with a deep consciousness of women, which was already inspiring for today's readers and Jane Austen's advanced concepts about women's role in today's society were valuable for all the women, even including the women in the 21st century.

In her study of Romanticism and Utopian-ism in *Persuasion*, Zhao Ajuan pointed out that Jane Austen, as a woman in a patriarchal society, was unable to find her own happiness in the real world, so she cleverly combined the romantic qualities of the time with the "utopian complex" to create a work like *Persuasion* in order to find happiness and refuge for herself and other women in the 18th century in literature.

Wu Qian in an analysis of the stylistic features of the novel *Persuasion* from the perspective of literary stylistics concluded that *Persuasion* had the stylistic features of simplicity and irony, as well as the stylistic features of the nineteenth century period and the dramatic genre. She thought that the author's choice of words, narrative techniques and rhetorical use were subtle, which would help the reader to appreciate more deeply the thematic meaning and literary beauty of the novel.

Zheng Wenwen's article on interpreting gender relations in *Persuasion* from the perspective of critical discourse analysis also provided a new perspective for relevant studies in the field of gender. she revealed the gender inequality in the power relationship and the struggle of women for their own rights in this novel.

Liu Yue studied the persuasive function of literature from Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. She

analyzed the purpose of Austen's creation of this novel, holding that most *Persuasion* in everyday life had good effects, but in the novel Mrs. Russell's *Persuasion* for Anne was not instructive.[7]

Though many scholars studied *Persuasion* from different perspectives, few of them have analyzed conversational implicature of *Persuasion* in the novel systematically. Therefore, this paper is to take this as a starting point to analyze and explore the conversational implicature in *Persuasion* based on Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle.

2. Theoretical Perspective

Grice's Cooperative Principle includes four maxims: Quantity Maxim, Quality Maxim, Relevance Maxim, and Manner Maxim. Quantity Maxim refers to the principle that the speaker should make his conversational information as informative as required, no more and no less. Quality Maxim refers to the principle that the speaker should express true information. Relevance Maxim refers to the principle that what the speaker said should be relevant to the topic. Manner Maxim refers to the speaker should express his or her own ideas clearly and avoid ambiguity in conversation.[8]

Leech's Politeness Principle includes Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim. Tact Maxim pays attention to the hearer's cost and benefit while Generosity Maxim focuses on the speaker's cost and benefit; Approbation Maxim needs the speaker to minimize dispraise of the hearer and maximize praise of the hearer; Modesty Maxim is opposite of Approbation Maxim, that is the speaker should decrease praise of self and increase dispraise of self; Agreement Maxim requires the speaker minimize disagreement and maximize agreement among participants of communication; Sympathy Maxim requires the speaker and the hearer minimize antipathy and maximize sympathy in communication.[9]

According to Grice, people may send more meanings than literal meanings in daily communication in an indirect way. In order to express some intentions the speaker will violate the Cooperative Principle so that conversational implicature can be derived. Conversational implicature is not the literal

meaning presented by the linguistic units within a language system, but the meaning or intention implied beyond the linguistic signs, i.e. the meaning that language produced in a given context.

3. Conversational Implicature in Persuasion Based on Cooperative Principle

People should observe the Cooperative Principle and cooperate with each other in order to make the hearer understand the speaker's meaning in communication. However, sometimes people will violated the Cooperative Principle in the actual conversation which is to achieve special aims, such as suggestion, warning, indication etc. This chapter is to explore the conversational implicature of Persuasion based on Grice's Cooperative Principle.

3.1 Quantity Maxim

Quantity maxim informs that there is conversational implicature when the speaker provides inadequate or overmuch information. In the novel *Persuasion*, conversations between major characters reveal some conversation implicature, which could give readers more imaginative room and a better understanding of different personality of different characters, and their different inner activities. The following are some typical examples of conversational implicature generated in the light of Quantity Maxim.

Example 1

Anne: "You have had your little boys with you?"

Marry: "Yes, as long as I could bear their noise; but they are so unmanageable that they do me more harm than good. Little Charles does not mind a word I say, and Walter is growing quite as bad." [10]

This conversation happened between the heroine Anne and her sister Marry who was a constant fuss and who was always hanging her head in dismay at the slightest illness or pain. Anne was asked to visit Mary, and when she asked if Mary's son little Charles was staying with her, Mary didn't answered Anne's question directly but complained that her children were so noisy. At the same time she complained about Walter becoming unsatisfactory to her. Mary's answer clearly violated the Quantity Maxim, and she provided far more information than what was actually

needed. The reason Mary said so much was to get Anne to spend more time with her and talk with her because she felt so lonely. From the conversational implicature we can find Marry was a fussy and selfish woman lack of sense of happiness because she complained so much without consideration of Anne's feelings.

