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内 容 简 介

本书属于跨学科研究:1)以文学语篇的交流性特征为出发点,在文体学、语用学和语篇分析相结合的基础上提出了语用文体学的分析模式;2)以文学批评和文体学研究涉及得最少的文学体裁——戏剧——为研究对象,深入探讨了戏剧语言的特征和戏剧文本的多重属性,把长期以来被传统的文学批评、戏剧批评和文学文体学研究所忽视的戏剧语言——舞台指令——纳入语用文体学研究的范围;3)通过对西方荒诞剧代表作家厄内斯库的三部剧本进行宏观和微观分析,指出了作者在同一文本中对待不同功能性读者的不同修辞手法以及戏剧语篇中复杂的作者-读者关系。本研究拓宽了语用学和文体学的研究范围和层面,同时也对西方戏剧批评和文学研究有一定贡献。

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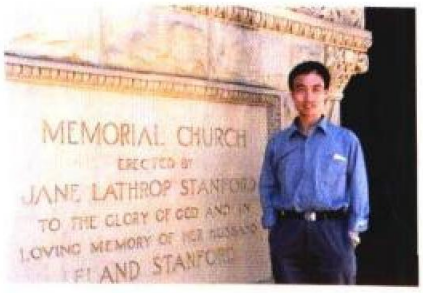

Feng Zongxin, born in 1962, was educated at Peking University and got his M.A.and Ph.D. degrees in English Language and Literature. From 1998 to 2000, he was a post-doctoral research fellow at the Linguistics Research Centre, Beijing Foreign Studies University.From 2000 till present, he has been on the teaching staff of Tsinghua University, currently the Director of Graduate Studies in the Foreign Languages Department.

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Much as I owe to my supervisors and all those who have helped me in one way or another, none of them shares in any sense any of the possible inadequacies and lapses likely existing in this book. Should anything happen to have been dealt with in a way other than it should have been more appropriately considered or organised, I myself ought to take the sole responsibility.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Stylistics, which may be most commonly defined as "the study of style" (Wales, 1989: 437; Leech, 1985: 39), is a discipline that can be traced back to ancient Greece. However, modern stylistics started at the beginning of the twentieth century from Charles Bally, who developed and scientificalised the classic rhetoric by making use of Saussurean structuralist linguistic theory, and it became well established as an academic discipline in the 1960s. The development of modern stylistics has benefited a lot from modern linguistics. Ever since its establishment, modern stylistics has been a field much debated by both literary critics and linguists. It is, and at the same time is not, an independent discipline due to its various characteristics, both theoretical and practical.

By this definition it is meant that stylistics is both disciplinary and multi-disciplinary. I would like to start from the amalgamic nature of stylistics. But issues concerning this discipline, such as linguistics as its basis, literature as its object of study, the relationships between language and literature have to be clarified. For, while stylistics is often the study of literature based on linguistic description and analysis, linguistics is, however, regarded as having nothing to do with literary studies. Literature is made out of language, whereas those involved in the studies of language and of literature for a long time in the past did not see that they were talking

about the same thing. Stylistics as a mediatory discipline, together with the developments of linguistic and literary theories of the 1980s and 1990s, can serve as a powerful tool for both more explicit linguistic description and analysis with less impressionistic and therefore more convincing literary interpretation. It is necessary, first of all, to discuss some problems concerning language studies and literature studies, linguistic and literary criticism, etc.

1.1 Language and Literature: A Special Relation

Language is the material for literary creation and the chief medium for literary communication, and hence the concept of rich exploitation of language would be meaningless without taking into account literature, which is deemed as "verbal art" , "verbal artefact" (Halliday, 1983: viii), and "a linguistic form of art" (van Peer, 1991: 127).

Although there has been a keen awareness of language in literary studies from Aristotle onwards, and although linguists have been attentively responsive to literature, the bridging between the two kinds of studies has not been stable. The essential relation of language and literature presumes that the two approaches are close neighbours working on the same ranch. Yet the division of labour leads different practitioners to assume different views on what they are doing, hence resulting in hostile attitudes toward each other's work.

In spite of the essential complementarity and seeming inseparability of the two, language studies, whether in the form of the pre-20th-century philology or in the form of the 20th-century modern linguistics, have been held in opposition to literary studies, with linguists (supposedly) giving little attention to literature or being reluctant to admit literary studies to their discipline and literary theorists being even less welcoming of linguistic criticism.

The general situation between language and literature studies can be characterised as one of disharmony. Literary scholars frown upon linguists' formalist methods of describing literary writing with stubborn rationality.

They feel that such an enterprise does not do any justice to the real "literary" nature of the works, and they therefore prefer to exclude linguistics and linguists from their field of study altogether. Since literature also deals with emotions and with the irrational side of human existence, they feel that little help is to be expected from an all-too-narrowly-defined rational approach. Linguists, on the other hand, are not satisfied with the work of literary scholars due to the looseness of their terms and their methods, their superficial linguistic knowledge and their lack of system. As a result, linguists also question the validity of many conclusions arrived at in literary scholarship.

1.1.1 The Opposition

The language/literature opposition can be traced to the traditional division of English studies, which, according to Roger Fowler (1971: 1-2), is most evidently reflected in the division of "the literature syllabus" and "the language syllabus" in British universities. At many universities in the 1950s, English departments were staffed by people with two different kinds of training and interests. As literary studies gained ascendancy, "language" was presented as an archaic irrelevance at best and an inimical source of potential contamination at worst. The position of the philologists became an entrenched defence under constant attack. The regular "Berlin Wall" down the middle of the English studies existed and the flavour of the dispute between the warring factions could be sensed. Fowler summarises the history of English studies in England as presenting "a lamentable spectacle of two close neighbours jealously fencing in their pastures and defending them at any cost, including irrational argument" (Fowler, 1971: 2).

Mary Louise Pratt (1977) describes language/literature opposition in America in a similarly humorous way, making an analogy that the Modern Language Association and the Linguistic Society of America have held their annual meetings at the same time and in the same city, but in different hotels. Both feel that their disciplines belong in each other's vicinity, but they do not change programs or street guides; so to get from one place to another you have to find your own way.

Roger Sell (1991: xii-xiv) summarises that the opposition of such is one between linguistic studies and literary studies in a more general sense. For, all too often, when the world's language specialists and literature specialists talked to each other, they have talked at cross purposes. Language study comprises everything from hard-core linguistics to conversation analysis, and literary study consists of everything from humanistic criticism to deconstruction. There has been some temptation to drop all dialogue and defensively cultivate one's own little patch. Ironically, those who try to bring the two sides together have sometimes been accused of understanding neither, and the situation is complicated by the further sub-specialisation in the field of language studies and literary studies alike.

Fowler's account concerns the situation in Britain, and Pratt's account concerns the situation in America. Sell's account covers the situation in general in the English-speaking world. The difficulty of communication between linguists and critics, and the problem of the applicability of linguistic methods and ideas to the study of literature are largely based on the paradoxical relationship of the two disciplines. On the one hand, it is impossible for literary studies to escape from linguistics. On the other hand, linguistics can not yet offer necessary concepts and methods of appropriate literary studies. While linguistics can not do without considering literary texts, literature offers special difficulties.

When specialists in either of the disciplines keep within their own circles, no perceptible tension can be observed. But whenever they start to interact, all sorts of frictions become obvious, and these frictions have been labelled as professional (syllabus) "division", neighbourhood "quarrel", "strife" (Fowler, 1971), and disciplinary (poetics/non-poetics) "opposition" (Pratt, 1977), which lead to mutual ignorance and lack of dialogue due to mutual "misunderstandings" (Sell, 1991), and mutual "mistrust" (van Peer, 1989). Fowler (1971: 3) attributes the opposition to a failure of the two disciplines to understand, or a reluctance to get to know, each other. In his opinion, the ignorance is mutual, and further, "the general level of knowledge about literature and criticism among linguists is higher than 'lettrists'". I do not dare to agree with Fowler on his last assertion, especially in the context I know, since there may be even stronger

oppositions from the literary side if practitioners of linguistics claim to work on the study of literature. However, it is undeniable that linguistics has become a valid and applicable tool in the study of language—all varieties of language, and linguists and stylisticians armed with the tool, especially since Halliday and Enkvist's first works, have paid more attention to literary aspects of language than literary scholars do to linguistic aspects of literature.

On the whole, the situation has been changing for the better. According to Sell (1991), changes have taken place due to a particular configuration of circumstances, and interdisciplinary studies have been well on the way with promising results and remarkable influence.

1.1.2 The *Rapprochement*

Current literary studies involve such issues as the position of literature within the larger sphere of culture, the relationship between literatures of different cultures, and the questions concerning the relation of literary to other cultural forms within the context of interdisciplinary studies. While the opposition of linguistic studies and literary studies can be seen from a larger sphere, an old problem still remains as an obstacle. Although there have been various types of definitions of literature and there are various ways of dealing with literary studies, the question "What is literature?" is still a chief concern. To find an answer, Russian formalists in an earlier period turned to linguistics and some recent trends turned to interdisciplinary approaches such as literary pragmatics. Still more recent studies have been carried out by empirical literary researchers in Northern Europe throughout the 1990s, who have turned to psychology and cognitive sciences for methodological breakthroughs.

In his preface to *Literary Pragmatics*, Sell (1991) attributes the *rapprochement* between linguistic studies and literary studies in Finland as a breakthrough outside the English-speaking world due to two reasons. First, the English department of Å bo Akademi University, Finland, is a foreign-language department, so that the linguistic aspects of literary texts would in any case receive some attention. Second, it is still a small department and is

much more likely to hold together intellectually. But I think that non-native English speakers are in a position free of traditional bias of the English world in terms of the language/literature opposition and thus they can see more rationally, or, at least, less passionately, the close relationship between language and literature. In this way, they can more actively apply new theories of linguistics and related disciplines to their work. Moreover, I do not think this "new" situation is alone in Finland or in other non-English-speaking countries. In a larger context including the English-speaking world, interface studies have been in progress with the growth of stylistics and discourse theories. Against the background of the opposition between language and literary studies, it is stylistics that has witnessed happy moments by trying to combine both approaches in the study of literature or literary texts. Works of such scholars as Jakobson (1960), Halliday *et al.* (1964), Halliday (1973), Enkvist *et al.* (1964), Leech (1977), Carter (1982), Carter and Simpson (1989), etc. have demonstrated close relations between linguistics and literary studies from interdisciplinary perspectives.

Studies of language and literature have also been connected in the field of language teaching from the 1970s onwards. Works include Fowler (1971, 1981, 1986), Halliday (1973, 1983), Widdowson (1975, 1978, 1986), Chapman (1982), Carter (1982, 1986), Carter and Burton (1982), Carter and Nash (1983, 1990), Cummings and Simmons (1983), Long (1986), Brumfit and Carter (1986), Burke and Brumfit (1986), Short and Candlin (1986), Carter and Long (1987), Carter and Simpson (1989), Durant and Fabb (1990). And more work has been done since 1990. Unlike Sell (1991), I do think that there are two more important reasons behind this *rapprochement:* First, the field of language teaching has taken a serious interest in literature, in departments of modern languages, of linguistics and applied linguistics, as well as in the department of English language and literature, forming a contrast to earlier oppositions in most British civic universities as described by Fowler. Even then (in the 1950s) University College London attached some importance to linguistic studies of literature. For example, in his introduction to *Linguistic Criticism*, Fowler (1986: 2) states, when he was a college student, "it was well accepted that commentary on language was a normal and essential practice within literary

criticism: essential for coaxing out the complexity of literary texts" . Second, applied linguistics has necessitated such an undertaking under the influence of the general trend of interface studies armed with modern linguistic theories and stylistical methodology. But this may be only one side of the story, because in the English-speaking world those involved in interface and interdisciplinary studies of language and literature are mostly on the linguistic side. One could say that linguists are making attempts of carrying out dialogues, but one-way only. Yet the situation is changing. For example, not only The Poetics and Linguistics Association chaired by Ronald Carter, Professor of Modern English Language at Nottingham University, is one of the several organisations promoting a dialogue between linguistics and literature, but also the Modern Language Association (MLA) has a Division on Linguistic Approaches to Literature. Nationally and internationally, linguistics and literary theory are no longer considered as separate disciplines but related fields of study that require each other's insights for meaningful access to literary texts.

1.1.3 The Language of Literature and Literary Language

The controversy concerning the problematic relations between language and literature studies can boil down to the nature of the language in literature: the language of literature vs. literary language. While literature is made of language, literary theorists do not agree on what literature is (See Eagleton, 1983; Carter, 1989b). Although the language of great literature of the world's masters can be labelled as "literary" , there is no satisfactory definition for literary language. When we say that the language of Shakespeare or Milton is by definition, literary, it is like telling someone what classic music is by pointing to his or her CD collection. This way of definition actually explains nothing. Moreover, it is hard to find certain features that can be exclusively literary, or even poetic in Russian Formalists' views. Formalists see literary language as a set of deviations from a norm, a kind of "linguistic violence" , and they see literature as a "special" kind of language in contrast to the " ordinary " language we commonly use

(Eagleton, 1983: 4). But deviant uses of language do not appear in literature alone, and it is impossible to find a list of words and constructions that have inherently deviant, violent, or special in all contexts of use. While Formalists presume "making strange" as the essence of literary language, they cannot explain whether an isolated utterance (from great works of literature) is literary. For example, when the famous modern Chinese poet Zang Kejia's highly "literary" lines

While some people are dead
They are alive
While some people are living
They are dead

are pronounced by an obviously shallow, mundane, and pretentious actor in a recent bad TV theatre, it has served its best purpose of being disgusting and de-appetising.

Carter (1989b) points out that the term "literature" means different things in different periods of the history of English literature. He puts forward six criteria for "literariness" by seeing the relation between literary and non-literary language as a continuum. When he defines literary language, he considers the features of non-literary discourse and what he is actually defining is non-literary language rather than literary language. While Formalists and structuralists tried to define literary language by focusing on "poetic" language without giving due attention to non-poetic language, Carter seems to define literary language by emphasising non-literary language, similar to the way many contemporary literary theorists do in defining literature by saying what literature is NOT. Thus, Carter's argument, although seeming closer to the truth, can not solve the problem noticed by Traugott and Pratt (1980: 20) that a religious poem is literature in an anthology while it is not literature in a collection of hymns. In his line of argument, the explanation could be like this. On the one hand, a religious poem experiences spatial changes by appearing in an anthology and in a collection of hymns. Hence, whether it is literature does not depend on its inherent linguistic features. On the other hand, when a religious poem appears in an anthology, it is literature; and when it appears in a collection of hymns, it is still literature, because it does not conform to his criterion of

"non-literary" language.

Short and Candlin have the following observations:

> It is difficult to make a linguistic distinction between literature and the rest of language. By this we mean that despite a widespread assumption to the contrary, we know of no particular linguistic feature or set of linguistic features which are found in literature but not other kinds of text.
>
> (Short and Candlin, 1986: 107)

Although it is possible to list the rhetorical strategies that give literature its distinctive quality, these rhetorical devices are not exclusively for literature alone. Journalistic discourse, advertising discourse, even graffiti, can be poetic or literary. A sensational newspaper headline can be more deviant and striking than a piece of recognised literature (Halliday, 1983). Many other types of public discourse (especially advertisement) depend much of their impact on memorable or startling figures of speech that are often thought the exclusive domain of poetry.

Notably, Mukarovsky, one of the active scholars of the Prague School and the author of the classical essay "Standard Language and Poetic Language", holds a functional view of literary language (Mukarovsky, 1932; 1977). He claims that if a text is highly valued this is not because it is written in any special language evolved for the purpose but because of the functions to which the language is addressed, for there is no such thing as a literary genre. Halliday speaks highly of Mukarovsky's contribution to the task of linguistic study of texts (Halliday, 1988: vii), and in an earlier work (Halliday, 1983: xi) objects to the deviation theory which sees deviation as a defining characteristic of literary language, saying that it is from conformity that a text derives its meaning, however linguistically innovative. Very few literary texts depend their impact on a departure from the norms of the language in which they are composed. Thus, literature is made of language, not in the sense that architecture is made out of steel and concrete, but in the analogy that dancing is made out of movements of the body. Steel and concrete are formless until some pattern is imposed on them by the builder, but language is not formless. Dancing starts from everyday actions like leaping and balancing and reaching that are not formless but

already highly orchestrated and meaningful patterns of bodily movement. It is out of these patterns that further patterns are created, and it is when we become aware of these second-order patterns that we come to recognise something we call dancing, or bodily art. Therefore, to say that literature is made of language is in no way to deny that it has a special status as verbal art. Halliday does not use such terms as "literature" or "literary text", but "verbal art" and "verbal artefact" in the literary tradition of Russian Formalism and Prague School. This very naming or reference indicates that he still recognises the special relationship between language and literature and is positive as to the special status of literary texts against the background of texts in general. He says that by analysing a literary text as a verbal artefact, we are asserting its status as literature. And it is only "when language is put under attention that it becomes a piece of verbal art" (Halliday, 1983: viii).

Sociolinguists and functional linguists use a term "register", which is often discussed in terms of "field", "tenor", and "mode", to make comparisons between different genres of language. Register refers to a fixed pattern of vocabulary and grammar that regularly co-occurs, and is conventionally associated, with a specific context. In short, it links variation in language use to variation in situation. In spite of the fact that certain communicative contexts regularly predict certain registers, literary communication is a notable exception. This is because literature is simply not a register of language: literary discourse is a variety of language use, but not in the normal sense. It has the capacity to assimilate and absorb registers producing complex and multi-layered patterns of communication. According to Brumfit and Carter (1986: 8-9), a literary text is almost the only context where different varieties of language can be mixed and still admitted. Any deviation from norms of lexis and syntax in legal documents would be inadmissible... any non-literary linguistic form can be pressed into literary service. Writers will exclude no language from a literary function.

Thus, literary language is a quality conferred upon texts according to what they *do* rather than according to what they *are*. Just as "weeds" are not particular plants in a certain taxonomic system of "phylum—subphylum—class—subclass—order—family—genus—species" in biology,

there is no permanent or fixed linguistic and taxonomic feature for "literature" or "literary language" . These terms are *functional* term rather than *ontological*: they tell us about what we do, not about the fixed being of things. The same kinds of plants treated as weeds by one gardener who eradicates them may be treated as useful plants (for medicinal purposes) by another gardener who cultivates them. In a similar fashion, a piece of great writing regarded as poetic and literary in one context may be banal or even boring in another. Just as there is no such thing as "weed" , so there is no such thing as "literary language" . In a larger context, there are no items in any known modern language vocabulary or grammar that can be inherently and exclusively literary.

Likewise, literary theorists of the post-structuralist section have roughly the same relational and functional view. Derrida (1978) holds that writing, like any process of language, works by *différance* (meaning "differing" and "deferring"). This challenges the conception of texts as having fixed centres of meaning. He argues that meaning is best understood in terms of the relationship between the known and the unknown, presence and absence, the stable and the unstable. For Derrida, a text is a complex network of unfinished meanings, and reading becomes a much more dynamic activity. A text may show us something about the nature of meaning and signification that is not able to formulate as a proposition. While literary writing shows this most obviously, it is true of all other types of writing. This is where deconstructionist views reject the literary/non-literary opposition as an absolute distinction.

By functionally denying the special status of literary language, stylisticians do not mean to debunk literature as a discipline, but to emphasise the full panoply of linguistic resources available to writers. As Simpson (1997: 8) points out, literary discourse derives its effectiveness from its exploitation of the entire linguistic repertoire. Literary communication thrives not on the presence of a clearly defined linguistic code but on the very absence of such a code.

In fact, the question of what is literature can best be answered in such a way that its special status as a verbal artefact should not be underestimated while its ordinariness as linguistic text similar to any other text should not

be overestimated. According to van Peer (1991: 127), since literature is an art form dependent on a specific medium—language, and since the use of language is not a sufficient but necessary condition for the existence of literature, it will be assumed that literature is a *linguistic* form of art. Based on Pratt's (1977) theoretical considerations, van Peer concludes, "literature is a complex symbolic form of acting socially" (van Peer, 1991: 140).

The *rapprochement* of language and literary studies has several aspects worth mentioning. For one thing, as an inevitable result of the general trend of interdisciplinarity in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the rigid distinction of literary from non-literary language is no longer a set criterion for literature, and the irrational debates between language scholars and literature scholars seem less and less justifiably grounded. From Russian Formalists' criteria of "literariness" (*literaturnost*) of literature to more recent views on literature from functionalist perspectives, there has been a great change. Scholars generally agree that only in one sense is literary language the language of literature, because in the history of "literature", this term has meant different things at different times. In fact, literature is subject to constant change and it is not universally the same everywhere but eminently negotiable, and there cannot be some essence that can be ontologically regarded as exclusively belonging to literature. As Carter (1989b) has noted, "differently positioned readers may well frame different answers to questions concerning the nature of literary language". In a joint work, Carter and Nash (1983: 123-24) have argued that to polarise language as either literary or non-literary leads to the assigning of values to particular kinds of language, valorising and polarising the literary against the non-literary. For another, the *rapprochement* is not simply a bridging of the two disciplines but an approach to the study of literature in a new light and from a wider perspective.

1.1.4 Literature as Text and as Discourse

Widdowson (1975: 7) says that literature has attracted the attention of linguists for two opposing reasons: (1) It represents data that can be accounted for in terms of models of linguistic description; (2) It represents

data which can not be so accounted for.

