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Analysis of Shylock in Merchant of Venice Under Violation of Cooperative Principle

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Abstract:

As a unique linguistic phenomenon in linguistics, Cooperative Principle has aroused people's attention since it was put forward. Recently, the study of Cooperative Principle is mainly reflected in the aspects of translation, teaching, humor, rhetoric and advertising. Few people combine Cooperative Principle with literary works, especially literary dialogues and its effect. This article attempts to analyze the image of Shylock in The Merchant of Venice under the violation of Cooperative Principle, namely, the quality maxim, the quantity maxim, the relation maxim and the manner maxim. Through the analysis of Shylock's dialogue, this paper analyzes the duality of Shylock's character. On the one hand, he is a cruel, stingy and merciless usurer, who is repugnant. On the other hand, he is the victim and resister of racial oppression, who is pitiful and admirable. It not only deepens our understanding of Shylock, but also deepens the theme of Shakespeare's humanism thoughts on money, law and religion in bourgeois society. In brief, it not only offers us an interdisciplinary perspective, but shows the feasibility and validity of combining literature and linguistics.

Keywords: Cooperative principle, violation of cooperative principle, conversational implicature, shylock

1. Introduction

In 1967, Paul Grice brought up the Cooperative Principle in Logic and Conversation. The Cooperative Principle can be divided into four maxims: the quality maxim, the quantity maxim, the relation maxim and the manner maxim. However, people always violate the cooperative principle in daily life, one or more maxims, to achieve the successful transmission of information, which will produce conversational implicature. This means the production of implicated meaning. Namely, the Cooperative Principle is to "explain how a hearer gets from what is said to what is meant, from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning." (Thomas, 1995:56)

At aboard, the Cooperative Principle researches lie in such aspects: conversations in class, distinctive features between men and women' discourse as well as the purpose of improving writing skills. Cooperative Principle also lays the foundation for many fresh theories, like the Politeness Principle, Levison's QIM Principle as well as the Relevance Theory. In China, the cooperative principle can be studied from translation, humor, comic dialogues and advertising. (Jin, 2005: 17) However, there are few researches focusing on interpreting literary works from the perspective of Cooperative Principle. Thus, this paper will be a supplement to both Cooperative Principle and interpretation of character's personalities in literature.

As a special literary genre, drama is composed of plot and character's dialogue. The dialogue in drama not only reveals the inner activities of the characters, as well as reflects the motivation of the person's behavior, but promotes the development of the plot. The merchant of Venice is a 16th-century comedy written by William Shakespeare, which mainly relates to the contract dispute of "cutting one pound of meat". The theme of the script is to eulogize love, friendship and love, and reflects the contradiction between capitalist bourgeoisie and usurers in the early days of capitalism. It showed author's humanism ideas about money, law and religion at that time. This play shapes the typical image of Shylock, the most controversial character in this play. In the traditional view, Shylock is an indifferent usurer, a miser image bending solely on profit. Nowadays, based on Cooperative Principle, this paper will reveal the versatility of Shylock. As for the study of The Merchant of Venice, it has been interpreted from many aspects: Humanism, Feminism, psychoanalysis, translation, religion, law and linguistics. Its characters have aroused much attention since the publication of this play, especially the Shylock. Up to now, many scholars have studied Shylock in the traditional way of literature; few have made research under Cooperative Principle of linguistics. Therefore, this paper applies Cooperative Principle into the interpretation of Shylock in Merchant of Venice. That is to say, it will analyze Shylock's dialogues under the four maxims. Generally speaking, the implied meaning can be realized by the violation of these four maxims, thus this paper will concentrate on the violation of Cooperative Principle in Shylock's dialogue. It not only shows the feasibility and validity of combining literature and linguistics, but also offers us an interdisciplinary perspective.

Through the analysis of this paper, it will shed lights on the multiplicity of Shylock's characters. As an ordinary man, he longs for the respect from others, but he doesn't respect others. As a businessman, he yearns for a bright future, but at last he is deprived of all his property. As a father, he shows great love for his family, but his daughter ran away with one of his enemies. As a Jew, he is eager to change the social status of the Jews, but the religion he believes is discriminated at that time. In short, Shylock's double personalities are vividly shown in this play. He is unpleasant but impressive, tough but helpless, rich but stingy. On the one hand, he is a cruel, stingy and merciless usurer, who is repugnant. On the other hand, he is the victim and resister of racial oppression, who is pitiful and admirable.

