

Analysis of Conversational Implicature in The Legend of Zhen Huan from Perspectives of Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle

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Abstract: In our daily lives, understanding and using language is an art. We not only are supposed to know its surface meaning, but also understand its implicature. The successful use of language will yield twice the result with half the effort. The dialogue of characters in TV dramas is an important manifestation of language. The simple form and rich language style of The Legend of Zhen Huan is one of the important factors for the show to become the pinnacle of harem-themed TV dramas in China in past years. The cooperative principle and politeness principle in pragmatics are important theoretical foundations for character analysis. This paper takes a number of specific dialogues in The Legend of Zhen Huan as examples, according to the backgrounds of the plots, combined with the classic theory of pragmatics, analyzes 10 examples selected from the TV series of The Legend of Zhen Huan, attempts to reveal how and when characters obeys and violates CP and PP, and experiences its unique linguistic charm.

Keywords: The Legend of Zhen Huan, Cooperative Principle, Politeness Principle, Conversational Implicature

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Directed by Zheng Xiao Long, The Legend of Zhen Huan is a television series based on a network novel written by the popular Chinese Internet novelist Liu Lianzi. The protagonists include famous TV stars like Sun Li, Chen Jianbin, Cai Shaofen, etc. The series present with beautiful scenes, costumes, and refined lines, and it has been warmly welcomed by major television stations and highly enjoyed by public audience. The broadcast rights have been sold to South Korea, the United States, Japan and some Southeast Asian countries. Accordingly it has been translated into different languages such as English, Japanese. It enjoys high popularity with foreign audience. In fact, it has become the town talk of the street.

The main story of the TV series reads as follows: In the earliest days when Zhen Huan comes to the palace, she is just yearning for perfect love. After involving herself in a series of rivalry events in the imperial harem, she experiences ups and downs of life and grows up, gradually degenerating from

an ignorant and innocent girl into a scheming concubine, and eventually dominates the harem. Women are absolutely the leading roles and their lives in imperial harem make the focus. The concubines maintain a good friendship on the surface, but under the surface they stand their own ground to improve or defend their status. Female language plays a key role in the maintenance of friendship. The present study will explore the ways in which concubines talk from the perspective of CP and PP, and analyze the relationship between her utterances and her images.

1.2. Research Questions

This study aims exploring the discourses by different characters in The Legend of Zhen Huan from the perspective of CP (cooperative principle) and PP (Politeness Principle). It also attempts to analyze the relationship between their utterances and their images. Specifically, the study tries to answer the following three questions: (1) How are these characters' conversational implicature generated by violating CP and observing PP?

(2) When characters obey and violate CP and PP?

(3) How are Zhen Huan's character traits demonstrated by the use of language strategies?

1.3. Research Method

This study intends to analyze characters' conversational implicature within the framework of CP and PP. The research method is employed to analyze 29 cases selected from the The Legend of Zhen Huan, with a purpose of working out characters' conversational implicature. It is expected that such a method could help present characters' language skills, their varied linguistic strategies and unique personalities. The use of the research method could expect to show that it is possible to study this TV series from the pragmatic perspectives.

1.4. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five parts. The first part briefly introduces the research background, methodology, and organization of the thesis. The second part refers to previous studies on literary and television works by applying CP and PP. The third part presents the theoretical framework: Grice's CP; Leech's PP. The fourth part analyzes in detail dialogues in The Legend of Zhen Huan from the perspectives of CP and PP. The last part is the conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Brief Introduction to The Legend of Zhen Huan

The Legend of Zhen Huan is a 2011 Chinese drama based on a popular internet novel. The drama is set in the harem of Emperor Yongzheng of the Qing Dynasty. Spanning 76 episodes, it has been considered one of the most successful dramas in the past years.

The story follows the trials and tribulations of Zhen Huan, a concubine of the emperor, as she survives the perilous Inner Palace, where nothing is as it seems.

The series has been exported to the US as a miniseries titled *Empresses in the Palace*. The entire series is condensed into six 90-minute episodes, using original Chinese dialogue with English subtitles. The opening and closing themes are also changed for the US release.