Literary text and literary discourse are actually different concepts. Widdowson (1975) distinguishes literature into literature as text and literature as discourse. He says that it is common to find instances of language use which can not be accounted for by grammatical rules. Usually the linguist's statement about deviant sentences is about the lines as text. Although it is possible to specify the nature of text by referring to the rules lexical collocation and grammar, the linguist often faces the problem of the relation between grammaticality and interpretability. This is because a piece of language, literary or otherwise, is not only an exemplification of linguistic categories, but also a piece of communication. In fact, any piece of communication, whether spoken or written, is discourse of one kind or another. Unlike other types of writing, sentences in literature as text may be ungrammatical. Bizarre collocations and ungrammatical sentences sometimes make little sense on the level of text. But these deviant phenomena in literary writings, especially poems, are meaningful and interpretable, and therefore acceptable in literature as discourse. Thus, a text is static, and a discourse is dynamic. What is ungrammatical and deviant on the level of text is acceptable, interpretable, communicable and significant on the level of discourse.

Actually, this is true of all types of discourse, because, as the French historian Michel Foucault points out, discourse is an important human activity and a historical cultural phenomenon. Sociologically and sociopolitically, it is a structure, a function, a relation, and a process. One of the central aims of Foucault is to demonstrate that texts mean not because of their supposed "objective" structures, but because they are the result of discourse formations which are intricated in the ideological system of a society. In this sense, the term discourse indicates formations that are much larger than individual language texts. According to Fairclough (1988), all texts are political because all discursive formations are political. Critical linguists and discourse analysts hold that discourse is closely related to ideology and social structure (Fowler, 1981, 1986; Kress and Hodge, 1979; Joseph and Taylor, 1990). Thus, analysis of discourse is an analysis of history, politics, ideology, and social practices.

Cluysenaar (1976) sees literature as acts of communication, Fowler sees literature as processes rather than objects, and it is based on this observation that he developed his theory of "literature as social discourse" (1981) following Halliday's model of "language as social semiotic" (1978). When we see literary writing as discourse, we can find some global features of literary discourse. In this way, Feng (1996) sums up some global features of literary discourse as:

(1) The essential unity of formal contradictions. While all types of discourse share some features of deviance or deviation from the norm, literary discourse has its systematic patterning or discourse cohesion. When "ordinary" pieces of language enters literary discourse, they lend special effect to it on a macro level. That is why some of the monotonous passages, such as a recipe, a doctor—patient talk, and the like, can be discursively significant.

(2) Doubleness in the patterns of communication. While literary writing is removed from its immediate social context, it is public discourse. Although it is the characters that are talking in the fictional world, it is the author in the real world that is held as responsible for what the characters say.

(3) Artistic fictionality. Literary discourse distinguishes itself in terms of its global effect of combining insight and cognition in a way any other types of writing can rarely do. What makes literary discourse is not what language is used, but how language is used in a mosaic of mosaics.

People on the linguistic side are reluctant to claim that linguistics can offer the literary critic new insights into works of literature, for the development of linguistics used to struggle with utterances of a single sentence. Since literary texts are utterances, literary works by definition form part of the data for which the linguistic theory must account. In view of the language/literature opposition discussed above, Pratt (1977) says that both linguists and critics have been at fault in regarding the linguistic analysis of literature as some kind of special case of applied linguistics. As Halliday (1964) suggests, any theory of language use will ultimately have to

describe literary utterances to the same extent it can describe any utterances.

1.2 Why Pragmastylistics?

"Pragmastylistics" refers to a discourse-oriented approach by blending "stylistics" with "pragmatics", which has come from "pragmatism" or "pragmaticism", a philosophical doctrine that "evaluates any assertion solely by its practical consequences and its bearing on human interests".① In language studies, although this field is termed "linguistic pragmatics" or "pragmalinguistics,"②it is more conveniently termed pragmatics (from Greek word *pragma*, meaning "deed"), first used by scholars interested in questions of meaning. It is now well established in everyday use to mean "practical", even "dogmatic".

Every contribution to the vast and multilfaceted discipline of stylistics will involve an engagement with style. The term "style" actually has a multiplicity of definitions and conceptions (Hu, 1996: 357-58; Shen, 1995: 15-21). Just as style can be defined in a number of different ways, so stylistics as a field of study can refer to different studies of style or styles. The very form of the term "stylistics" suggests a scientific and orderly, rather than an intuitive or impressionistic, investigation of style. Charles Bally, the father of modern stylistics, remarked that "stylistic observation" must be distinguished from the observation of facts of style. Thus there are two separate levels of study: a general, methodical and scientific discipline; and an application of its methods or postulates to the analysis of the "style" of a specific utterance, text, speaker, writer or movement or period.

Stylistics has a specifically linguistic function. It offers an invaluable testing ground for theories and constructs in linguistics. Many linguistic theories are highly abstract and do not rest easily beside actual language use. The experimental and creative discourse that characterises much literary

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① *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 7th edn. p. 805.

② Leech's use of the term (1983a: 11) refers to a branch of general pragmatics in opposition to "socio-pragmatics", while Wales's use of the term (1989: 368) is the same as linguistic pragmatics in opposition to pragmaticism in philosophy.

communication makes it an excellent site for investigating theories about language. It has become an axiom in stylistics that we often perceive conventional modes of language only through exposure to deviant or distorted ones. In this respect, literary discourse has an important role to play in that it often highlights the norms of communication by its very departure from them.

Many people agree that stylistics is a method of textual analysis on the structure and function of language. This is because finding out about what writers do is a good way of finding out about language.

Modern stylistics can assist critical readings through linguistic patterns in literary texts. Because its methods are systematic and principled, stylistics allows different readers to come to an interpretative "consensus" about a text.

A popular misconception in literary-critical circles is that stylistics is some sort of impersonal mechanical device that dismantles literary texts and scour for significant features of language that influence reading or interpretation. For example, the American literary theorist and critic M. H. Abrams, in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Abrams, 1981: 192), defines "stylistics" as "a method of analysing works of literature which proposes to replace the 'subjectivity' and 'impressionism' of standard criticism with an 'objective' or 'scientific' analysis of the style of literary texts." This definition is far from being accurate in the eyes of stylistic practitioners, since, as has been pointed out by Simpson (1997: 3), it fails to characterise stylistics with an effective method of literary study. The quotation marks given to the terms of *subjectivity, impressionism, objective*, and *scientific* are enough to imply the definer's doubt about the status of stylistics.

It is to be noted that stylistics is not absolutely "objective" in the sense some people in the literary circle may assume. Carter and Simpson (1989), Short (1996), Simpson (1997), among others, have already expounded this point. Stylistics is "objective" in the sense of being less impressionistic than traditional literary criticism, or "objective" in terms of its modes of argumentation (Shen, 1995) by making systematic and consistent analysis and interpretation by taking language as a special social fact. Thus,

stylistics is not a thoroughly depersonalised activity in which the analyst is somehow removed from the analysis. As Halliday (1983) points out, analysis already involves interpretation. Although they are terminologically different, they are operationally going on in the same process. In this view, the stylistic analyst is always present in stylistics: he or she chooses a text for study, has intuitions about the meaning of this text and selects certain linguistic models as he or she sees appropriate to the task. As has been discussed by both literary theorists and linguists, there is not single "correct" meaning of a piece of text conditioned in certain contexts, so there is no single "correct" interpretation of a text under analysis. Different readers, because of their different sociolinguistic and sociocultural backgrounds, can bring different interpretations to the same text. Based on linguistic models, stylistics can serve as a "toolkit" (Carter and Simpson, 1989; Simpson, 1997) in bringing principled, rigorous, and consistent analysis and interpretation.

Simpson (1997: 4-6) lists some of the main assets of modern stylistics as follows. First, stylistics is a method of applied language study which uses textual analysis to make discoveries about the structure and function of language. Second, stylistics has a critical potential for literary study. In its literary-interpretative guise, it can assist critical readings by highlighting and explaining linguistic patterns in literary texts. Third, stylistics has a specifically linguistic function. It offers an invaluable testing ground for theories and constructs in linguistics. The experimental and creative discourse that characterises much literary communication makes it an excellent site for investigating theories about language which have been developed. It has become an axiom in stylistics that we often perceive conventional modes of language only through exposure to deviant or distorted ones. Finally, stylistics facilitates the comparison of different genres of language. In this generic application, emphasis is placed on the relationship of literature to other types of discourse. Leech and Short present clearly the rationale for the generic component in stylistics:

> Linguistics places literary uses of language against the background of more "ordinary" uses of language, so that we see the poet or novelist making use of the same code, the same set of

> communicative resources, as the journalist, or the garden wall gossip... It is unthinkable that the literary artist should cut himself adrift from the all-embracing role that language has in our everyday lives. So literary expression is an enhancement, or a creative liberation of the resources of language which we use from day to day.
>
> (Leech and Short, 1981: 6-7)

When examining literary discourse against the totality of discourses, stylistics is essentially a comparative method of study. The assumption behind is that a better understanding of literary communication can be reached only if it is viewed as contiguous with other discourses. At the same time, stylistics emphasises intersubjective intuition and this role can allow different readers to come to an interpretative "consensus" about a text, on a principled and systematic procedure.

I have appropriated the term "pragmastylistics" from Leo Hickey's use of it in *The Pragmatics of Style* (1989) based on Roger Sell's "literary pragmatics" (1991) in analogy, as I find, to Leech's term "pragmalinguistics" (Leech, 1983a: 11) for my pragmatics-oriented approach to stylistic studies of literary discourse.

1.2.1 The Concerns of Pragmatics

The term "pragmatics" was first introduced in *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* by Charles W. Morris, who contrasts pragmatics with semantics and syntax. For Morris, pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that deals with the relation of signs to interpreters and to users. It reflects the relationship between speech and context, and accounts for what syntax and semantics cannot account for. Pragmatics as a discipline became formally established in the 1970s, with the growth of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and functional grammar which can be seen as a reaction against the approach to problems of language in the influential works of Chomsky and his followers. Levinson, in the first chapter of his *Pragmatics* (1983: 9-27), lists a series of definitions:

> (1) Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalised, or encoded in the structure of

language;

(2) Pragmatics is the study of all those aspects of meaning not captured in a semantic theory;

(3) Pragmatics has as its topic those aspects of the meaning of utterances which cannot be accounted for by straightforward reference to the truth conditions of the sentences uttered. Put crudely: PRAGMATICS = MEANING - TRUTH CONDITIONS (by Gazdar, 1979: 2);

(4) Pragmatics is the study of the relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding;

(5) Pragmatics is the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate;

(6) Pragmatics is the study of deixis (at least in part), implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and aspects of discourse structure.

But Levinson himself finds none of these definitions satisfying. In fact, groups after groups of scholars have been trying to propose definitions for this discipline. Stalnaker (1972: 383) takes pragmatics as the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed. Akmajian *et al* (1979: 267) define pragmatics as the study of language use and communication. Kempson (1975: 84) defines it as a theory which seeks to characterise how speakers use the sentences of a language to effect successful communication. Leech (1983a: x) defines pragmatics as "the study of how utterances have meanings in situations" . Crystal (1987: 120) defines pragmatics as something that "studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others". Blakemore (1992: 39) holds that there is a distinction between a hearer's knowledge of his/her language and his/her knowledge of the world, and he argues that "it is this distinction that underlies the distinction between semantics and pragmatics" . Jacob L. Mey, chief editor and one of the two founders of the *Journal of Pragmatics* in 1977, defines pragmatics as "the study of the conditions of human language uses as these are determined by the context of society" (Mey, 1993: 42). And in the second edition of his *Pragmatics: An Introduction*, he gives a slightly different wording, defining pragmatics as something that "studies the use of language in human

communication as determined by the conditions of society" (2001: 6).

According to Yule (1996), pragmatics, unlike syntax and semantics, is the only discipline that takes human factors into consideration. So he defines pragmatics as "the study of how more gets communicated than is said" (Yule, 1996: 3). Verschueren (1999) sees pragmatics as belonging neither to general linguistics nor to applied linguistics, but something that offers a new "perspective". So he characterises pragmatics as "a general cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behaviour" (Verschueren, 1999: 7).

Actually there can be no exhaustive and satisfactory definition on this "new" discipline. Some people see it as a theory of language in use, others see it as a theory of communication, and still others see it as a study of how people mean or how people do with language. Just as Wittgenstein (1953) puts forward the formula that meaning is use,[①] so Wales (1989: 368) puts pragmatics at its simplest, defining it as "the study of language use". Various formulae have been proposed to explicate the nature of this discipline, for example:

Pragmatics = Meaning - Semantics
(cf. Hu Zhuanglin *et al*, 1988: 270).

Pragmatics = Semantics + Context (Simpson, 1993: 120).

Pragmatics = Meaning - Truth Conditions of Utterances
(Gazdar, 1979; see Watts, 1991: 26).

The representative pioneering attempts of pragmatics take the form of speech act theories of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), Searle's indirect speech act theory (Searle, 1975), Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975), Leech's Politeness Principle (Leech, 1983), Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Principle (Sperber & Wilson, 1986), and Levinson's Neo-Grician Principles (1987).

1.2.2 The Tasks of Stylistics

The usual practice of the stylistician is to distinguish the style of a text

① See Hu Zhuanglin, 1994:37.

and test and verify it through detailed description and analysis of the linguistic features in the text. But the necessity of such stylistic studies is more than often challenged with questions such as: What is the task of stylistics? Is there any ontological significance in the application of linguistic theories to the study of style? Is there is any *raison d'être* of stylistics as an independent discipline?

Stylistics can account for the general features of language, e.g., description, narration, explanation, and argumentation, as well as the idiosyncratic features of language, i.e., the specific style of certain authors. Lang (1987: 299-304) proposes a conceptual basis or framework for any account of style by providing a checklist of questions about style, including "the identification of style", "style and structure", "style and history", and "style and value".

According to Lang (1987) and Toolan (1990), it is reasonable to say that there are three tasks for stylistic studies: (1) serving the purpose of teaching and learning foreign languages (See Toolan, 1990: 42); (2) providing a base for the application of linguistic theories, to be tested and verified, further improved and perfected; and (3) offering a methodology for literary studies. Hu Zhuanglin (1996) largely accepts the proposal and further expounds these "tasks". However, Hu sees none of these as the major task of stylistics but proposes that the essential task of stylistics is to reveal the nature of style, to find effective methods for stylistic analysis, the representational forms and communicative effects of various features of style (poetry, fiction, drama, prose, technical writing and journalistic writing, etc.), and to analyse specific texts.

According to Simpson (1997: x), language occupies a pivotal role in the study of curriculum. He believes that the study of language is perhaps even easier to justify intellectually than the study of literature. Part of the stylistic remit is to banish the imprecision, speculation and flights of fancy that have characterised much traditional practical criticism. While stylistics does not embrace science directly, its systematic techniques, coupled with its pursuit of conceptual rigour, make it easy to see why the status of science is often conferred upon it.

Given that it examines literary discourse against the totality of

discourses, stylistics is essentially a comparative method of study. The assumption behind is that a better understanding of literary communication can be reached only if it is viewed as contiguous with other discourses. It is pointless therefore to focus on literature in a restricted "cellular" fashion whereby it is cut adrift from other contexts of language use.

1.2.3 The Trouble with Stylistics

Stylistics is an independent discipline in the sense of being theoretically founded and practically operated; it is not an independent discipline in the sense of being interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary. However, the status of stylistics as a discipline is embarrassingly controversial, partly due to the polysemy of the term, partly due to its amphibious nature of being based on linguistics and having literature as its object of study.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1993) states clearly about the trouble with stylistics as follows:

> The trouble with stylistics is that no-one has ever known exactly what the term meant, and that nowadays hardly anyone seems to care. And yet, paradoxically, the object, style, seems to be as fascinating as ever, and the subject, stylistics, like the phoenix, is forever reborn.
>
> The reason for this constitutive paradox of stylistics is not hard to find. As a field of research, stylistics has inherited all the problems caused by the polysemy of the word "style". Thus it has always hesitated between the generic (stylistics is the study of registers and styles of writing ...) and the idiosyncratic (style is the man, and stylistics is the science that accounts for man's inimitable style).
>
> (Lecercle, 1993: 17)

In discussing the problem of subjectivity and objectivity of stylistic analysis, David Crystal (1972: 103) defines stylistics as "the linguistic study of systematic, situationally-distinctive, intra-language variation", saying that stylistics cannot be meaningfully restricted to the study of literary texts, as the linguistic explication of such texts is theoretically dependent on the prior explication of non-literary variation, because "literature is in principle mimetic to the totality of human experience", meaning that there

is no subject-matter or mode of linguistic expression which is a priori incapable of being introduced into a work which, by critical consensus, will be considered literary.

As early stylistics mainly took poetry as its object of analysis, and did not seem to tackle practical problems of literary criticism, much analysis of literature was not well received. Crystal further points out both the cause of the problem and the task of the stylistician:

> One reason why much linguistic analysis of literature has not been received well is that linguists take texts which seem interesting and problematic to them; they often forget that the text, or the problems, may not be of comparable interest to the critic. The stylistician must thoroughly appreciate the literary critic's problems and position, if he wants to sell his product; and most stylisticians (because of the nature of their training) do not.
>
> (Crystal, 1972: 112)

Green and LeBihan (1996: 20) write about two points concerning stylistics: First, stylistics has long realised that scientific criticism is not a tenable concept. It would be obvious to many people both inside and outside academic circles that any approach to literature is essentially affective. It is not just in the realm of literature that problems about the scientific approach to language emerge. Linguistics itself has a fairly long history based on a tacit assumption of its "scientific credentials", and has constantly attempted to prove itself as a science. As some people observe, self-evident disciplines such as physics and chemistry need not reaffirm their position as sciences, only a discipline that is fundamentally unsure of its status would constantly find it necessary to claim its status. Second, an emphasis on the reader's response to a text rather than on what are construed as innate features need not necessarily lead to subjectivism and impressionism.

A substantial part of modern stylistics, especially "practical stylistics", is close to literary criticism and practical criticism, or New Criticism. Carter (1982: 7) says that the very name of practical stylistics "reveals a certain parasitism on practical criticism". However, basic to stylistics is the idea of looking closely at texts, which generally attempts to integrate literary criticism and linguistics. In fact, stylistics is more "practical" than practical

criticism since it bases interpretation on an analysis of significant linguistic features and tries to avoid impressionism or subjectivity (Wales, 1989). It is a process of literary text analysis which starts from a basic assumption that the primary interpretative procedures used in the reading of a literary text are linguistic procedures. Practical stylistics is, as Carter (1982: 4) notes, in many ways different from practical criticism. For one thing, in the scheme of traditional practical criticism, language becomes a kind of link between the essentiality of experience and the mature judgement of the writer, and this link is a precious one and therefore not to be tampered with. For another, the basic proposition of practical criticism is that literary texts are sources of meaning in that they make statements about man and man in the world. Therefore, language is seen as transparent in its opening on to the world, and writers use this medium to render its meanings. The relationship between language and the text and the world is essentially taken for granted and unproblematic.

1.2.3.1 Stylistics: Linguistic or Literary?

While linguistics investigates, describes, or explains the surface and deep structures of utterances at various linguistic levels—phonetic, phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, etc., stylistics as a discipline studies how each utterance differs from others in transmitting, conveying or expressing different connotations as well as the basic idea or message which pure communication would contain. Stylistics takes into consideration all types of utterance or text, and can be applied with equal validity to the study of style in every possible type of language-use, from the most formal to the most colloquial and from the most poetic to the most prosaic.

Halliday, in talking about linguistic study of literary texts, says that he does not mean "the study of language" but "the study (of the language) by the theories and methods of linguistics" ; for he believes that there is a crucial difference between the *ad hoc*, personal and arbitrarily selective statements offered, frequently in support of a preformulated literary thesis, as "textual" or "linguistic" statements about literature, and an analysis founded on general linguistic theory and descriptive linguistics. It is the latter that may reasonably be called "linguistic stylistics" .

Roman Jakobson, the founder of modern linguistic poetics, made a statement about the relationship between linguistics and literary studies in his "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics", presented to the Indiana Style Conference in 1958:

> If there are some critics who still doubt the competence of linguistics to embrace the field of poetics, I privately believe that the poetic incompetence of some bigoted linguists has been mistaken for an inadequacy of the linguistic science itself. All of us here, however, definitely realise that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms.
>
> (Jakobson, 1960: 377)

Widdowson (1975) genuinely sees the role of stylistics as integrating. By "stylistics" he means the study of literary discourse from a linguistics orientation, and what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism on the one hand and linguistics on the other is that it is "essentially a means of linking the two" and has "no autonomous domain of its own" (1975: 3).

It is to be noted that the term "linguistics" is ambiguous. This term can be understood in two senses: linguistics as a metalanguage (a language about language) used "practically" for the analysis and description of literary texts, and linguistics as a metaphor for such analysis and description (See Green and Lebihan, 1996: Ch. 1). Literary criticism has sought to use linguistics rather eclectically, thus linguistics and linguistic models have occupied an important but not dominant place in literary criticism during the twentieth century. But there remains a paradox: while linguistics or language-based theories form the core of literary theory, formal knowledge about language is not paid due attention to. Literary texts are by definition made of language, so the obvious tools for analysis are the tools of linguists. But many critics suggest that literature has a special status or quality inaccessible through the application of the metalanguage of linguistics. This can be seen from the notorious Fowler-Bateson debate during the 1960s (See Fowler, 1971). Roger Fowler, the founder of linguistic criticism, or rather, critical linguistics, insists that linguistic methods and tools are necessary for

the proper and detailed analysis of literary texts, whereas the literary theorist Bateson is strongly suspicious of an "objective" approach to literary texts and rejects the whole species of linguists from the study of literature, declaring that literary texts have an "ineradicable subjective core" that is simply not amenable to linguistic analysis.

