A Pragmatic Reading of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

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ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to utilize pragmatics in the analysis of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* by using the "cooperative principle" and the "maxims" as developed by Paul Grice, and "speech acts theory" as clarified by J. L. Austin. The investigation has shown that by drawing upon such language analysis strategies, greater light can be shed on the meaning of the play, especially because it is one of Shakespeare's plays most amenable to pragmatic analysis. Furthermore, it has been found that this kind of analysis invites a special role for the reader to participate more creatively in the interpretation of the text besides providing an in-depth analysis to the play's scenes and speeches and highlighting certain aspects that may otherwise be overlooked. A pragmatic reading of the play enables us to understand the social function of language and consequently the relationships among the characters and their social status.

Keywords: Pragmatic, Shakespear, Rome and Juliet.

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is a systematic way of explaining language use in context. It seeks to identify aspects of meaning which cannot be found in the plain sense of words or structures, as explained by semantics. As semantics is concerned with the study of what is said directly by means of word, i.e. coded messages, pragmatics is concerned with the study of what is implied, i.e., non-coded or hidden messages. Its roots lie in the works of J. L. Austin (1975) and J. R. Searle (1969) on speech acts theory and Paul Grice (1989) on conversational implicature and the cooperative principle, on the work of Stephen C. Levinson (1983) on pragmatics, and on Penelope Brown and Geoffrey Leech (1987) on politeness, all of which will be drawn upon in the ensuing discussion. According to Leech and Short (1981), "The pragmatic analysis of language can be broadly understood to be the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions, but from the way in which utterances are used and the way they relate to the context in which they are uttered" (290). Most linguists include the following main categories under

pragmatics: speech acts theory, felicity conditions, conversational implicature, the cooperative principle, and politeness. It is these aspects that will be drawn upon for our interpretation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* from a pragmatic viewpoint. Accordingly, the characters' speeches and actions and numerous verbal strategies throughout the play will be investigated through a pragmatic reading of the play.

Speech acts theory is based on Austin's distinction between constative and performative verbs/actions. In Austin's definition, performative refers to some kind of action deemed to have been performed by saying something. In contrast, the constative refers to meaning which is viewed in terms of being true or false. The illocutionary act is the performative where one uses an utterance to perform a speech act. An illocutionary act has an effect on the hearer; Austin calls this effect the perlocutionary act. According to speech acts theory, when speakers utter sentences, they also perform acts of various kinds: declarative, commissive, expressive, directive, etc. These forms indicate not only the performance of an action but also the nature of the relations between the speaker and the addressee and their social status.

John Searle (1969) classified speech acts into 5 categories: (1): directives (the speaker wants the listener to do something, that is, illocutionary acts designed to get the addressee to do something); (2):comissives (the speaker indicates himself/herself will do something, that

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is, illocutionary acts that commit the speaker to do something); (3): expressives (the speaker expresses his/her feelings or emotional response, that is, illocutionary acts that express the speaker's psychological attitude toward the state of affairs); (4): representatives (the speaker expresses his/her belief about the truth of a proposition, that is, illocutionary acts that undertake to represent a stat of affairs); and (5):declaratives (the utterance results in a change in the external non-linguistic situation, that is, illocutionary acts that bring about the state of affairs they refer to). For a speech act to achieve its illocutionary force or purpose, certain conditions must be met. These conditions have been called felicity or appropriateness conditions which were first introduced by J. L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Word*s (1962) and were developed later by J.R. Searle (1969). Accordingly, performatives are illocutionary acts in which saying becomes doing when the necessary conditions are fulfilled.

According to Paul Grice (1989), when people engage in conversation, they implicitly agree to cooperate conversationally towards mutual ends. In other words, they enter into what he calls the cooperative principle which comprises, in his opinion, four principles or rules which he calls maxims, to which other maxims such as "politeness" may be added (1989: 22-57). The four rules or maxims comprising the cooperative principle are: the maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner. While quality requires the speaker to be truthful, quantity expects him/her to be as informative as required. And whereas relevance demands that speaker's contribution should be relevant for the purpose of the exchange, manner requires that speaker's contribution should be clear, avoiding obscurity and ambiguity. "Flouting" or "violating" these maxims can result in communicating particular non-literal meanings that are not directly stated in the words of speakers but are indirectly inferred or implicated; hence, the concept "implicature".

Grice's theory of implicature is among the most important and influential contributions to contemporary pragmatics. Grice uses the term to refer to what the speaker means or implies rather than what he literally says. For Grice, meaning is a derivative function of what speakers mean in a certain context rather than the universal conventional meaning that predetermines what that word means in any context or situation. Grice suggests that an implied meaning can be signaled either conventionally by encoding it in the language or

conversationally by inferring it from the conversational situation. The conversational implicature is a message that is not explicitly stated within the utterance; the speaker implies it. Grice proposed that the hearer is able to infer the intended message because he understands the usual linguistic meaning of what is said, the shared contextual information and the assumption that the speaker is obeying the cooperative principle.

The politeness maxim which Grice chose not to elaborate involves two types of politeness: "negative" and "positive" politeness. Perhaps the best known account of linguistic politeness is provided by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1887). Arguing that politeness is a universal phenomenon, they maintain that everyone has what they call face needs or one's public self-image. Drawing mainly upon their account of this maxim, Holmes (1995) provides this broad definition of linguistic politeness: "Politeness involves showing concern for two different kinds of face needs: first, negative face needs or the need not to be imposed upon; and secondly, positive face needs, the need to be liked and admired" (5). While the first kind of face needs requires that one's actions should be unimpeded by others, the second kind expects one's actions to be desirable to other people.

Though Grice's maxims are primarily concerned with spoken rather than written texts, his maxims can have important applications in literary interpretation particularly in the analysis of drama texts which, after all, consist of conversational exchanges between the characters. As the linguistic aspect of pragmatics is concerned with the study of spoken language in a real conversation, literary pragmatics, by analogy, considers literary texts as communicative acts ruled by communicative strategies between texts, authors, characters, and readers. In literature, all deviations from the normal usage of words are essential for the tasks set out by the author.