2.2. Previous Studies on Literary and Television Works by Applying CP and PP

Grice proposed CP (cooperative principle) in 1967. Since then, CP has been applied to many areas, like translation, advertising, literature, business letter writing, language teaching, and the study of

humor, etc. This part reviews the study of applying CP in literary works. In novels, characters often violate the maxims of CP and observe the maxims of PP (politeness principle) to produce conversational implicature.

Van Dijk, a discourse analyst, is considered to be the first to bring in literature pragmatics. Van Dijk says that a literary discourse can be a drama, a novel, and a poem [1]. In his opinion, the whole discourse or the text is a macro-discourse, performing a macro-speech act while the specific discourses in a text can be seen as micro-speech acts. He also states the literary text works as the media for communication between the author and the reader. And this process can be defined as literary communication.

Many Chinese scholars also have made contribution in the field of literary pragmatics. Shao Zhihong is the first scholar who introduces pragmatics into literary criticism. He applies Grice's CP and Leech's PP to analyze Shakespeare's Hamlet.

Meanwhile, researches are found using CP to analyze conversations in films adapted from famous literary works or famous novels and in television programs as well. Chen Yuan studies humor in Modern American Situation Comedies from the perspectives of flouting CP and PP. Si Wen and Zhu Xiaomei present A Pragmatic Analysis of Conversational Implicature and Humorous Effect in Ice Age 2 in 2015 and so on.

2.3. Summary

CP and PP have received increasing attentions from domestic and foreign scholars, and studies have been fruitful. Studies at home and abroad contribute greatly to studies of CP on television series. The present study makes an exploration in elaborating characters', especially Zhen Huan conversational implicature from CP and PP.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Grice' CP

According to American linguist Herbert Paul Grice (1913-1988) observation, "our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, co-operate efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction." This suggests that there are two meanings in real life communication: the explicit meaning and the implicit meaning. While the explicit meaning refers to the literal meaning embodied in the utterance of a speaker, the implicit refers to the implied meaning that the speaker wants to explain. In order to explain how the speaker express his/her ideas and how the listener fully understands the intended meaning, Grice has brought in the concept of "Conversational Implicature"—an important manifestation of indirectness [2]. He puts forward CP (cooperative principle) in a paper titled Logic and Conversation: "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."

3.1.1. Four Maxims within the CP

Grice later formulates more specific rules in the actual realization of the CP. They read as follows:

Maxim of Quantity

- a. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
- b. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Quality

- a. Do not say what you believe to be false.

b. Do not say for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of Relation

Be relevant

Maxim of Manner

a. Avoid obscurity of expression.

b. Avoid ambiguity.

c. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

d. Be orderly. [2]

According to He Zhaoxiong, these four maxims are not equally important in binding on the communicator's conversing. Of the four maxims, the maxim of quality is the most important [3].

3.1.2. Flouting of Maxims

People would obey certain CP to ensure the conversation to move smoothly. However, sometimes a speaker deliberately violates one or two maxims of CP to express his/her intention in an indirect way, and the listener is required to infer what the speaker means according to the specific situation.

Example

(1) Adam: What is the exam for this module like?

Bella: Like an exam.

(2) Adam: How you getting on with your pragmatics essay?

Bella: It's a beautiful day, isn't it? Look at that sky!

In these cases, we can think of Bella as saying something which is clearly not informative enough. Adam can see that what she has said is not informative enough and so he looks for an implicature which would make the utterance as a whole informative enough. The implicatures are that Bella does not want to tell Adam about the exam (and maybe that she thinks he is stupid or annoying) and that Bella does not want to talk about her essay (which must not be going well).