Since application of linguistics to literature has aroused heated debate and continues to do so, stylistics cannot escape the same situation. Stylistic study of literature has not only met with fierce attacks from traditional literary critics and theorists, but criticism from linguists and stylisticians as well.

Stylistics cannot be conveniently labelled as either linguistic or literary. The term "stylistics" itself has connotations of a discipline, for the linking of the language of linguistics (metalanguage) and the analysis of literary texts is essentially its domain. In practice, however, stylistics is often divided into linguistic stylistics and literary stylistics, and this distinction may imply the existence of what Fowler (1971) termed the "Berlin Wall", an opposition between language and literary studies. Leech (1985: 39) distinguishes stylistics into "general stylistics", the study of style in texts of all kinds, and "literary stylistics", the study of style in literary texts. Within literary stylistics, he distinguishes descriptive stylistics (where the purpose is just to describe style) and explanatory stylistics (where the purpose is to use stylistics to explain something). And within explanatory stylistics, he further distinguishes cases where the explanatory goal is extrinsic (to find out the author(s) or the chronology of a set of writings) or intrinsic (where the purpose is to explain the meaning or value of the text itself). He holds that it is this latter type of study that is most commonly seen in the investigation of literary texts. Leech (1985) writes that the method of stylistics in these terms is to "relate features of linguistic description step by step to aspects of critical interpretation", and the two activities of linguistic description and literary criticism are viewed as distinct, but complementary. There is no reason, other than a tactical one, for starting from one end rather than from the other.

> If we start from the linguistic point of view, we have to select the features of stylistic significance from the mass of data which might

> form part of a linguistic description. If we start from the literary critical point of view, we begin with some conception of the work's literary significance, and seek evidence for (or against) this significance in the linguistic details of the text. In either case, both points of view—linguistic and critical—must be simultaneously engaged if the analysis is to serve its explanatory purpose.
>
> (Leech, 1985: 42)

Wales (1989: 438) distinguishes "general stylistics" from "stylistics", holding that stylistics is sometimes "confusingly" called literary stylistics OR linguistic stylistics. It is called *literary* just because "it tends to focus on literary texts"; *linguistic* just because "its models are drawn from linguistics." Although Wales does see the point that linguistic stylistics can refer to "a kind of stylistics whose focus of interest is not primarily literary texts", she seems to deplore the irrationality of the distinction and to emphasize the integrity of the discipline or to highlight the interchangeability or even synonymy of the two terms in regard to the commonness and inseparability of what might be otherwise called two "branches" of stylistics. This sufficiently exemplifies the nature of the overlapping and the interrelatedness of linguistic and literary aspects in the field simply under the title of stylistics without an epithet.

Although in practice people still tend to take linguistic and literary stylistics as different subjects, emphasis has often been laid on their commonness. Presumably, both linguistic and literary stylistics have something to do with the relation of language to literature. Linguistic stylistics, according to Carter and Simpson (1989), is the purest form of stylistics, it foregrounds the linguistic over the literary, and does not merely see the application of linguistics in terms of its function and analytical "tool kit". Carter and Simpson state:

> Linguistic stylisticians believe that in the analysis of language there are dangers in compromising the rigour and systematicity of analysis of stylistic effects, and that practitioners in related disciplines are unwilling to accept the kind of standards of principled description of language necessary to a genuinely mutual integration of interests.
>
> (Carter and Simpson, 1989: 4)

Literary stylistics, in a similar way, can be understood in two interrelated senses. In the broad sense, it includes all kinds of stylistic practices that study literary texts. It tends to focus on the aesthetic or thematic function of language in literary texts. In the narrow sense, literary stylistics is contrasted with (general) stylistics whose focus of interest is not primarily literary texts, but "the refinement of a linguistic model which has potential for further linguistic or stylistic analysis" (Wales, 1989: 438). A distinguishing feature of literary stylistics is the provision of a basis for fuller understanding, appreciation and interpretation of avowedly literary and author-centred texts. Carter and Simpson (1989: 7) observe that although the precision of analysis made available by linguistic methods offers a challenge to established procedures of close reading or practical criticism, the general aims and techniques of literary stylistics remain closely associated with those of New Criticism, traditionally characterised in spite of developments in linguistic and literary theories. Because it sees referential, text-immanent language as a primary constituent of the text and as a locus for author-initiated effects and responses to those effects, assumptions about the role of language in depicting literary realities can be easily challenged.

Michael Short (1982a) sees the need for linguists involved in stylistic analysis to be alert to defined literary concerns, and his term "literary linguistic stylistics" seems redundant at best. However, it represents a view of the nature of stylistics more mediatory between linguistics and literary studies and suggests the essential integrity of stylistics at the interface, whether it is called linguistic stylistics or literary stylistics. The two epithets themselves in the term as a nominal phrase suggest the nature of stylistics being linguistic in the first ordering and literary in the second ordering from the point of view of componential structure: (literary (linguistic stylistics)), or suggest the literary nature of linguistic stylistics from the point of view of information structure: literary and linguistic. The subtitle of Michael Toolan (1990), "a literary-linguistic approach", as a term here seems to bear the same orientation in stylistics.

1.2.3.2 Stylistics: Dependent or Independent?

Since stylistic models mainly come from theories of linguistics, there

can be as many kinds of stylistics as there are linguistic theories. And since stylistics is so often related with literature and studies of literary style, there can be as many kinds of stylistics as there are literary theories. Due to the main influences of linguistics and literary criticism, the development of stylistics has assumed a riding-on-the-wall situation corresponding to the developments of both linguistics and literary criticism.

The two neighbouring lines along which stylistics has developed are neither clearly parallel nor exactly criss-crossing, but are like a pair of rails with constantly varying spacings in between, along which the locomotive of stylistics has been chugging, not without difficulty. Before the 1930s, stylistics was characterised as mainly literary, developing chiefly with the work of Russian formalists, Prague School linguists, British semanticists, and American New Critics. From the 1950s onwards, stylistics began to be oriented toward linguistics, developing rapidly as stylisticians absorbed the descriptive methods of new linguistic theories.

In the 1960s, this newly developing field of study was characterised as overwhelmingly linguistic. Stylistic study was dominated by attempts to define style and to isolate the particular properties of authorial, period, or group styles. Interestingly, work in stylistics represented by the 1958 Indiana Style Conference was not wholly intrinsic to linguistics because of its eclectic and interdisciplinary nature: the conference was participated by literary critics, anthropologists and psychologists as well as linguists. At the interface with literary criticism at this stage, there was some measure of absorption of stylistics into the dominant critical paradigm, an approach which was termed New Criticism and characterised by a close verbal analysis. In the 1970s, stylistics was seen as not only a branch of linguistics but an independent discipline between linguistics and literary studies. Participants at the 1969 Conference on Style at Bellagio, Italy, agreed that linguistics alone cannot deal with literary style and that stylistics is not only a branch of linguistics but an independent discipline between linguistics and literary studies. There were also views taking stylistics as a mediatory discipline between linguistics and literary criticism and a subject between teaching language and literature (Widdowson, 1975).

As many more new linguistic theories began to flourish, stylistics has

taken on more varying modified forms along this line: from Formal stylistics (Structural stylistics, Behavioral stylistics and Generative stylistics), Functional stylistics (Prague School stylistics, Hallidayan Systemic-Functional stylistics and American functional stylistics), to Discourse stylistics, and Pragmatic stylistics, etc. Apart from influences of linguistics, stylistics has also drawn eclectically on trends in literary theory. Thus, stylistics is also characterised as literary and has been undergoing different trends along this line, for example, from Practical or New stylistics to Discourse stylistics, Socio-historical and Socio-cultural stylistics, and Literary pragmatics, etc. Hence in the 1980s, stylistics was described not as an independent discipline with its own special vocabulary and techniques, but an integration of a number of interests drawn from both linguistic and literary concerns (See Carter and Simpson, 1989).

Carter and Simpson have provided an insightful outline of modern stylistics, dividing its development into four periods, landmarked by publications in each decade:

The 1960s is a decade of formalism in stylistics, landmarked by Thomas Sebeok's edition of *Style in Language* (1960), and Donald C. Freeman's edition of *Linguistics and Literary Style* (1970). The 1970s is a decade of functionalism in stylistics, landmarked by Freeman's collection of *Essays in Modern Stylistics* (1981), where formalist- and functionalist-inspired papers are equally collected. The 1980s is a decade of discourse stylistics, landmarked by Carter's edition of *Language and Literature* (1982), and Carter and Simpson's co-edition of *Language, Discourse and Literature* (1989). The 1990s could well become a decade of socio-historical and socio-cultural stylistic studies.

Carter and Simpson's temporal division is helpful and useful in our overview of the development of stylistics. But it is not free of problems. First, this division may possibly neglect the simultaneity of the development of one stylistic trend with another or others, for more than one trend of stylistic development may have existed at the same time in a certain period. For one example, Catano holds that the age of formal stylistics is between 1955 and 1975. In the meantime, the years between 1955 and 1960 is the age of behaviourist stylistics based on Bloomfield's descriptive linguistic theory,

the representative stylistician of which is Michael Riffaterre; the years between 1960 and 1975 is the age of transformational generative stylistics based on Chomsky's TG linguistic theory, the representative stylisticians of which are Timothy R. Austin and Richard Ohmann (Catano, 1988: 146). For another example, functional stylistics started from M. A. K. Halliday's thesis "Linguistic Function and Literary Style: An Inquiry into the Language of William Golding's *The Inheritors*" at the beginning of the 1970s, but it is only the publication of Birch and O'Toole's collection of essays in *Functions of Style* (1988) that indicates the maturity of this branch of modern stylistics. Second, this division may possibly imply that each stage of stylistics is more advanced than the previous one, or that a "newer" model came into being just because the precious one may have been out of date, which is actually not. Essentially, stylistics is a discipline that carries out linguistic studies of style, i.e., style is approached with linguistic theories. For example, the theoretical basis of formal stylistics is formal linguistic theory which includes structural linguistics, descriptive linguistics and transformational-generative linguistics; stylistic studies in this area focus on the structural form of language and pay special attention to the ontological features of language. The theoretical basis of functional stylistics is functional linguistics which includes Prague School functionalism, Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics and American functionalist linguistics. This kind of theory focuses on the meaning potential of language and pays special attention to the phylogenic features of language. Comparatively speaking, the formal theory is closer to psychology, while the functional theory is closer to sociology. It does not mean in any sense that one stylistic theory is more advanced than another.

Perhaps it is more important to realise that although the distinction of different trends of stylistics is dependent upon the distinction of different schools of linguistic models, stylistics is not necessarily dependent on the distinction of different schools of linguistics. For example, it is well known that there is an opposition between formalist approaches to linguistic studies and functionalist approaches to linguistic studies. But this opposition has led to some misunderstandings. Although Chomsky's approach can be called formalism and Halliday's approach to language can be called functionalism,

formalism does not mean that its practitioners only deal with language forms regardless of language functions. The essence of formalism, according to Ning Chunyan (2000), is very much like that in the pure science of math and logic, which comes out as a formal axiomatic tool for the "science-forming capacity" with which the empirically inaccessible objects or phenomenon in nature can be explained. So it is far from the truth to assume that formalist approaches focus their efforts on language forms and functionalist approaches focus their studies on language functions.

Taylor and Toolan (1984) have made the distinction between formalist stylistics and functional stylistics based on the opposition between formalist and functionalist approaches in linguistic studies, chiefly represented by Chomsky's TG grammar and Halliday's functional grammar. But pure linguistic analysis is different from stylistic analysis that combines analysis and interpretation, linguistic forms and literary significance. Thus, it does not follow that the opposition between linguistic practices is the opposition in stylistic practices. Starting from the features of generative approach in literary stylistic analysis in terms of its emphasis on linguistic competence and its consideration of both the surface structure and deep structures, Feng (2000a) discusses some theoretical issues and analyses the functional aspects in generative stylistics in analysing literary discourse. He concludes that stylistics has developed with both linguistic and literary studies and that generative grammar, although formalist in nature, provides functional apparatus for contextual stylistic studies of literary texts.

1.2.4 Pragmastylistics as an Interdisciplinary Approach

It is because I have found deficiencies in existing stylistic studies of literature that I intend to adopt an interdisciplinary approach. Since much of the stylistic and linguistic analysis has been formal, it only concentrates on observable features of language and effects realised in the text. A tradition of formalist linguistics treats language as a system. The characteristics of this kind of investigation are that it is formal and syntactic, rather than pragmatic. Language is thus not treated as communicative or dynamic

discourse but as abstract or static text. When this conception of language is mapped on to literary studies with the same kind of formalism, it is easy to view literary texts as divorced from any context of use.

While stylistics is so closely related to the study of literature, pragmatics is mainly philosophical and linguistic. It may seem that the development route of pragmatics is far apart from those of stylistics or the study of style in literature. But it is conceptually well accepted that pragmatics can serve as a powerful tool in the linguistic analysis of literature (Hu, 1980). Morris, when putting forward the concept of pragmatics in 1938, claims that there is a close relationship between pragmatics and rhetoric. Theoretically, since pragmatics can be a common base for both linguistics and literary studies, and since literary pragmatics is analogous to linguistic pragmatics, there is no intrinsic reason why pragmatics should not be applied to literature. van Dijk's views on systematic studies of literature with pragmatic principles (1976; 1985) can well justify the validity of this approach. Sell (1991) has carefully avoided the linguistic-literary controversy by claiming that this discipline is at one and the same time both linguistic and literary, paying attention to the larger social context. This emphasis is in line with Fowler's theory of literature as social discourse (1981) developed on the basis of the social semiotic theory of language by Halliday (1978) and of the dialogical theory of Bakhtin (1981), paying special attention to the relationship between literature and society.

Although pragmatic theories and principles (such as speech acts, conversational implicature, and politeness) are originally based on oral communication, studies have found that written communication also involves these rules and principles. In spite of the differences in speaking and writing, there are underlying similarities in terms of interpersonal interaction. As is well-known nowadays, in using language, people do not merely talk or write but they also perform actions; language is employed in situations including both a linguistic and non-linguistic context; part of the global context consists of the knowledge, beliefs and assumptions of the people involved and that at least one side is, to a certain extent, trying by means of language to achieve certain purposes or make some effects on another or others. In literary works, characters are performing the kind of

speech acts that are appropriate to the specific situations with all the fictional felicity conditions just as people do in everyday conversation. On another level, the author, in his/her writing, knows too well his/her readers' possible reaction to his/her speech strategies which can be taken as the same as those employed when addressing his/her audience. Although one of the pragmatic conventions of fictional narrative is that the speaking *I* of the speech act is understood not to be the author of the work but only an immediate narrator or addresser who has been created by the author, although within the fictional world of the story the author is not held responsible for what is said (for we have reliable and unreliable narrators, not authors), what the characters say is just what the author himself wants to convey to his/her readers. This is because the author is held responsible as speaker when his or her work comes to be judged by the external world, as in criticism, libel suits, censorship cases, or selection of literary prizes (Traugott and Pratt, 1980: 21).

When pragmatics combines with literary studies and stylistics, new interdisciplinary fields with at least one more dimension have come into existence. Among them are pragmatic stylistics or literary pragmatics. Just as pragmatics in general, so with a more specific application of it to literary studies, no account of theory, scope, and method can be definitive at present. However, any pragmaticist of literature must know that he will be relating whatever aspects of the literary text under discussion to the world in which the text functions communicatively. Literary texts are strongly linked to forms of human action, and it is from this relationship that pragmatics of literature derives its importance. Thus, the essence of it lies in the various possible ways of understanding what we call literature, from discourse analysis to *Rezeptionsasthetik*, or from socio-poetics to the semiotics of culture. According to Hickey (1989: 8-10), pragmastylistics is stylistics with a pragmatic component and can be described as a study of language-in-use which pays special attention to the choices made from among the various grammatically correct ways of expressing one and the same thing, which is semantically or truth-conditionally equivalent. It also describes how choices relate to the overall situation in which language is used, including what the interlocutors already know or do not know, and what the speaker or writer

wishes to achieve through his language-use. It will always attempt to show that the different possible ways of saying the "same" thing (style) depend on the factors which compose the situation (pragmatic factors). The domain of this discipline includes the study of all the conditions, linguistic and extralinguistic, which allow the rules and potential of a language to combine with the concrete factors of a situation in order to produce a text intended to bring about certain internal changes in the receiver. Such studies may focus on any expanse of language-in-use, ranging from the phrase or clause to a complete discourse, conversation or text. Hickey says that a stylistics which includes a pragmatic component can claim to be complete just because stylistics studies the form of linguistic utterances and pragmatics is interested in the formal analysis of the dependence of a text in respect of its situation or context.

Literary pragmatics is a discipline applying pragmatics to the study of literary discourse in terms of communication (van Dijk, 1976; Pratt, 1977; Traugott and Pratt, 1980; Sell, 1985, 1991 & 1994). According to Sell (1991: xiv), literary pragmatics sees the writing and reading of literary texts as interactive communication processes. Like all such processes, literary writing and reading are inextricably linked with the particular sociocultural contexts within which they take place. Literary pragmatics takes for granted that no account of communication in general can be complete without an account of literature and its contextualisation, and that no account of literature will be complete without an account of its use of communication resources generally available. It in effect reinstates the ancient linkage between rhetoric and poetics. Such a discipline, as Sell says, is not basically a type of literary scholarship which borrows theories and techniques from a separate discipline of linguistics, nor is it basically a type of linguistic scholarship which uses literary texts as examples, but rather is, or aspires to be, at one and the same time both linguistic and literary. It centres on literary texts but does not fundamentally distinguish the communication between literary writers and their readers from any other type of communication.

Since the 1970s, linguistics has witnessed a number of interdisciplinary approaches: language as act (speech act theory), language as interaction

(conversation and discourse analysis), language and context (pragmatics, and Halliday's functional linguistics and socio-semiotic theory), anthropological linguistics, psycholinguistics; and sociolinguistics. Some of this linguistic work began to stimulate types of literary research which were potentially more sensitive than deconstruction was to context. Particularly promising was speech act theory of literature, an attempt to develop the theories of Austin, Searle, and Grice to cover literary texts.

The distinction of literature as text and literature as discourse (Widdowson, 1975) highlights the nature of literary communication and provides a way to analyse the nature of literature as being ordinary as text and special as discourse. The language used in literature features itself as an amalgam of a series of oppositions and contradictions in terms of formality, felicity, and animation (1975: 47). Literature need not be deviant in terms of textual features, but it must be deviant discoursally and communicatively. In a communicative sense, the literary author tells as well as writes; and the reader listens as well as reads. It is the very peculiar way of the author's telling and the readers' hearing that makes literary communication unique. It is the special relationship which holds between speaker/author and hearer/reader in literature that is very important in the stylistic study of literature.

With pragmatics and other new theories of language studies such as discourse analysis, linguists and stylisticians find that literature can be more rigorously dealt with, and that literary pragmatics and pragmatic stylistics are more powerful tools in this field. The earliest scholars who applied pragmatic methods to the study of literary texts are van Dijk (1976), Ohmann (1971, 1973), and Pratt (1977). The term "literary pragmatics" first appeared in Ohmann (1973), elaborated in Pratt (1977) and Traugott and Pratt (1980: 255-62), and it became a discipline only in the 1980s through the efforts of Enkvist (1985) and Sell (1985). Wales (1989: 281) defines "literary pragmatics" as following the developments in the field of linguistic pragmatics, in speech act theory, text linguistics and also in stylistics itself, concerned with literature as discourse in its interactional and social context, and with reader reception. Hence

> literary pragmatics looks at the linguistic features of texts which arise from the real interpersonal relationships between author, text and

> reader in real socio-cultural contexts. Consideration is made of features such as deixis, modality, mutual knowledge, presupposition, politeness and tellability, etc.
>
> (Wales, 1989: 281)

Watts (1991: 27) writes,

> literary pragmatics must concern itself with textual meanings beyond the linguistic structure of the literary text itself, either in the inward-looking way...(i.e. the study of deixis..., implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and aspects of discourse structure) or by looking outwards towards aspects of the sociocultural affiliation of authors/readers and the complexity of literary communication beyond simplistic assumptions of message transference by means of a code through a channel from the sender to the receiver.

According to Enkvist (1994), there may be as many definitions as there are practitioners of literary pragmatics. Obviously there is a link between the pragmatics of literature and the pragmatics of linguistics. Since dialogues between linguists and linguists, and between literary scholars and literary scholars are possible, dialogues between linguists and literary scholars should be theoretically possible and literary pragmatics and pragmatic stylistics may be fields where they are. Pratt (1977) and van Dijk (1976) suggest that it is both possible and necessary to develop a unified theory of discourse which allows us to talk about literature in the same terms we use to talk about all the other things people do with language. Since the belief that literature is formally and functionally distinct from other kinds of utterances and the concomitant belief that literature is linguistically autonomous (which is the central notion of structuralist poetics) cannot successfully undergo a test, it becomes necessary to consider literary discourse in terms of its similarities to our verbal activities rather than in terms of its differences from them. For the linguist, literature may be data that can provide him with important insights into areas and aspects of nonliterary discourse that have been problematic or invisible to him in the past.