2. Theoretical Basis

In this part, it will focus on the theory related to this paper: conversational implicature, Cooperative Principle as well as the violation of Cooperative Principle.

Conversational implicature was first put forward by Herbert Paul Grice in his speech of 1967. General speaking, to make our conversation meaningful, people usually obey some principles and cooperate with each other. However, the reality is often opposite. In daily communication, people do not always abide by the "principle of cooperation" in actual verbal communication, and people will deliberately violate it out of needs, which contributes to the implication. And Grice calls such implication as "conversational implicature." It explains how listeners understand and receive speaker's implication through the speaker's surface meaning. Correspondingly, the appearance of conversational implicature often needs some conditions. If a speaker doesn't offer enough information he is expected to provide, that is, to lie, such violation will not produce conversational implicature. Namely, when both the hearer and speaker recognize the violation, some implicature in conversation can only happen.

Cooperative Principle is an important area of pragmatics, raised by Herbert Paul Grice. In the process of people's communication, two participants seem to follow a certain principle consciously or unconsciously in order to achieve a successful communication. Therefore, Grice put forward the "principle of cooperation" in conversation. In Grice's own words, it is "Make your conversational contribution such as required at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." (Grice, 1975:45) Furthermore, there are four maxims in this principle, each of which includes one or more sub-rules.

At first, it is the maxim of quantity, which "makes your contribution as informative as required and doesn't make your contribution more informative than is required." (Dai & He, 2002:87) For example,

A: When is Sarah's birthday party?

B: Sometime next month.

This conversation happens between A and B when B knows the exact time of Sarah's birthday party. B withholds some information required by A, which flouts the maxim of quantity. The implied meaning is that "I don't want to tell you when Sarah's party is to be held."

Secondly, the maxim of quality requires us "don't say what you believe to be false and don't say that for which you lack adequate evidence." (Dai & He, 2002:87) For example,

A: Would you like to attend my wedding on Sunday?

B: I'm afraid I have an examination on Sunday.

This conversation happens between A and B when B doesn't have an examination on Sunday that stops him from attending wedding. B says something he knows is false and A also knows it is false, which means he flouts the maxim of quality. The implicature is that "I don't want to attend your wedding on Sunday."

Thirdly, as for the maxim of relation, you should say something relevant. For example,

A: Do you think she is more beautiful than me?

B: What is a nice day!

This happens between A and B when it is possible for B to tell A the truth of her beauty. However, what B answered is totally irrelevant to A's question. Thus, B flouts the maxim of relation. The implied meaning is that "I don't want to compare you with her."

Lastly, the maxim of relation's requirements can be divided as follows: "avoid obscurity of expression; avoid ambiguity; be brief; and be orderly." (Dai & He, 2002:87) For example,

A: What should we buy for the kids?

B: We could buy anything except I-C-E-C-R-E-A-M.

This happens between A and B when B has the ability to pounce the word "ice-cream". Here B flouts the maxim of manner. So, it can be analyzed that "I refuse to let kids know the content we are talking about; especially it is about some ice-cream."

In the course of communication, cooperative principle is an important theory concentrating on the conveyance of meaning. It conveys more than is literally said.

3. Analysis of Shylock under Violation of Cooperative Principle

A complete drama should not only include the compliance of the Cooperative Principle, but the violation of Cooperative Principle. In order to have a better appreciation of the drama, conversational implicature should arouse more attention of the reader. It is not easy for readers to distinguish literal meaning from implicit meaning in play. Then this paper will elaborate how Shylock violates the four maxims of Cooperative Principle to promote the production of conversational implicature. Through the following analysis, readers will have a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of Shylock's complex characters.

3.1. Violation of the Relational Maxim

Characters in play often do not want to let others know their true ideas; they often choose to violate the relational principle to cover their ideas, just like Shylock.

SHYLOCK: Three thousand ducats; well.

BASSANIO: Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK: For three months; well.

BASSANIO: For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

SHYLOCK: Antonio shall be bound; well.

BASSANIO: May you stead me? Will you pleasure me? Shall I know your answer?

SHYLOCK: Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.

BASSANIO: Your answer to that.

SHYLOCK: Antonio is a good man.