3.2. Politeness Principle

3.2.1. Leech's PP

Leech took seriously Grice's idea that we can explain utterance interpretation in context by assuming that we aim to follow maxim-like principles when communicating. He suggested that there are a number of maxims which play a role in how we assess the politeness of particular communicative acts. He suggested that these fall under an overarching Politeness Principle which operated alongside Grice's Cooperative Principle. Leech began working on this in the 1970s (Leech 1977) and published a book on politeness in 1983. He returned to this topic in 2014. Leech puts forward the PP (politeness principle), which is considered a very important theory to explain deliberate violation of CP to generate the conversational implicature. According to PP, a speaker engaged in interaction is required to say something polite rather than something impolite, to maximize the expression of polite beliefs and to minimize the expression of impolite beliefs. Here is his politeness principle as stated there:

Principle of Politeness: In order to be polite, S[elf] expresses or implies meanings that associate a favourable value with what pertains to O[ther] or associate an unfavourable value with what pertains to S[elf] [4]

Leech proposed a number of maxims which fall under the Principle of Politeness. The principles all have to do with acting positively towards others and negatively towards yourself. In his 2014 book, these are:

Maxims of Politeness:

Generosity:

Give a high value to O[ther]'s wants.

Tact:

Give a low value to S[elf]'s wants.

Approbation:

Give a high value to O's qualities.

Modesty:

Give a low value to S's qualities. Obligation of S to O:

Give a high value to S's obligation to O.

Obligation of O to S:

Give a low value to O's obligation to S.

Agreement:

Give a high value to O's opinions.

Opinion reticence:

Give a low value to S's opinions.

Sympathy:

Give a high value to O's feelings.

Feeling reticence:

Give a low value to S's feelings.

3.3. Relations between CP and PP

Leech deems that “the PP can be seen not just as another principle to be added to the CP, but as a necessary complement, which rescues the CP from serious trouble.” [5] CP can “account for the relation between sense and force; and this kind of explanation is particularly welcome where it solves puzzles which arise in a truth-based approach to semantics.” [5] PP can be applied to explain why a speaker sometimes chooses to violate CP. People often violate CP for the sake of PP.

In actual conversations, CP and PP together regulate the participants. The former refers to the need to maintain a cooperative attitude in conversations, while the latter serves as a remedy for CP. In general, CP and PP are a mutually reinforcing relationship in conversation. Sometimes, in order to consider CP more, PP needs to be sacrificed, while sometimes, in order to prioritize PP, CP needs to be placed behind.

4. Analysis of characters' Conversational Implicature in The Legend of Zhen Huan

This part serves as the core of the thesis. This paper firstly selects the typical examples from the TV series of The Legend of Zhen Huan, and then attempts to analyze the utterances of different characters especially Zhen Huan from the perspectives of CP and PP. Finally, this paper will try deduce the conversational implicature of their utterances.

4.1. Analyzing Zhen Huan' Speech by CP

This part is to analyze Zhen Huan's utterances from the perspective of CP, and discusses the conversational implicature she wants to express by violating the maxims of CP.

4.1.1. Conversational Implicature by Violating Quantity Maxim

Example 1

The following dialogue happens when Zhen Huan is pregnant. The emperor hears from Fang Ruo that Zhen Huan often dreams in sleeping and he wants to know if Zhen Huan feels better now.

Emperor: Fan Ruo says that you often are bothered by dream since you becomes pregnant. How

about you now?

Zhen Huan: Your Majesty, have you ever seen by yourself that I am uneasy? Your Majesty just heard from the single side of Fang Ruo but haven't asked the royal physician to prescribe me Anhunsan (a kind of medicine to make people feel easy) or what I dreamed about.

Emperor: What's your meaning?

Zhen Huan: I mean, better not judge according to just one side of words.

Emperor: So do you sleep well now?

Zhen Huan: I did feel uneasy in the first few months, but these days I am better.

To the emperor's question, Zhen Huan doesn't reply yes or no directly. Instead, she provides more information than is required, which violates the maxim of quantity. At that time, Zhen Huan's father has been imprisoned by the emperor. She violates the quantity maxim to express her anger and dissatisfaction. By saying something more about her sleep quality, Zhen Huan implies that the emperor should make comprehensive investigation into truth rather than listen to somebody's bare words. She is defending for her father. Her father is innocent and is loyal to the emperor.

4.1.2. Conversational Implicature by Violating Quality Maxim

Example 2

This conversation is made by Zhen Huan and the emperor. At that time, Zhen Huan still believes true love in the harem.

Emperor: I am now more than forty. If you let me be with you until you are white-haired, I must live to 100 years old.