3.2 Quality Maxim

Quality Maxim suggests that the speaker shouldn't use false words in communication. The speaker should express true information to the hearer. The following are some typical examples of conversational implicature generated in the light of Quality Maxim.

Example 2

Anne: "I am much obliged to you, but I am not going with them. The carriage would not accommodate so many. I walk, I prefer walking."

Wentworth: "But it rains."

Anne: "Oh! very little, nothing that I regard." [10]

One day, Anne and her cousin Mr Elliott and others were walking down the street, but it suddenly started raining. Their carriage was only big enough for four people, so Anne politely offered to walk and gave the carriage to the others. It so happened that Captain Wentworth appeared and tried to help Anne into the carriage, and the above conversation took place. It was true that the carriage could not contain so many people, but Anne expressed that she liked to walk. And it's raining, but Anne said it was nothing. From the conversation above we can see Anne obviously told a lie, for Anne might like to walk, but definitely not to walk in the rain, so Anne's words violate Quality Maxim. The conversational implicature here is that Anne did not want to immediately get on the carriage and leave, and she would like to spend more time with Wentworth. So the plot mentioned above showed that Anne was nervous with mixed feelings of sadness and joy when she saw Wentworth.

3.3 Relevance Maxim

The speaker should say something related to the theme of conversation. If the speaker intentionally speak something which is not related to the theme of topic, the Relevance Maxim will be validated and conversational implicature is appeared. Following are some

typical examples of conversational implicature generated in the light of Relevance Maxim.

Example 3

Mr Shepherd: "He is a rear admiral of the white. He was in the Trafalgar action, and has been in the East Indies since; he was stationed there, I believe, several years."

Sir Walter: "Then I take it for granted, that his face is about as orange as the cuffs and capes of my livery." [10]

After the death of Lady Elliott, Sir Walter's sanity was ruined and he began to make ends meet. In desperation, Sir Walter asked his friend Mr Shepherd for some advice. Mr Shepherd offered to lease Kellynch House to general Croft. But Sir Walter's inner superiority came out when he heard that the tenant was a naval man. He taunted the naval tenant that his face was as yellow as his own servant's cuffs, which was obviously irrelevant to the conversational theme. So Sir Walter violated the Relevance Maxim, and the conversational implicature here is that obviously on the one hand he had to rent out his estate for money and on the other hand he wouldn't like to lose his face, so by derogating others he maintained his superiority and showed that he was decent to deal with difficulties he encountered, which reflected he was a pretentious and vain man.

3.4 Manner Maxim

When someone doesn't express himself directly in the dialogue and his expression is vague or obscure, lengthily or illogically, the Manner Maxim may be violated. People won't always adhere to the conversational principle clearly and orderly. And at this moment conversational implicature comes into being. Following are some typical examples of conversational implicature generated in the light of Manner Maxim.

Example 4

Anne: "You have asserted nothing contradictory to what Mr Elliot appeared to be some years ago. This is all in confirmation, rather, of what we used to hear and believe. I am more curious to know why he should be so different now."

Smith: "But for my satisfaction, if you will have the goodness to ring for Mary; stay: I am sure you will have the still greater goodness of going yourself into my bedroom, and bringing me the small inlaid box which you will find on

the upper shelf of the closet." [10]

After Mrs. Smith told Anne of Mr Elliott's bad behavior, Anne became increasingly curious as to why Mr Elliott was nothing like he used to be, so she asked Mrs. Smith hurriedly, hoping that she would tell Anne something about Mr Elliott without mincing words. But instead of telling Anne the specific information directly, Mrs. Smith asked Anne to call Mary for help one moment then asked Anne to get the little box and speaks in long and momentarily baffling words. So Mrs. Smith violated the Manner Maxim not to give obscure answers to others. The conversational implicature here is that Mrs. Smith was unwilling to tell Anne what kind of person Mr Elliott was in words even if Anne was right in front of her and she would like to show her the real evidence for Anne to make a self judgement. From the conversational implicature we can see that Mrs. Smith was a prudent lady.

4. Conversational Implicature in Persuasion Based on Politeness Principle

Leech held that Grice's Cooperative Principle failed to fully summarize the pragmatic functions in people's daily communication activities in 1983. Therefore, Leech put forward Politeness Principle to make up for the deficiency of Cooperative principle. That is to say, similarly, when people violate Politeness Principle, conversational implicature would also be produced. This chapter will explore the conversational implicature based on the Politeness Principle in the novel Persuasion.

4.1 Tact Maxim and Generosity Maxim

Tact Maxim and Generosity Maxim concerned with two opposite sides of the same problem. The former refers to benefiting others rather than letting others suffer losses while the latter refers to trying to suffer losses rather than benefiting oneself, so the two opposite maxims are regarded as one pair. Following are some typical examples of conversational implicature generated in the light of Tact Maxim and Generosity Maxim.