Pragmatics has provided new insights into our understanding of literature and covers areas that semantics has hitherto overlooked. Speech acts analysis is relevant to the interpretation of literary dialogue just as it is essential for our understanding of ordinary conversation. In our reading of any literary work, we need to perform this kind of analysis in order to understand what is going on in that work. The intended meaning of an utterance is of great importance in pragmatic analysis especially in the analysis of speech acts and implicatures. As it is difficult to arrive at the

intended meaning, it is appropriate to distinguish between the authorial intention and the characters' or the narrator's intentions in the pragmatic analysis of literary texts, where we can analyze these intentions from the contexts available from or suggested by the text. When we read the characters' dialogue, it is more likely that we read into their language much more than it appears to state or mean directly. The extra meaning we infer is what is called implicature.

Review of Related Literature

Grice's views have had a direct bearing on literary theory and can help answer many crucial questions in literary criticism. Michael Hancher's (1978) paper entitled "Grice's 'Implicature' and Literary Interpretation: Background and Preface" serves as a good introduction to Grice with regard to implicature and literary interpretation. In his preliminary remarks, Hancher observes: "Two aspects of Grice's work are particularly relevant to literary interpretation: his theory of nonnatural meaning, and his theory of conversational implicature" (online article, 1996).

Many studies, such as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), have dealt with implicature in conversation but did not address its use in literary texts. However, this study is related to the analysis of the characters' speeches because of the close connection between real life conversation and dramatic dialogue ass we shall see in the discussion of the play concerned. Traugott and Pratt (1980) surveyed speech acts theory, including the cooperative principle and dealt with various forms of fictional discourse, and discussed certain ways of applying pragmatics to the analysis of written discourse. However, they did not treat the subject in a detailed manner as their work was meant primarily for beginners. Nevertheless, it provides a useful model for pragmatic analysis that will be useful for the discussion *of Romeo and Juliet*. Leech and Short (1981: 288-316) includes a chapter on pragmatic analysis as part of the authors' general aim to demonstrate how linguistics can contribute directly to literary interpretation. Although their interpretation is geared mainly to stylistic purposes, their discussion of various subjects such as speech acts, felicity conditions, Grice's maxims and conversational implicature in a variety of prose texts offers a good model of pragmatic analysis that will be utilized in the analysis of the selected play. Many other good woks on pragmatics such as Levinson (1983) do not deal with the relationship between pragmatics and literary criticism.

The idea of applying Grice's maxims to literary texts had been done in Dijk's *Pragmatics and Poetics* (1976), and in Pratt's *Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (1977). Dijk states that in literary communication all Grice's maxims are violated; the speaker "opts out" from the contextual principles of ordinary conversation and consequently the "cooperative principle" does not hold (1976:46-54). Pratt (1977:173-74) also notes the conspicuous difference in communication on the level of author-reader. She states that what counts as a lie, a clash, an opting out, or an unintentional failure on the part of a fictional speaker (or writer) counts as flouting on the part of the real-world author. Thus, this violation or flouting of the cooperative principle in the characters' language will be focused upon in our examination of the way language is used in this play. This applies not only to the principal characters such as the hero and the heroine but also to the secondary characters such as Juliet's father and mother, the Nurse as well as other minor characters including Romeo's friends, the Friar and even the servants and the guards.

In her article "Pragmatic Aspects of Literary Communication" Karpenko (1993) takes a different direction. Contrary to Dijk and Pratt, Karpenko maintains that "an author never opts out" (4). She argues that though the maxims "are violated in literary texts by definition: they can be full of reasonings and descriptions which are not directly connected with the plot and may be regarded as irrelevant or uninformative…, they may appear significant and relevant with respect to the general message of the author" (3-4). She adds that "the only reasonable way to treat this contradiction is first to take into consideration the presupposition which is implicit in every published literary text, namely, that the author wants to communicate" (4). Similarly, Sell (2000) argues that Grice's cooperative principle can be useful for literary interpretation. As speakers might flout a maxim for the sake of making a conversational implicature, so authors might adopt the same strategy when dealing with real readers (Sell, 2000, 58). In fact, Sell views the literary text as performing a speech act where the cooperative principle is invariably in operation. As we shall see later, Shakespeare's play is no exception to this way of viewing literary texts.

The Gricean maxims and the cooperative principle have been used by Mona Baker (1992: 217-270) to discuss the important role of pragmatics in interpreting texts for the purpose of translation. Nevertheless, her

chapter serves as a good introduction to pragmatics for students of literary criticism as well for it reveals how pragmatic analysis can be used to unravel the hidden meaning of texts, literary or otherwise. In fact, her discussion of Grice's maxims and the effective impact of their flouting on the interpreter serve a useful purpose in analyzing the play's language especially the use of pun for which *Remo and Juliet* is well known. More recently, Davies (2000) also concentrates on the misinterpretations of the cooperative principle but without exploring its implications in literary criticism.

Though *Romeo and Juliet*, like all Shakespeare's plays, has been dealt with from different traditional critical perspectives by a wide range of critics and scholars, few studies have dealt with it from a pragmatic viewpoint. One of these studies is that of Mick Short (1996: 214-216) in which he discusses the social conflict between Juliet and her parents by drawing upon the theory of politeness as put forward by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). However, his discussion of the politeness/impoliteness strategies adopted by Juliet's parents does not cover all the relevant points pertaining to this issue. Another study of the play from a pragmatic viewpoint has been carried out by Rahmani (2008). In her M. A. thesis Rahmani covers only the flouting of Grice's maxims as applied to some selected examples from the "Romeo and Juliet" movie. A more comprehensive examination of such issues is what this paper will try to do.

Discussion

In the following discussion, I shall analyze the applicability of pragmatics to the study of *Rome and Juliet*. As the play is mainly concerned with interpersonal relationships, the relationship between the individual and society as well as parent-child relationship and social status on various levels, it can encourage a pragmatic approach. Following Grice's argument as already indicated in the aforementioned review, the success of a conversation depends on the speakers' attitudes to the verbal interaction. One of the most basic assumptions we must make for successful communication is that people engaged in conversation are cooperating, or, in other words, they observe the maxims. The maxims are flouted if the speaker breaks one or more of the maxims in ordinary conversation or when using the utterance in the form of a rhetorical strategy including tautology, metaphor, overstatement, understatement, rhetorical

question and irony.