Zhen Huan: Your Majesty has a life span of ten thousand years. If Your Majesty just accompanies with me to live to 100 years old, is it a big loss for Your Majesty?

The quality maxim requires that a speaker should say something true. While the emperor is more than twenty years older than Zhen Huan and has many concubines, "Your Majesty has a life span of ten thousand years" is an exaggeration, believed to be false, which obviously violates quality maxim. The conversational implicature is that Zhen Huan doesn't mind the age gap and she hopes to spend the rest of her life with the emperor, which shows her admiration for and love to the emperor.

4.1.3. Conversational Implicature by Violating Relation Maxim

Example 3

Cao Qinmo: I feel so sorry for you. His Majesty favors you most but you still show no sign of pregnancy. Now that Concubine Fu Cha is pregnant, His Majesty definitely cares more for her. My sister, you should pay more attention to improving your health in your free time.

Zhen Huan: As Concubine Fucha is pregnant, it's natural that His Majesty cares more about her. I will take care of myself in daily life. You also should take good care of

Princess Wen Yi, who is important to His Majesty.

Toward Hua Fei, Zhen Huan said: Concubine Cao is offending you; I have to say sorry to you on behalf of her and ask for your forgiveness on behalf of her.

Hua Fei: Why?

Zhen Huan: Concubine Cao said His Majesty shows most care to me, but I am not pregnant. Isn't she satirizing you? Of all the concubines, you are most favored by His Majesty. So I have to say sorry to you, for her.

Cao Qinmo uses Concubine Fucha's pregnancy to satirize Zhen Huan. Cao Qinmo says "I feel so sorry for you. His Majesty favors you most but you still show no sign of pregnancy. Now that Concubine Fu Cha is pregnant, His Majesty definitely cares more for her. My sister, you should pay more attention to improving your health in your free time." On hearing this, Zhen Huan thanks Cao

Qinmo's advice and says: "You also should take good care of Princess Wen Yi." Zhen Huan's answer is a violation of relation maxim because they are talking about pregnancy, with nothing to do with the princess.

Then Zhen Huan begs Hua Fei's pardon, which is also a violation of relation maxim. The conversational implicature is that what Cao Qinmo says is sarcasm not only for Zhen Huan, but also for Hua Fei, because Hua Fei hasn't got pregnant yet.

4.1.4. Conversational Implicature by Violating Manner Maxim

Example 4

Emperor: I have something to ask you.

Zhen Huan kneels beside the bed, speaking tenderly: I will tell whatever I know.

Hesitant, Emperor: he.....is he my child?

Zhen Huan, raises her head, with gentle smile: Absolutely. Everyone under the heaven is your child.

When a speaker says something ambiguous, s/he is violating the manner maxim, producing conversational implicature, with undefined communicated intents for the hearer to interpret.

When the emperor directly asks Zhen Huan whether Hong Yan is his son, a humiliating question, Zhen Huan wants to keep it a secret by replying with great ambiguity. She says that everybody belongs to the emperor. This conversation violates the Manner Maxims. "Everyone" is vague. It may refer to everyone in general. It may include Hong Yan in specific. The conversational implicature is that she does not admit Hong Yan is not the son of the emperor. By using the strategy, she made the emperor angry and indirectly tells the truth.

4.2. Analyzing characters' Speech by PP

4.2.1. Observation of Generosity Maxim

Concubine Hua and Cao Guiren designed to frame the Zhen Huan for putting tapioca flour in Princess Wenyi's diet, causing the princess to feel unwell. Because Zhen Huan met King Guojun after leaving the banquet on the night of the family banquet, Zhen Huan couldn't tell the matter in order to protect her reputation, and under the evidence of the palace servant, there was no way to prove herself innocent, so Zhen Huan had to swallow her anger and accept the punishment under the questioning of the emperor and empress. When Concubine Hua was proud, Concubine Duan, who did not know Zhen Huan rushed to make a false testimony for Zhen Huan, saying that Zhen Huan talked about Buddhist scriptures with him on the night of the family banquet, and accidentally missed the time.

Example 5

Hua Fei: Oh? Then why didn't the Wan nobles mention the encounter with Concubine Duan?