Because pragmatics deals with forms and meanings in use, it is the most comprehensive approach. Correspondingly, literary pragmatics looks at literary texts in their use, as communication. Consequently, literary

pragmatics is committed to contextualization, because all use of language is in some kind of situational context. This suggests a definition: literary pragmatics looks at literary discourse in context. It is true that there is nothing novel, and if indeed there is anything new in it, the newness lies in a heightened consciousness of the relation that obtain between context and discourse (See Sell, 1994).

Although it is open to question whether the account of the literary use of language that satisfies linguistics will in the end be of interest to literary studies, the fact remains that for the first time linguistics is used to offer a description of literary discourse that answers the needs for a contextually based approach to texts and that at the same time bridges the gap between literature and nonliterature, and thus between linguistics and poetics.

Literary communication theory involves not only the communication between the personae and characters but also the communication between the writer and the reader. Widdowson, Cluysenaar, and Fowler, among many others, all take literature as an act or a process of communication, not just an object for study. Leech (1983b: 151) says that stylistics can be regarded as the kind of discourse analysis that deals with literary discourse. With the concept of discourse, greater dynamic and communicative factors can be revealed in literature. Every time literary writers put pen to paper, they certainly do create personae, both for themselves and for their readers, and these personae are not coterminous with either the writer or the readers as they really are. But what are they? It is true that literary writers can increase the difference between the implied author and themselves, or between the implied reader and the real readers. But the same is true of nonliterary communication, and to say that literary writers never really mean the things they purport to think or feel is travesty and impoverish literature (See Sell, 1991; 1994).

By the 1980s, many scholars, particularly in reaction to the still influential formalist approaches to literature, and to the more recent deconstructionist ones as well, were in various ways extending their attention beyond the words on the page. "New" historians were developing fascinating and unexpected aspects of the substantiality of literary texts with the cultures in which they are written and read, and even the more

traditional historical approach was renewing itself, not least by establishing closer links between the tasks of the bibliographer and the critic: the literary texts' circumstances of publication are now being brought into the very centre of the interpretative arena (See Sell, 1991; 1994: Intr.). European empirical literary scientists were busily testing the responses of real readers.① And the discovery of Bakhtin (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981) in the West was lending insights to the relationships between the languages of literature and the wide range of sociolects operative in any language community. In this period, a number of approaches were being developed which seemed to be even more pragmatic than the speech act theory of literature. These scholars see literary communication as more fully a part of social interaction. Within a Marxist perspective, there has been discussion of how texts come to be designated as literary in the first place.

More mature attempts have been made in the 1990s. As linguists' thought becomes more socially oriented, the horizons of stylisticians are broadened. And as both linguists and literary scholars begin to relate their object of study to society, the social dimension of their research becomes a "half-way house" (Sell, 1994: 21) from which the step to each other's central areas of interest is much shorter.

The promise of literary pragmatics and pragmatic stylistics lies in its inclusion of a "top-down" perspective. It sees the writing and reading of literary texts as interactive communication processes. One of the concepts is the speech act (Austin, 1962, Searle, 1969, and others). Another is the concept of politeness studied by Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987), Levinson (1983), Leech (1983) and others, and applied to the study of various kinds of literary decorum by Sell (1985).

Pragmatics is still a protean concept, and more protean are pragmastylistics and literary pragmatics. There can be as many concepts of pragmatics in linguistics as there can be in literary and stylistic studies, potentially applicable to literary discourse. Over the past decades, a body of scholarship has been published, e.g. Fowler (1981), Birch and O'Toole

① See Rolf A. Zwaan. 1993. *Aspects of Literary Comprehension: A Cognitive Approach.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

(1988), van Peer (1988), Sell (1991). Linguistic pragmatics is well understood to include a wide variety of different approaches, and many literary scholars find in pragmatics suggestions of an undesirable scientificity, and there is always a risk that labels may lead to the kind of territorial disputes and fragmenting cliquishness from which the present century has suffered too much. Those calling themselves literary pragmaticians will possibly go on doing so.

A pragmastylistic approach is based on notions of pragmatic-stylisticians and literary pragmaticists to the effect that the pragmatics of style in literature is analogous to the pragmatics of style in any other type of text, and that the two levels of communication in literature are fundamentally the same as any other type of communication. Thus the pragmastylistics in my present work presents an effort to apply pragmatics and stylistics to literary studies in terms of text (as discourse) and its context.

Context is actually a very complicated term and it is closely related to the meaning, which is the object of both linguistic and literary studies. Firth's well known remark "Each word, when used under a new context, is a new word" (1957: 190) indicates that the meaning of a word is the sum of its contexts, including both the context within the text (co-text) and the context of situation. Halliday (1978) proposes the concepts "context of situation" and "context of culture" based on Malinowski's distinction. Carter (1989: 69) lists three levels of context: the inner and outer context, the intertextual context, and the historical context in studying poetry and conversation. It is notably an increasing tendency nowadays that linguists, like their counterparts in literary theory, see meaning as contextual. MacCabe (1985: 124) says that it is not that a word has different meanings for different speakers but that the same lexical item appears in different discourses. According to Fowler (1986: 11-12), the point is not that many linguists do not consider language without context; on the contrary, meaning itself depends upon the "pragmatic dimensions of language". The emphasis on the context of language use, or contextualisation, has brought scholars from the linguistic camp and the literary camp to see the fact that linguistic methodology can be certainly applied to the study of literary discourse and literary communication.

Views of literature as (social) discourse and as communication with emphasis on situational context seem to be a move in the right direction. For a detailed study of the interpersonal aspects manifested in written literature, I shall proceed on a pragmatic-stylistic level, on the basis of written communication in general and literary communication in particular in terms of interpersonal rhetoric. By placing my argument on the basis of the inseparability of the principles of cooperation and politeness in human interaction, I would like to extend Grice's Cooperative Principle and the maxims to cover all politeness factors in the light of what Leech calls the "interpersonal rhetoric" as well as the "textual rhetoric" . I shall consider the two related aspects of the Cooperative Principle: the principle proper and its concomitant maxims. For my own purpose, I shall take the former as an abstract and prescriptive code binding the addresser and addressee, sender and receiver, writer and reader; and take the latter as concrete and descriptive (hence interpretative) tools accounting for conversational implicature in both spoken and written discourse.

1.3 Why Drama?

Among the three major types of literature, drama has lamentably been the least studied in either literary criticism or stylistics. For one thing, while drama is an important literary genre, it is very often not taken as literature, since it is one of the most complex forms of art. The term "drama" comes from the Greek *dran* (meaning "to do" or "something that is done"), and is often related to "theatre" , which comes from the Greek *theatron* (meaning "seeing place" or "a place where something is seen"). For another, drama as one of the major genres of literature really poses the greatest challenge to literary criticism and dramatic text analysis. Reading a play requires an exertion of the imagination greater than that required by other types of literature. More often than not, the reader has to "view" the text in close relation to its imagined performance, or "to construct mentally an image of performance" (Nash, 1989: 24). While theatrical critics deliberately neglect the literary aspects of dramatic text, literary critics do not normally think it their business to comment on drama. Thus, drama has become a borderline

area to which neither of the neighbours along the fence has paid enough attention. It is the theatrical nature of drama that makes dramatic studies evasive and elusive.

It is only in recent years that dramatic study has seen happy moments in stylistics. Some stylisticians, equipped with pragmatics and discourse analysis, have been trying to change the situation (Short, 1989, 1996, 1998; Simpson, 1989; Leech, 1992; Herman, 1995; and Culpeper *et al.*, 1998). By treating the analysis of dramatic text as a valid way of understanding drama, they form a striking contrast to traditional dramatic criticism which holds that the significance of drama lies in the performance and the only proper way to approach it is to be in the theatre.

Because of its amphibious nature of being both literature and art, drama has been nomenclaturally unstable. Thus terms referring to this form *drama, theatre,* and *play,* are all ambiguous and without quite clear distinctions. In practice, these terms have complex semantic relations and overlappings.

According to *Webster's New International Dictionary,* drama is a "composition, in prose or poetry, accommodated to action, and intended to portray life or character, or to tell a story by actions and, usually, dialogue tending toward some result directly based on them". Woodbridge states:

> A drama is a presentation of an action or closely linked series of actions, expressed directly by means of speech and gesture. ... Its subject matter is the action and reaction of human will, and it is treated with a view, not to the sequence of events, but to their essential relations as causes and effects.
>
> (Woodbridge, 1926: xiii)

The term "play" is also ambiguous, meaning both the play text and the performing and viewing of it on the stage. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines it as a literary composition, synonymous with "drama":

> 1. a. A literary work written for performance on the stage; drama.
>
> b. The performance of such a work. ...

And under the entry "drama", this dictionary says:

> 1. A prose or verse composition, especially one telling a serious story, written for or as if for performance by actors; play.

2. Dramatic art of a particular kind or period: *Elizabethan drama*.

In fact, there are a lot of compounds related with the word "play" in English, such as "playhouse", "player", "playwright", "playbill", "(to) playact", etc. The English language is not alone in harbouring another word for "drama" and its related compounds. For example, German regularly employs its word for "play" (*Spiel*) for a dramatic composition and offers compounds for the varied activities of the drama: *Schauspiel* (play), *Schauspieler* (actor), *Schauspielhaus* (theatre).

The term "theatre", apart from being the physical structure for the presentation of plays and other dramatic performances, also refers to the literature of the play, its theatrical production, and performance. *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines it as

> ... 3. a. Dramatic literature or its performance: *the theater of Shakespeare and Marlowe*. b. The milieu of actors and playwrights. c. The quality or effectiveness of a theatrical production: *This play is good theater*. ...

According to Cohen (1994: 9), there is a distinction between the hardware definition and the software definition of "theatre". The former refers to the physical layout, e.g. (1) the building where plays are put on (the architecture and structure); (2) the space for dramatic performance; and (3) where films are shown, as in "movie theatre". The latter, in contrast, refers to the theatre activity that goes into such a place. In addition, theatre also refers to the company of players that perform in such a space and to the body of plays that such a company will tend to produce.

The endless definitions of these terms take in common action as a central element, either implied or stated. However, as an expedient, I would choose to refer to this literary genre by drama, the tangible dramatic text for performance on the stage by "play", while by "theatre" I mainly refer to the play or drama in performance. Hence throughout this book I may refer to the writer of this kind of literary text as the "playwright" rather than the "dramatist", although they are often defined as the same. ①

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① See *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2nd College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

1.3.1 Drama as Art

It is commonsensical that art is based on, and rooted in, life. So drama is art of life or life in art. It is characterised with illusion of reality, with doubleness of life, and with theatrical convention. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle provides one of the earliest and most influential theories of drama by explaining drama as the imitation of an action (mimesis). Those analysing his work interpreted his statement in several ways. One is that drama imitates life. But the drama of the Greeks, for example, with its intense mythic structure, its formidable speeches, and its profound actions, often seems larger than or other than life. Yet we recognise characters saying words that ourselves are capable of saying, doing things that we ourselves are potentially capable of doing. The Greek tragedies and comedies are certainly life-like and certainly offer literary mirrors in which we can examine human nature.

The relationship between drama and life has always been subtle and complex. Drama has the capacity to hold up an illusion of reality like the reflection of a mirror, so that we take the reality for granted while recognising that it is illusory. Although Aristotle describes dramatic illusion as an imitation of an action, the action of most drama is not like a mirror: it is not drawn from our actual experience of life, but from our potential or imagined experience. Thus, when we read or view most plays knowing that the dramatic experience is not absolutely real in the sense that, for example, the actor playing the Prince of Denmark in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* does not really die, see a ghost, or frighten his mother. These actions are only "real" on the stage, because the play imitates those imagined actions, to be realistic enough to appeal to the audience.

When we sit in the theatre and share an experience with others through the illusion created there, we tacitly agree with the actors that, for the time of the performance, the play is a living reality. We know that theatre is not life, but we suspend this knowledge for the few hours when we watch the play. We share with the actors the illusion that life is being lived on stage as we observe their actions, which can be repeated night after night. ...

Theatre's grand illusion is twofold: that the actors are other than who they are in the present moment, and that life is taking shape before us in the first time.

We both believe in what is happening before us and disbelieve in the pretence. We give way to theatre's magic and illusion as our minds and emotions are involved. This is because theatre is one of the most immediate ways of experiencing another's concept of life—of what seems to be human. Playwrights such as Shakespeare have said that there is a doubleness about the theatrical experience that provides a sense of life reflected before us in a special mirror—the stage. For instance, the audience experiences that actor both as actor—the living presence of another human being—and as fictional character. Likewise the performing space is a stage and at the same time an imaginary world created by the playwright, designer, director, and actor. Sometimes this world is familiar to us as a tenement or farmhouse, with the stage resembling a modern living room or a hotel room or a front yard. But sometimes the world is unfamiliar, like Hamlet's blighted castle at Elsinore, etc.

Going to the theatre is, in a sense, like looking into the mirror. When we look into a mirror we see our double—an image of ourselves—and possibly a background and anyone standing around the reflection. However, theatre is also something more than a reflection of life. As a form of art, it is a selected reflection of life, organised in a meaningful manner. As audiences, we expect plays to be related to life experiences. They expect in such a way that the play's events should be authentic in feelings and experiences, rather than expecting something they have actually experienced. Most of us go to the theatre expecting the familiar.

1.3.2 Drama as Theatrical Art

One of the major functions of drama is that it represents events that happened in the past or that we imagine happening. It consists of characters (represented by players or actors), action (by gestures and movements), thought (by dialogue and action), spectacle (by scenery and costume), and audience.

The actions the actor/actress imitates help us live our lives more deeply, more intensely, because they give us insight into the possibilities of life. We are all restricted to living this life as ourselves. Drama is one art form that helps us realise the potential of life, for both the good and the bad. In an important sense, we can share the experience of a character such as Hamlet when he soliloquises over the question of whether it is better to die than to live in a world filled with sin and crime.

When drama is seen as theatrical art, the situation becomes immediately complicated, for drama is more often related to theatrical performance than to literary reading and enjoyment. In fact "the art of the theatre" seems more complex. Craig (1911: 138) holds that this art is neither acting nor the play (text), it is not scene nor dance, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words, which are the body of the play; line and colour, which are the very best of the scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dance.

The 17th-century playwright and critic, John Dryden, writes that (the art of) a play ought to be a just and lively image of human nature, reproducing the passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.① The 19th-century German critic Freytag says, the business of dramatic art is "not the presentation of a passion for itself but of a passion which leads to action". And the dramatist's mission is "not the presentation for itself, but for the effect on a human soul".② According to Styan (1960: 170), a play must "concentrate and combine life within fixed limits".

Since drama serves to be performed and viewed by audiences in the theatre, dramatic criticism lays emphasis on the relationship between the playwright and the audience rather than on the relationship between the writer and the reader, laying more emphasis on performance rather than on the play text. Analysis of literary discourse largely ignores this literary genre just because dramatic criticism is often theatrical criticism, taking performance as its object of study for highly justifiable reasons. As Styan

① G.B. Tennyson. *An Introduction to Drama*. 1967. p.1.

② G.B. Tennyson. *An Introduction to Drama*. 1967. p.1.

says:

> The worst difficulty in thinking about a play is simply to remember that, given words for demonstration on a stage, there is no other completely valid means of judging their efficiency and value except within their own terms. Leave your armchair throne of judgement, ... submit for the while to be tossed to and fro in the action of the play: drama's first aim is to subdue us.
>
> (Styan, 1960: 65)

In spite of the seemingly convincing arguments of Styan and of other advocates of performance analysis, theatrical criticism has its own problems, because text and performance form a kind of constant vs. variable relationship, with the play text being relatively stable and performance infinitely variable. For an analyst, drama is literature.

Short (1989: 139-143), in his discussion on the relationship between the text and performance, points out the incorrectness of the suggestion that the only adequate analysis of drama must be the analysis of performance, and emphasises the necessity that critics should concentrate on dramatic texts. He also argues that the performance-oriented view has come partly because of the inability of practical criticism (including traditional stylistic analysis) to cope with the meanings produced by dramatic texts. He then points out that bringing the theatrical experience into the realm of criticism and thus treating plays in a radically different way from treating other types of literature may result in two-fold problems: such criticism may be incoherent as a discipline and theatrical criticism may become infinitely variable. In this way there may be no play to criticise, because meanings and values will change not just from one production to another, but from one performance of a particular play to another. And critical discussions may be impossible unless two critics involved are arguing about the same performance presented by the same group in the same theatre on the same night. To seek the common footing for different critics, the play text is the only constant, or in Pagnini's term, the "invariable", in opposition to the "variable" (Pagnini, 1987: 79).

1.3.3 Drama as Literary Art

Most theatrical critics tend to overlook the literary aspect of drama. For example, Greenwood (1950: 12) holds that a play is "simply something acted on a stage by living people" and Boulton (1960: 3) takes a play as "not really a piece of literature for reading", but "literature that walks and talks before our eyes". Then my questions to Greenwood are: (1) What is this "something" after all? (2) In what way does this "something" exist? And my question to Boulton is: What type of literature is the "literature that walks and talks before our eyes? Greenwood's and Boulton's arguments can best explain only some of the different aspects of this special type of literary art.

However, since literature itself is regarded as art, "a linguistic form of art" and "verbal art", drama in the sense of a literary genre can be first of all taken as literature. Dramatic performance, except in extreme cases of pantomime, is mainly a linguistic and verbal activity. Even in the dumb show, dramatic production and performance are still based on the play text as verbal art. Any production and performance of a pantomime, for instance, Beckett's famous play *Act Without Words* (Ⅰ and Ⅱ), must be based on Beckett's text, without which no production or performance is possible. Thus drama in the sense of play text is verbal art and literary artifice on the first ordering and artistic artifice on the second ordering, and I would mainly focus on the former.

As a drama or play may be "a prose or verse composition" (*The American Heritage Dictionary*), the writing process of most playwrights may be largely taken as the process of poetry-making and fiction-making. This can be seen from the fact that drama contains verses with rhyme and meter, or specifically creates narrative or descriptive passages in addition to dialogue that serve as an integral component of this dramatically fictional form.

In fact, drama can be taken as poetry, as fiction, and as conversation. Analysts can treat an extract of the text as a poem and analyse the lines of, say, a sonnet in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in terms of its sound,

meter, syntax and figurative language. The same analyst can treat a piece of drama more or less like fiction by analysing the characters and plot. This is because plot and characters are as significant in dramatic texts as in fiction. However, drama differs fundamentally from fiction in that it usually lacks a narrative voice, and this absence can make a novel difficult to dramatise successfully. One example is cited in Thornborrow and Wareing (1998: 119) of the recognised problems in dramatising Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, done by the BBC in 1995, in which the ironic narrative voice offers a different perspective on characters and events from the one the characters in the novel necessarily perceive or comment on. Thus the information and the attitude conveyed in the narrative voice must be translated into other aspects of the dramatisation.

It is obvious that drama only favours those who happen to be good at making it. Just as literary language is the same as, and at the same time different from, non-literary language, dramatic language is also the same as, and at the same time different from, the language in other literary genres. Moreover, the essential features such as action, words and rhythm of the drama are different from its superficial features in terms of stage directions and dialogue. This is why great novelists such as Henry James tried play after play only to prove themselves successful in being boring and deadly dull to the audience, while their novels fascinated millions of readers. Ironically, many of Henry James's stories became successful theatre pieces through the hands of some good playwrights. Michael Stephens (1986: 5) also sees the quality of drama as literature and its relation with fiction, saying that drama is so often what is not said. And this is the quality which short fiction shares with drama. Drama joins short fiction and poetry in its concern with being concise.

Drama has its special ways of attempting to deal with the function of the narrative voice. Information about the plot and the characters is sometimes given through explicit interjections by the playwright in the text of the play, as stage directions. Some stage directions give very precise instructions about the appearance of characters and the set. Explicit notes can be interpreted by the director, actors, costume, and set designers into audible signals through the choice of accent and other features of the speech of the

characters, and into visual signals such as clothing, posture and movement. All these can give the audience information about character in much the same way as a narrative voice might deliver.

But the most important aspect of drama that differs from poetry and fiction is its emphasis on verbal interaction, the way relationships between people are constructed and negotiated through what they say. Thus, a dramatic text in its tangible form is taken as a dramatic discourse in its form of communication.

1.3.4 Drama as Verbal Art

Although drama shares a lot of commonness and similarities with other literary genres like poetry or fiction, the differences are obvious. Unlike poetry and fiction, which more often appear solely in written form, drama is also performed on the stage in the theatre. The term "drama" derives from a Greek word meaning *to do, to act* and the term "theatre" derives from a Greek word meaning *to see, to view*. These two ideas, doing and seeing, are complementary and define the study of drama in its largest sense, the sense that includes both the play and the performance of it. These root ideas lie behind a number of common pairings that repeatedly appear in dramatic criticism: play and performance, script and production, text and staging, creation and interpretation. In short, the root ideas contain the essence and the range of the whole field of the study of drama.