Example 5

Shepherd: "Many a noble fortune has been made during the war. If a rich admiral were to come in our way, Sir Walter--"

Sir Walter: "He would be a very lucky man, Shepherd, that's all I have to remark. A prize indeed would Kellynch Hall be to him; rather

the greatest prize of all, let him have taken ever so many before; hey, Shepherd?" [10]
Mr Shepherd heard that the rich navy was coming back to shore and they were coming to settle down, which was certainly a good news for Mr Shepherd and Sir Walter who would lease his house to the rich navy men. Sir Walter would be the one who got the biggest benefit, for if the tenant was a rich man, Mr Walter could rent out Kellynch House without shame. According to Mr Shepherd's description, the navy was the best and most generous person to deal with, especially in business. But from the conversation above we can see Mr Walter did not see himself as the one who got the most benefit, and rather he felt that navy men's living in Kellynch was just like a thing of getting a treasure for them, and he regarded it as a reward that no one else had ever received. From the conversation we can see that Mr Shepherd observed Tact Maxim while Sir Walter violated Generosity Maxim. The conversational implicature is that Sir Walter felt he had suffered a great loss, which showed Mr Walter was really selfish and hypocritical.

4.2 Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim

The Agreement Maxim expects that the speaker should reduce disagreement between self and others and increase agreement between self and others. Similarly, Sympathy Maxim aims to increase emotional support to others and reduce emotional disagreement to others. It involves the relationship between the speaker and the listener, especially the feelings of both sides, so as to minimize the resentment of both sides and maximize the sympathy for each other. This chapter is to explore the conversational implicature based on Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim in Persuasion.

Example 6

Anne: "There is hardly any personal defect, which an agreeable manner might not gradually reconcile one to."

Elizabeth: "I think very differently, an agreeable manner may set off handsome features, but can never alter plain ones. However, at any rate, as I have a great deal more at stake on this point than anybody else can have, I think it rather unnecessary in you to be advising me." [10]

Anne held that it was not good that the widow Mrs Clay was so close to her father all the time and told her sister Elizabeth about it. When Elizabeth heard Anne's admonition, she thought that Anne's speculation was too absurd and her father could never have an affair with the widow Mrs Clay. She insulted Mrs. Clay's appearance and argued that her father could not possibly like such an ugly-looking woman. Anne believed that good looks were not important as long as one had good manners but Elizabeth angrily contradicted Anne, insisting that ugliness could never be covered up by lovely manners. And this showed their different values. From the conversation we can see Elizabeth expressed with a kind of strong tone that Anne did not need to enlighten her, which indicated actually she was also wouldn't like to let her father be closed to Mrs Clay. In this dialogue, Elizabeth clearly violated Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim. The conversational implicature here showed that she was full of disgust and dislike for ugly people. And she showed no respect and agreement to her sister Anne who was kind enough to remind her but gave her mockery and scolding. Elizabeth was so arrogant that just like her father.

4.3 Approbation Maxim and Modesty Maxim

Approbation Maxim is to praise others more and reduce the dispraise of others as much as possible. Modesty Maxim is tried to be modest in communication. There are some examples showed in the Persuasion. This part is to explore the conversational implicature based on Approbation Maxim and Modesty Maxim in Persuasion. Example 7

Mary: "I cannot think him at all a fit match for Henrietta; and considering the alliances which the Musgroves have made, she has no right to throw herself away, and be giving bad connections to those who have not been used to them. And, pray, who is Charles Hayter? Nothing but a country curate. A most improper match for Miss Musgrove of Uppercross."

Charles: "Now you are taking nonsense, Mary, I grant you, that any of them but Charles would be a very shocking match for Henrietta, and indeed it could not be; he is the only one that could be possible; but he is a very good-natured, good sort of a fellow" [10]

Charles Hayter was the cousin of Mary's

husband Charles, who was courting Henrietta. Mary despised the Hayter family and was strongly opposed to the marriage. She also believed that this marriage would not only ruin Henrietta's happiness but also would bring her family into bad connection. On the contrary, Charles believed that his cousin was a very good-natured man and he was the only one who could match Henrietta. Therefore, Mary violated Approbation Maxim and Modesty Maxim while Charles followed them. The conversational implicature here is that Mary had been disparaging Charles Hayter because in her eyes he could not bring any benefit to Henrietta's family so he did not match Henrietta. From the conversational implicature we can see that Mary was a snob.

In brief, in this part six examples have been used to figure out how the conversational implicature is generated and what it is in different context in the novel *Persuasion* from perspective of Politeness Principle. Therefore, we can use Leech's Politeness Principle as an effective way to explore the different personality of different characters because those characters would either obey or break these maxims intentionally or unintentionally to show their feelings or attitudes in certain situation.

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