

A Study of Conversational Implicature in Lady Chatterley's Lover from the Perspective of Cooperative Principle

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Abstract: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is Lawrence's last important novel. Lawrence describes the rebellion and pursuit of the heroine Connie in marriage and love. Lawrence was good at using dialogue to describe round characters. The characters in the novel frequently violate some Cooperative Principle maxims, thus producing various conversational implicature which enrich their personalities. This article uses the Cooperative Principle (CP) to analyze the typical dialogue in the novel that violates the CP. And it's hoped that the CP approach to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in this article may help readers understand the theme, plot and several main characters' personalities better and also provide some enlightenment for the practicality of the pragmatic approach in the interpretation of prose novels. This article adopts the literature research method, through the related literature review, analyzing the protagonist's implication from the perspective of Cooperative Principle; through the text analysis method, this article carries on the analysis to the protagonist's dialogues which violate the Cooperative Principle, analyzing the implied meanings; also by using the CP and the dialogues to connect the real life, it will help readers to further grasp the protagonist's intention.

Keywords: *D.H.Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover, Violation of Maxims, Cooperative Principle*

1. Introduction

1.1. The Aims of This Article

Dialogue is the most important part of a novel. In David Herbert Lawrence's work, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the characters always violate the CP maxims, conveying the meaning which is irrelevant to the literal meaning. The reason why the author does not arrange the dialogues in accordance with the Cooperative Principle is to convey some implied meaning. These dialogues are full of research value.

This paper attempts to analyze the dialogue of the characters in Lawrence's work *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from the perspective of pragmatics, based on Grice's Cooperative Principle, and to analyze the emergence of conversational implicature that violates the Cooperative Principle.

It aims to explore the subtext of the conversation participants' violation of CP. That is, what the participants' real intentions are; how these conversational meanings are generated; and the deep meaning behind the dialogue of the characters.

By applying the violation of the four maxims under the Cooperative Principle in the dialogue with the content of the dialogue between characters in the novel, it can be understood Lawrence's clever arrangement in the language of the dialogue between characters in the novel can help the readers get more comprehensive understandings of the novel.

In addition, after the in-depth analysis of the dialogue between characters in the novel and the psychological description of the characters in the novel, we can see the characters' characteristics more comprehensively and understand the theme that Lawrence wants to express more clearly.

Moreover, it can also prove the validity and usability of applying the CP to literary works.

1.2. A Brief Introduction to D.H.Lawrence

Lawrence was an English novelist, poet, dramatist, and painter. He regarded the genera of novel as the highest form of human expression of thoughts and feelings. He had the courage to challenge social

conventions and revealed the instinctive power of human nature in his works. In 20th century English literature, Lawrence was a controversial figure both before and after his death. His works were unusual and extremely sincere. He touched on people's vanity and the shortcomings of modern western civilization. As a result, he was besieged by his defenders and branded as a "dirty writer". His works were also banned and destroyed, so he wandered the world and eventually died in a foreign country. But it was only 30 years after his death that his name established a high place in the history of English and even the world literature. Someone considered Lawrence an "anti-feminist", but it was not true: he agreed with the female literary tradition, and sought out the female literary advice and response. Also, he encouraged women to write.

Speaking of Lawrence's dream, Lawrence was born in the late 19th century. At that time, the capitalist machine industry was booming and dominating the world. Based on this, the capitalist relations of production are not equal. From his broad and forward-looking cosmopolitanism perspective, Lawrence proposed his dream of salvation: to get away from the noise of machines and the cage of machines, to get close to nature, to return to the true nature, and to establish a harmonious relationship between men and women.

Foreign studies on Lawrence started earlier than home, especially in Britain and the United States. Lawrence has become a specialized subject in the West, which has received unprecedented attention.

Lawrence was one of the earliest foreign writers introduced to China. However, compared with the study of Lawrence abroad, the study of Lawrence in China started late, achieved little, and the study of various works was not balanced.

1.3. The Structure of This Article

This article consists of five parts, and each part is listed respectively as follows:

Chapter One is an introduction to the article, including the aims of this article, a brief introduction to D. H. Lawrence, and the structure of this article.

