

## INDIRECT WARNING IN G. B. SHAW'S *PYGMALION*

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Language is a social instrument which people use to share their thoughts and ideas and to communicate. The study of meaning in relation to the context brings in the theory of pragmatics in the use of language. Pragmatics is the study of language use in a particular context to bring out the meaning of an utterance where semantics fails. Study in pragmatics should take into consideration the context of the utterance either it is uttered or printed in the form of a dialogue in a text. The application of the theories of pragmatics would unfold many layers of meaning of any given dialogue to enhance the meaning and bring out new interpretation to the understanding of the text, and it would also help the learner to understand the importance of using language in relation to the context. Pragmatics studies the use of language in context. It basically deals with conversational aspect of language and it is a context bound study of language use in society. David Crystal (1971: 243) says “pragmatics studies the factors which govern someone’s choice of language when they speak or write”. Pragmatics began to grow with the theories provided by the great philosophers like J. L. Austin, J. R. Searle, and H. P. Grice. The present paper focuses on the use of indirect speech acts by Shaw to present his ironical ideas.

### **Theories of Pragmatics**

The major theories and concepts of pragmatics that are used in the analysis of the dialogues are:

#### *Speech acts*

J. L. Austin delivered a series of William James lectures at Harvard University in 1955, which were printed posthumously in the form of a book in 1962 as *How to Do Things with Words*. The theory expounded in these lectures came to be known as the ‘Theory of Speech Acts.’ Austin discussed his theory of speech acts with his concept of ‘performative verbs’ and the ‘conditions for happy performatives’. Austin classified speech acts into five broad categories which are: Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behavitives, and Expositives. Searle, on the other hand, modified the five categories of speech acts into Representatives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives, and Declarations.

According to Austin, while making the use of language in conversation people perform three different types of acts simultaneously. They produce an utterance to make the hearer know what they mean and what the hearer has to do. The utterance of the sentence, on the part of the speaker, is termed by Austin as *locutionary act*. When people utter a sentence, they make a statement, a request, a promise, etc. with a certain conventional force associated with the verb, this is an *illocutionary act*. People try to get desired effect on the hearer, by performing an illocutionary act; the consequences of the illocutionary acts were termed by Austin as the *perlocutionary act*.

### *Direct Speech Acts and Indirect Speech Acts*

While performing actions through words speakers generally make use of sentences which have a particular form and a specific function. The linguistic forms and the functions conventionally associated with them are sometimes very strictly followed, whereas on some occasions the functions performed by the linguistic form uttered are not directly associated with the conventional function of the form. These direct and indirect associations of the form and function of an utterance lead to the classification of the speech acts into Direct Speech Acts and Indirect Speech Acts.

For example,

Did you eat my chocolates?

It is a Direct Speech Act, as the speaker has performed the act of questioning by using the interrogative form.

But if the speaker utters—My Chocolate box is empty.

The utterance, then, seems to be a declaration but it also implies that the speaker is making an indirect question to the hearer whether he knows anything about how his chocolate box is empty or if he himself has eaten the chocolates in the box.

### *Felicity Conditions*

According to the theory of speech acts, people make use of words to perform actions, which are typically marked, by the use of performatives. Austin says that performatives are not like ‘constatives’ that can be assessed by being either true or false. Performatives, rather, can only be felicitous or infelicitous depending on whether their felicity conditions are met or not.

For example,

i) I declare that he is dead.

This utterance would be infelicitous if the speaker does not have any authority of declaring anybody dead, if he is not a doctor.

Austin formulated six rules to be followed for making a performative happy. Searle, later on, modified the six rules of felicity conditions of performatives, given by Austin, into four major types. They are: Preparatory Condition, Propositional Content Condition, Sincerity Condition, and Essential Condition.

### *Cooperative Principle*

H. P. Grice formulated the theories of cooperative principle and conversational implicature. Grice stated the cooperative principle in the following words: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged”. (Grice, in Cole and Morgan, 1975: 45). Grice talks of the maxims of cooperative principle, which are:

#### Maxim of Quality

Try to make true contribution.

- a) Do not say what you believe to be false.
- b) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

#### Maxim of Quantity

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

#### Maxim of Manner

Be perspicuous

- a) Avoid obscurity of expression

- b) Avoid ambiguity
  - c) Be brief
  - d) Be orderly
- Maxim of Relation  
Be relevant.