Zhen Huan: I shouldn't have been hidden, but she didn't want outsiders to know, so as not to worry the emperor and the empress. But we do not know that it will involve the princess. I think that the emperor is sage, the empress is wise, and they must return me to innocence. And I don't want to lose my trust in Concubine Duan, I keep it a secret.

Zhen Huan's remarks did not try to defend herself, but showed the virtuousness of Concubine Duan, the wisdom of the emperor, and her own indifference to the emperor trust, from her forbearance, you can see her self-purifying posture. Zhen Huan's answer was plain, not a direct reply to Concubine Hua, both let Concubine Hua have nothing to say, and let her out of stuck.

4.2.2. Observation of Tact Maxim

At that time, Concubine Hua's elder brother Nian Qian Yao was exposed by the ministers for the

following crimes, such as reversing dignity and inferiority, forming a party for personal gain, etc., and the status of the Nian family was in jeopardy, Concubine Hua was afraid that her brother would be punished, and she was also worried that her status would not be guaranteed, so her temper was restrained a lot, and seeing that her ability could not help the family, she came up with the idea of letting her henchman Songzhi serve the emperor. Although Concubine Hua made this decision, she was very unhappy in her heart, and her attitude towards Song Zhi was also hateful. Song Zhi is loyal to Concubine Hua. She knew Concubine Hua's fiery and arrogant temperament, and worked hard to do things for Concubine Hua, not only could not ask for credit, but also dealt with it cautiously.

Example 6

Concubine Hua: Did the emperor give you the position of an official woman?

Songzhi: The emperor values you and gives me the position Da Ying.

Concubine Hua: It's rare for the emperor to give you face like this, presumably the emperor must like you very much.

Song Zhi: I can have the position, all because the emperor cares for you. The emperor personally said to me that because I am your slave, He will not mistreat me.

In order to appease Concubine Hua's anger, Song Zhi put her position very low in every sentence, and did not say anything that was detrimental to Concubine Hua's interests, so that she did not let Concubine Hua suffer, which was to observe with the Tact Maxim.

4.2.3. Observation of Approbation Maxim

Concubine Hua's elder brother Nian Qian Yao won the battle in Qinghai, and his power was growing day by day, and Concubine Hua specially took an excellent ink fox skin to please the Queen Mother favor. Although the Queen Mother accepted it, she knew very well that the expenses in Concubine Hua's palace were very large, and the Nian family's life was extravagant.

Example 7

Emperor: I'm afraid that such a good ink fox skin will only be available in Qinghai.

Queen Mother: The emperor is really bright-eyed and bright-hearted, the palace is so dark, and you can clearly see that it is the skin of the ink fox, and the government of the harem is naturally even more insightful.

The queen mother can't talk about court politics with the emperor openly, but in the way of praise, she naturally transitions to court politics, which mentions the emperor and is more acceptable.

4.2.4. Observation of Modesty Maxim

Among the many concubines, the Queen Mother noticed Zhen Huan, she couldn't escape the reply, in order to be low-key, every answer was full of self-humility and self-deprecation.

Example 8

Queen Mother: Very good, indeed very sensible.

Zhen Huan: The concubines are young and reckless, but fortunately, they are blessed by the queen mother, and the queen and the sisters are willing to teach the concubines, so as not to lose their honor.

Queen Mother: It's no wonder that the emperor likes you, and the mourning family also likes you.

In the dialogue, Zhen Huan's words are very cautious, and she does not dare to have the slightest expansion of her mentality, trying to praise herself as little as possible and belittle herself more.

In contrast to Western culture, Chinese culture is more modest and low-key, and generally adopts an attitude of prevarication and avoidance in the praise of others. This is especially common in Chinese praise conversations.

4.2.5. Observation of Agreement Maxim

King Dun had a short temper, beat civil officials, and made a lot of noise in the court. On one side was the royal prince, on the other hand was the ancestral rules, in the face of the anger of the courtiers, the emperor could not be explained, and he was also annoyed. Zhen Huan offered a plan to persuade Prince Dun, which made the emperor very happy.

