Living Semantic and Pragmatic Aspects:

A Reading in Shakespeare's ROMEO AND JULIET*

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Abstract

Parallel to his outstanding literary career, Shakespeare is incomparable in terms of language and linguistics. The unique structures, coinages, and other innovations that he presented in the line of his writings clearly show his authority over English which he masters unrivaled.

This research is an attempt to show how Shakespeare tackled some major linguistic aspects, and to try to assess his approach to them. Semantics and pragmatics are applied there in his work and they are closely connected to the characterization. It is to follow an intriguing experiment, analyze its components and see how it works.

Basically, it is intended to highlight a strategy that Shakespeare made use of by embodying a linguistic aspect in a character letting the character to stand for it. Human representations of linguistic aspects are set masterly in *ROMEO AND JULIET* in a way that allows us to get sufficient information about the extent to which linguistic characterization is essential for Shakespeare. For him, language and communication are bound to characterization which creates harmony and compatibility and gives more credibility to the characters.

معايشة للناحيتين الدلالية والتداولية
قراءة في مسرحية روميو وجولييت لشكسبير*

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المستخلص

يعد شكسبير كاتباً لا يجارى بإمكانياته اللغوية فضلاً عن حرفته الأدبية المرموقة. وتبين التراكيب والاشتقاقات والابتكارات اللغوية الفريدة التي قدمها في سياق كتاباته بوضوح السلطة التي يتمتع بها على اللغة الانكليزية بشكل منقطع النظير.

كما يعد هذا البحث محاولة لاستبيان الكيفية التي استطاع بها شكسبير واعياً أم غير واعٍ أن يتعامل مع بعض النواح اللغوية الرئيسة، ولتقييم اسلوبه في مقاربتها. ففي أعماله هناك تطبيق للناحيتين الدلالية والتداولية ويرتبط هذا التطبيق ارتباطاً وثيقاً برسم الشخصيات لديه. ومن هنا يتابع البحث تجربة مثيرة قدمها الكاتب ويحلل مكوناتها ونجاعتها.

ويهدف البحث في الأساس إلى تسليط الضوء على الاستراتيجية التي استعملها شكسبير بتجسيد ناحية لغوية ما في شخصية معينة معطياً للشخصية نفس سمات تلك الناحية. فنجد أن التمثيلات الشخوصية للنواحي اللغوية وضعت بأتقان في مسرحية روميو وجولييت بشكل يتيح لنا الحصول على معلومات كافية عن اهمية رسم الشخصيات لغوياً عند شكسبير. فبالنسبة إليه ترتبط اللغة ارتباطاً وثيقاً برسم الشخصيات الأمر الذي يضفي توافقاً وانسجاماً أكبر لمعقولية الشخصية.

Introduction:

This research, no question, is not meant to show and evaluate Shakespeare's mastering of English language for he, simply is Shakespeare, the giant of English literature and certainly a language authority. Rather, it is dedicated to consider one characteristic feature he has, that is his understanding of man relating this to masterly conscious manipulation of the linguistic tools with which he paints his literary masterpieces and the characters in them, in particular.

Unwilling to go far from the point meant to be considered by drifting into the tides of admiration and acclaim for Shakespeare, one of his unforgettable works, ROMEO AND JULIET is selected for discussion. Reading this play many times, one can notice the presence of an underlying strategy the writer set for himself, to facilitate his work, to scale his characterization and to contrast his characters for a more effective end. The strategy mentioned I preferred to call 'human representations of linguistic aspects' in which he embodied some linguistic aspects in characters. The aspects in concern are the 'semantic' and the 'pragmatic' ones.

With a literary flavor, he dealt with pragmatics and semantics quite fairly. Moreover, his manipulation of the semantic and the pragmatic instances is feasible. He was fully conscious of the linguistic usages he interwove in all his works. In terms of characterization, there was a balancing equation through which he could give each character its due deal of convenience by putting suitable utterances in each character's mouth, i. e. the nobility their suitable language; the servants their suitable language, too.

At this point, it is essential to review some general definitions of each: semantics and pragmatics. First of all, one should indicate that both, semantics and pragmatics are rooted, in a way or another, in conversation, for it is considered even today "the primary setting of language use"[1] and certainly, conversation is dialogued in drama. Alluding to Grice's maxims, pragmatics is to do with the way in which language users tend often to "mean more than they say."[2] a thing that is made by means of "pragmatic implications" that he called "CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURES,"[3] and hence, we are made back again to conversation.

Yet, it is not fit to go defining pragmatics before defining semantics as it is the base level of language. Geoffrey Leech argues that, in semantics "meaning is defined purely as a property of expressions in a given language, in abstraction from particular situations, speakers, or hearers." [4] This means, of course, the primary lexical meaning irrelevant to any context, or in other words, the literalness of the words.