Chapter Two is the literature review. This part overviews studies on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from different perspectives. A brief review of studies on the Cooperative Principle and conversational implicature at home and abroad are also included.

Chapter Three comes to the theoretical framework part, which includes three sections: theory of Cooperative Principle(CP), the violation of Cooperative Principle, and conversational implicature.

Chapter Four is the analysis of conversational implicature in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from the perspective of Cooperative Principle. This part mainly studies the dialogues among the characters selected from *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by using the CP and conversational implicature. The characters' personalities are exposed according to the detailed explanation.

Chapter Five makes a conclusion of the whole study, the limitation of this article, and suggestions for further study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Previous Studies about Cooperative Principle

Grice's Conversational Implicature theory completes the transition from meaning to meaning and realizes the breakthrough of pragmatics. It has been widely recognized and highly praised in linguistics, and has been seriously studied by many people in the field of linguistics. Pragmatics mainly studies the language in use. An important application of pragmatics is the study of literature. The notion of conversational implicature was first proposed by Grice in 1967 in Harvard University and it has been widely used.

However, people often violate the maxim of the CP and therefore produce conversational implicature. What the speakers really mean is different from what the speakers said. But this theory is also considered controversial. Harnish (1976) said that Grice just analyses his CP in conversations where his CP is effective.

The cooperative principle is one of the important contents of pragmatic scholars' research, and it has aroused widespread interest in China. The research field can be divided into three categories: translation

theory research, theoretical research, and applied research. Chinese scholars such as Professor Hu Zhuanglin, Professor Xu Shenghuan, Professor Zhou Liquan, Professor Suo Zhenyu, Professor Qian Guanlian, etc. have different views on the CP.

2.2. Studies about *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

The researches on this book are mainly carried out from the following aspects: the perspectives of social criticism of dehumanization, the psychological analysis of sexual impulse, the female images and eco-feminism, the Oedipus Complex, and so on (Meyers 1987).

In all of Lawrence's works, the most sensational work is *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The novel was welcomed by readers as soon as it was published. But after its publication, the novel aroused great controversy and was banned in many countries. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a novel that deals with both social class antagonism and sexual relations. The plot of the book is very simple: Connie was married to Clifford during the war, but as soon as the honeymoon was over, Clifford went to war. Six months later, Clifford returned home paralyzed from the waist down and became impotent. Connie, full of sexual depression, gradually deteriorated under Clifford's suggestion that Connie should have an affair and then make a baby. Then she met Mellors, the gamekeeper, and they fell in love. But Clifford did not agree to Connie's request for divorce. So Connie and Mellors decided to elope and live a new life that they had never lived before.

Although the story is a little cliched, this is not a simple affair of vulgar novels. As always, the novel reveals Lawrence's deep concern for sexual relations, and it also reveals from a macro perspective the social status quo of Britain after the First World War and the mechanical distortion of human nature caused by industrial civilization. The love story between Connie and Mellors in the book is still fresh. It has significance for us to build a harmonious relationship between the sexes and pursue pure love in today's reinforced concrete society.

Many researchers have studied the novel from the perspectives of aesthetics, sexuality, literary criticism, and ethics, but few have studied it from the perspective of pragmatics.

This article attempts to analyze the dialogue of the characters in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from the perspective of pragmatics, based on Grice's Cooperative Principle. And it will contribute the research field of D.H. Lawrence and his work, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, especially from the perspective of pragmatics.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Theory of Cooperative Principle (CP)

The Cooperative Principle (CP) refers to "making 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 (Levinson 2001)."

The CP includes four maxims: the maxim of quality, quantity, relation, and manner. The Cooperative Principle and its component maxims ensure that in a conversation exchange, the right amount of information is provided and the interaction is conducted in a truthful, relevant, and perspicuous manner (Huang 2009).

The maxim of Quality involves two requirements. Firstly, do not say things which you already know are wrong. Secondly, do not use evidence that lacks enough details.

The maxim of Quantity includes two requirements. Firstly, your speech should be informative. Secondly, your speech should not be more informative than what is required.

The maxim of Relation needs what you said to be relevant.

