



## Implicature in Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" (stylistics study)

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### Abstract

The study examines the application of speech act theory and conversational implicature in analyzing the discourse of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice." By synthesizing these theories, the research aims to assess their effectiveness in understanding the characters and themes of the novel. It finds that these analytical approaches effectively reveal the portrayal of characters in specific contexts, suggesting that literary language can be meaningfully analyzed using discourse analysis theories.

التضمين في رواية "كبرياء وهوى" لجين أوستن (دراسة أسلوبية)

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المستخلص

تبحث الدراسة في تطبيق نظرية افعال الكلام والتضمين التخاطبي في تحليل خطاب رواية "كبرياء وهوى" لجين أوستن. ومن خلال تجميع هذه النظريات يهدف البحث إلى تقييم مدى فاعليتها في فهم شخصيات الرواية وموضوعاتها. والهدف هو تقييم هذه الأساليب التحليلية والكشف بشكل فعال عن تصوير الشخصيات في سياقات محددة، مما يشير إلى أنه يمكن تحليل اللغة الأدبية بشكل هادف باستخدام نظريات تحليل الخطاب، مما قد يقدم رؤى لتفسيرات فعالة وخلاقة.

### INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen, an English novelist, penned some of the most beloved books that have been translated and read by people from all over the world. Born on December 16, 1775, in the village of Steventon, Hampshire, England, she passed away on July 18, 1817, in Winchester, Hampshire. Austen started writing stories and plays at an early age. Her first novel, Sense and Sensibility, was anonymously published in 1811. Throughout her lifetime, she published five more novels: Pride and Prejudice (1813), Mansfield Park (1814), Emma (1815), Northanger Abbey (1818), and Persuasion (1818). All of her works are set in the 19th century and center around the lives of the upper classes.

The opening line of Pride and Prejudice, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife." (1813/1985:1), is one of the most recognizable and iconic sentences in English literature. Austen masterfully captures the main themes of the novel in this sentence: marriage, social status, and economics. It is also a satirical remark, as it suggests that it is the men who are supposedly seeking marriage, especially during the Regency era, while the reality often involves women seeking husbands for financial security rather than happiness.



This line also foreshadows the frequent use of irony throughout the novel. As previously mentioned, marriage is a central theme of the story. Mrs. Bennet, the mother of five daughters—Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, and the two youngest, Lydia and Kitty—desperately tries to get her daughters married off for financial security, rather than focusing on their happiness.

The novel *Pride and Prejudice* depicts the tumultuous relationship between Elizabeth Bennet, the daughter of a country gentleman, They must conquer their own pride and prejudice in order to fall in love and unite in matrimony.

The study focuses on highlighting that relationship In the world of linguistics what is said may differs from what it means, to understand what it meant, it's not enough to know what the meaning of words (semantics), and how they have been organized together in a sentence (syntax), context is needed to truly understand what is meant. And attempt to point out their characteristics, manners, and how their distinct differences affect their interactions by using conversational implicature .

## Conversational implicature

A higher order Speech act was first introduced by linguist philosopher J.L. Austin in his book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), and further developed by John Searle in his book *Speech Acts* (1969). Austen defines utterance as "The uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or as 'just,' saying something." (1969:5), to reinforce that definition, we can say speech acts are speech that aims beyond the words or phrases, they refer to an action performed by the utterance. Hidayat (2016).

Austen described utterance as a performative and divides speech acts to:

1- Locutionary acts which Searle (1979) classified them in Direct speech act and illustrated them as "the simplest cases of meaning in which the speaker utters a sentence and means exactly and literally what he says" (1979:30). Thus, locutionary acts are utterances that refer to the literal meaning of the words that are being spoken, producing meaningful expression.

2- Illocutionary acts are utterances said by the speaker in attempt to accomplish a specific purpose of the speaker. Promising, warning, informing, commanding, and requesting are apparent examples. Illocutionary acts are allotment of Indirect speech acts as Paul (2022) noted "We might define an indirect speech act (following Searle 1975) as an utterance in which one illocutionary act (the primary act) is intentionally performed by means of the performance of another act (the literal act)."

3- Perlocutionary acts are the utterance that gives an impact to the interlocutor or reader, such effects like insulted, amusement, conviction, fright, and laughter



are considered Perlocutionary effects. As Austen stated, "saying under something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons: and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them" (1962:101).

Searle (1983:240) classified Illocutionary acts into five Subdivisions:

1. Representative: Speech acts states what the speaker believes to be the case or not.
2. Commissive: Commits the speaker to a course of actions.
3. Directives: Directs the hearer to a course of action.
4. Declaration: Result in the state they name.
5. Expressive: Indicates the speaker's attitudes.

### Gricean Implicature

Firstly, it is important to understand the general notion of conversation, which is that it cannot be completed by one person. This is the foundation of Grice's theory, as outlined in his book "Logic and Conversation" (1975). Grice introduced the concept of the Cooperative Principle, defining it as "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" (Grice 1975: 45). This principle explains how language is used in daily conversations to communicate effectively. Grice recognized that people cooperate to achieve successful understanding in conversations, even during arguments.