Short (1989) lists a number of considerations suggesting that the object of dramatic criticism can be the play text rather than theatrical performance. For example, teachers and students have traditionally read plays without necessarily seeing them performed and have still managed to understand them and argue about them. And a dramatic producer must be able to read and understand a play in order to decide how to produce it. Moreover, there is a logical and terminological distinction between a play and a performance of it, for a good play may have a bad production and performance by either a good or bad group of people. Of course Short does not mean to deny the necessity of going to the performance of plays for understanding them and responding to them sensitively. His point is that we must, as Styan and

others have done, distinguish between literary and theatrical analysis, for literary criticism and theatre studies are distinct areas which have overlapping boundaries. He says:

> Hence the critical analysis of a dramatic text is likely to produce suggestions for the performance which have to be tested in the theatre, and a new performance of a play might well suggest an interpretation which no critic had ever thought of but which could only be evaluated by checking it against the text.
>
> (Short, 1989: 141)

This argument is, not surprisingly, in agreement with Hoey's discussion on the relationship between literary criticism and discourse analysis. According to Hoey (1989), a useful interpretation of literary work can be reached by an analysis of the text's organisation as discourse, and a discourse-centred stylistic analysis has an important input into both discourse analysis and literary criticism. For discourse analysts, such an analysis provides a testing ground for the models and systems they develop; for literary critics, it provides a variety of useful readings which can lead to a fuller interpretation of the text. In fact, the relationship between the analysis of the play text and the study of the theatrical performance may be dialectical. For the process of critical analysis of play text is certainly a process of understanding and interpretation. It is on the basis of the interpretation that stage productions are made for theatrical performance. Theatrical performance of the play is actually another, or further, interpretation of it and may in turn affect or enrich our previous understanding and interpretation.

It is understood that although in our cultural activities there are noticeably or presumably more audiences of the theatre performance than there are readers of the play, the drama is first of all a tangible play text, typical of any written discourse. In order to present the play on the stage, its producers, directors, actors and actresses, first of all have to be readers of the play text. Moreover, not every piece of drama can have the chance of being performed on the stage in the theatre, so some remain forever as play texts.

In order to analyse drama, I have to define my scope of study within the

dramatic text, namely, the play text representing dramatic discourse (in contrast to theatrical performance). Short (1989: 149) observes that like many other texts, dramatic texts have a structure whereby one level of discourse is embedded in another. Sometimes one is tempted to characterise play-going as a situation in which we "overhear" the talk between the characters. But the situation of drama is unlike that of everyday-sense eavesdropping because it is arranged to be overheard on purpose. Characters speak to characters, and the conversation is part of what the playwright "tells" the audience. Not only any play will contain this level of discourse, but there also exists a higher level of communication. It is important to note that features which mark social relations between two people at the character level become messages about the characters at the level of discourse which pertains between the playwright and the reader. The discourse function of dramatic text, like that of other forms of literary text, is not only a conveyance of pragmatic message between characters, but also a conveyance of literary message between the playwright and his readers, and between the playwright and the outside world.

1.4 Why Absurd Drama, or The-Theatre-of-the-Absurd Plays?

Absurd drama, or drama of the absurd(ist) school, is a special kind of discourse in the literary genre of drama. It is difficult to find a strict definition of "absurdist" and "absurdism". Abrams, in his *Glossary of Literary Terms* (1981), describes "absurdism" as the name that is applied to:

> a number of works in drama and prose fiction which have in common the sense that the human condition is essentially and ineradicably absurd, and this condition can be adequately represented only in works of literature that are themselves absurd.
>
> (Abrams, 1981: 1)

It is interesting that this comment does not actually define what is meant by "absurd". While it simply tells us that absurd texts exist, it does not offer any criteria for the recognition of such a text.

In fact, not until the publication of Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* in 1961 did drama of this absurd school come to be so formally called. With my emphasis on the analysis of the play or dramatic text, which can be both a blueprint or basis for stage production and a document to be read and enjoyed for its literary merit, I borrow Esslin's term and use it as a compound modifier to refer to the kind of play texts in my present study: The-Theatre-of-the-Absurd plays. ①

The Theatre of the Absurd refers to a kind of drama that presents a view of the absurdity of the human condition by the abandoning of usual or rational devices and by the use of non-realistic form. Significantly, the absurdity involved is not that of mere ridiculousness, but a profound disquiet arising from the displacement of things from their familiar surroundings. The Theatre of the Absurd, in its displacement of things and people, renders everyday values and experience meaningless and futile. In the Theatre of the Absurd proper as described by Esslin, the transformation of both the object (the play itself) and of the viewer's relationship to the action on stage, works to accomplish this displacement, felt most keenly by the viewer. It expounds an existential ideology and views its task as essentially metaphysical. Conceived in perplexity and spiritual anguish, it portrays not a series of connected incidents forming a story but a pattern of images presenting people as bewildered beings in an incomprehensible universe.

The most prominent features of the plays of this school are that they typically have no complete stories, no clear conflicts, or characters of distinctive individual personality (e.g. mostly without a name). The identity of the characters are bizarre, the language they use is illogical, tautological, conflicting, and nonsensical, and the articles and items specified for use on the stage are absurdly abnormal and out of place.

Esslin (1980: 328) summarises the traditions that the Theatre of the Absurd displays in new and varied combinations under four headings, which are:

(a) "Pure" theatre; i.e. abstract scenic effects as they are familiar in

① In fact a similar form of this compound term, "Theatre of the Absurd Play", has appeared in two Ph.D. dissertations, by Schnebly (1994) and Maline (1995), in America.

the circus or revue, in the work of jugglers, acrobats, bullfighters, or mimes

(b) Clowning, fooling, and mad-scenes

(c) Verbal nonsense

(d) The literature of dream and fantasy, which often has a strong allegorical component.

Esslin says that the element of "pure" and abstract theatre in the Theatre of the Absurd is an aspect of its anti-literary attitude, its turning away from language as an instrument for the expression of the deepest meaning. Thus he highlights the elements that distinguish any stage performance from the reading of a play, elements that exist independent of words. Like traditional theatrical critics, Esslin's attention is on theatrical effects by saying that theatre is always more than language (1980: 329). Language alone can be read, but true theatre can become manifest only in performance. And the elements of theatrical effects have deep, often metaphysical meaning and express more than language could. This reminds one of what Nietzsche spoke concerning the strange metaphysical power of the concreteness and the skill in theatrical performance in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "The myth by no means finds its adequate objectification in the spoken word. The structure of the scenes and the visible imagery reveal a deeper wisdom than that which the poet himself is able to put into words and concepts." ①

Although the most widely acclaimed play of this school is Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953), the first widely recognised true example of the Theatre of the Absurd is the Romanian-born French playwright Eugène Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano* (1950),② which Ionesco himself called an "anti-play". Ionesco is also held as the founder of this school, so I choose to study some of his representative plays: *The Bald Soprano* (1950), *The Lesson* (1951), and *The Gap* (1969). They are representative in two senses: First, Ionesco is representative of most eminent writers of this school, whose works are mostly written in French,

① Quoted from Esslin (1980).

② *A Handbook to Literature* (5th edn.), by Hugh Holman *et al*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. 1986. p. 2.

which is not their mother tongue.[①] Second, these plays are representative of his particular styles in different socio-cultural circumstances of his life.

Reflecting the isolation of human beings and the difficulty of communicating, the characters in such plays often seem to talk nonsense which may be perplexing and confusingly incomprehensible. Through the text the playwright deliberately shows the meaninglessness and impotence of language and its crisis. Ionesco holds that it is not only that language cannot help with communication, but it prevents people from getting to know the real world. This accounts for his squandering clichés on his plays, loading them with extraordinary absurdities to show his view of the world. This kind of text may arouse interest in basic problems of linguistic communication. The interesting point is that Ionesco, together with other writers of the absurd school, defy language on the one hand and cannot completely do without, or get rid of, language and resort to other means on the other. Ionesco's plays are remarkable in several senses: First, the stage directions, unlike the rest part of the texts, are often as normal and meaningful as those in any other modern drama, except the abnormal length in a descriptive style. Second, the content of the stage directions and performance instructions is sometimes as absurd and illogical as can be. From an overall point of view, his plays are such that the illogical and the logical, the incommunicable and the communicable are skillfully combined together to make sense by way of seeming nonsense.

Since existentialist literature and drama of the absurd school both focus on the absurdity of the world and the anguish of human beings, holding that human beings living in meaningless isolation in this alien universe cannot possibly communicate, it is necessary to explore into the paradoxical situation where the characters communicate through the incommunicable and how the playwright communicates with his readers or audience through his incommunicably communicable verbal texts.

The texts of Ionesco's plays to be discussed in the present study are

① Even the only English-speaking of the most eminent figures in this school, Samuel Beckett, spent most of his lifetime in France, mostly writing in French. And his first play was written in French with the English version coming out in 1957.

translated English versions, the first three translated by Allen and published in a collection (Ionesco, 1958), the last translated by Rosette Lamont and reprinted in Miller (1983). But for the sake of simplicity I will refer to them throughout as Ionesco's texts. As Burton (1980) has noted, although the study of translated versions is not exactly the same activity as analysing the original plays (in Ionesco's case, in French), such a stylistic analysis is not a study of individual authors but a description of particular texts.

By choosing this particular genre of literature, specifically, Ionesco's plays, as the object of my stylistic analysis, I hope to discuss literary communication and interaction from the viewpoint of particularly deviant texts. Because drama has been the least discussed of the three major literary genres in stylistic studies, drama of the absurdist school has quantitatively been paid even less attention to. As a type of literary discourse, drama is deviant from non-literary or everyday use of language in the first ordering; and drama of the absurdist school, or The-Theatre-of-the-Absurd play, is deviant from traditional drama in the second ordering. By this two-ordering deviation, I do not mean it in the sense of Russian formalists' defamiliarisation or estrangement, but in the sense of its "anti-literary attitude" ① in the light of the special nature of literary communication. With the assumption that literature is a communicative act taking place on both the micro-level within the text between characters and the micro-level outside the text between the writer and the reader, or between the writing and the reading of the text, the role of pragmastylistics is justified and the place is well-grounded where theatrical criticism and text analysis are unified, and more broadly, where linguistics and literary studies can find themselves friendly neighbours working for the same purpose in spite of their previous hostility.

In applying interpersonal rhetoric to the study of dramatic texts (as

① According to Esslin (1963: 239), the language in Ionesco's plays exposes the emptiness of stereotyped language. And such language has ceased to be the expression of anything alive or vital and has been degraded into a mere conventional token of human intercourse, a mask for genuine meaning and emotion. Ionesco himself defines his plays as "the denunciation of the ridiculous nature of language which is empty of substance, made up of clichés and slogans" (quoted from Esslin, 1963: 239).

discourse) in general and The-Theatre-of-the-Absurd play texts in particular, I wish to explicitise, in addition to the part that is traditionally recognised as dialogic from/between actors (actresses) to/and the audience, the dialogical properties involved in dramatic texts that are traditionally regarded as monological, and the dialogicalness of dramatic texts (especially lengthy descriptive-narrative directions and soliloquies) where the playwright communicates with his readers by way of descriptions and directions in addition to dialogues between the characters he creates. And also some discussion will be given on the interpersonal interaction between the author and reader in terms of the playwright's cooperation with, and his politeness toward, the reader as are realised by the lexicogrammar of the play texts. Through this study I intend to place Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principle in a modified framework of interpersonal interactional rhetoric, and apply the framework in the study of dramatic discourse in order to show the feasibility of pragmastylistics by revealing principles of verbal interaction.

Chapter 2

The Interpersonal Rhetoric

Leech's concept of "Interpersonal Rhetoric" (1983) focuses on the interpersonal and rhetorical aspects of the discipline of pragmatics and covers Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) and his own Politeness Principle, together with many other principles. For my application of pragmastylistics to the study of interpersonal communication, I would take this concept as a concept consisting of an abstract and imperative principle that binds interlocutors and some concrete and interpretative maxims that help interpret what people mean by violating them. Based on Leech's concept, I intend to solve the problem of conflicts between the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle, together with other principles. The discussion will proceed along the line of the rhetorical and interpersonal nature of pragmatics, the CP and the PP, cooperativeness and politeness, issues concerning models, i.e. principles and maxims, and onto Interpersonal Rhetoric *in* and *of* literature.

2.1 Pragmatics: Rhetorical and Interpersonal

Leech, in his *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983a), describes semantics as grammatical and pragmatics as rhetorical, for he sees the former as "part of

the grammar" , and the latter as "part of the use of the grammar" (p. 5).① His distinction is based on one of his postulates that semantics is rule-governed and pragmatics is principle-governed. According to philosophers such as Charles Morris and Rudolf Carnap, this is because semantics traditionally deals with meaning as a dyadic relation, as in "What does *X* mean?" , while pragmatics deals with meaning as a triadic relation, as in "What did you mean by *X*?" . Thus meaning in pragmatics is defined relative to a speaker or user of the language, whereas meaning in semantics is defined purely as a property of expressions in a given language, in abstraction from particular situations, speakers, or hearers. Based on this, Leech distinguishes pragmatics into a grammatically-related linguistic pragmatics (pragmalinguistics, which may be language-specific) and a sociologically-related pragmatics (socio-pragmatics, which may be culture-specific).

Leech's concern, however, is general pragmatics, which is restricted to the study of linguistic communication in terms of conversational implicatures, and limited to a rhetorical mode of pragmatics. He not only touches upon the study of "relatively permanent parameters" of situation in relation to language choice, such as "register" , which is included in the work of Halliday (1978) and others, but also "style" , a heading in the study of Crystal and Davy (1969). According to Leech, the difference between pragmatics and register corresponds to a distinction of DYNAMIC and STANDING features of communication. For,

> [T]here are some features which tend to undergo continuing change and modification during discourse (such as illocutionary force in Austin's sense, 1962: 100); but there are other features, such as formality of style, which tend to remain stable over fairly long periods of condition. Politeness, for example, is often a function of both: standing features such as the social distance between participants interact with dynamic features such as the kind of

① Leech believes that grammar is the abstract formal system of language and pragmatics is the principles of language use, and they are complementary domains within linguistics. See Leech (1983:4).

illocutionary demand the speaker is making on the hearer (request, advice, command, etc.) to produce a degree of politeness appropriate to the situation.

(Leech, 1983a: 12)

2.1.1 Rhetoric and the Rhetorics

The term "rhetoric" comes from Greek *techne rhetorike*, meaning "art of speech". It traditionally refers to the study of effective use of language in communication. However, it has now also been understood, in particular situations, as the art of using language skillfully for persuasion, or for literary expression, or for public speaking. In the late twentieth century, with the development of semiotics, stylistics and pragmatics, an interest in traditional rhetoric has been revived. The term has now come into modern linguistics and literary theory in new senses which reflect current rather than traditional perspectives; or in senses that are loosely connected with the more traditional ones.

Leech sees rhetoric as the effective use of language in its most general sense, "applying it primarily to everyday conversation, and only secondarily to more prepared and public uses of language" (Leech, 1983a: 15). He says that the point about the term is the focus it places on a goal-oriented speech situation, in which the speaker uses language in order to produce a particular effect in the mind of the hearer.

Based on Halliday's (1973) distinction of metafunctions in his functional theory, Leech (1983a: 15) distinguishes two kinds of rhetorics using "rhetoric" as a countable noun for "a set of conversational principles which are related by their functions". According to him, each of the rhetorics consists of a set of principles, such as the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle, which, in turn, consists of a set of maxims, in accordance with Grice's terminology (1975). At the same time he prefers to call Grice's "maxim" as "sub-maxim" thereby introducing another level into the hierarchy:

Rhetorics (*consisting of*)

Principles (*consisting of*)

Maxims (*consisting of*)

Sub-maxims

Leech's diagram (1983a: 16) shows that the "Interpersonal Rhetoric" mainly includes Grice's Cooperative Principle and his own Politeness Principle, together with a series of others such as Irony Principle, Banter Principle, Interest Principle and what he calls the "Pollyanna" Principle. And his "textual rhetoric" includes Proccessibility Principle, Clarity Principle, Economy Principle, and Expressivity Principle.

Interpersonal Rhetoric	**Cooperative Principle (CP)**	Maxim of Quality	Sub-maxims
		Maxim of Quantity	...
		Maxim of Relation	...
		Maxim of Manner	...
	Politeness Principle (PP)	Maxim of Tact	...
		Maxim of Generosity	...
		Maxim of Approbation	...
		Maxim of Modesty	...
		Maxim of ...	...
	Irony Principle	Maxim of ...	...
		Maxim of ...	...
	... Principle	Maxim of ...	...
		Maxim of ...	...
Textual Rhetoric	**Processibility Principle**	End-focus Maxim	...
		End-weight Maxim	...
		... Maxim	...
	Clarity Principle	... Maxim	...
		... Maxim	...
	Economy Principle	... Maxim	...
		... Maxim	...
	Expressivity Principle	... Maxim	...
		... Maxim	...

Figure 1 Four-level Hierarchy (Adapted from Leech, 1983a: 16)

2.1.2 Interpersonality

In Leech's term "interpersonal rhetoric", in contrast to "textual rhetoric", the epithet "interpersonal" traces back to Halliday's distinction of the metafunctions of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. These

are:

(a) The *ideational* function: language functioning as a means of conveying and interpreting experience of the world.

(b) The *interpersonal* function: language functioning as an expression of one's attitudes and an influence upon the attitudes and behaviour of the hearer.

(c) The *textual* function: language functioning as a means of constructing a text, i. e. a spoken or written instantiation of language.

While Halliday (1973) treats all the three metafunctions of language as being intrinsic to grammar, Leech here disagrees with Halliday by distinguishing the three metafunctions into two domains: identifying grammar as ideational, pragmatics as interpersonal and textual. For he says,

> [F]rom the speaker's point of view the Interpersonal Rhetoric may be characterised respectively as "input constraints" and "output constraints" on the grammar. From the hearer's point of view, these constraints are reversed, so that the Textual Rhetoric constrains the input, and the Interpersonal Rhetoric constrains the output of the decoding process.
>
> (Leech, 1983a: 57)

Leech further disagrees with Halliday in the functions of language. While deprecating the popular view that language is a vehicle of ideas, Halliday concedes that the ideational function "is a major component of meaning in the language system that is basic to more or less all uses of language" (Halliday, 1973: 38-39). Leech insists that the popular view of language is essentially correct, and it is the ideational function which makes human language what it is: it is an extraordinarily powerful instrument of thought and communication. Leech, however, puts communication as the interaction between elements of grammar (phonetics, syntax, semantics) and pragmatics, hence giving a new picture of communication and language. He identifies ideation as semantic representation and then traces how listeners deduce the sense and force of a sentence in the context using the principles of "textual rhetoric" and "interpersonal rhetoric".

But Leech claims that he does not insist too rigidly on his four-level

hierarchy as mentioned in the above section, since it is not always clear to what level a given precept belongs. For example, in terms of Grice's two Maxims of Quality (which are "sub-maxims" in Leech's hierarchy), the second seems to be a predictable extension of the first:

Maxim 1: Do not say what you believe to be false.

Maxim 2: Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Leech writes,

> If we say something for which we lack adequate evidence, we do not know whether what we say is true or false. Therefore Maxim 2 simply says "Do not put yourself in a position where you risk breaking Maxim 1" ; and both can be summarised in the precept "Avoid telling untruths" .
>
> (Leech, 1983a: 16)

It is to be noted here that Leech's label of "precept" strongly suggests the kind of moral colouring of Grice's maxims. He thus insists that the rhetorical principles socially constrain communicative behaviour in various ways, but they do not (except in the case of "purely social" utterances such as greetings and thanks) provide the main motivation for talking. This is because cooperation and politeness are largely regulative factors which insure that, once conversation is under way, it will not follow a fruitless or disruptive path and therefore it is necessary to distinguish between illocutionary goals and social goals, or equivalently between the illocutionary force of an utterance and its rhetorical force. Together, the illocutionary force and the rhetorical force of an utterance make up its pragmatic force.

Leech avoids the rigid opposition of the formalist view that takes language as a mental phenomenon and the functionalist view that takes language as a societal phenomenon, taking a balanced view comprising both aspects of language: internal and external and giving it a formalist and functionalist account. He holds that grammatical explanations are primarily formal and pragmatic explanations are primarily functional.

I am inclined to base my discussions on Leech's interpersonal rhetoric because it is a convenient and more appropriate concept for me to deal with the pragmatic principles in human interaction and communication. Interpersonal rhetoric not only includes the principles and their concomitant

maxims (on the third level) and sub-maxims (on the bottom level), but also more importantly, groups the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle under the same heading with the possible implication that they are on somewhat equal footings. On this basis, it is easy to see that these principles (CP and PP) work in a combined effort in communication, in opposition to the commonly held view of conflicts between them. For example, Leech discusses the problems of incongruity between Grice's Cooperative Principle and his own Politeness Principle, saying that

> [I]n being polite one is often faced with a clash between the CP and the PP so that one has to choose how far to "trade off" one against the other; but in being ironic, one EXPLOITS the PP in order to uphold, at a remoter level, the CP.
>
> (Leech, 1983a: 83)

By this he means that there are conflicts between, or the problems of precedence and priority concerning his Politeness Principle and Grice's Cooperative Principle. He only sets up some principles and maximums first and then strives to show how one principle or maxim can be outweighed by another, so that considerations of face-threat and politeness are seen to operate within a process of language interaction that is more complex and dynamic. However, I intend to start my discussion by regarding that these two principles are more complementary than conflicting.

2.2 The Cooperative Principle

Paul Grice, who has concerned himself with philosophical issues in language use, has contributed greatly to theories of pragmatics. Apart from his work "Meaning" (1957), he proposed the Cooperative Principle at the William James Lectures at Harvard University in 1967 and later developed his ideas in the classical paper, "Logic and Conversation" (Grice, 1975). Through this he suggests a "general principle" which participants of a conversation are expected to observe, i. e. the COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE: 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. Assuming that this general principle is

accepted, Grice distinguishes four categories echoing Kant's: Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner. Under these four categories, he further provides maxims which guide the speaker and hearer in conversations and which they either follow or flout.