And the maxim of Manner needs what you said to be perspicuous. That is, your contribution should avoid obscurity and ambiguity. Also, you need to be brief and orderly in your contribution (Grice 1975).

3.2. The Violation of Cooperative Principle (CP)

The Violation of the CP in verbal communication is conducive to expressing the communicator's intention and promoting tacit communication. If everyone blindly adheres to the CP, language will

become dull, uninteresting, and less energetic. The violation of the CP, that is, pragmatic communicative expression is an indispensable part of every language and has great significance in language communication.

3.3. *Conversational Implicature*

Conversational implicature is an important concept in pragmatics. In daily communication, the CP is regarded as the ideal principle that people follow in order to communicate smoothly. However, people violate the CP for different purposes when they talk. And they do not say something in a clear, true, and relevant way. Thus, conversational implicature arises. That is, when the speaker violates any of the CP maxims, the hearer must reason from the literal meaning of the utterance in order to understand the real intention of the speaker. Grice also proposed four features of conversational implicature. They are calculability, cancellability, non-detachability, and non-conventionality.

4. The Analysis of Conversational Implicature in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from the Perspective of Cooperative Principle

4.1. *The Violation of the Maxim of Quality*

4.1.1. *Providing Untrue Information*

Example 1

"I hope, Connie, you won't let circumstances force you into being a demi-vierge."

A demi-vierge means that a girl or woman behaves in a sexually provocative and permissive way without yielding her virginity. But Connie isn't a virgin anymore. She already has lovers when she was young, and her father and Clifford know that. What her father really means is that Clifford is impotent during the war, and he doesn't want Connie to be unhappy with this fact. And he wants Connie to have a normal life. Connie's father doesn't like Clifford and he implies Connie to find her love and happy life. By speaking of this, her father humiliates Clifford. And this is what implied meaning conveys to us.

Example 2

"But you trust me, don't you?" she said.

"Oh, absolutely!"

Connie plans to leave Clifford and live a happy life with Mellors. But Mellors worries a lot about their future. He doesn't have money, and Connie is from the upper class and a wealthy family. He is not sure about their future, because everything seems impossible for a gamekeeper and a wealthy lady to be together. He doesn't trust Connie fully, but he said, "absolutely," for making Connie feel better. But also conveys his uncertainty to Connie. And Connie notices his mockery, but she knows that the things between them are always difficult. She can understand Mellors.

Example 3

"Would you really like me to have a child one day?"

"I shouldn't mind, if it made no difference between us," he said. He still thought that the ability to have sex might come back to him.

In this conversation, Clifford obviously violates the maxim of quality by telling lies. Everyone knows that he was impotent during the war, but he still says that he might have a child of his own. He wants a child whether it's his or not, but he cannot just say it out loud because he needs his pride. He also afraid that Connie will leave him after having affairs with others, so he indoctrinates her with false ideas which he might be fecund again. Connie is shocked and confused after hearing this. But she learns how to tell others what Clifford just told her if she is pregnant.

Example 4

"Why don't you speak ordinary English?"

"Me! Ah thowt it wor ordinary."

When Connie asks Mellors why he doesn't speak standard English, Mellors lies about that. Although he is relatively well-educated and that is the reason why he can speak standard English, he tries to isolate

himself from Connie in the way of speaking vernacular. He tries to express his indifferent attitude of being neither supercilious nor obsequious in this way, which makes Connie very angry. Connie feels that she is humiliated by Mellors. Connie is different from other people who are of high social status. She believes that people are equal in spite of which social class they are in.

Example 5

“It’s a poor little tea, though,” said Mrs. Flint.

“It’s much nicer than at home,” said Connie.

In this conversation, both speakers tell lies for being polite and humble. Mrs. Flint’s tea couldn’t be low quality because she’s family is rich and she really likes tea. She will not drink bad tea everyday. The truth is that she is waiting for Connie’s compliment. It is humble bragging, in which people exhibit false modesty, pretending to downplay her accomplishment while sully bragging about them at the same time. And Connie’s tea should be better than Mrs. Flint’s because Connie is wealthier than Mrs. Flint, and her tea should be better. By saying this, Connie makes Mrs. Flint happy. This dialogue is highly adopted in people’s daily communication. This is more like a kind of social etiquette. Both speakers feel great when they speak like this.