Right from the beginning, we notice that the cooperative principle is holding. The use of the Prologue to give a short outline of the story indicates the author's desire to win the trust of the audience, telling them that both the author and the audience are brought together by a joint aim to cooperate in this dramatic performance. The audience therefore watches the play with the expectation that it must fulfill the terms provided in the Prologue. Obviously, this situation is akin to what we find in ordinary conversation where speaker and listener are engaged in mutual agreement to cooperate. However, there are many situations in the play where the cooperative principle is not maintained and where figurative language is used.

In order to be able to make use of Grice's maxims, the cooperative principle and speech acts theory and to apply them to *Romeo and Juliet*, we need to distinguish between two levels of language use: the conversational level that applies to the individual characters and their speeches, and the literary level that applies to the author. As far as the author is concerned, Shakespeare fulfills the requirements of the maxims and the cooperative principle. As indicated in the prologue's speech, the author is truthful, economical, relevant and clear in his use of language. As far as the characters are concerned, they engage in dialogue that is very close to ordinary language exchanges and to which pragmatics can be applied even though they sometimes use literary style that can hardly be called conversational.

In the first scene of the play, the servants of the Montague and the Capulet families open the play with a brawl that eventually draws in the heads of the two households, the officials of the city of Verona, including Prince Escalus. The servants exchange punning remarks about conquering the men and women of the opposite side and use offensive language and threats that eventually lead to a fight. Characters violate the maxims for various reasons as required by the context. They use abusive language with the deliberate intention to bring forth the maximum offensive verbal exchange. They are intent not on cooperation but on insult and offence. In other words, there is a total violation of the maxims, politeness included.

When Prince Escalus orders the combatants to stop fighting on penalty of punishment and proclaims a death sentence upon anyone who disturbs the peace again, he is in a position to give these orders and inflict due

punishment on the transgressors. Using the voice of authority, the Prince speaks in a threatening but truthful manner. "If ever you disturb our streets again, / Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace"((I, i, 89-90). From a pragmatic viewpoint, the Prince can use speech acts involving orders and threats that are heeded or implemented only because the necessary felicity/appropriateness conditions are met. His words also conform to the maxims as they are truthful, relevant, concise and clear.

Speaking under different circumstances, and in a different context, Montague and Benvolio seem to be observing the cooperative principle when discussing Romeo's problems. Throughout the dialogue, every one of the speakers is trying all he can to deal with the subject of Rome's melancholy without hiding any necessary information and while being clear, brief and speaking to the point. On the other hand, we notice how Romeo breaks the maxims when he resorts to rhetorical language in a good number of his speeches. For example, he describes his state of mind through a series of oxymorons - setting contradictory words together - blending the joys of love with the emotional desolation of unrequited love (I, i, 169-174). Indeed, the whole of Romeo's speech with its list of conflicting opposites reflects his passionate love and his confusion of mind. And describing the woman he loves to Benvolio, Romeo uses overstatements about Rosaline's beauty, thus giving more information than is required to emphasize his passion, but in this way violating the quantity maxim. Additionally, when Romeo tells Mercutio "I have a soul of lead" (I, iv, 15) he is using an exaggerated statement that conveys something different from the literal meaning to emphasize his strong and committed love. In uttering this overstatement as well as many others, Romeo is also flouting the maxims of quality and quantity.

In certain scenes of the play, we can also notice how the additional maxim of politeness holds. For example, in the first meeting between Capulet and Paris, we notice the presence of positive politeness. Praising Capulet before he asks him for Juliet's hand in marriage, Paris says:" But now, my lord, what say you to my suit?" (I, ii, 6). Here, Paris shows respect and treats Capulet as his superior by addressing him "my lord". Capulet also shows respect not only for the suitor but also for Juliet when he asks Paris to wait until he gets her approval, thus appearing to be taking her interests, or face needs, into consideration. Capulet is initially reluctant to give his consent to Paris's proposal of marriage but says he agrees to the match if Paris can gain Juliet's consent. He further invites him to the party he is holding that very night, so that Paris may begin to woo Juliet and might win her heart. In this scene, Capulet appears to be a kind-hearted and polite man. He also leaves it to Juliet to choose the man she wants even though the power to force her into marriage is still implicit. On the other hand, it may be said that neither Rome nor Benvolio seems to observe the principle of politeness, as they decide to go to the party without invitation. However, their behavior may be excused because Peter's illiteracy leads him to unwittingly invite them to the party.

Similarly, in the meeting between Lady Capulet and her daughter, we see how the mother tries to observe the maxim of politeness and the necessary conditions of a normal conversation when she takes her cue from the Nurse's last words to initiate the conversation about marriage, as we notice in this exchange:

> Lady Capulet: Marry, that "marry" is the very theme
> I came to talk of. Tell me, daughter Juliet,
> How stands your disposition to be married? (I, iii, 56-58)

In her dealing with Juliet, Lady Capulet seems distant, reserved and polite. Juliet's reply is also polite and cooperative. Juliet declines the proposal in a polite manner by using indirect answers (hedging): "It is an honor that I dream not of" (I, iii, 60) or by being evasive; "I'll look to like, if looking liking move" (I, iii, 91). When Lady Capulet asks Juliet about her feelings regarding the marriage proposal, Juliet reacts with dutiful reserve. Taken as whole, the way the conversation develops shows the power of parental influence evidenced by Lady Capulet's attempt to put pressure on her daughter before she has begun to think about marriage.

On the other hand, the Nurse's behavior shows a clear violation of the maxims. Throughout the conversation, the Nurse indulges in her bawdy language. The Nurse's lack of reserve shows her familiarity with both mother and daughter. When Lady Capulet asks Juliet to stay so that she may add her counsel, the Nurse launches into a long story about Juliet as a child even before her mistress can begin to speak. And when Lady Capulet's words fail to stop the talkative Nurse and to put an end to her discursive speech, Juliet intervenes and eventually forces

her to stop talking. Obviously, the Nurse's talk violates Grice's maxims of quality, quantity, relevance, manner and even politeness. However, the effect of this violation is meant to provide a moment of humor or wit and even some laughter in the midst of an intense meeting.