1. The Maxim of QUANTITY:
   (1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
   (2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
2. The Maxim of QUALITY:
   (1) Do not say what you believe to be false.
   (2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
3. The Maxim of RELATION:
   Be relevant.
4. The Maxim of MANNER:
   (1) Avoid obscurity of expression.
   (2) Avoid ambiguity.
   (3) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
   (4) Be orderly.

(From Grice, 1975: 45-46)

These maxims provide interpretative tools with which people can work out what Grice calls the "conversation implicature", a special kind of meaning-*nn*. The theory of implicature has become a key concept in pragmatic analysis, for it provides a principled account of how it is possible to mean more than what is actually said, but the principles and the maxims generating and underlying implicature have a more explanatory role with respect to linguistics: complementing and supplementing semantic description which treats as semantically constant the meaning content of words or larger groupings that is in fact inconstant and dependent upon certain contexts specified by implicatures.

Grice (1975) begins his discussions with the meaning resulting from conventional meaning. He says that in some cases the conventional meaning of the words used will determine what is implicated, besides helping to determine what is said. So he intends to represent a certain subclass of

non-conventional implicatures, conversational implicatures, as being essentially connected with certain general features of discourse. Grice holds that in certain conversations people have the same desire: to be mutually comprehensible and cooperative, because 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 extent at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognises in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. This purpose or direction may be fixed from the start, or it may evolve during the exchange; it may be fairly definite, or it may be so indefinite as to leave very considerable latitude to the participants. But at each stage, some possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable. In other words, there is a code of cooperative behaviour which organises the way interlocutors interpret each other's speech. Because speakers expect their interlocutors to share this code, they interpret what others say on the basis of the assumption that their conversational partners are following a certain principle. This is what Grice formulates as the rough general principle, the Cooperative Principle.

Of course, Grice is aware that some of his maxims are controversial, or need some explication. For example, as to the second maxim in his second category, Quantity, he says that to be over-informative is not necessarily regarded as a transgression of the CP but merely a waste of time. However, it might be argued that such over-informativeness may be confusing in that it is liable to raise side issues; and there may also be another undesirable effect in that the hearer may be misled as a result of thinking that there is some particular point in the provision of the excess of information. However this may be, there is perhaps some reason for doubting about the admission of the second maxim. Under the category of Relation, there is only one maxim, "Be relevant" , and Grice says that though the maxim itself is terse, its formulation conceals a number of problems, the treatment of which is exceedingly difficult. As for the category of Manner, Grice claims an understanding of it as, unlike the previous categories, relating not to what is said, but to how what is said is to be said. He implies that his four maxims in this category are not conclusive or definitive, because one might need

other maxims in addition to his four.

Grice also admits that the observance of some of these maxims is a matter of less urgency than is the observance of others: a man who has expressed himself with undue prolixity would, in general, be open to milder comment than would a man who has said something he believes to be false. It might be the case that only when the first maxim of Quality is satisfied can other maxims come into operation.

There are three hierarchies in Grice's model: Principle, Categories, and Maxims. In discussing the principle, Grice mentions the "fundamental question" about the Cooperative Principle and its attendant maxims: What is the basis for the assumption which he seems to be making and which talkers will in general proceed in the manner that these principles prescribe? A paradoxically inadequate but adequate answer is that it is just a well-organised empirical fact that people DO behave in these ways: they have learned to do so in childhood and not lost the habit of doing so; and indeed it would involve a great deal of effort to make a radical departure from the habit. It is much easier, for example, to tell the truth than to invent lies.

Grice seems to be tired of a rationalist approach to find a basis that underlies these facts, and he wishes to think of the standard type of conversational practice not merely as something that all or most people do **in fact** follow but as something that it is **reasonable** for us to follow, that we **should not** abandon. For he was once attracted by the idea that observance of the CP and the maxims in a talk exchange could be thought of as a quasi-contractual matter, with parallels outside the realm of discourse. For, once two people—an owner of a car and a passerby—are involved in a certain thing, say, "tinkering under the hood" of a stranded car in Grice's account, the passerby-helper's very act of stopping by and tinkering under the hood indicates his being capable of mending the car, and the benefactor may have stronger and stronger expectations in more specific forms (in the absence of indications that the helper is merely an incompetent meddler).

It is worth noting that talk exchanges seem to exhibit characteristically certain features that jointly distinguish cooperative transactions. According to Grice, first, although in real life people's aims are not always the same, for example, the participants may have some common immediate aim, like

getting a car, one car, or their jointly-owned car, mended; and their ultimate aims may be independent, like getting each of their own cars mended; or their aims may be even in conflict, in the case where each wants to get his own car mended in order to drive off, leaving the other stranded. But in talk exchanges there is a common aim even in an over-the-wall chat. It is only a second-order aim that each party should, for the time being, identify himself with the transitory conversational interests of the other. Second, the contributions of the participants should be dovetailed, mutually dependent. And third, there is some sort of understanding (explicit but often tacit) that, other things being equal, the transaction should continue in an appropriate style unless both parties agree that it should terminate.

But while some such quasi-contractual basis as this may apply to some cases, there are too many types of exchange, like quarreling and letter writing, that it fails to fit comfortably. In any case, one feels that the talker who is irrelevant or obscure has primarily let down not his audience but himself. Based on this, Grice claims that the observance of the CP and the maxims is reasonable (rational) along the following lines:

> [A] hat anyone who cares about the goals that are central to the conversation/ communication (e. g. giving and receiving information, influencing and being influenced by others) must be expected to have an interest, given suitable circumstances, in participation in talk exchanges that will be profitable only on the assumption that they are conducted in general accordance with the CP and the maxims. Whether any such conclusion can be reached, I am uncertain; in any case, I am fairly sure that I cannot reach it until I am a good deal clearer about the nature of relevance and of the circumstances in which it is required.
>
> (Grice, 1975: 49)

Now the problem concerns the status of maxims in the Cooperative Principle, and the number of maxims in Grice's discussion. The maxims are often taken as the Cooperative Principle itself. This is problematic in that Grice exemplifies his principle with the four categories, or sets of maxims. By four "categories", Grice clearly means four sets of maxims, or nine "sub-maxims". Levinson explains Grice's theory as: the two parties should

"speak sincerely, relevantly and clearly, while providing sufficient information" (1983: 102). He also holds that Grice means that it is in the most common conversations that these maxims are adhered to. When the conversation cannot adhere to them, the listener should assume that these maxims are playing a certain role on a deeper level. But, the problem is: which is playing the role on a deeper level, the principle of cooperation or the maxims? The principle is merely a working assumption, a cooperative code between interlocutors, which enables one participant in a conversation to communicate with the other on the assumption that his partner is being cooperative. Thus cooperation, or cooperativeness, is essential for successful communication, it is the theme on which interpersonal verbal interaction is based. And the maxims are interpretative tools by which people work out the implied meaning. According to Grice, these maxims give interlocutors the ability to interpret each other's comments by means of "conversational implicature", so that the speaker's implied meaning is what is attended to.

Grice (1975: 47) also says that there are all sorts of other maxims that are also normally observed by participants in talk exchanges, and these may also generate non-conventional implicatures being socially connected with the particular purposes that talk is adapted to serve and is primarily employed to serve.

When Leech (1983a: 80) says that we need the Cooperative Principle to help to account for the relation between sense and force, he also actually refers to the maxims rather than the general principle. When he says that the Cooperative Principle itself has problems or troubles, i. e. it cannot explain (i) why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean; and (ii) what is the relation between sense and force when non-declarative types of sentence are being considered, he is trying to remedy or rescue Grice's theory of conversational implicature. Of course Grice himself did not totally ignore these problems. For instance, he observes that in actual communication people are not always willing to abide by these maxims, and he classifies four types of violations, which are:

1. He may quietly and unostentatiously VIOLATE a maxim; if so, in some cases he will be liable to mislead.

2. He may OPT OUT from the operation both of the maxims and of the CP; he may, say, indicate or allow it to become plain that he is unwilling to cooperate in the way the maxim requires.
3. He may be faced with a CLASH: he may be unable to fulfill the first maxim of Quantity without violating the second maxim of Quality.
4. He may FLOUT a maxim: that is, he may BLATANTLY fail to fulfill it. On the assumption that the speaker is able to fulfill the maxim and to do so without violating another maxim (because of a clash), is not opting out, and is not, in view of the blatancy of his performance, trying to mislead, the hearer is faced with a minor problem: How can his saying what he did say be reconciled with the supposition that he is observing the overall CP? This situation is one that characteristically gives rise to a conversational implicature; and when a conversational implicature is generated in this way, I shall say that a maxim is being EXPLOITED.

(Grice, 1975: 49)

The first case accounts for lies and deceits; the second case may account for what some government officials do when they refuse to answer questions on the ground that the information required is classified; and the third case accounts for the speaker's having to break one maxim or another. It is in the most probable situations that people are thought to be at least consistent with the principle on a certain level: when one side finds the other violating the maxims, he has to go to a deeper level to find the implied meaning. But the problem is that the hearer cannot determine whether the speaker is cooperating when he is not being direct, in a form of implicit cooperation. Grice may be considering how the maxims are violated in observing the general principle of cooperation. And according to him, violations may provide clues for what is implied in what is actually said, because we cannot find any implication in his work that flouting one or more maxims may undermine the observance of the Cooperative Principle. In the following cases, Grice (1975) says, though some maxim is violated at the level of what is said, the hearer is entitled to assume that that maxim, or at least the overall Cooperative Principle, is observed at the level of what is implicated:

Group A where no maxim is violated, or at least in which it is not clear that any maxim is violated.

Group B where a maxim is violated, but its violation is to be explained by the supposition of a clash with another maxim.

Group C which involve exploitation, a procedure by which a maxim is flouted for the purpose of getting in a conversational implicature by means of something of the nature of a figure of speech.

(Adapted from Grice, 1975: 51-2)

In explaining some extreme examples of patent tautologies like *Women are women* and *War is war*, Grice maintains that at the level of what is said, such remarks are totally uninformative and so, at that level, cannot but infringe the first maxim of Quantity in any conversational context. They are, however, informative at the level of what is implicated, and the hearer's identification of their informative content at this level is dependent on his ability to explain the speaker's selection of this particular patent tautology. If it were really the case that flouting any of the maxims means uncooperativeness, common sense will tell us that the particular situation of communication would certainly be total failure or breakdown, and Grice's Cooperative Principle would be groundless.

The Cooperative Principle is crucial to all communication. But in interpersonal communication, even if two parties share a lot in common and fully cooperate with each other, they cannot be definitely expected to understand each other properly. It becomes obvious that the issue of cooperation in communication cannot be dealt with completely if one neglects such factors as: common knowledge of the world, mutual knowledge of each other, knowledge of each other's willingness to cooperate on a particular occasion, and, last but not the least, the specific context in which an instance of communication takes place. The Cooperative Principle itself does not automatically guarantee effective communication, as are often shown in well-known jokes and comics. Sometimes people do not violate maxims intentionally and conversations come to breakdowns unintentionally due to lack of assumed or shared knowledge. Cook's example of communication failure may best explain this:

A: ... Then she did a P. G. C. E. in T. E. S. O. L. as they call T. E. F. L. nowadays.

B: Sorry, I don't know what you're talking about.

(Cook, 1989: 32)

Speaker A may assume that Speaker B knows what he is talking about by the three acronyms, and he is in a way observing the maxim of Quantity. Yet B does not know what A has in mind by what he says, and the maxim of Quantity, for B, has not been fully observed by A. Thus, the two speakers cannot successfully go on with the talk, and the communication has come to a breakdown.

By convention, the second speaker in Cook's example is expected to ask the first speaker about the three acronyms or abbreviations if he has no knowledge of what is being mentioned and if he does not wish to appear rude. Instead, his actual answer may well imply a refusal to continue the conversation because this form of utterance is liable to be interpreted as marked by lack of interest in further listening to A's talk. Here one can easily see the indirect speech act and imagine what the perlocution is. From this point of view, it seems a bit difficult to analyse whether the two speakers are adequately cooperating if the issue of cooperation itself is not clear. Even if it is certain that cooperation exists, the degrees of sincerity in cooperation cannot easily be determined, because language sometimes serves as a veil behind which the implicatures are never fixed.

It is just because the speaker should assume that the listeners share a common experience, and because the two sides are both assuming certain comprehensible cooperation from each other, that the process of cooperation is often not easy to determine: sometimes the cooperation is explicit, sometimes implicit; sometimes it is only single-sided, sometimes even non-existent at all. It is in this very process of non-explicit cooperation that the smooth passage of accurate information is hazarded, when one party fails to understand the other in a way expected by that party, or when the listener cannot determine whether the speaker is violating the maxims of the Cooperative Principle, and if yes, whether the violation is intentional or unintentional.

Traugott and Pratt (1980: 237) say that a cooperative speaker speaks

"with a viable communicative purpose vis-à-vis the hearer in the context," and speaks in such a way that "his purpose is recognisable to the hearer." A cooperative hearer trusts that the speaker "has a reasonable purpose in speaking", and he is "doing the necessary work to discern the purpose".

However, the above example of Cook's may be an instance where the speaker is cooperative in Traugott and Pratt's definition, but the hearer fails only because he does no work "to discern the (speaker's) purpose". Very often, in reality people do not always speak purposefully or reasonably or comprehensibly, and hearers do not always "get what speakers have in mind". Traugott and Pratt (1980: 238) conclude that in thinking about the Cooperative Principle, as with any linguistic rule, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between competence and performance. Sometimes people genuinely choose to flout the maxims. For example, people lie, or withhold information, or try to confuse the addressee. Moreover, even at the level of competence, the Cooperative Principle works differently from one speech situation to another, for example, cooperating with advertising is different from with friendly advice.

In communication, numerous personal factors are involved, including sex, age, social status, identity, communicative competence, world outlook, social and cultural backgrounds of the speaker and the hearer. Identity, social status and role of an individual are three different notions and the factors of the two sides of the communication are dynamic and relative, including the degrees of intimacy, shared knowledge, communication background and the particular setting. According to Samovar and Porter (1985), communication has eight ingredients: source, encoding, message, channel, receiver, decoding, receiver response and feedback. Among the ingredients, encoding and decoding are of special significance. It is these very processes of encoding and decoding that are very important in communication.

Jenny Thomas (1983: 91) attributes pragmatic breakdowns in communication to "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said", and she further sees interpersonal communication as "cross-cultural". For she defines the term as "not just native to non-native interactions, but any communication between people who, in any particular domain, do not share

a common linguistic or cultural background" (*ibid.*).

Deborah Tannen (1984) goes even further and states that "no two people have exactly the same communicative background, ... all communication is cross-cultural" Understanding communication is a means of understanding language at the same time, so the aspects of ways of speaking are "not extra-linguistic or even paralinguistic but are the essence of the language," and in analysing the pragmatics of communication, we are "analysing language itself". In a later work, Tannen, with her study of the differences between males and females in the interpretation of the same story in the same linguistic and cultural community, further confirms her point that interaction between any two individuals is cross-cultural (Tannen, 1990: 132).

In spite of the problems their definitions of "cross-cultural" may give rise to, these two scholars have positively emphasised the complicated nature of communication between individuals who have different cultural or subcultural backgrounds, and their remarks have suggested a new aspect of interpersonal communication studies. Leech also mentioned the difficulties in making comparisons of socio-pragmatic factors such as politeness across the boundaries of speech communities, so it is obvious that comparisons of interpersonal communicative behaviour is a fascinating area to study. Since cross-cultural communication in general is a subject much broader than what I am here emphasising, I will not devote any specific section to it.

Since the Cooperative Principle is often related to conversational implicature, the role of the Cooperative Principle comes particularly to the fore in indirect communication, where language-users cooperate to the extent of relying on unspoken inferences to effect the communication. Indirectness is such a common strategy that a speaker may deliberately resort to it in order to cope with a situation when he or she feels appropriate. This actually raises an interesting social question. Many scholars have been studying why people, on hearing an obviously bizarre or inappropriate utterance, do not simply decide that the speaker is not using the language appropriately, and leave it at that, and those scholars have been dwelling on what motivation drives people to seek a hidden message behind the literal message. Indirect communication works only by virtue of a basic, shared assumption that when people speak and listen to each other, they normally do have the

intention of accomplishing purposeful and effective communication in the context. This assumption can be viewed as a large-scale appropriateness condition governing all language use. Basically, the Cooperative Principle represents our knowledge that verbal communication is an activity in which individuals work together to accomplish shared, mutually beneficial goals.

Sociolinguistic and stylistic factors also play important roles in communication, because no one who is communicatively competent speaks the same all the time in all situations. According to Dell Hymes (1972), communicative competence refers to the ability of native speakers to use the resources of their languages in ways that are not only linguistically accurate but also socially appropriate. His well-known acronym for the seven properties, SPEAKING, which stands for **S**etting and Scene, **P**articipants, **E**nds (outcomes and goals), **K**ey, **I**nstrumentalities and Channels, **N**orms, and **G**enre (text type), has been a classic summary for what counts in communicative competence. Canale and Swain (1980) identify three components: grammatical competence; sociolinguistic competence; and strategic competence. And later Swain (1983) makes up four components by adding "discourse competence". Gu Yunying (1986) sums up five aspects of communicative competence: linguistic (mastery of grammatical knowledge), functional (the ability to use the four basic skills), contextual, interpersonal, and sociocultural.

While the social class and educational background of speakers have a strong influence on speech patterns for everyone and in every situation, it is still the case that part of the communicative competence of every native speaker lies in the ability to alter patterns of speech behaviour to suit the situation, including the identity of those who are listening. People do shift styles to indicate varying degrees of social distance. The background of the speaker and of the hearer are only one of the variables to be taken into account. As Swift's famous saying goes, "Proper words in proper places make the definition of a style". Wolfson (1989: 189) notices that early sociolinguistic studies failed to take these factors into account, partly due to the fact that they grew out of the tradition of dialectology, wherein regional background, age, education of the speakers themselves were seen as the key variables in speech differences, and little attention or no attention was paid

to stylistic variation.

2.3 The Politeness Principle

Since linguists have become increasingly interested in issues concerned with language in use, they have brought to bear a knowledge of, and familiarity with, natural language and techniques of linguistic analysis. Leech (1983a) not only discusses the relations among Speech Act Theory, the Cooperative Principle and his own development of a politeness principle, but also examines how aspects of English syntax and semantics are related to the process of communication.

In another work of the same year (Leech, 1983b), Leech intends to provide an example of analysis that can be undertaken from a pragmatic perspective. It also reflects some of the most important arguments and assertions in his view of pragmatics. Instead of talking about "intention", he talks of communication as a goal-directed activity, during which various different types of goal interact. The speaker, in order to achieve his ultimate goal, has the task of encoding both the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in the locutionary act. The hearer has to work out, from the locutionary act, the illocution and perlocution. After considering some inadequacies of Speech Act Theory and of Grice's Cooperative Principle, he suggests the Politeness Principle as a supplement to the Cooperative Principle. Leech summarises the Politeness Principle and the maxims (1983) and reiterates them in his "Pragmatic Principles in Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*" (1992), which consist of the following six maxims:

1. The TACT Maxim:
   (1) Minimize the cost of *others*;
   (2) Maximize the benefit to *others*.
2. The GENEROSITY Maxim:
   (1) Minimize the benefit to *self*;
   (2) Maximize the cost to *self*.
3. The APPROBATION (or Flattering) Maxim:
   (1) Minimize the dispraise of *others*;
   (2) Maximize the praise to *others*.

4. The MODESTY Maxim:
   (1) Minimize praise of *self*;
   (2) Maximize dispraise of *self*.
5. The AGREEMENT Maxim:
   (1) Minimize disagreement between *self* and *others*;
   (2) Maximize agreement between *self* and *others*.
6. The SYMPATHY Maxim:
   (1) Minimize antipathy between *self* and *others*;
   (2) Maximize sympathy between *self* and *others*.

(Adapted from Leech, 1983 & 1992)

Although the Politeness Principle is attributable to Leech, it is worth noting that politeness phenomenon had been under discussion by sociolinguists and sociologists such as E. Goffman, P. Brown, and S. Levinson prior to Leech. For example, E. Goffman raised the problem of "face" as early as in the fifties when he noticed that "face work" is often involved in interactions. He holds that face work is a mutually cooperative act. In order not to lose face, the safest way is not to hurt others' face and therefore people often degrade, depreciate, or minimise the praise of themselves in order to appreciate, highlight or maximise the praise of others. Any act in the other way round is unimaginable in social interactions.

In the "Foreword" to Brown and Levinson's *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (1987), John Gumperz writes that politeness is basic to the production of social order, and a precondition of human cooperation, so that any theory which provides an understanding of this phenomenon at the same time goes to the foundation of human social life. Politeness phenomena by their nature are reflected in language. Societies everywhere, no matter what their degree of isolation or their socio-economic complexity are, show these same principles at work.

Based on their investigations conducted in three separate language cultures which showed great similarities of politeness phenomenon, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) have provided a useful framework for understanding politeness by using the concept of Goffman's term "face", universalising politeness across history and geography as the strategies,

linguistically realised, by which human beings hold their own or grasp for more.