Another good comprehensive definition can be read in Al-Sulaimaan's SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS (2010). He sees that semantics deals with "the literal meaning of the words and the meaning of the way they are combined."[5] Again, we can see that meaning is strictly tied to literality in the scope of semantics. In respect to pragmatics, Al-Sulaimaan supposes that it is a field that encompasses "all the ways in which literal meaning must be refined, enriched or extended, to arrive at an understanding of what a speaker meant in uttering a particular expression."[6] On the other hand, we can see that Leech insists that pragmatics deals simply with "meaning in relation to speech situations"[7] which is the same conclusion attained earlier by Grice.

To sum it up, and upon the unanimity shown, it is fair to say that if semantics, in a word, is just about 'meaning,' pragmatics then, is all about 'meaning more.' Thus, it is evident that Shakespeare understood this linguistic binary well, and hence, consciously or unconsciously, they were applied in his writings specially in characterizing his characters. In ROMEO AND JULIET, he presented to us a couple of characters one of whom is bound to 'meaning' and the other to 'meaning more' aspects.

1. 1. Mercutio and Benvolio: the Linguistic Binary

In this research, two characters, Mercutio and Benvolio are selected from ROMEO AND JULIET for consideration.

Throughout the play, Mercutio is presented as raw[8], hasty and surface with low intelligence level. On the other hand, his friend and counterpart, is characterized as moderate, thoughtful[9], conscious and tending to rhetoric with good intelligence level. Going alongside these two characters, observing their speeches, actions and reactions, one can find many examples to quote. But, before setting out to track them up, it is noteworthy that some acronyms are suggested to indicate each character-bound linguistic characteristic. For Mercutio's character, LLP is used to indicate his 'limited linguistic perception.' As for Benvolio, ALP is used to indicate his 'adequate linguistic perception' not to fall in redundancy.

Both characters engage in a certain conversation about a letter that Romeo, their Montague friend received. Their linguistic perception varies in respect to what the letter was all about and how is Romeo to deal with it.

"BENVOLIO:

"Tybalt, the kinsman to old Capulet, hath sent a ***letter*** to his father's house."
MERCUTIO:
"A challenge, on my life."
BENVOLIO:
"Romeo will ***answer*** it."
MERCUTIO:
"Any man that can write may answer a letter."
BENVOLIO:
"Nay, he will answer the letter's master, how he dares, being dared.""[(10:78-79)]

Now, it is obvious that Mercutio took the **literality** of the speech by assuming that any man who can write can answer a letter by writing a replying letter. While, for Benvolio, it was not a matter of mere writing letter, instead he interpreted the challenge message conveyed by the letter assuming that Romeo is able to answer the challenge posed and to punish Tybalt not for daring but for being dared to dare.

There is another good example that goes along the aforementioned is there in the beginning of ACT THREE, SCENE I. Once again, Mercutio shows his LLP taking only the words denotations without deeper consideration. It was when he and Benvolio were in a street and Tybalt came looking for Romeo. Tybalt politely approached them.
Tybalt:
"… Gentlemen, good e'en; a **word** with **one** of you."
Mercutio:
"And but **one** word with **one** of us? … "[(10:105)]

Again, Mercutio took it surface sticking to the words in themselves. He insisted to stay on the semantic level seeing only the literality of the words.

In general, As far as communication is concerned, it is obvious that there is a lack of communication when it comes to Mercutio. He and the other characters around him, specially his friends are quietly aware of it. Ironically, Mercutio is always connected with words like 'wit' or 'wise' things that he is absolutely not. While acclaiming Romeo's with which he sees, contrasted with his own, "unerring,"[11] he admits his own LLP. Reproving Romeo's lack of courtesy in an occasion, he failed to keep up with Romeo, as the latter replaced 'curtsy' for 'courtesy':

Romeo:
"Meaning to curtsy?"
Mercutio:
"Thou hast most kindly hit it."

Romeo:
"Sure wit! … "[10: 82]

In the same scene, Romeo liked to go on the wordplay that Mercutio began trying to play the smart, and he pushes and beats him that he called for Benvolio to stand for him in Romeo's face:

Mercutio:
"Come between us, good Benvolio; my wits faints."

Then, as the conversation continues, he adds:

Mercutio:
"Nay, if our wits run the wild-goose chase, I am done, for thou hast more of the wild-goose in one of thy wits than, I am sure, I have in my whole five …" [10:83]

In another instance and in the same course, Mercutio confesses his LLP he begs Romeo not to misunderstand him trying to give little explanation to Romeo about what he means:

Mercutio:
"   I mean, sir, in delay …

Take our good meaning, for our judgment sits
Five times in that, ere once in our fine-wits."[10: 38]

In terms of intelligence levels, the variation between Mercutio and Benvolio can be illustrated by looking at the following instance. After the Capulets party was over, Benvolio and Mercutio could not find Romeo. Looking for him in vain, Mercutio bluntly inferred that Romeo went home to sleep:

Mercutio:
"He (Romeo) is wise,
And on my life hath stolen himself to bed."[10: 59]

His inference was far removed from all the circumstances like Romeo's new love for Juliet, and his late love for Rosaline which alienates him, driving him crazy and loving to be all alone in the wild that his love for her was denies because she decided to be a nun. By contrast, Benvolio's inference was more natural, intelligent and in context. He deduced that Romeo has hidden himself from them deliberately, unwilling to be found, benefitting of the darkness of the night:

Benvolio:
"Come; he hath hid himself among these trees
To be consorted with the humorous night;
Blind is his love, and best befits the dark."[10: 59]

As far as the two characters' reactions are concerned, they provide more information supporting the stated assumptions.