Parallel to the Nurse's rambling speech about Juliet's childhood and the irrelevant family history of the Nurse is Mercutio's extensive talk about the Queen Mab of the Fairies (I, iv). Bored with the long talk, Romeo steps in to stop the speech and to calm Mercutio down. However, the speech, which flouts Grice's maxims of manner, quality, quantity and relevance (being vague, prolix, untruthful and irrelevant) and is generally meaningless, is used by Mercutio in an attempt to cheer up Romeo. Moreover, the frequent puns in Mercutio's speech add to its vagueness and obscurity. Actually, Mercutio is the most adept character in the play at playing with double meanings and his wordplay is a major source of the comic, the witty and the surprising. Mercutio's flouting of the maxims provides a clear evidence that shows Shakespeare drawing upon the ambiguities and nuances of words for artistic purposes.

In the confrontation scene between Capulet and Tybalt, the main illocutionary acts used include reprimanding, protesting, vowing, and dismissing. Capulet uses his superior social status to order Tybalt to keep the peace; he also resorts to threats to calm down Tybalt. Sometimes, Tybalt seems to disregard this situation when he utters threats against Romeo for intruding into the Capulet's party. In response, Capulet scolds him until he agrees to keep the peace and finally walks out of the party altogether (I, v).

On the other hand, the first meeting between Rome and Juliet in the Capulets party is full of speech acts indicating agreeing, convincing, promising and vowing. However, the dialogue repeatedly violates Grice's maxims as it is presented in a metaphorical and literary style that does not conform to the rules of an ordinary conversation. Captivated by Juliet's beauty, Romeo first resorts to a series of metaphors comparing Juliet's beauty to a shining torch, a rich jewel, and a white dove (I, v, 43-48). He then embarks on a dialogue replete with religious imagery which figures Juliet as a saint and Romeo as a pilgrim who wants to erase his sins (I, v, 93-106). Romeo also asks a number of rhetorical questions for which he already knows the answer such as: "Did my heart love till now?" (I, v, 51); "Is she a Capulet? (I, v, 117). In reality, such "insincere" questions are asked to create an effect

rather than to effect an answer, thus flouting the quality maxim.

Parallel to this scene is the balcony scene where the power of language becomes obvious when Romeo and Juliet exchange words of love. Speaking metaphorically, Romeo imagines that Juliet is the sun:" What light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east", and Juliet is the sun" (II, i, 43-44). The inference here is that she is transforming night into day. This is a clear flouting of the maxims; Juliet cannot be the sun, and it is still night. The illocutionary and perlocutionary effects of such verbs indicate the evocative and beautiful force of poetic language which is presented in sharp contrast with the language of everyday life and social reality. Also in the balcony scene, we witness speech acts indicating swearing, wondering, refusing, thinking, confessing, calling, calming, greeting, vowing, pledging, promising and agreeing.

In using metaphors, rhetorical questions, puns and hyperboles/overstatements throughout the play, characters break the maxims, for these figures invariably contain some statements which are literally false or obscure. As Leech and Short (1981:299) observe, such figures of speech are "ways of failing to say what one means and are consequently at odds with the principle of cooperation." However, it is through the implicative force of such figures that characters as Romeo, Juliet and Mercutio are able to express themselves in the most effective manner. Flouting the maxims enables Romeo and Juliet to use various kinds of metaphors to indicate the extent of their passionate love and Mercutio to engage in sexual innuendos that exasperate the Nurse, thus providing the play with moments of sharp humor. Additionally, Mercutio occasionally ridicules Romeo, and from this sharp mockery, the audience can easily infer his intimate relationship with Romeo.

In the encounter between the Nurse on the one hand and Mercutio, Benvolio and Romeo on the other, the appropriateness conditions for an ordinary conversation seem to break down. Mercutio, in particular, engages in a series of puns intended to make fun of the Nurse. His intricate, witty and sexual verbal joking as a way of teasing the Nurse insinuates or implicates that the Nurse is a harlot, an accusation that she understands and strongly denies. Later on in this scene, we notice a shift in these conditions when they are reestablished again when Romeo begins to talk to the Nurse about more serious matters regarding his message that the Nurse will convey

to Juliet. Using directive illocutionary acts, Romeo tells the Nurse to inform Juliet to come to Friar Lawrence's cell so that they can conduct the marriage ceremony.

An interesting scene in which the cooperative principle fails, at least at the beginning, is scene v, Act II when Juliet is waiting impatiently for the Nurse to hear from her the news from Romeo. Though Juliet prepares the ground to let the nurse disclose the news from Romeo by calling her "honey Nurse" and "sweet Nurse" (94), the Nurse claims to be tired, that she has sour legs, and that she is out of breath to tell the news she has brought from Romeo. For the greatest part of this scene, the cooperative principle does not hold. While Juliet is waiting impatiently for the Nurse's return, the Nurse deliberately teases Juliet by withholding the news about the upcoming wedding (II, v). Instead, she complains about her aches and pains. Finally, she tells Juliet that she is to marry Romeo at Friar Lawrence's cell. The Nurse's lack of cooperation in imparting her news enhances her comic role in the play. While Juliet is anxious to know the news, the Nurse contrives to break the maxim of relevance by continually changing the subject and by concentrating on Romeo's physical attributes.

When quick communication breaks down, Juliet grows frantic and desperately urges the Nurse to speak. Ironically, and to Juliet's great exacerbation, when the Nurse speaks, she begins by lavishing praise on Romeo, giving a description of the man's outlook, something that is old news to Juliet and which she does not need, and so it does not advance the conversation as required. In pragmatic terms, it is something given and contains nothing new. Actually, the Nurse flouts the cooperative principle and the maxims at least three or more times in this scene. Instead of telling Juliet "your lover says, like an honest gentleman"; "where is your mother?"; "I am weary" and "Jesu, what haste!", she should have replied directly to Juliet's repeated questions and even appeals and courteous requests to speak. At long last, the Nurse gives in and reveals the news that Romeo is waiting at Friar Lawrence's cell to marry her and to prepare a ladder for Romeo to climb up to Juliet's chamber that night to consummate their marriage.