Grice himself has considered the factor of politeness in his discussions of cooperation and the Cooperative Principle. And Brown and Levinson's face-saving theory is closely based on Grice's original model of conversation, and assumes that human conversation is purposeful and goal-directed. Against this backdrop, they propose a politeness model that aims to account for "deviations" from Grice's Cooperative Principle and its four maxims. The basis for their model is a highly abstract notion of "face" . According to their analysis, all people have a strong interest in preserving *face*, which has two aspects: the *positive face*, the self-image and self-respect that a person has; and the *negative face*, the claim to privacy, freedom of action, and other elements of personal autonomy. In order not to lose face, or to save face, the most polite strategy is to commit the face-threatening act (FTA) in a way that is "off record" , with its threatening-ness veiled in metaphor, irony, understatement, hints and so on, so that the other person is not openly forced to recognise it. Less polite, although still polite to some extent, are two "on record" strategies involving redressive action: "negative politeness" and "positive politeness" , by which the model person, though performing the FTA explicitly, nevertheless pays deference respectively to the other person's negative and positive face. The last is the "bald on-record" strategy, in which the FTA is performed with no polite redress at all.

However, it is actually possible to perform a non-FTA in such a way that it is experienced as either polite, neutral, or impolite. And there certainly comes a paradox. A not impolite act can be experienced as impolitely executed. More generally, by adopting a polite strategy a person does not in practice always achieve his goals; he sometimes achieves them by impolite means; and sometimes he cannot achieve them at all. In any situation the politeness spectrum has a pragmatic reality. An act performed by one person is received as impolite, whereas performed under the same circumstances by a virtually identical person, the same act is received as polite, so that the values on the spectrum suddenly become rearranged. Politeness, that is to say, works in ways not entirely predictable, just like human interaction in general.

Whether the norms of polite speech in different languages vary a great deal or only a little, there do seem to be norms that are shared and that are related to the universals of politeness. Brown and Levinson's evidence (1978) shows that questions are correlated with negative politeness and statements with positive politeness. In one sense, grammatical moods can be viewed in terms of the politeness scale: interrogative mood is somewhat "more polite" than indicative mood, since the former can do more to diminish threats to face; by the same token, imperative mood is the "least polite" since imperative forms often seem to be face-threatening acts. They argue that the two desires of the politeness theory, "positive face" and "negative face", though susceptible to cultural variation and elaboration, embody two valid social needs that transcend cultural boundaries.

Leech (1983a: 83) distinguishes absolute politeness and relative politeness. And he deals with absolute politeness as a scale, or rather a set of scales, having a negative and positive pole at each end. Some illocutions (e.g. orders) are inherently impolite, and others (e.g. offers) are inherently polite. In his methodologically rigorous experiment conducted decades ago, Walters investigated the perception of politeness by native and non-native speakers of English and Spanish in order to explain "how much politeness could be squeezed out of speech act strategies alone" (Walters, 1979). He used a "standard lexical text" in order to establish a "hierarchy of politeness" by instructing his informants to ignore context as much as possible. However, it would not be feasible to suppose that there is any absolute "politeness quotient" which can be assigned to a linguistic structure unambivalently and out of context. It is very easy to find counter examples where elaborately polite forms of request carry the propositional content that remains polite or impolite all the time. For instance, a very polite request like "Would you be so kind as to ...?" is polite between individuals on formal social occasions while never remains so polite between close individuals on informal occasions or on intimate terms. And an impolite request like "Do come to the party" issued to a close friend will turn out to be polite. So cooperativeness and politeness cannot be thought of as separate, let alone conflicting. Nor are the issues of "uncooperativeness" and "impoliteness" two sets of phenomena in absolute opposition to

cooperativeness and politeness. It might be more reasonable to regard them as complex sets of relations because any assertive interpretation toward a polarity may surely meet with vigorous challenges accompanied by numerous counter-examples. The range of possibilities can be attested by the fact that very few people would likely get offended at a seemingly "impolite" speech act obviously out of cooperativeness and rhetorical tact, showing good-will, considerate-ness and helpfulness, while very polite speech acts in improper contexts of situation cannot as a rule guarantee the interlocutor's cooperative recognition of the speaker's kind intentions.

2.4 Cooperativeness and Politeness

In proposing the Interpersonal Rhetoric, Leech's aim is to introduce into pragmatics not only a CP, but also other principles, such as "a Politeness Principle", and one of his major concerns is the "interaction between these two principles" (1983a: 7). In describing the Interpersonal Rhetoric, Leech concentrates on Grice's Cooperative Principle and one maxim of the Politeness Principle, the Tact Maxim. By restricting the range of his discussion in this way, he only tries to show the explanatory value of a rhetoric of which Grice's CP is just one component. Leech's study of politeness is undoubtedly a great contribution to pragmatics. However, he has changed his ideas on the status of politeness in the study of human interaction. Previously Leech (1980) took the Politeness Principle as one of the maxims, or sub-maxims, in the sense of his 1983 model, of the Cooperative Principle, and later modified his model by giving the principle an independent status, equal in importance to, or more important than, the Cooperative Principle. His views in 1983 are mainly a complementarity argument, claiming that the Politeness Principle has in a way completed Grice's theory of "conversational implicature", rescuing it from serious trouble and accounting for problems that cannot be accounted for by the Cooperative Principle, i.e. why people deliberately violate the maxims of the Cooperative Principle in verbal communication. One of the answers he provides is: It is out of the need of politeness that people do so. Leech's assertion (1983a) that the CP and the PP are co-ordinate principles is shown

by the fact that without the PP, the CP would make erroneous predictions, for the PP explains why, despite the maxims of Quality and Quantity, people sometimes quite appropriately say things that are false or less informative than is required (pp. 80-81).

In Leech's line of argument that one principle sometimes overweighs the other, there are a lot of arguments concerning the conflicting situations of interactional principles. There are arguments furthering Leech, for example, politeness is more important than cooperation (Liu, 1987). And there are also arguments going against Leech, for example, the Tact Principle (which is actually an upgrading of the Tact Maxim in Leech's Politeness Principle) is the most important and dominating principle in communication (Li, 1994). Li criticises Leech's treatment of Tact as a maxim of the Politeness Principle, saying that it is not in agreement with the real situations of linguistic communication, since Tact is close to rhetoric which is defined by Leech himself as, "the effective use of language in communication". And the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle are both specific manifestations of the Tact Principle.

There are a number of reasons for resisting Leech's argument, as listed in Brown and Levinson (1987: 4-5). One of them is that the distribution of politeness (who has to be polite to whom) is socially controlled: it is not as if there were some basic modicum of politeness owed by each to all; in contrast, language usage principles of the Gricean sort do indeed generally obtain, principled exceptions though there are. Another is that every discernible pattern of language use does not require a maxim or principle to produce it. The Gricean maxims are not merely statements of regular patterns in behaviour: they are background presumptions, which by virtue of that special status can stand against apparent counter-evidence. Thus a partial answer to a question does not typically undermine the presumption of cooperation. If politeness principles had maxim-like status, we should expect the same robustness: it should, as a matter of fact, be hard to be impolite. When we hear a rude remark, such as "Shut your mouth!" or the like, we would expect an attempt to construct an inference of the sort: "The speaker has broken the maxim of Tact" (or some such principle); however, given the Politeness Principle, we must assume that the speaker is in fact

following the PP; the only way to preserve this presumption is to assume that he is not in a position to observe the maxim of Tact, say because he is in a hurry; it is clear that this can be worked out. This is an argument against setting up politeness principles as co-ordinate in nature to Grice's Cooperative Principle.

Brown and Levinson's position is clearly stated: Grice's Cooperative Principle (however it is finally conceptualised) is of quite different status from that of the Politeness Principle. The Cooperative Principle defines an "unmarked" or socially neutral presumptive framework for communication; the essential assumption is "no deviation from rational efficiency without a reason". The politeness maxims are, however, just such principled reasons for deviation. Politeness has to be communicated, and the absence of communicated politeness may be taken as absence of the politeness attitude.

Sell (1991: 215) has different views on politeness and interaction from either Brown and Levinson's or Leech's. While accepting much of Brown and Levinson's account of politeness that politeness has a lot to do with FTAs and face, and that the distinction between negative and positive politeness is useful, he resists their isolation of FTAs and politeness from everything else. For he does not see politeness as coming into operation only when people face-threateningly address each other, talk about other people, or make commands, requests, or enquiries. He sees all interaction, and all language, as operating within politeness parameters. Based on the common observation that politeness, or a culturally induced sensitivity to politeness, is mankind's patient, sleepless super-ego, Sell sees the politeness considerations as ubiquitous. While Leech (1983) regards cooperation and politeness as separate principles, Sell sees cooperativeness as intrinsically polite.

Fraser (1990) observes that one expects politeness to exist in every conversation and ultimately reflect the participant's adherence to Grice's Cooperative Principle. There is actually an important politeness maxim in conversation. Grice himself points out that there are other maxims (aesthetical, social, or moral in character), such as "Be polite", which are normally observed by participants in talk exchanges (Grice, 1975: 47). Robert Mao (1994) observes that to be polite is to comply with the rights

and obligations that conversation participants hold toward each other. In other words, it is to comply with the terms and conditions of the conversational contract (CC). By the same token, violations of the CC may most often give rise to impoliteness.

In spite of criticisms on Leech's attempt to take the Politeness Principle as co-ordinate with the Gricean Cooperative Principle, the Interpersonal Rhetoric is actually appropriate for an explanation of the problem of binding forces of the principle(s). Looked at from a higher level of the hierarchy, the Interpersonal Rhetoric has a more powerful explanatory force if we take the two principles as equal and inseparable components for the fact that in interpersonal interactions, cooperation and politeness actually go hand in hand. Pragmatic principles can be better understood when analyses are related to language system, communicative processes, contexts of situation, and contexts of culture. Therefore it seems necessary for us to reconsider Grice's Cooperative Principle and the theory of conversational implicature.

2.5 Issues Concerning Interactional Models

A lot of attempts have been made to revise Grice's model and each seems to be based on a dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of Grice's theory in application. Horn (1984) suggests that Grice's four maxims, together with their nine sub-maxims, can in fact be reduced to three: Quality, Quantity (which retains the first maxim of Grice's Quantity), and Relevance (which is an enlarged maxim subsuming all the rest of Grice's maxims). Sperber and Wilson (1986) are more radical in reducing all the maxims to one: Relevance (which is, in their term, the principle of relevance). And there are arguments that the Relevance Principle can well replace Grice's Cooperative Principle because it is more adequate, especially in the study of literature (Pilkington, 1991). All these boil down to the basic problems: How many different goals can human beings keep in play in verbal interaction? How many maxims do human beings act on in the process? What is the difference between principles and maxims, and between rules and maxims? How many other principles are at work in addition to Grice's Cooperative Principle? Is a model with ten maxims likely to be more accurate than a model with only

one, or five, or fifty? And what is really the difference between the models proposed up to now? I would like to look into the most radical discussion of Sperber and Wilson, which has been assumed to be quite influential of the day, and try to see how my own points can be related.

2.5.1 Relevance and the Cooperative Principle

At the time of the publication of part of Grice's "Logic and Conversation" (1975), Wilson and Sperber published their own works respectively, returning to pragmatics from different perspectives. The former was showing how a number of semantic problems could be better solved at a pragmatic level and the latter was arguing for a view of figures of speech rooted in pragmatics. In their joint influential work, Sperber and Wilson (1986: 36) ask such questions: What is the rationale behind the Cooperative Principle and maxims? Are there just the nine maxims Grice mentioned, or might others be needed, as he suggested himself? It might be tempting to add a maxim every time a regularity has to be accounted for. However, this would be entirely *ad hoc*. What criteria, then, do individual maxims have to meet? Could the number of maxims not be expanded but reduced?

Instead of simply expanding or reducing the number of maxims, Sperber and Wilson have presented a new approach to the study of human communication, grounded in a general view of human cognition. They argue that human cognitive processes are geared to achieve the greatest possible processing effect for the smallest possible processing effort. And to achieve this, the individual must focus his attention on what seems to him to be the most relevant information available. To communicate is to claim an individual's attention; hence to communicate is to imply that the information communicated is relevant. This fundamental idea that communicated information comes with a guarantee of relevance is the Principle of Relevance. Because they argue that the principle of relevance is essential to explaining human communication, they hold that this principle is enough on its own to account for the interaction of linguistic meaning and textual factors in utterance interpretation.

According to Sperber and Wilson, although the relevance theory is closely related to Grice's maxim of Relevance, it is not just a simple extension and revision of one of Grice's four maxims. It is based on the results of modern cognitive science, philosophy of language, and human behavioural sciences. Sperber and Wilson (1986: 162) hold that achieving optimal relevance is less demanding than obeying the Gricean maxims. In particular, it is possible to be optimally relevant without being "as informative as is required" by the current purposes of the exchange. Thus they discuss that it seems to be a matter of common experience that the degree of cooperation described by Grice is not automatically expected of communicators. For example, people who do not give us all the information we wish they would and do not answer our questions as well as they could, are no doubt much to blame, but not for violating principles of communication. According to Sperber and Wilson, the speaker's task is to make sure that the thought he intends to convey is consistent with the principle of relevance; otherwise, he runs the risk of not being properly understood. The hearer's task is to find the interpretation which is consistent with the principle of relevance; otherwise, he runs the risk of misunderstanding the utterance or not understanding it at all.

Sperber and Wilson (1986: 61) claim many differences between their relevance theory and Grice's theory. One is that the Relevance Principle is "much more explicit than Grice's Cooperative Principle and maxims". Another is that "Grice assumes that communication involves a greater degree of cooperation" than it does. For Sperber and Wilson, the only purpose that a genuine communicator and a willing audience necessarily have in common is to achieve successful communication: that is to have the communicator's informative intention recognised by the audience. Grice assumes that communication must have "a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction" (Grice 1975: 45) over and above the aim of achieving successful communication.

A more radical difference between their approach and Grice's, according to them, is that Grice's principle and maxims are norms which communicators and audience must know in order to communicate adequately. Communicators generally keep to the norms, but they also

violate them to achieve particular effects; and the audience uses its knowledge of the norms in interpreting communicative behaviour. The Relevance Principle, in contrast, is a generalisation about ostensive-inferential communication. Just as communicators and audience need not know the principles of genetics to reproduce, communicators do not follow the Relevance Principle as they follow Grice's Cooperative Principle; and they could not violate it even if they wanted to. The principle of relevance applies without exception: every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of relevance. It is not the general principle, but the fact that a particular presumption of relevance has been communicated by and about a particular act of communication, that the audience uses in inferential communication.

Although the most important difference between their principle and Grice's approach may be the difference in the explanation of communication, to me it is only a difference in the way of treating communication. Grice's account of conversation starts from a distinction between what is explicitly said and what is implicated. Implicatures are explained as assumptions that the audience must make to preserve the idea that the speaker has obeyed the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle. The Relevance Principle is intended to explain ostensive communication as a whole, both explicit and implicit. Since communication is a risky business, and it involves too many factors in the process, it is at present not feasible for us laymen to carry out extremely philosophical studies or empirical cognitive studies in order to explain the workings of communication mechanism. Fortunately, I find that it is possible to re-interpret Grice's theory by distinguishing the abstract Principle from the concrete maxims. When the CP is taken as imperative in communication, it involves all factors that require interlocutors to make necessary efforts in understanding the speaker's utterances delivered in any fashion. In this way, the maxims can serve as concrete interpretative tools for him to deduce what the speaker means.

2.5.2 Principles and Maxims

What is at the heart of Grice's proposals is a working assumption by

conversationalists of the rational and efficient nature of talk. It is against that assumption that deviant ways of talking show up as being polite, and to discern the speaker's purpose, it requires rational explanation on the part of the recipient, who finds in considerations of politeness reasons for the speaker's apparent irrationality or inefficiency. The assumption of the rationality and efficiency in the nature of the talk is already imperative. Although Grice's Cooperative Principle consists of the general principle and the maxims or sub-maxims, his discussion does not suggest a clear distinction between the principle and the sets of maxims by which people observe the general principle. In a similar manner, Leech (1983a: 8-9) makes no point in treating the principles (CP and PP) and their "maxims" separately, because Grice's usage suggests that the maxims are "a special manifestation" of the principle. Levinson seems to have the same view, taking the general principle as the maxims, or seeing the two components of the Cooperative Principle as interchangeable terms. For example, he uses "the Cooperative Principle" and "these principles" interchangeably, one here and the other there (Levinson, 1983: 101-02), possibly suggesting that the maxims can be referred to as "principles" and the general principle is the same in nature as the maxims. Originally, Grice (1975) refers to his maxims as "attendant maxims", later literature refers to them as "concomitant maxims" (Mao, 1994). When the Cooperative Principle has been discussed in this way, not surprisingly, the abstract imperative aspect of the cooperative behaviour or code is neglected while the concrete interpretative aspect of the maxims is emphasised.

Leech says that "the kind of constraint on linguistic behaviour exemplified by Grice's CP differs from the kind of rule normally formulated in linguistics ... in a number of ways" (1983a: 8). He sees conversational principles and maxims as "regulative" rather than "constitutive" in Searle's terminology (Searle, 1969: 33), and he holds that the rules of a language normally count as an integral part of the definition of that language, but maxims do not (1983a: 8). Although everyday interpretation of the terms "principle" and "maxim" may be of a moral or ethical nature, Leech's view is that in saying that people normally follow the CP, one is by no means taking a moral stance. To clarify this point, I'll discuss the issue of prescriptivity

and descriptivity.

2.5.3 Prescriptivity and Descriptivity

By the general principle, Grice implies the imperative, if not moral or ethical, aspect of the assumed cooperative code existing between interlocutors and the mutually expected cooperative behaviour involved in the process of communication, but he emphasises more the interpretative efficacy of the maxims for their explanatory power for conversational implicature. Leech emphasises the descriptive aspects of his as well as Gricean maxims. These two theoreticians seem to have much the same view in terms of the nature of their principles, i.e. they are interpretative and descriptive.

Not only does Leech take the maxims the same as the principles (or as components of the principles), but also stresses the descriptive aspects of his politeness maxims together with those of the Cooperative Principle, in the same way as Grice does the maxims of the CP. In a later work (Leech, 1992: 261), he says that the maxims of the Politeness Principle, like those of the Cooperative Principle, are purely descriptive: postulated for the purpose of explaining observed behaviour (e.g. accounting for communication indirectness, asymmetries of speaker-reference vs. addressee-reference, pragmatic "paradoxes", gradations of linguistic politeness, pragmatic acceptability). He explains that in wording the maxims, he is describing a "linguistic, rather than social imperative, which should be more carefully worded ..." But Gu Yueguo (1990) holds that the notion of politeness conveys moral meanings and normative values, in spite of the differences across cultures. Leech's descriptivity argument (1983, 1992) overlooks the prescriptivity and imperativity of certain essential elements of the principle(s) in verbal communication and lays emphasis only on the descriptive and interpretative nature of the maxims. In order to "perfect" theories of verbal communication, many discussions concerning this point tend to focus on how one (principle or maxim) overweighs the other in interpreting conversational implicature.

Moreover, Leech does not discuss in detail the relationship between his

principle and Grice's in terms of imperativity, nor whether his principle has greater binding forces than Grice's. But he does consider the question of what *other* maxims are at work in addition to his Politeness Principle.

My discussion holds that it is essential to treat the principles in abstract and concrete aspects in terms of imperativity and prescriptivity as well as descriptivity and interpretativity. It is conceivable that the general principle of cooperation and their maxims are like two sides of a coin. In rational and efficient talks, observing the Cooperative Principle, or acting cooperatively, does not entail explicit observance of the maxims such as Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner; and violating any of the maxims for rhetorical purposes does not necessarily undermine the cooperative act in communication, nor does it mean an absence of cooperation between interlocutors. On the one hand, the general principle is essential and imperative. Liars' and nonsense-talkers' mock cooperation or ironical politeness in conversations are extreme cases which have nothing noteworthy to explain ordinary sensible or meaningful exchange of information for practical purposes in our life. Hence there is no talking about invalidating the Cooperative Principle when someone tells white lies that go against Grice's Quality maxim. On the other hand, the maxims can serve as concrete criteria for evaluating or interpreting how the speakers are observing the cooperative code, and it is in this sense that the maxims are interpretative and descriptive. Thus, the more abstract code or the principle should be seen as separate from the more concrete "concomitant" maxims, the abstract being largely normative and the concrete being mostly descriptive. In this manner, the principle is normative, imperative, and prescriptive, and maxims are evaluative, descriptive and interpretative.

Grice's cooperative code between interlocutors refers to the abstract and normative aspect of the essentials of communication, and it is not this abstract and normative principle of cooperation that is violated, but the concrete, descriptive, and interpretative maxims that are violated. The Cooperative Principle and the four sets of maxims as well as the Politeness Principle and its six maxims are better to be thought of as two pairs of different entities. Grice has made no obvious attempt to elaborate on the Cooperative Principle as a concept and the four sets of maxims as a whole,

and other theoreticians do not seem to distinguish the way people cooperate in talk exchange and the way people find out about what one actually means by what he says.

2.5.4 Universality

There have been other objections to Grice's Cooperative Principle on various grounds. For example, one objection goes that it does not stand up to the evidence of real language use, as in the argument that the majority of declarative sentences do not have an information-bearing function. Another objection goes that the maxims of the Cooperative Principle are not universal to language, because there are linguistic communities to which not all of them apply. Zhang Zexing (1991), for example, clearly states that the Cooperative Principle is based on European languages and the maxims are not applicable to the Chinese language.