Example 9

Emperor: You are the only one who can solve problems for me. Those ministers of mine have been making a fuss for a long time with my money, but they can only come up with some ideas of punishment or non-punishment, which is really useless.

Zhen Huan: The concubine is just a mere woman in the harem, where is the idea of the concubine, but it is the emperor's intention, and I guessed it by luck. Those ministers are familiar with book ethics, but I am familiar with the emperor.

The emperor praised Zhen Huan for his ability to "solve problems", saying that the courtiers were "extremely useless", Zhen Huan naturally did not dare to receive such praise, let alone show off herself of cleverness. The emperor can say that the courtiers are useless, but Zhen Huan can't say it, and the emperor himself didn't come up with this strategy, in order to save the emperor's face, Zhen Huan said that this was "the emperor's mind", and he was just guessed by his "luck". This maintained a modest posture and minimized the differences between the two sides, which was more practical and useful to the emperor than too obvious flattery. Later, Zhen Huan explained that her approach and that of the courtiers are different, not a matter of ability, but each has its own strengths, the courtiers are "familiar with book ethics", while they are "familiar with the emperor", everyone is a person who eats the royal family and shares worries for the emperor, which makes the emperor angry at the same time, maximizes the emperor's sense of identity and increases the consistency of views between the two sides.

4.2.6. Observation of Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim

King Guojun entered the palace to greet the sick bedridden queen mother, and personally fed the queen mother with medicine. At that time, the Concubine Hua was arrogant, and her brother's behavior was arrogant, so that the middle palace was weak, which aroused the criticism of the courtiers. King Guojun has long maintained a romantic image of not caring about the government and politics, o just to dispel the suspicions of the emperor and the queen mother, in order to protect himself.

Example 10

Queen Mother: Have you heard about Concubine Hua and her brother's affairs in the court?

King Guojun: No wonder the emperor's mother is not in good health, because you refused to listen to the imperial doctor. The doctor said that he wouldn't let you worry about it, but it's okay, even the outside affairs are taken care of. This time it's just that, if it's like this next time, I won't dare to enter the palace again.

The queen mother asked about the government, and the king of Guojun avoided answering, only mentioning the queen mother's condition, "No wonder the emperor is not in good health", in order to increase the sympathy of both parties, and then slightly mischievously coquettish, "If you are like this next time, I will not dare to enter the palace again", which is the same as the tone of coaxing the child, which can minimize the disgust of both parties and increase the closeness of both parties.

5. Conclusion

By applying Grice's CP and Leech's PP, this study has analyzed 10 examples selected from the TV series of The Legend of Zhen Huan, and explored how characters produces their intended

conversational implicature. It has also revealed how and when characters obey and violate CP and PP. The major findings can be summarized as follows:

Firstly, When Zhen Huan talks to people whose social positions are higher than herself such as the emperor, the queen Mother, she observes the maxim of PP so as to gain appreciation and recognition. Sometimes she violates the maxims of CP for the sake of maintaining face and good relationship with them. In these aspects, CP, together with violation of its four maxims, explains how the conversational implicature is generated, and PP as complimentary to CP illustrates why CP is violated.

Secondly, different characters can make use of different language skills and employ corresponding speaking manners on different occasions, to addressees of different social status, so as to accurately express their intention and clearly convey her standpoints. This proves that it is necessary and feasible to study this TV series from the perspective of pragmatics. This new approach to analyze TV series and literary works helps enrich the traditional criticisms on TV series and literary works.

Finally, The Legend of Zhen Huan dominates the screen and endures, which is closely related to its very interesting lines. From the perspective of pragmatics, based on the theoretical level of the analysis of these lines, we can better absorb the nutrients in their language, better understand the plot, and understand Chinese culture.

However, Chinese culture emphasizes the values of modesty, implicitness, and restraint, which deeply influences people's linguistic communication styles. In verbal communication, Chinese people often exhibit a tactful attitude, which contrasts sharply with the more direct and open expression styles in Western culture. Therefore, when following and violating the Approbation Maxim and Modesty Maxim in verbal communication, Chinese people exhibit significantly different behaviors from those described by Leech [6].

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