In his cell, Friar Lawrence marries Romeo and Juliet in a secret ceremony; but does this marriage meet the felicity/appropriateness conditions of a religious marriage? Judging by the general requirements of a modern religious marriage, we notice the lack of certain conditions which must be met in order for the marriage to

be legal. For example, there must be an appropriate person solemnizing the marriage; the ceremony must be performed in the presence of 2 witnesses aged 18 or above; there must be a marriage registration form that must be filled in before permission to marry; the marriage registration form should be signed by the two spouses, the two witnesses and the person who has solemnized the marriage and the form should be returned to registrar to be registered; the spouses have to declare that there are no impediments to the marriage and that they accept each other as husband and wife in addition to the need for an appropriate place in which the marriage ceremony is conducted. ("Getting Married", online article, 2013). Obviously, most of these appropriateness conditions are not met to make Romeo and Juliet's marriage a legal and acceptable marriage especially because of such basic hindrances such as their young age, lack of parental consent and absence of witnesses.

Utterances are verbal acts and consequently they can form part of the plot development. This is true of the scenes where words rather than physical actions are used, producing the witicims, the punning and the verbal exchanges that form a great part of the play's texture. For example, at the beginning of Act III, the events that make up the plot are largely verbal events taking place between Benvolio and Mercutio about the hot weather, the possibility of a brawl, and Mercutio's augment with Tybalt – all are verbal acts that form an essential part of the plot sequence. However, verbal communication begins to break down when Mercutio starts to taunt and provoke Tybalt who accidentally sees Romeo and immediately turns his attention from Mercutio to Romeo. Venting his anger on Romeo and in an act of revenge, Tybalt calls Romeo a villain. Romeo refuses to be angered by Tybalt's verbal attack, but Mercutio angrily draws his sword and declares with his usual biting wit that if Romeo is not ready for fight, he will do it himself. Here, words develop into serious actions and the scene ends with the death of both Mercutio and Tybalt. The Prince's words, full of threat, bring the scene to a close. Though Benvolio's narrative of events is done in a manner that adheres to the cooperative principle and Grice's maxims as evidenced by its truthfulness, objectivity, brevity and clarity, the Capulets protest and consider him to be lying and prejudiced and ask the Prince not to accept Benvolio's testimony, thus causing a breakdown of the communicative act. However, the communicative principle is restored when the Prince

enters and uses directive/declaration speech acts that look like real actions that are taken seriously by the citizens: "And for that offence/Immediately we do exile him hence" (II, ii, 183-184). In other words, the prince's pronouncements mean exactly what they say.

While Juliet, in a poetic and impassioned soliloquy, is reflecting on the night and hoping it will soon bring in Romeo, the Nurse enters, lamenting the death of Tybalt but without mentioning his name. As happened in a previous scene, the Nurse violates the cooperative principle when she again deliberately withholds important information from her mistress and reveals it only towards the end of the communicative act. In this way, she is violating the maxims particularly the quality and manner maxims, a violation that results in making Juliet not only confused and worried but also leads her to conclude that Romeo rather than Tybalt has been killed and to blame Romeo for this act. When the Nurse begins to moan about Tybalt's death (violating quality and manner maxims), Juliet makes another wrong inference when she believes that both Romeo and Tybalt have been killed. When at last the Nurse tells the right story, Juliet realizes that Romeo has killed Tybalt and that he has been sentenced to exile. The Nurse takes Juliet's criticism of Romeo's action to implicate a condemnation of her lover and soon begins to curse Romeo's name, an action that prompts Juliet to denounce the Nurse for criticizing her husband.

In the next encounter between Romeo and Friar Lawrence, the cooperative principle holds when the Friar tells Romeo the news that the Prince has banished him. Using persuasive speech acts (directives) such as 'be patient," "hear me a little speak," and "let me dispute with thee of thy estate," the Friar manages to control Romeo and to make him accept his plan so hat he will go to Juliet that night and leave for Mantua the next morning where he will stay until the news of their marriage can be made public. However, the behavior of the Friar marks a continuation of the previous error he had done in violating the appropriateness conditions for a regular marriage ceremony. Strictly speaking, Juliet's marriage to Romeo is illegal. In this way, the audience would be immediately warned that this marriage will perhaps not last as it surely lacks the basic conditions of marriage rites as already explained.

In his next meeting with Paris, Capulet uses a series of titles such as "My lord," "Sir Paris," "noble earl" that indicate Paris's superior social status and Capulet's

compliance with the politeness principle. However, this compliance soon breaks down when he begins to discuss the marriage proposal. Giving the sudden death of Tybalt as a pretext for not consulting Juliet about Paris's marriage proposal, Capulet immediately tells Paris that Juliet will abide by his decision of accepting the marriage proposal. He also promises that the wedding will be held on Thursday. Obviously, Capulet's decision and promise lack the required appropriateness conditions since they are given without the prior consultation of Juliet over her position. This lack of appropriateness conditions further underlines the powerlessness of women in Verona, including Juliet herself. Furthermore, they lack the necessary politeness as they insult the face of Juliet who will be committed to marriage without her prior approval. On the other hand, the same lack of appropriateness conditions creates a dramatic irony because while the father is giving his assurances about his daughter's compliance, Romeo and Juliet have already consummated their marriage.

After spending their wedding night together, Juliet uses directive speech acts to convince Romeo to leave, realizing how dangerous it is for him to stay. By their frequent use of metaphorical language, the lovers are violating the quality, quantity and perhaps manner maxims. Both Romeo and Juliet are in effect trying to transform day into night and vice versa by their use of language, but words cannot change time. However, by urging Romeo to leave in time to secure his life, Juliet is speaking in more pragmatic terms: she is truthful, sincere and has a clear evidence for her claims and assertions about time.

Another ironic situation occurs in the conversation between Juliet and her mother. Believing that Juliet weeps over the death of Tybalt rather than the departure of Romeo, she tries to comfort Juliet with her plan to have Romeo poisoned. In her encounter with her mother, Juliet does not observe the cooperative principle although her mother believes she does. Leading her mother to believe that her tears are the result of her grief over Tybalt's death, she resorts to a series of puns which make the mother believe that she also wishes Romeo to be dead when in fact she is firmly emphasizing her love for him. Juliet's mother cannot realize that Juliet is proclaiming her love for Romeo under the guise of saying just the opposite. The ironic twist in Juliet's retorts is indicative of her flouting of the manner and quality maxims. Juliet's statements are intended to be obscure and ambiguous

besides being untruthful and false in the first place. Lady Capulet believes that Juliet grieves for the death of Tybalt, though we know she is actually grieving for the banishment of Romeo. So we here notice two meanings taking place at the same time: Juliet means one thing and Lady Capulet understands a different meaning. Here the verbal ambiguity is a clear violation of Grice's maxims though it is clearly a rich source of comedy and an important means of plot and character development, enhancing the growing gulf between mother and daughter and later between father and daughter and suggesting Juliet' passage from innocence to experience.