(Bate&Rasmussen, 2014:22)

Bassanio wants to borrow money from Antonio, but Antonio's money is invested in the cargo of the sea. Then they seek help from the Jewish usurer, Shylock. In this conversation, Shylock said three times "well", which seems to be irrelevant to Bassanio's question. Therefore, Shylock flouts the maxim of the relation. This implies that Shylock wants to seize this chance to revenge. As we all know, Sherlock and Antonio are old enemies and therefore Bassanio is his new enemy because he is Antonio's friend. It is not a small thing to lend your money to your enemies, so Shylock needs to take it into consideration. He repeated three times "well" to get more time to think about this matter. The enemy wants to borrow money from Shylock, so he occupies a dominant position. His indecision is no doubt a torment to his enemies, because they can't read his inner thoughts. Here, the reader can see the sly and the tact side of Sherlock. He knows how to make full use of opportunities to make him in a favorable position and give his enemy psychological torments. Therefore, it vividly shows Shylock's arrogant personality and his worldly sophistication. Moreover, When Bassanio asks Shylock's replay, Shylock squeezed out a sentence that Antonio was a good man. It seems to be a positive evaluation for Antonio's quality, but the real reason is that Antonio is wealthy, which can be implied from Shylock's further explanation. Thus, it is clear to show Shylock's view of money, which money is equal to the quality of a man or money is King.

With the development of this this play, it reveals another explanation of Shylock' sparsimony and greed. Shylock is stingy and greedy, which is restriction of survival in some degree. He deprived his daughter's right of inheritance, preventing property from falling into the hands of Christians. His national sufferings teach him how to survive in this cruel world. But his daughter couldn't understand him.

SALARINO: How now, Shylock! What news among the merchants?

SHYLOCK: You know, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight.

(Bate & Rasmussen, 2014:58)

This conversation happens between Salarino and Shylock. From the context, what the Salarino wants to know is the news in business, not Shylock's daughter, which also violates the relational maxim. Therefore, Shylock's answer indicates his anger towards Jessica's flight as well as busybody. Faced her daughter's elopement, Sherlock had no thought in his business. Since his wife died, her daughter Jessica has become his only support. Although there are some problems in Shylock's mode of education, his love for her daughter is beyond any doubt. Jessica thinks his father Shylock is a wicked moneymaking machine. She could not understand his father's hardships. There, this adds some tragic factors to the character of Shylock.

3.2. Violation of the Manner Maxim

In the court, Shylock has no concession. He insists his decision of cutting one pound of meat from Antonio. At that time, Bassanio expressed his strong dissatisfaction with Sherlock.

BASSANIO: Do all men kill the things they do not love?

SHYLOCK: Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

BASSANIO: Every offence is not a hate at first.

SHYLOCK: What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

(Bate & Rasmussen, 2014:87)

In this dialogue, it is clear to show Shylock's attitudes towards Antonio. As for Bassanio's question, Shylock should answer: "Yes or No." However, Shylock gives Bassanio a general question, which makes his intentions more ambiguous than the direct answer. So, Shylock flouts the manner maxim. Furthermore, Bassanio gives a further statement, indicating we should keep patience and tolerance towards others' fault. Shylock still doesn't answer directly, where he uses an analogy to show his views that he disagrees what Bassanio holds. Therefore, he would not change his mind to cut one pound of meat from Antonio. This also flouts the manner maxim. Why Shylock hates Antonio so much? It needs us to have a further interpretation. In public, people didn't call Shylock's name, but the contemptuous term, like "Jew" or "murderer". In public, Antonio abuses him as heretic and spits on his robe even the beard. Even when Antonio needs Shylock's help, Antonio is also full of arrogance. When Sherlock turned over the humiliated "old account," Antonio didn't apologize but offended him again. Thus, it is reasonable for us to understand Shylock's hatred to Antonio. So, Shylock seized Antonio's business, sabotaged his business and alienates his friend to vent his anger. At that time, Christians show their kindness and justice, but in action, they discriminate the Jews. They not only give the material exploitation to Jews, but also the spiritual oppression. It is no wonder that arouses Shylock's strong revenge.

3.3. Violation of the Quality Maxim

Of course, Antonio is just a representative who discriminates Shylock, the minority. In the court, Shylock thought the Duke would have the right to perform the contract in accordance with the principle of justice. So, in the conversation with the Duke, he was happy to follow the Cooperative Principle. But then he was aware of the real intention of the Duke. To get his pound of meat, he purposely violates the quantity maxim.

DUKE: How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

SHYLOCK: What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong? You have among you many a purchased slave, which, like your asses and your dogs and mules...I stand for judgment: answer: shall I have it?