Example 6

Connie said, “Love can be wonderful: when you feel you live, and are in the very middle of creation.”

“I suppose every mosquito feels the same,” said Hilda.

In this conversation, Connie tells about her feeling about love with Mellors to Hilda. She feels alive in this relationship. She feels great because of her love. But Hilda hates Mellors for he is just a gamekeeper and she is mad at Connie for loving him. After Connie said her part, Hilda replied contemptuously by saying every mosquito feel alive and in the middle of creation. Hilda shows her angry and dissatisfaction towards Connie and Mellors. Also, Hilda holds a different concept of relationships from Connie. She thinks that women can totally live without men and love is not the necessities to people.

4.1.2. Metaphor

Example 7

“Looks to me like a gold-digger,” he said. “And you’re a pretty easy gold-mine, apparently.”

Connie’s father is shocked because of the fact that Connie loves a gamekeeper. Connie is wealthy but Mellors apparently has nothing in material. Her father compared Mellors as a gold-digger and Connie’s gold-mine. That’s a vivid and proper description of such a relationship. A gold-mine is full of gold just like Connie who has money and social status. A gold-digger is someone who gets the benefit from the gold-mine, and that is reasonable for others to see a poor man like Mellors fall in love with a wealthy woman like Connie. But the aspect of finance is the last thing Mellors will consider about. He hates inequality, especially the inequality raised from money, social class, or other factors. That’s the reason why he can not be together with Connie for her wealth. Being called a gold digger is an insult to him. And Connie herself knows clearly about it. She is an intelligent woman who will know immediately if others love her just because of her wealth.

Example 8

“We are a couple of battered warriors,” said Connie.

Mellors laughed.

Both Connie and Mellors have had an unsuccessful marriage. Connie’s husband, Clifford, is impotent and disabled. Although he is wealthy and intelligent, he can not make Connie happy. He is more like a wounded pet who needs Connie to take care of, and he is not the one who can take care of Connie both physically and mentally. Mellors’ wife is fierce and cruel. She is not even a decent person. She always quarrels or even fight with Mellors. And she tells others the untrue stories about their marriage. So Connie compares them as “battered warriors”. They’ve been hurt during the wars (their marriages), but they became together to fight against the difficulties.

4.2. The Violation the Maxim of Quantity

4.2.1. Providing Less Information

Example 9

“I want to stay near here tonight. Not here: near here!” said Connie.

Hilda prepares the whole voyage, and she chats with Connie. Then Connie wants to express that she wants to spend the last night with Mellors before they leaving because she loves him so much and she must meet him before she leaves. But she is shy and embarrassed about telling the truth directly. She knows that Hilda holds the different opinion on the relationship. In order to lessen the awkwardness, Connie provides less information. It is a common reaction when people have to tell the truth but they are not willing to tell that truth.

Example 10

“And do you really think,” she said, “it's worth the risk.”

“Is what worth what risk?”

“This escapade with my sister.”

Hilda is not proud of the love affair between Connie and Mellors. She looks down upon Mellors and the affair between him and Connie. So she asks Mellors in a veiled way instead of just asking him whether he thinks being together with Connie is worth the risk or not. Although she does not like Mellors, she loves her sister Connie and she need to ask Mellors to see what the kind of people Mellors is. In this dialogue, Hilda gives Mellors inadequate information and violates the maxim of quantity.

4.2.2. Providing More Information

Example 11

“It would be more natural if you spoke to us in normal English, not in vernacular.”

“Would it? ... would anything else be natural?”

In this conversation, Mellors fights back by providing more information. The reasons are as follows:

Firstly, he could have just used normal English, but he chooses to ask Hilda many questions to stand up for his dignity. He will not obey what Hilda wants him to do. Secondly, he is expressing his dissatisfaction by saying that. He is angry because Connie's families consider him as an animal but not a human with flesh and bones. So he uses this opportunity to fight back.

Example 12

“I'm sorry we can't have a son,” she said.

“It would almost be a good thing if you had a child by another man. If we brought it up at Wragby, ... Don't you think it's worth considering?”