When Lady Capulet informs her daughter of Capulet's decision to accept Paris's proposal, Juliet is greatly disappointed and rejects the offer. Juliet is further shocked when her mother tells her about Capulet's plan to marry her to Paris on Thursday. Using appropriate and polite rejection speech acts (representatives/ commissives), Juliet expresses her determination of refusing to marry and her intention to marry Romeo rather than Paris, if she ever chooses to marry:

> Juliet: I pray you tell my lord and father, madam,
> I will not marry yet; and when I do, I swear
> It shall be Romeo, whom you know I hate,
> Rather than Paris. ((III, v, 119-122)

When Capulet talks to Juliet about the wedding, expecting to find her excited, he becomes furious and enraged when she expresses her refusal to obey his "decree" to marry. Indeed, the perlocutionary effect of Juliet's position on her father is quite startling. Capulet's language is full of commissives replete with threats and abuse. He threatens to disinherit and disown Juliet if she continues to refuse his orders: "Hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,/ For, by my soul, I'll never acknowledge thee" (III, v, 193-194). He also uses abusive epithets, calling Juliet "baggage,' "carrion, "crying child," and a "whining puppet", etc. and further reinforces his words with threats telling her that she has to accept Paris or she will be killed. Cauplet's face-threatening and offensive speech acts place his daughter in a great dilemma.

In the father-daughter relationship we see the social stance of speaker to hearer where the dynamics of conversation are reflected in familiarity and politeness or distance and rudeness adopted by one towards the other. Initially, Capulet appeared to be taking his daughter's interests into consideration. Later, we see Capulet not observing the rules of politeness when he shows no interest in his daughter's welfare and self-respect or, in pragmatics terms, shows little concern for her face needs. Throughout the encounter, it is obvious that Juliet's position is subordinate to her father's concerns although he seems to look out for his daughter's interests. As a matter of fact, most of the verbal exchanges between father and daughter show that the father is trying to control his daughter and to patronize her. The balance of power changes only after Juliet refuses to marry Paris.

From now on, Juliet loses confidence in all the people around her and, consequently, in her subsequent speech acts she seems not to abide by the cooperative principle. When the cooperative principle breaks down, the characters may be said not to be talking to each other at all, for the mother or the father has no notion of what Juliet is talking about. The audience, however, is aware of what is going on. This is a good example of dramatic irony stemming from the ambiguity of the character's utterances. However, by her pretensions, Juliet reveals a radical transformation in her character. She is no longer that innocent and easy-going female; she is now a woman who is capable of dominating the conversation with her mother, if not with her father.

Apart from the use of metaphor, pun, irony and hyperbole, which shows a clear violation of the maxims, there are a good number of speeches in the play which are somewhat overlong and are, therefore, other clear examples of the maxims flouting. Examples include Mercutio's Queen Mab speech (I, iv,) Juliet's soliloquies as she waits for news of Romeo (III, ii, 1-31) and as she prepares to take the potion (Iv, iii, 14-59), the Friar's soliloquy (II, iii, 1-26), his long speech to Romeo on moderation and patience, (III, iii, 108-159) and his explanation of his plan (V, iii, 229-269)and Romeo's soliloquy as he prepares for his death (V, iii, 74-120). In other words, there is a clear violation of Gricean maxims. In real life, people do not speak at such length when they are alone nor do they usually use such impassioned utterances. Although the Elizabethan audiences must have delighted in such poetic language and such poetic drama, we need to apply our "suspension of disbelief" to be able to accept them nowadays. Nevertheless, all these instances show us that there is a great deal of variety in Shakespeare's use of languagee. Besides the use of colloquialism, punning, wordplay, formal and elaborate metaphor and long and ornate speeches, we notice the use of ordinary conversation for different purposes, both

mockingly and in earnest. Furthermore, we notice the use of prose as well as verse to serve certain dramatic purposes and to reflect the mentality, the mood and the social status of the characters.

In language, to be polite, one has to be indirect, to use respectful address, to apologize and, sometimes, to use circumlocution and hyperbole (Holmes, 1995). Throughout *Romeo and Juliet* both negative and positive politeness are used to indicate familiarity or to show respect. Thus, we find a wide range of politeness indicators running roughly from titles of respect (my lord, madam) to polite forms of address (Mr., Mrs.), to surnames (Capulet, Montague), to first names (Paris) and to endearment terms (my dear). All these linguistic devices are used to signal various degrees and kinds of social relationships including familiarity, intimacy, formality, distance, inferiority, superiority, etc. The frequent use of such language shows the nature of the Veronian society with its interest in status and social distance. This is clearly seen in the Nurse's address to her superiors and to the Capulets. The Nurse uses different forms of address to dramatize her role as Juliet's confidante. When the Nurse tries to be too intimate, it becomes clear that the Capulets do not seem to approve of such intimacy.

When Juliet again arrives at Lawrence's cell, she uses persuasion and threatening speech acts (commissives) to convince the Friar to find out a way to help her out of her problem (IV, i, 50-67). In response, the Friar employs a cluster of expressives and directives, including guaranteeing, pledging, vowing, undertaking, deploring and warranting to make her accept his suggested solution involving Juliet's consent to marry Paris and her taking a potion so that she may appear dead for the next 42 hours:

> Hold, then, go home, be merry, and give consent
> To marry Paris….
> To-morrow night look that thou lie alone;
> Let not the Nurse lie with thee in thy chamber.
> Take thou this vial…. (IV, I, 89-120)