### **The Story in Brief of Shaw's *Pygmalion***

The play is divided into five acts. The first act of the play begins at 11.15 p.m. with people running to take shelter at the Inigo Jone's church in Covent Garden vegetable market. A lady (Mrs. Eynsford Hill) and her daughter (Clara) are seen waiting for Freddy (son of Mrs. Eynsford Hill) who has gone to bring a cab as it is raining heavily and they need to go home. But the mother and the daughter leave the place in bus as Freddy is too late. Meanwhile, a Note taker (Higgins) comes to the place and starts taking notes of the pronunciation of the people present and passes comments about to which place they belong. The people present over there begin to be afraid of the Note taker thinking him to be a policeman; he also frightens the flower girl, Liza, who sells flower on the street. When Freddy comes with a cab he does not find his mother and sister there and he is informed by Liza that they went home by bus, and she takes the cab to home.

In the second act of the play, Higgins and Pickering are in the laboratory of Higgins and they listen to the phonetic sounds. Liza comes to the place of Higgins and asks him to give him lessons in English. Higgins agrees to give her lessons in English so that she could be a flower girl at a florist's shop. He accepts the challenge of Pickering to pass the flower girl like a duchess in six months by giving her the training of the proper and standard use of English. Mr. Doolittle, father of Liza, arrives at the house of Higgins to make some money out of his daughter being with Higgins, but Higgins thinks that he has come to take his daughter away and so he asks him to take his daughter with him. When Higgins comes to know that Mr. Doolittle wants money in place of his daughter then he questions his (Mr. Doolittle) moral sense to which Mr. Doolittle says that he cannot afford morals. The lessons in English for Liza start towards the end of the second act.

In the third act of the play, Higgins comes to his mother's house and for Mrs. Higgins, it is her at-home day. He has come there with Pickering and Liza to get the comments of her mother about how and what Liza talks. But the purpose of Higgins is interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Eynsford Hill, Clara and Freddy. Freddy sees Liza and he falls in love with her. Later in the act, Higgins takes Liza to pass like a duchess in a garden party in an Embassy in London, and no one present at the party could guess that she is a simple flower girl who sells flowers on the street, and that makes Higgins win the bet of passing Liza like a duchess as the time period of six months is not yet over.

The fourth act of the play is set at the house of Higgins. Higgins and Pickering are ready to go to sleep as they have returned from the 'garden party'. But before Higgins could go to sleep there occurs a hot conversation between him and Liza as she is very much worried about her future. She thinks that after the training she is not fit to go back to her earlier life of selling flowers on the street and she has no money to settle in a florist's shop. Liza finally leaves the house of Higgins, but she meets Freddy Eynsford Hill in the street; he is there to gaze at the room of Liza because he is in love with her.

The last act of the play takes place is in the drawing of Mrs. Higgins where Higgins has come to inform his mother that Liza has run away from his place. Mr. Doolittle also arrives there

as by then he has turned into a respectable man in the society from the position of a dustman. Mrs. Higgins informs Higgins that Liza is with her and she would allow him to talk to her only if he promises to behave in a proper manner. Higgins and Pickering talk to Liza and they ask her to come back to their place, but she goes away and finally she marries Freddy and opens flower shop with the financial assistance received from Pickering.

### **Analysis of Indirect Warning in Shaw's *Pygmalion***

To warn somebody is to make someone know that the speaker is either informing the hearer or making the hearer cautious about a certain act that would happen in future and which would have bad consequences for the hearer. It is, also, an act of suggesting the hearer to prepare himself to avoid the consequences of the happening.

According to Vanderveken (1990: 174), to warn is to have a proposition which “is future to the time of utterance as in the case of a prediction” but, in the directive use, “to warn someone to do something is to suggest that he do it while presupposing that it would be bad for him not to do it” (1990: 197).

#### Example 1

MRS PEARCE: Dont answer back, girl. You dont understand the gentleman.

*Pygmalion: Act II, p. 32*

Mr. Higgins, Pickering and Mrs. Pearce are having conversation pertaining to Liza and her future after her lessons in English by Higgins. During the conversation Higgins asks Mrs. Pearce to take Liza to the bath-room, to which Liza says that Higgins is a “great bully” (Act II: 32) and that is why she would not stay with him if she wishes so and that she would not allow anybody to wallop her. Mrs. Pearce, on hearing the words of Liza, makes the above utterance as an indirect warning to her.