In this conversation, Clifford explains too much to convince Connie. He wants to convince her to have a baby, even it is not his. He explains so many details to make Connie believe it is a normal thing for her to find another man to have a baby, but this affair will never bring a bad influence to their relationship. When people want to convince others, they tend to give more information so that they can get what they want.

4.3. The Violation of the Maxim of Relation

Example 13

“Here is the address of a good manservant...”

“... I will not have a manservant,” said Clifford.

“And here are the addresses of two women...” Hilda kept talk.

Hilda talks to Clifford, who is unwilling to let Connie leave their house and recover from the bad physical situation. Clifford said he doesn't want a manservant. All he wants is his gentle and considerate wife to take care of him, even at the expense of his wife's physical condition. but Hilda just ignored him, because she loves her sister and she will not turn a deaf ear to Connie's condition. So she keeps saying

details about the female servant. She will never leave Connie who's in bad condition and let her continue to take care of Clifford.

Example 14

"Where did you go?" Clifford asked.

"Right across the wood! Look, aren't the little daffodils adorable? To think they should come out of the earth!"

Connie meets Mellors in the wood, but when she is asked where has she been, she sidetracks the topic and talks about daffodils. She changes the topic because that she does not want others to know about her affair with Mellors, but she is not the person who is good at telling lies. That is the normal subconscious reaction when people are asked a question which they don't want others to know. If someone suddenly changes the topic, it can be easily found out he wants to hide something.

Example 15

"It makes you very dead, really." she said.

"There speaks my evangelical little wife." he said.

Clifford wants Connie to obey him by taking good care of him, following his orders, doing what he wants her to do, and so on. Every time when Connie says something which does not support him, he will call her evangelical little wife. But Connie is not a religious person. And it is irrelevant to what Connie just said. What Clifford says violates the maxim of manner. He does this because he looks down upon Connie. This is a humiliating reaction.

Example 16

"If you'd been in her own class."

"Or if I'd been in a cage at the Zoo."

Connie's families don't agree with the love between Connie and Mellors. The prominent problem is that Mellors is a gamekeeper. That's why they said, "If you'd been in her own class." But Mellors knows that they just consider him a monkey in the zoo, just because he's a gamekeeper from a lower class. He said the irrelevant sentence to defend his own dignity.

4.4. The Violation of the Maxim of Manner

Example 17

The dialogue is the same as Example 4.

The conversation mentioned in Example 4 also shows the phenomenon of violating the maxim of manner. Mellors always speaks dialect instead of normal English to defend his dignity in his own way. But it will irritate others, especially Connie, who treats Mellors equally without considering class and other factors. But it is important for Mellors to do this: firstly, he does not speak standard English deliberately because he wants to convey the idea that he is a gamekeeper and he will do whatever a gamekeeper need to do; secondly, he does not want others to know that he is well-educated and he could have had a better job and life; thirdly, he is tired of the relationship and is not willing to find any romantic encounter, so he speaks in dialect and cuts off any chance of Connie falling in love with him.

5. Conclusion

This article attaches great importance to the conversation in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In this novel, characters are deliberately violating the Cooperative Principle in conversation. It is helpful to have a practical understanding of the theory of the CP, by combining CP with dialogue analysis. From the detailed analysis of the conversation, the findings are summarized as follows:

To begin with, speaking of Mellors, the gamekeeper, he always violates the maxim of quality, relation, and manner. Although he's from a lower class, he's full of wit and humor. He always fights back with words if anyone offends him. In addition, Connie often violates the maxim of quantity and relation, because she wants to hide the truth which is the affection between Mellors and herself. Moreover, Hilda often violates the maxim of relation. She's an independent smart woman who always does things in her own way.

Though this article tries to study Lady Chatterley's Lover from a relatively new perspective, there's still room for improvement:

Firstly, the analysis of this article is not profound due to the author's limited knowledge. Secondly, due to space constraints, the paper can not completely analyze all the dialogues which violate the Cooperative Principle in Lady Chatterley's Lover, but only extract some typical examples to illustrate.

The more literary value of this novel needs to be further studied.

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