Mercutio is a close friend to Romeo and he wanted to get him out of his sorrow and torture because of his hopeless love. In one instance, he tried advising but the advice he presented was a kind of a blunt, stupid and totally non-meditated one:

Mercutio:

"If love be rough with you, be rough with love:
Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down."[10: 37]

On the contrary, Benvolio's intelligence and communication capabilities can be seen through his speeches. They are selected and tend usually to be ruled by the rhetoric and the grand style. For example, Benvolio tried to advise Romeo, also to get him out of the despair, and his advice is quite thoughtful. He said:

Benvolio:

"Tut, man, one fire burns out another's burning,
One pain is lessened by another's anguish;
Turn giddy, and be holp by backward turning.
One desperate grief cures with another languish:
Take thou some new infection to thy eye,
And the rank poison of the old will die."[10: 24]

Here, we can see, through both characters' actions, reactions, responses and communication that the linguistic perception for each is consciously and exquisitely determined by the structures of characterization.

Last but not least, and in the light of Leech's differentiating points between the two fields, semantics and pragmatics, and basing on the human representations of linguistic aspects strategy, a table is drawn to sum up the idea. It is as follows:

Mercutio/ the Semantic Aspect	Benvolio/ the Pragmatic Aspect
• His locution is rule or grammar-governed.	• His locution is principle-controlled.
• His grammatical explanations are primarily formal.	• His pragmatic explanations are primarily functional.
• His grammar is plainly ideational.	• Pragmatics is interpersonal.

These premises are set by Leech to differentiate between the two linguistic aspects and we can apply them on the two selected characters from ROMEO AND JULIET, as well. Applying the last point in Leech's table on Mercutio for instance, we see that his grammar is totally notion-bound, i. e. he is committed to the general notions and ideations of things around. He applies the general definitions of things and abstractions on single situations regardless of their situational peculiarities. The instance in which he tried to advice for Romeo serves well. "If love be rough with you, be rough with love:" He committed himself to the notion of 'roughness' and demanded Romeo to be 'rough' with love which is simply an abstraction.

Unlike Mercutio, Benvolio is all aware of the circumstances around. Tracing the linguistic side in his character, we may describe his grammar as being interpersonal. It is, by no means, committed to the general ideations of things. Rather, we see that it is situation-bound, and thus Benvolio interacts interpersonally. Moreover, we notice that he is much closer to Romeo than Mercutio that he pays more attention to what he (Romeo) feels and that is why Romeo confessed to him his love to Rosaline in the first hand. His counsel to Romeo while trying to know the source of his sadness shows it all: "One pain is lessened by another's anguish;" indicating that his 'pain'

would be 'lessened' if Romeo told him about the 'anguish' he experiences. In short, the linguistic binary presented by Shakespeare through both characters works well.

CONCLUSION

Obviously, one can say that Shakespeare had good knowledge of linguistics that he committed himself to certain structures for characterization. He did not overlap or change roles among the characters he put together in a work.

Also, he is to have keen interest in going deep into language. Eventually, that interest led him to personify some linguistic aspects applying the previously indicated strategy of human representations of linguistic aspects.

As far as semantics and pragmatics are concerned, Shakespeare sees that semantics is to do with the direct surface level of language. People tending to stick to this level are usually very young, raw, with low intelligence level. As for pragmatics, he sees that it is to do with things underneath the surface level of language. Rather, it is about the 'intentions' behind meanings. People tending to this level are mature, with ordinary and above intelligence level.

NOTES
1. Herbert H. Clark, PRAGMATICS OF LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE (England; Blackwell Publishers, 1988), p. 1.
2. H. P. Grice, LOGIC AND CONVERSATION. (New York; Faber and Faber Inc., 1975), P. 58.
3. Ibid.
4. Geoffrey Leech, PRICIPLES OF PRAGMATICS (English; Longman Group Ltd., 1983), p. 6.

5. Misbah M. Dawood Al-Sulaimaan, SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS (Iraq; Mosul, Maktab Al-Ula ,2010), p. 44.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid, 4.
8. www.gradesaver.com/shakespearestudy guide/cha.html
9. Ibid.
10. William Shakespeare, ROMEO AND JULIET (England; Longman Group Ltd., 1988), p. 78-79.
11. Ibid, P. 81.

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5. Shakespeare, William ROMEO AND JULIET. England, Longman Group Ltd., 1988.
6. www.gradesaver.com/shakespearestudy guide/cha.html