(Bate&Rasmussen, 2014:88-89)

In the above-mentioned, Shylock by violating the quantity maxim makes the Duke speechless. According to the normal logic, he should answer: "What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?" However, he started a long description, giving Duck much extra information that the unfair in this society. Shylock not only wants to show the reasonableness of his requirement, but vents his angry to the discrimination to Jews from society. His long accusation made the Christians in the court silent. Shylock is a tragic character. He loses his only daughter and suffers the discrimination of others. To some extent, he was a victim of racism in the Christian world. From this point of view, Shakespeare is compassionate to Shylock. The play is not only about the ruthlessness of Sherlock and the kindness of Christians, but the causes of Sherlock's cold character.

For centuries, Sherlock has been condemned for his brutal manners in the court. In court, Sherlock insisted that Antonio fulfills the contract of cutting "one pound of meat", which was actually his motive for defending the equality of law. Justice is one of the doctrines advocated by Judaism. For shylock, if he gives Antonio his forgiveness, it will indicate he gives up Jewish ideal of justice, abandoning his own cultural identity. It is thus clear that Shylock's insistence grows out of Jewish cultural identity. Here, we could not find the looks of miser as well as the face of timid. What we can feel is the flames of revenge in Sherlock's chest. He didn't shrink though he was single. There is no shyness and retreat in front of the blandishments, showing the heroic spirit of a brave fighter.

3.4. Violation of the Quality Maxim

Then let's see the last appearance of Shylock in this play. This shows his final ending in the debt storm. Maybe he is not content with this result.

PORTIA: Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?

SHYLOCK: I am content.

PORTIA: Clerk, draw a deed of gift.

SHYLOCK: I pray you, give me leave to go from hence; I am not well; send the deed after me, And I will sign it.

(Bate & Rasmussen, 2014:101)

In this dialogue, Portia asks Shylock whether he is satisfied with her decision, and Shylock gives an affirmative answer. This seems to be a happy ending, but it is necessary for us to speculate on the psychological state of Shylock. Indeed, he bears some grudges. He says he is content because he is unable to change the status quo. As the plaintiff, Shylock is bound to succeed with his contact. However, Antonio gathered a group of Christians and colluded, which contributes Shylock to pay a double cost. Shylock not only didn't get his capital back, but his entire property was confiscated. And it is even sadder that Shylock was forced to practice Christianity, changing his previous belief. To some degree, it can be a kind of religious oppression. The Jewish nation is a religious nation. They believe in Judaism, which is the spiritual pillar of the nation. Antonio wants to convert Shylock to Christianity, which is crueler than the wish of one-pound meat. Later Shylock said he was not well, which shows his helplessness for his result. Therefore, Shylock's "I am content" is falsehood, which indicates that he doesn't want to argue with them even if he is dissatisfied. Shylock's words flout the maxim of quality.

4. Conclusion

Although Shylock lost his case because of Portia, the court verdict is clearly wrong. When Sherlock left the court quietly, the law of Venice was also quietly destroyed. That is to say, it refuses a citizen's reasonable request. Although Sherlock ended as a tragedy, he made an important step for the Jews to have equal rights with Christians in the face of the law. On the surface of the plot; Sherlock does have a cool and selfish personality, which is hated by many people. However, if the reader deeps into the background of this play, they will understand the characteristics that a Jewish usurer contains deep historical roots and social malpractices.

Shylock survives the hardships, and brings up his daughter. He is a shrewd financier, a model for those businessmen who are in a lower class. He changed his life with diligence and wisdom. He also longed for a day of with money that was as important as life to punish those people who often bullied him. So, he is not an ordinary person who is only satisfied with a little business. He is a businessman who seeks equality and identity with reason and thoughts.

In short, Shylock is a hatred person as well as pitiful character. His cruelty, greed and parsimony are dislike by lots people. He suffers all kinds of injustices, which arouses our sympathy. Besides, he is not afraid of authority, admired by a lot of people. Thus, he is the epitome of the oppressed Jews, suffering the injustice of the world. At the same time, he is an ordinary father and husband, who gives unselfish love to his family. Then, he is a greedy and cruel usurer, who will do anything to achieve his aims. At last, he is the embodiment of the humanistic spirit. He did not fight for himself, but fought for his whole nation. From Shylock, what we see is the survival circumstances of the weak, small Jewish nation: low status, cringe, hard life. Thus, Shylock's behaviors are the wisdom under the long-term national diaspora and the brutal

suppression of the Europeans. It not only deepens our understanding of Shylock, but deepens theme of Shakespeare's humanism thoughts on money, law and religion in the bourgeois society.

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