The utterance of Mrs. Pearce is in the form of a declarative type of speech act which functions as a directive type of speech act to warn Liza about the possible bad consequences. Mrs. Pearce is Higgins's housekeeper and she knows well the way Higgins behaves and all about his mood and temperament, which makes Liza think it clearly that the above utterance by Mrs. Pearce is not just a simple declaration or praise of Higgins, it is an indirect warning that has the suggestion that she should try to avoid future bad consequence of the act by Higgins. Mrs. Pearce violates the maxim of quantity as she utters more than required information and only the utterance ‘Dont answer back, girl’ would have been sufficient to warn Liza. But her violation is intended to strengthen the degree of warning by violating the maxim she takes the liberty to add the utterance ‘You dont understand the gentleman’ which she feels necessary as Higgins is the owner of the house and she is only a house-keeper and so her warning would not have much impact on Liza. The primary illocutionary act is warning; the secondary illocutionary act is a simple statement of declaration.

#### Example 2

MRS PEARCE: If you please, sir, the trouble's beginning already.

*Pygmalion: Act II, p. 38*

Mrs. Pearce and Higgins are conversing where she suggests him to have good manners in front of Liza so that she could adopt. She asks for the permission to give Liza the Japanese dress to wear that Higgins has brought from abroad and she goes away for some time. Mrs. Pearce returns in short time and informs him about the arrival of Alfred Doolittle, father of Liza. She

makes the above utterance before she informs Higgins, which is an indirect warning embodied with suggestion.

The utterance of Mrs. Pearce is in the form declarative speech act, but its function is that of a directive speech act. The illocutionary force of the utterance is that of warning. She knew that Higgins has picked up Liza without the consent of any of her family members as she is a flower girl who sells flowers in street and so if any one comes in to claim the girl that would create problem for Higgins. She makes the above utterance to make Higgins be prepared for the consequences if anybody turns up for the claim of the girl. She makes the above utterance as an indirect warning to Higgins with the suggestion to be ready for the trouble that he would face with the ‘dustman’ who says that his daughter is with Higgins. The utterance is relevant to the context as Mrs. Pearce has already inferred that the man has come for Liza and that would create problem for Higgins. The primary illocutionary act is that of warning in the directive use and the secondary illocutionary act is that of a simple declaration of personal thinking with an implication of suggestion.

### Example 3

MRS HIGGINS: Ask Miss Doolittle to come down, please.

THE PARLOR-MAID: Yes, maam.

MRS HIGGINS: Now, Henry: be good.

*Pygmalion: Act V, p. 91*

Liza runs away from the house of Mr. Higgins and she has taken shelter in the house of Mrs. Higgins, the mother of Mr. Higgins, of which Higgins is unaware. He goes to his mother’s house to inform her that Liza has run away but he comes to know from his mother that Liza is with her. Mrs. Higgins says that she would ask Liza to come down to have a talk with him on the condition that he should promise to behave in good manners. Higgins agrees to behave in proper way and Mrs. Higgins asks her maid to call Liza. Before Liza comes down, Mrs. Higgins makes the second utterance which is an indirect warning to Higgins.

The utterance of Mrs. Higgins (‘Now, Henry: be good’) is in the form of declarative but the function it performs is of imperative form. It has the illocutionary force of irony as it is an indirect speech act. Mrs. Higgins makes the above utterance to have the proposition of future occurrence of the behaviour of Higgins in front of Liza. It has the effect that if he does not keep his manners good then she would not allow him to talk to Liza or to take her with him which would not be liked by him. The utterance is a violation of the maxim of relevance *as* it is not necessary in the whole effect of the conversation, but it becomes relevant when studied against the contextual background that makes it clear that the manner of Higgins is not a refined one and, for most of the time, it is a face-threatening act by him for the hearer. Higgins, too, knows that his mother does not generally consider his behaviour to be a refined one and so the above utterance could only be a warning to him to behave properly. It is an act of warning that also suggests Higgins to control his manners. The primary illocutionary act is that of a warning whereas the secondary illocutionary act is that of a declaration.

### **Conclusion**

The pragmatic interpretation of literary text would also help developing a better strategy to use language for successful communication. The analysis of the selected dialogues has also put forward the following findings.

To warn someone indirectly, Indirect Speech Acts are used by the characters. They use declarative type of speech act to function as directive type of speech act which performs the

primary illocutionary act of warning through the secondary illocutionary act of declaration as analysed in examples 1, 2, and 3.

The declarative type of speech acts perform the function of a declaration but the primary illocutionary force associated with could be used to warn someone.

People generally warn someone in direct speech act and in very rare occasions indirect utterance of warning is uttered.

Shaw uses indirect warning to minimize the negative consequences of the bad happenings that the hearer is about to presuppose.

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