Grice also proposed a set of rules that interlocutors follow to achieve cooperation in conversations, which he called "Maxims":

**Maxims of Quantity:** Speakers should provide enough information to allow listeners to understand what is being communicated, without giving too much or too little information.

**Maxim of Relevance:** Speakers should provide information that is relevant to the conversation and avoid providing irrelevant or off-topic information. This is considered one of the most important maxims for achieving cooperation.

**Maxim of Quality:** Speakers should be truthful and avoid providing false or unsupported information. They need to be sincere and tell the truth.



Maxim of Manner: Speakers should communicate clearly, concisely, and in an orderly manner, avoiding ambiguity, vagueness, and unnecessary complexity. However, interlocutors do not always follow Grice's maxims, either unintentionally or intentionally by flouting or violating them. Flouting the maxims occurs when the speaker makes it obvious to the listener that they are not adhering to the maxims. Violation, according to Grice (1975), happens when speakers intentionally do not apply certain maxims in their conversation to cause misunderstanding or achieve other purposes.

This study synthesizes Conversational Implicature as a higher order of Speech Act and investigates the conversation of the characters Elizabeth Bennet, Mr. Fitzwilliam Darcy, Caroline Bingley, and Charles Bingley in *Pride and Prejudice*, using Grice's maxims to analyze its implied meaning.

### **Analysis of quotations from 'Pride and Prejudice':**

This analysis provides an in-depth examination of selected quotations from the novel, utilizing Grice's maxims to understand conversational implicature.

1) *"How pleasant it is to spend an evening in this way! I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book! When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library."*

Miss Bingley's speech begins with an exclamatory sentence, constituting a performative speech act, followed by a representative speech act. She violates the maxim of quality by feigning interest in books to align herself with Darcy's interests. The lack of response from others flouts the maxim of quantity, indicating either awareness of Miss Bingley's dishonesty or a genuine absence of remark.

2) *"By the bye, Charles, are you really serious in meditating a dance at Netherfield? I would advise you, before you determine on it, to consult the wishes of the present party; I am much mistaken if there are not some among us to whom a ball would be rather a punishment than a pleasure."*

Miss Bingley's utterance starts with a directive speech act, questioning Mr. Bingley's intent to hold a ball at Netherfield, followed by a suggestion to consult the rest of the party. She concludes with a representative speech act, subtly insinuating Mr. Darcy's dislike for such events.



3) *"If you mean Darcy," cried her brother, "he may go to bed, if he chooses, before it begins-but as for the ball, it is quite a settled thing; and as soon as Nicholls has made white soup enough, I shall send round my cards."*

Mr. Bingley's speech begins with a representative speech act, suggesting Mr. Darcy can opt to go to bed if he doesn't want to attend the ball. The second part is a commissive speech act, affirming his commitment to host the ball.

4) *"I should like balls infinitely better," she replied, "if they were carried on in a different manner; but there is something insufferably tedious in the usual process of such a meeting. It would surely be much more rational if conversation instead of dancing were made the order of the day."*

This utterance is a representative speech act, expressing disdain for the typical organization of balls and advocating for a more conversational approach.

5) *"Much more rational, my dear Caroline, I dare say, but it would not be near so much like a ball."*

Mr. Bingley's reply is a representative speech act, asserting that if they adopted Miss Bingley's suggestion, it wouldn't resemble a ball.

6) *"Miss Eliza Bennet, let me persuade you to follow my example, and take a turn about the room. I assure you it is very refreshing after sitting so long in one attitude."*

This is a directive speech act, urging Miss Bennet to walk around the room. Miss Bingley is trying to capture Mr. Darcy's attention, which results in a perlocutionary effect on him. Despite the direct invitation, Mr. Darcy declines to join their party.

7) *"What could he mean? She was dying to know what could be his meaning?"-- and asked Elizabeth whether she could at all understand him?*

Miss Bingley's utterance is a representative speech act, expressing curiosity about Darcy's intentions. Her indirect expression implies uncertainty, followed by a directive speech act asking Elizabeth if she comprehends him.

8) *"Not at all," was her answer; "but depend upon it, he means to be severe on us, and our surest way of disappointing him will be to ask nothing about it."*

Elizabeth's utterance begins with a locutionary act, stating she does not understand Darcy's meaning. It continues with a representative speech act,



presuming Darcy's intention to criticize them, followed by a directive speech act suggesting they avoid asking further, displaying her wit.

10) *"Oh! shocking!" cried Miss Bingley. "I never heard anything so abominable. How shall we punish him for such a speech?"*

Miss Bingley's utterance begins with an expressive speech act, expressing shock. She then asserts her view, followed by a directive speech act asking how to punish Darcy.

11) *"Nothing so easy, if you have but the inclination," said Elizabeth. "We can all plague and punish one another. Tease him—laugh at him. Intimate as you are, you must know how it is to be done."*

Elizabeth's directive speech act suggests teasing Darcy, with a representative speech act implying Miss Bingley knows how due to their intimacy.