Paris and Lawrence's conversation at the opening of Act IV violates Grice's maxim of quality. When Paris informs the Friar of his proposed marriage to Juliet, the Friar does not tell him the news of Juliet's secret marriage to Romeo. Paris's speech with the Friar lacks sincerity and points to a clear violation of the quality maxim. By claiming that Juliet is weeping for Tybalt's death, he is

saying something that is really untrue and for which he has no clear evidence. That he has agreed to marry her as a result of Capulet's determination that the couple should get married so that Juliet can stop crying and put an end to her mourning, is also another flouting of the quality maxim as it is only a personal judgement that is not based on real evidence. When Juliet enters, she ascertains that she has not married Paris yet. Nevertheless, Paris kisses her hand as if she were his wife, which is again untrue, for there is nothing as yet to suggest that she is officially his wife. Paris's behavior here indicates lack of the appropriateness conditions for the conversation to be normal and acceptable. Juliet's answers to Paris's compliments and references to their upcoming marriage show her skill in handling a conversation. Her clever answers enable her to avoid any confrontation with Paris. The scene shows Paris and Juliet engaged in a rigid and formal verbal exchange in which Paris tries to display signs of positive politeness by showing himself as a proper and courteous suitor while Juliet shows her skill in sidestepping Paris's questions and compliments. Actually, a deep irony underlines all the exchanges between Juliet and Paris as it actually underlines the conversations between Juliet and her parents. Juliet has actually defied her family and is now married to Romeo and all of this is unknown to them. In other words, the cooperative principle is here breaking down, for Juliet is hiding the most essential piece of information.

On her encounter with her father after her return from Lawrence's cell, Juliet's words to Capulet are more evasive and misleading than ever before. When he demands where she has been, she replies:

> Where I haven learnt to repent the sin
> Of disobedient opposition
> To you and your behests. (IV, ii, 17-19)

She further adds another false statement: "I met the youthful lord at Lawrence's cell/ And gave him what becomed love I might" (IV, ii, 25-26). Juliet's false statement about expressing signs of love for Paris leads her father to indulge in an ironic situation (dramatic irony) when he begins to praise the Friar for his role in the secret match between Romeo and Juliet. Excited by Juliet's deceiving words, Capulet advances the wedding by one day, contrary to Juliet's expectations. Juliet's assertion that she will abide by her father's wishes and marry Paris also lacks the quality maxim as she is not

actually telling the truth. This false information leads to the father's overjoy and consequently to his enthusiasm to move the wedding forward by one day. Juliet again acquiesces and appears compliant though she is only pretending. Capulet appears to have misinterpreted Juliet's acquiescence/obedience. This lack of truth results in the dramatic irony that underlies all these verbal exchanges. In many scenes with her parents, Juliet displays powers of duplicity that pave the way for her tragic death which is quickened by fate and hasty human actions. Undoubtedly, Capulet's abusive language to his daughter seems to be connected with this duplicity and lack of sincerity; his speech acts which are full of threats and offensive remarks play an important part in leading Juliet to adopt this duplicity in her speech.

As stated earlier, every speech act has its conditions of appropriateness. A performative such as a command or a question is successful if it elicits an appropriate response. Thus, Capulet's orders to Juliet have their intended and illocutionary force when she obeys them, but they stop having their force when she disobeys them either explicitly or implicitly. Generally, a father cannot order his daughter to marry someone unless it is done in terms of forced marriage, which is a violation of general social norms. However, this is not always the case. As Leech and Short (1981:293) observe: "The felicity conditions for speech acts may change from one society or time to another.…There have at least recently, been societies or parts of societies where it was reasonable for fathers to order their daughter to marry against her will". Juliet's behavior shows she is defiant of such restrictions as she is determined to reject her parent's desire to marry the man she does not want and insists on marrying in secret the man she loves and without her Parents' consent. To an Elizabethan audience, there was no doubt that this attitude was wrong. Nowadays, it is unthinkable for a father in a civilized society to order his daughter or his son to marry a partner against their wish though we know there were and still are societies in which it was thought reasonable for fathers to force their sons and daughters to marry. To understand better the force of the father's command to Juliet to marry the man she does not love, we have to take into our consideration the norms of their society in addition to modern norms of marriage and father-daughter relationship.

In this play as well as in Shakespeare's plays in general, language is used to suit the character or the speaker. Thus, we notice the difference between the formality of Prince Escalus's speeches and the bluntness of Mercutio's wit and between both of these and the Nurse's colloquial and rambling utterances. Additionally, both prose and verse are used for different purposes. Verse speeches are meant to create an effect, a mood or a feeling and their registered effect is mainly perlocutionary while prose speeches are meant to convey communicative information and the registered effect is illocutionary. With its figurative language and elaborate imagery and rhetoric, verse has an evocative power which is utilized for various purposes including the intent to show the character's sincerity when using genuine language or insincerity or hypocrisy when characters use far-fetched comparisons as in Lady Capulet's comparison of Paris to a book (I,3, 8—95). Actually, Shakespeare is critical of excessive metaphorical and affected language as when he makes Mercutio mock Romeo's language and Friar Lawrence's criticism of Romeo's elaborate metaphorical language (II, 3, 51-52; I, 3, 53-54; II, 3, 83-84). Juliet also rejects the affected language of courtship as insincere as appears in the balcony scene (I,2,89) and urges Romeo to speak plainly (I,2, 93-94) where it is said that plain language can reflect sincere and unaffected feelings.

Apart from the conversations between the characters, there are a good number of cases where a character is speaking to himself/herself, pondering thoughts and feelings which are also shared with the audience or the reader. One of these conversations pictures Juliet reflecting on taking the sleeping potion and its possible consequence. Her reflection takes the form of self-address. In a series of question and answer self-addressed verbal exchange, Juliet appears to be giving herself some information similar to what happens between an interlocutor and an addressee as we can see in this short excerpt: "Shall I be married then to-morrow morning? / No, no. This shall forbid it (IV, iii, 21-22). Juliet is asking herself some questions and answering them as it happens in ordinary conversation where the cooperative principle is observed. She is also making a series of realizations to her self-asked questions. At the end of the speech, she seems to be addressing both Romeo and Tybalt: "Stay, Tybalt, stay! / Romeo, I come! This I drink to thee" (IV, III, 57-58). Juliet's drinking of the potion is a significant perlocutionary speech act that shows her courage and strong resolution.