12) *"But upon my honour, I do not. I do assure you that my intimacy has not yet taught me that. Tease calmness of manner and presence of mind! No, no—feel he may defy us there. And as to laughter, we will not expose ourselves, if you please, by attempting to laugh without a subject. Mr. Darcy may hug himself."*

Miss Bingley's commissive speech act denies knowledge of teasing Darcy. She then asserts his composure, indicating resistance to mockery. The last part is a directive speech act, suggesting they avoid laughing without reason to prevent embarrassment.

13) *"Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at!" cried Elizabeth. "That is an uncommon advantage, and uncommon I hope it will continue, for it would be a great loss to me to have many such acquaintances. I dearly love a laugh."*

Elizabeth's expressive speech act disagrees with laughing at Darcy, asserting it is advantageous. She then asserts her love for laughter, indicative of her playful nature.

14) *"Miss Bingley," said he, "has given me more credit than can be. The wisest and the best of men—nay, the wisest and best of their actions—may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke."*

Mr. Darcy's representative speech act acknowledges that even wise actions can be ridiculed by those who prioritize humor.



15) *"Certainly," replied Elizabeth—"there are such people, but I hope I am not one of them. I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can. But these, I suppose, are precisely what you are without."*

Elizabeth's expressive speech act agrees with Darcy, asserting her preference not to mock wisdom. She then lists what amuses her, subtly suggesting Darcy lacks these qualities, flouting the maxim of quality.

17) *"Such as vanity and pride."*

Assertion, representative speech act, this utterance once again reveals Elizabeth's prejudice to Darcy, she is accusing him with arrogance and pridefulness.

18) *"Yes, vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride—where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will be always under good regulation."*

Assertion, representative speech act, Mr. Darcy agrees with Elizabeth acknowledging that vanity one of his weaknesses, showing self-awareness.

19) *"Your examination of Mr. Darcy is over; I presume," said Miss Bingley; "and pray what is the result?"*

Miss Bingley utterance's start with representative speech act, presuming that examination is over, and she asks Elizabeth what she concluded (directive speech act).

20) *"I am perfectly convinced by it that Mr. Darcy has no defect. He owns it himself without disguise."*

Elizabeth's representative speech act ironically suggests Darcy claims perfection, implying his arrogance, flouting the maxim of quality.

21) *"No," said Darcy, "I have made no such pretension. I have faults enough, but they are not, I hope, of understanding. My temper I dare not vouch for. It is, I believe, too little yielding—certainly too little for the convenience of the world. I cannot forget the follies and vices of others so soon as I ought, nor their offenses against myself. My feelings are not easily swayed. My temper would perhaps be called resentful. Once my good opinion is lost, it is lost forever."*

Darcy's representative speech act admits to his faults but asserts they are not intellectual. He describes his temper and resentment, indicating his uncompromising nature.

22) *"That is a failing indeed!" cried Elizabeth. "Implacable resentment is a shade in a character. But you have chosen your fault well. I really cannot laugh at it. You are safe from me."*

Elizabeth's representative speech act agrees resentment is a flaw but suggests Darcy's choice of fault is immune to mockery, though her tone is ironic.

23) *"There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil—a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome."*

Mr. Darcy's representative speech act suggests inherent flaws that cannot be overcome with education, indirectly referring to himself.

24) *"And your defect is to hate everybody."*

Elizabeth's representative speech act playfully teases Darcy, suggesting he hates everyone.

25) *"And yours," he replied with a smile, "is willfully to misunderstand them."*

Mr. Darcy's representative speech act playfully suggests Elizabeth deliberately misunderstands people. Elizabeth's previous utterance had a perlocutionary effect on Darcy, sparking intimacy between them.

## Conclusion

In Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," conversational implicature plays a significant role in shaping the interactions and relationships between characters. Through subtle hints, implications, and indirect speech, Austen masterfully conveys the underlying meanings and intentions behind characters' words, contributing to the rich complexity of the novel's social dynamics.

One of the central themes of "Pride and Prejudice" is the importance of communication and understanding in relationships. Austen demonstrates how misinterpretations and misunderstandings arise from failure to grasp conversational implicature, leading to conflict and tension between characters. For instance, Mr. Darcy's seemingly cold and aloof manner is often misunderstood by others due to his reserved nature, causing Elizabeth Bennet to form a negative opinion of him based on incomplete information.

Conversational implicature also serves as a tool for social commentary in Austen's work. By highlighting the nuances of communication in the Regency era, she exposes the hypocrisy, pretension, and social stratification of the time. Characters use implicature to navigate social norms and expectations, often masking their true feelings or intentions to conform to societal standards.

Moreover, Austen's use of conversational implicature adds depth to character development. Elizabeth Bennet's wit and intelligence shine through her ability to decipher underlying meanings in conversations, while Mr. Collins's obliviousness to implicature reveals his lack of social awareness.

In conclusion, conversational implicature in "Pride and Prejudice" serves as a subtle yet powerful tool that shapes the narrative, characters, and themes of the novel. Austen's keen insight into human behavior and social dynamics allows her to craft a story where what is left unsaid often speaks volumes, underscoring the importance of understanding beyond the surface of words. Through her exploration of conversational implicature, Austen invites readers to delve into the intricate world of Regency society and contemplate the complexities of human interaction and communication.

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