The lamentations that follow upon discovering Juliet's death are prolonged and provide a good example of

expressive speech acts characterized by their prolixity, perhaps to enhance Juliet' heroic stature. Theoretically, we expect the dramatist to be adhering to the cooperative principle in presenting the scene as we expect the same principle to hold vis-à-vis the interchange between the characters. When the maxims are flouted, we expect conversational implicatures and inferential strategies to be used by the reader to draw inferences from the characters' speeches. Capulet's words to Paris contain a sharp irony: "Make haste! The bridegroom he is come already" IV, v, 26-27). Capulet is not aware that Juliet is already married and that her bridegroom is Romeo, not Paris. Capulet's speech of lamentation is an expressive speech act full of verbs indicating grief and sorrow. The Nurse's desperate cries enhance this lamentation. The mourning scene that includes Friar Lawrence in addition to the Capulets also contains speech acts full of lamentation interspersed with words of comfort from the Friar. The scene concludes with a comic interlude between the musicians and the servant Peter, engaging in bawdy wordplay. Here we see how speech acts change rapidly according to the swiftly changing moods.

The opening scene of Act V begins with a description of Romeo's dream, with constative verbs predominant. Believing that his dream portends good news from Verona, Romeo is shocked when told by Balthasar that Juliet has died. As a result, constative verbs soon change into performatives:

> Is it 'en so? Then I defy you, stars!
> Thou knowest my lodging. Get me ink and paper,
> And hire post-horses. I will hence to-night. (V, I, 24-26)

When Romeo realizes that Juliet is dead, he breaks into defiant anger marked by the change in the type of speech acts employed. He uses expressive and commissive speech acts to reflect his desperation and regret and utters certain verbs indicating actions done through uttering the words. For example, we find the verbs "defy," "get," "hire," and "will hence". Apart from their plain meaning, these verbs indicate Romeo's strong resolution to act immediately. Translating his words into deeds, Romeo orders his servant to hire horses for the journey and buys poison from an apothecary, intending to take it when he joins Juliet in the tomb. Friar John's report that follows is full of constatives that report events or affirm facts or conditions regarding the failure of Friar

Lawrence's plans for Juliet's escape because of the sudden outbreak of the plague. Friar Lawrence now embarks on a series of commissive actions intended to salvage the situation by releasing Juliet from the tomb and hiding her in his cell until the arrival of Romeo.

The next scene is full of directives issued to order others to do certain things such as Paris's order to his page to whistle him on suspecting any approaching danger. It also contains comissives that commit speakers to do certain actions such as Romeo's giving a letter to Balthasar to deliver to Romeo's father and his ordering him not to intervene in his actions and to leave immediately. Using declarative speech acts, Romeo breaks open the gate of the vault. In an action lacking the necessary felicity conditions, Paris tries to arrest Romeo, ignoring Romeo's appeals for him to leave and insisting that Romeo is Tybalt's killer and, in effect, the cause of Juliet's death. His declarative utterance, "I do apprehend thee" fails as does his verdictive pronouncement that Romeo "must die". For his part, Romeo appeals to Paris to leave him alone. Addressing Paris, Romeo utters strong directive words to warn him off, but Paris challenges Romeo and the perlocutionary effect of that challenge is the deadly fight between the two rival lovers. Before he dies, Paris requests Romeo to place him besides Juliet's body in the tomb and Romeo vows he will grant him that wish. In a series of rapid performative speech acts, Romeo kisses Juliet, drinks the poison and dies just before Friar Lawrence enters the vault again.

When Friar Lawrence arrives at the scene, he uses directive words to convince Juliet to leave, but she refuses: "Come, go, good Juliet" (V, iii, 159). Juliet determines to kiss Romeo's poisoned lips with the intention of killing herself, but hearing the night watchman approach, she stabs herself, uttering the performative act," let me die". In this way, and in pragmatic terms, Juliet's saying is doing and her utterances are acts capable of producing enormous consequences. When the watch arrive, they consider Friar Lawrence suspicious and declare him and Balthasar to be under arrest. Pragmatically speaking, the watch's declarative statement, "Stay the Friar too" (V, iii, 186) is said by the right person (someone with power to make arrests) and so deprives the Friar of physical freedom and puts him under the obligation to answer any questions/accusations regarding the events and perhaps to be punished if found guilty.

In his brief and succinct account of the tragic events,

the Friar uses several constative speech acts such as, "I married them," "then comes she to me, "I writ to Romeo," "was stayed by accident." All his words are meant to narrate what happened and describe the events in the form of true or false statements. The Prince, acting as the right person in the right circumstances, believes the Friar's account and clears him of all accusations and consequently, sets him free. Assuming the role of a judge with legal powers, the Prince also blames the Capulets and the Montagues for their longstanding feuds and himself for his leniency. The Prince's official pronouncements are not only utterances; they are also illocutionary acts that have their appropriateness conditions and can have far-reaching consequences. As a result, and following the Prince's judgments, the two families are reconciled and the play ends with the constative statement: ""For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo", leaving the audience/reader free to make their own judgment about

the truth of the tragic events of the whole story.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated the relevance of pragmatic analysis to our understanding of *Romeo and Juliet* or to any other literary text for that matter. The application of speech acts theory, the cooperative principle and its maxims enables us to concentrate on the social function of language and consequently on the socio-cultural dimension of the play and the linguistic features of the characters' speeches. Through pragmatic analysis, we can read into the characters' language much more than it appears to state or mean directly. A pragmatic reading of the play enables us to better understand the relationships between the characters, their social status, the various ways of language use as well as the different tones of the literary work and its dramatic effects.

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قراءة براغماتية لمسرحية شكسبير
روميو وجولييت

توفيق إبراهيم يوسف*

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الاستفادة من علم البراغماتيةفي تحليل مسرحية شكسبير روميو وجولييت عن طريق استخدام "المذهب التعاوني" و"المبادئ"كما طورهما بول غرايس ونظرية "أفعال الخطاب" التي أرسى معالمها جي أوستن حيث يعتمد التحليل على هذه المفاهيم من أجل إلقاء مزيد من الضوء على معنى هذه المسرحية خاصةًوأنها من أكثر مسرحيات شكسبيرملاءمة للتحليل البراغماتي. ويخلص الباحث إلى ان مثل هذاالأسلوب من قراءة النصوص الأدبية يوفر دورا أكبر للقارئ للمشاركة في قراءة النص بالإضافة إلى أنه يؤكد على بعض الجوانب من المعنى التي يمكن أن لا يلاحظها القارئ عند استعماله أساليب التحليل التقليدية

الكلمات الدالة: البراغماتية، شكسبير، روميو وجولييت.