Leech (1983a) holds that the main purposes of socio-pragmatics are to find out how different societies operate maxims in different ways, for example by giving politeness a higher rating than cooperation in certain situations, or by giving precedence to one maxim of the Politeness Principle rather than another. He quotes some of Miller's examples to show how a pragmatic paradox can arise through the conflict of the modesty and approbation maxims, where the pragmatic paradox takes the form of repeatedly denying the truth of a compliment (Leech, 1983a: 136). He thus observes that the modesty maxim is, especially among Japanese women, more powerful than it is as a rule in English-speaking societies, where it would be customarily more polite to accept a compliment graciously rather than to go on denying it. Leech's quoting serves to drive home his point that emphasis of politeness can be realised at the expense of cooperation, namely, the conflict of the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle and of their maxims. However, I hold that cooperation and politeness go hand in hand. So far as one is cooperative and polite, how he makes choices of speech strategies out of one maxim rather than another in a particular situation is a minor issue. In this sense, cooperativeness and politeness underlie the superficial linguistic choices that may be taken as conflict of

maxims.

A major difficulty with Grice's conversational maxims and Leech's politeness maxims is that they, like the work of Austin and Searle, are built on the unstated assumption that the principles underlying face-to-face interaction are universal. Keenan (1976) argues that the maxims of the Cooperative Principle are not universal to language, because there are linguistic communities to which not all of them apply, pointing out that the principles Grice has put forward as the maxims "Be informative" and "Be relevant" are not at all operative in Malagasy society. Even in the "model" society, examples of this lack of universality can be found when the maxims such as "Be informative" and "Be truthful" may be contradicted by anyone whose occupation or social role requires that confidence be kept. In almost all societies, indeed, the reverse of the universality of the principles is true, for example, in diplomatic circles. Such universality is also the basis for Brown and Levinson's politeness. Janney and Ardnt (1993), by putting Brown and Levinson's politeness theory within the context of the on-going debate between universalists and relativists in the Western linguistic tradition, suggest that, like other theories of language universals, Brown and Levinson's theory lacks a universally unbiased conceptual framework for objectively and empirically evaluating their politeness scales. Thomas (1983) says that as one moves from "formal" to "informal" situations, one may need to invert the "politeness ranking" . Thus between husband and wife an utterance "I wonder if I could ask you to do me a favour as to keep quiet?" would be likely to be perceived as sarcastic or hostile rather than polite. If he does not normally behave so courteously, just imagine if one day he says to his wife at the table "Would you mind passing me the glass over there?" !

Odlin (1989: 49) has noted that one of the basic challenges in the study of politeness is to understand the differences of interpretation that different cultures make of certain kinds of behaviour. What counts as an apology in one culture may be seen as an expression of thanks in another culture, and what constitutes a proper request in one culture may seem very rude in another.

In spite of interdisciplinary research work that questions the universality

of Grice's theory and intercultural research work on politeness that questions the validity of the universality hypothesis of Brown and Levinson, seen from the relationships of the abstract vs. the concrete, the constant vs. the variable, and the common-sensically (in its non-derogatory sense) possible vs. the remotely probable, the theories are more universal. Thus, the validity of another dimension of universality which remains largely unnoticed but highly relevant: the application of the theories in both spoken and written (including literary) discourse.

2.6 Interpersonal Rhetoric *in* and *of* Literature

The study of Interpersonal Rhetoric in and of literary texts is based on the universality of interpersonal aspects of communication: the dimension of cooperation and politeness in written exchange. Grice's philosophical discussion is based on oral communication; Brown and Levinson's anthropological linguistic discussions (1978, 1987) centre on face-to-face spoken exchange, typical of much linguistic discussion of politeness, in spite of the works of Leech and Short (1981: 318 ff.) connecting speech with literary writing, and of Leech (1983b) applying politeness maxims to the analysis of Samuel Johnson's celebrated *Letter to the Lord of Chesterfield* (1755), which is sometimes taken as a non-literary discourse. In his discussions of Interpersonal Rhetoric, however, Leech (1983a) does not touch upon written discourse, and excludes written exchange altogether.

Edmondson (1981) argues that all communication can be mapped for interaction, but the title of his book, *Spoken Discourse: A Model for Analysis*, indicates the argument to be only a model for analysis of spoken discourse. One of his conclusions is that not all interaction is verbally realised in any case, so that the turns of an exchange are not a true guide as to what is happening: both semantic and pragmatic analyses are needed. Like Edmondson, Leech (1983a: 104-05) finds Searle's list of illocutionary forces too narrow, and writes of speech acts whose force can be negotiated. While classifying illocutionary functions into four types, Leech asserts that only two of them chiefly involve politeness: the COMPETITIVE and the

CONVIVIAL. The third category, the COLLABORATIVE, is one for which politeness is "largely irrelevant" , and "most written discourse comes into this category" (1983a: 104-05).

One of the challenges facing pragmatics is that of how to develop an approach to written discourse taking account of its differences from spoken discourse. Actually a lot of writings have touched upon the relation between speech and writing. Whether in ordinary discourse or in literary discourse, the similarities of speech and writing are rallying points for such attempts. In fact the differences of speaking and writing have exerted such influences on the differences between speech and written texts that many people tend to ignore the commonness and similarities. There may be an endless list of features showing the contrasting differences concerning liveliness, vividness, warmth, tangibility, temporality, spontaneity, etc. One may say that speaking and writing, or speech and written text, are never identical. The primacy of speech makes many people assume writing as secondary because it is a symbolic way of representing speech. In writing there is a pressure to avoid using forms whose meaning depends on intonational factors or gestures; the rules for degree of formality are not exactly the same for speaking and writing, because of the public-ness therefore the tendency towards standardisation of writing. Speaking (or speech, oral composition) is spontaneous, for the speaker composes what he says on the spot, making corrections as he goes on, and revising and clearing up misunderstandings as the exchange proceeds. Whereas writing (or text, written composition) is produced over a much greater and more flexible timespan and is subject to reflection, correction, and revision by the composer (as speaker); once it is delivered to the addressee, it is fixed, and there is little possibility for clearing up misunderstandings or revising further.

Fortunately, scholars studying literary discourse from a pragmatic perspective see more of the similarities than differences. From the principles of production and reception, Gray (1977), Pratt (1977), Nash (1980), Traugott and Pratt (1980), Leech and Short (1981), Chapman (1989), Sell (1991), among others, look on speech and writing, reading and listening, as the same in principle. Roger Sell's discussion on the relationship between writing and speech (1991: 218) is insightful. He notices the overly stressed

formal differences as well as functional differences, saying that formal differences between speech and writing can clearly be over-emphasised. Some features are more readily associated with written language: higher lexical density and simpler dependency structures (Halliday, 1985: xxiv), the definite article rather than deictics, and an infrequent use of pragmatic particles or compromisers such as "you know" and "kind of". And some speech phenomena—stuttering, hesitation, etc.—have no equivalent in writing other than in transcripts of real or fictional conversations, while some types of written text correspond to nothing in normal speech—telephone directories, for example. Nevertheless, many of the surface phenomena in spoken language that every analyst associates with politeness also occur in written language. According to Sell, this suggests the invalidity of over-emphasising the functional differences. It is true that there is a tradition going back at least as far as the Prague School of functional linguistics which sees speech not only as communicative but also as emotional, interpersonally involved, interactional, and warm, whereas writing is only communicative, detached, transactional in information transfer, and cold (See Brown and Yule, 1983: 13ff.). It is also true that some scholars argue that there are real cognitive differences in both the encoding processes and the reception processes. Nevertheless, some types of written texts—laws, holy books, prayerbooks, cooking recipes, love-letters, some business letters even—interact more fundamentally with human beings than any speech, and Tannen (1982) has shown that although some speech is certainly more personally evaluative, other speech is more analytically objective. Some types of writing are more casual and colloquial than many styles of speech, and some styles of speech are more ceremonial than many styles of writing. Speakers and writers alike actually select from a wide variety of styles and tones, and their choice immediately confronts any hearer or reader as something he likes or dislikes (Nash, 1980: 157).

In literature, many of the oldest works were originally composed and executed orally, and only later committed to writing. Once the oral tradition is lost, the actual work is in part unrecoverable. Although a literary work composed in writing is intended to be read rather than to be heard as the complete text, authors confront the gap between speech and writing

whenever they try to represent speech. For example, it is very difficult to write what would actually be said in an oral situation and be understood. Except for speech transcriptions, the most conversational dialogue is still stylised when compared with the spoken language simply for the medium of writing. In literature, standard trappings of literary conversation such as he asked, he explained, she added, she went on, etc. are put in only out of necessity. When representing non-standard speech, authors may resort to "eye dialect" (Traugott & Pratt, 1980: 339) for vivid phonetic representation of these non-standard pronunciation.

But it is generally acknowledged that writing has enormous cultural importance as it gives a more permanence to language. Since it is a "symbolic way of representing speech", there may be an essential link between the two forms of composition. Think of film shooting and drama staging based on texts. While speech may sound live and more vivid than writing does, writing can transcribe speech features of pronunciation and intonation in a similar manner, visually expressing and preserving speech features and often conveying more information than speech can temporally and spatially do. Although it is very difficult to write what would actually be said in a speech situation, the "stylised" conversational dialogue in writing is "spoken" rather than "written" and can be well understood in that way. Leech and Short (1981: 318-34) have touched upon speech presentation in literary discourse. In literature, paralinguistic features (facial expressions and gestures) in speech situations are often explicitly represented verbally, and when "eye dialect" is used for phonetic representation of non-standard pronunciation, it is no less "vivid" for its visual artistic purpose.

Engler (1991: 185) sees the closer relationship between writing and speaking, holding that orality and literacy are not mutually exclusive types of culture, but that they are "mind-sets" which can coexist beside each other, which may affect each other, and between which people can also to some extent switch. He quotes Robert Pattison: "All cultures are by definition oral cultures. When man learn to write they do not then forget how to speak" (1982: 24).

In spite of the problems of a comprehensive mapping of language on interaction, such insights have already been applied to written texts. One of

the earliest attempts was made by Gray (1977), who sees the difference between speech and writing as little more than the degree of interactional explicitness. In both speech and writing, the main relations between one assertion and the next are either descriptive (continuing or contrasting), explanatory (supporting or concluding), or rhetorical (questioning or answering). In spoken dialogue, there are often fully-formed questions at the surface level, which rhetorically generate answering moves from one assertion to the next. In writing, every new move is a reply to a question, which is sometimes explicitly stated but more often usually implied, e.g. by starting with a controversial statement, or one that even the author himself does agree with, to raise a possible question for the next move. An example would be Jane Austen's beginning of her *Pride and Prejudice*, "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife". Gray is aware of the fact that in writing the "catalytic" questions are chosen by the sender himself, whereas in spoken dialogue they are of course chosen, or even seem to be chosen, by the recipient. But these sender-selected questions stem from a large-scale sense-coherence framework that is also chosen by the writer: the entire composition can thus be seen as one macro-assertion. There is no absolute difference between speech and writing since there are situations where one participant is very much more in control than another—job interviews and classroom talk, for instance. Most striking of all is that the covertly dialogic nature of writing has been clearly grasped by applied linguists in the fields of composition and reading (Beaugrande, 1982; Cooper, 1982).

Enkvist (1991: 17-18) discusses the interpretability of texts, seeing more similarities between the written and spoken text in the same way. There are certain parameters that are specially important for a producer of discourse to bear in mind. One is politeness and face: we should be capable of estimating what features of the language and discourse might cause offense, and then avoid them, or perhaps use them willfully if offence is what we want to achieve. Another is previous knowledge. We have in the past several years learned what a very fundamental role the distinction between given and new information plays, not only in the organisation of messages as a whole but even in arranging the syntactic structure of the

individual sentence and clause. Thus the usual strategy in many types of text is to begin clauses and sentences with information that the speaker or writer believes is familiar to the receptor. In certain types of text where economy and speed are at a premium, speakers use strategies of what Enkvist calls "crucial information first" or "crucial information only" , instead of the more common "old information before new" . A third factor a speaker or writer should reckon with when adapting his discourse to his receptors is the receptor's information-processing capacity under the relevant circumstances. If the information density is too great, the processing load increases and may even "clog the machine" .

These three factors, according to Enkvist, can all be regulated by specific linguistic mechanisms. Typical regulators of politeness are the choice of speech act, the choice of mode of address, the choice of level of style and thus the regulation of the situational appropriateness of the utterance, paralinguistic features, gesture and body language and movement, and the like. The regulation of information structure and the relations between old and new information takes place through theme-rheme or topic-comment or presupposition-focus structure. And the regulation of information density takes place through dilution of metatext and the explicit spelling out of presuppositions; or by the concentration of a needlessly verbose message by cutting metatext and presuppositions, and generally leaving out all inferrable predictions and propositions.

The purpose of communication is to further one's aims by increasing the pool of information shared by one's hearer OR reader. But the pool of information is increased only when the hearer or reader succeeds in building scenarios, text worlds, around the emerging text. This building of text worlds is an incremental process which goes on throughout the act of listening OR reading. Brown and Yule (1983: 11-12), by defining "text" as "the verbal record of a communicative act" , put readers and listeners on the same status by idealising away from the variability of the experiencing of the text. In this way, they take it for granted that "readers of a text OR listeners to a text share the same experience" . Because literary discourse is an amalgam of both spoken and written, the representation of speech through written language is a major part of the literary writer's craft.

Chapman (1989: 159-62) finds that the reader is actually the listener, for the reader is the target of the message and he is ultimately addressed to. Even if in the fictional dialogue, where the changing roles are assumed by characters, even if the author chooses to remain remote and withdrawn, the reader is still the essential part of the work and the target of the message, for he listens to a number of different speakers whose words the author projects towards him.

To those interested in the interface studies, pragmatic theories have already suggested a new way of connecting cooperativeness and politeness with literary texts. Sell's interest in politeness is out of his wish to underline the interaction of literary texts as a way of qualifying much contemporary literary theory (See Sell, 1991: 221). So he says that the main thing would be to emphasise politeness as a matter of choice and cooperativeness in interpersonal relations by paying attention to politeness as a matter of choosing subject matter and language, and to politeness as a matter of helpfulness. According to him, there is actually a pragmatic politeness spectrum in any cultural milieu. Because everything done and said will be experienced as either to some degree impolite, or as a quite neutral as to politeness, or as to some or other degree polite, the choice of whether, and how to act at all, which may not even be a matter of conscious deliberation, is already a matter of politeness. Although we shall find occasion to say that a particular person seems more or less polite than another, we can never presume to give an absolute quantification.

Scholars have looked at the way FTAs are handled in the language of authorial personae and of characters. Among them, Karen Wadman and Paul Simpson have respectively applied Brown and Levinson's account to literary texts. Wadman (1983) has noticed politeness realisations in George Herbert's poems—hedging, negatives, questions—to emphasise both his distance from the God and the God's enormous power. When Christ is introduced as intermediary, the FTA actually increases in strength—the speaker asks, not only to be heard, but to be healed—yet he does so far more directly, and in a way that eliminates much distance—"My love, my sweetness, heare!". Simpson (1989) is the first to study politeness in dramatic texts and he has found a marked politeness shift chiefly by tracing the characters' utterances.

However, their discussions are not on the politeness *of* literary texts by focusing on the relationship between the writer and the readers, but only the politeness *in* literary texts by mainly focusing on the relationship between personae and characters dramatised within the world of mimesis. Sell asserts that writing is no less interactive than speaking. While some linguists hesitate to recognise the interactive dimension of writing, interaction has been recognised in extended monologic speech, although for not very long. Watts (1991) and Verdonk (1991) share the same idea that literary communication is interpersonal or interactive, and Sell (1991) goes a step further saying that the writing and reading of literary texts are interactive communication processes.

The propositions of these scholars are largely based on that fact that a writer is just as keen to hold the floor as the speaker. In writing, one cannot sit back and enjoy other people's contributions anyway, and he does not know whether his "listener" is interested in what he is saying or not, nor can he know if his "listener" has stopped attending to him. The fact that the compromising pragmatic particles do not generally occur in writing does not mean that writers never hesitate. Writers have more time to formulate their ideas than speakers do, but they cannot try to force through their points of view too soon. In the act of writing there is a monologic boldness and unmitigated finality that can be a heavy burden for him. So it is more challenging to reveal the pragmatic factors here. In talking about the interaction of writing and reading, Sell distinguishes politeness into selectional and presentational, saying that a writer who maintained absolute selectional politeness would scrupulously observe all the taboos and conventions of social and moral decorum operative within his culture, never saying anything, and never using any words, which would be in the least way threatening the readers' positive or negative face. Politeness, can be a matter of style as well as substance; a writer who maintained absolute presentational politeness would observe the Cooperative Principle at all costs, so that his readers would never be in the slightest doubt as to what was happening, what he meant, or why he was saying what he was saying. Readers would certainly not keep on reading if they find offensive linguistic devices of the author or if they feel that their time is being wasted (See Sell,

1991; 1994). Impoliteness such as assuming a condescending manner and other similar undesirable features that are often found unwelcome or irritating in speaking can make themselves felt strongly in writing in the same way.

Writers may resort to various means in expressing themselves in the most appropriate manner needed. Every word, written or spoken, is interactive, and a literary text is not defined in terms of a single function or set of functions, or in terms of a single feature or set of features, but a text which is designed literary within a certain milieu. The study of literature is therefore ultimately a kind of socio-cultural history. Although some literary writers embrace formalist, structuralist or post-structuralist theories which deny or overlook the interactive dimensions of the literary texts they produce, the interaction, however, still takes place, and the denial or overlooking is only one aspect of it.

Chapter 3

The Pragmastylistics of Drama

While drama is often related to theatre, it is the least studied of the literary genres. Among the scanty amount of work done on dramatic analysis, the most neglected area is the study on the macro-level, i.e. the communication between the playwright and the readers, or as literary pragmaticists say, between the writer and the outside world. This is due to the widespread view on dramatic texts that takes dialogue as the essence of the play. The pragmastylistics of drama, however, aims to deal with drama as a linguistic form of art (i.e. literature) and focuses on its communicative nature on both the micro-level and the macro-level, i.e. the interpersonal rhetoric involved both *in* the play text (among characters) and *of* the play text (between the playwright and the readers).

3.1 The Study of Drama

The study of drama actually meets with practical problems because of its amphibious nature. While we take drama as literature, the study of plays or play texts still faces problems such as "dramatic or theatrical?" and "text or performance?" . A dramatic text is different from a theatrical text, i.e. a text for performance. One who focuses on the tangible text may see more of its literary aspects, while one who focuses on performance may see more of

its artistic and theatrical aspects. This is because a dramatic text and a theatrical text are interrelated and a play text and its performance cannot be disconnected.

3.1.1 The Play Text: Dramatic or Theatrical?

Generally speaking, people involved in stage production and dramatic performance take play texts as their blueprint. The play as dramatic text is not necessarily ready for stage use without stage production, and it has to be transformed into a theatrical text by stage producers and directors who actualise the communication process, in order to be performed on the stage. And the transformation of a dramatic text into a theatrical text is a very complex communication process. According to Hess-Lüttich (1991: 236), this process has a number of intermediary steps and involves an ensemble of co-producers of the text who have a double role as interpreters of the writer's dramatic text and as producers and/or presenters of the theatrical text. The empirical analysis of this transformation process, he claims, is the task of a socio-semiotics of theatrical text production on the one hand and of a sociology of institutional communication within the theatre on the other. However, these two projects have not been combined so far. He says that one of the methodological dilemmas of traditional performance analysis is certainly a kind of "observer's paradox" (p.236). He also observes that the theatrical text is by definition a multimedial transitional process, but needs to be "fixed", notated, medially transformed, in order to be empirically analysed. It is just this methodological dilemma that has led to some more traditional drama departments and theatre critics to quite rule out the possibility of an explicit and scientific methodology of performance analysis.

Literary conventions assume a dramatic text to be, or make it seem, theatrical. According to Matthews (1910: 3), the great dramas of the mighty masters, without a single exception, were intended to be played rather than read. Matthews's statement might be too assentive, for it may imply that dramas that are originally produced for mere reading cannot be dramas written by mighty masters, or they are never great dramas. Although it may be an overstatement, in fact it emphasises the theatrical

nature of drama, for the term "drama" (in Greek, meaning *to do, to act*) always involves enactment. In his *The Technique of Drama*, Price writes:

> A drama is the imitation of a complete action, adapted to the sympathetic attention of man, developed in a succession of continuously interesting and continuously related incidents, acted and expressed by means of speech and the symbols, actualities and conditions of life.
>
> (Price, 1935: 4)

In practice, it is undeniable that many plays have not got chances of being performed however their writers may have originally assumed. Contrary to Matthews's "without a single exception", *A Handbook of Literature* (p. 376) only takes "play" as usually for performance, defining the term as "a literary composition ... ordinarily written to be performed by actors who impersonate the characters, speak the dialogue, and enact the appropriate actions." However, he adds that a play "usually, but not always, assumes that this enactment will be on a stage before an audience" (my emphasis).

The theatrical performance of drama has drawn so much attention just because traditional views of drama hold that the playwright's text is not all of the trade, his role is not only to tell the readers directly, but to convey his ideas indirectly through the actors to his audience. Thus, playwrights create their compositions "for or as if for performance by actors" (my emphasis).① Clearly dramatic conventions play the role here. For no playwright may produce a piece of drama in typical prose form and openly declare that it is not for performance, which would be a meaningless undertaking. If it is really the case, there must be some significance inside. Just as a novelist does not normally wish his work not to be read or openly declare it as something not intended to be read, the very act of his doing so must not be taken for nothing. For example, Soren Kierkegaard, the famous 19th-century Danish philosopher and literary writer in the existentialist school, on which the absurdist literature is based, made every effort in being extraordinary in this respect. The best example may be his writings entitled *Either/Or* (1843), which himself labels in the "Foreword" as a collection of

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① *The American Heritage Dictionary.*

"essays" , a typical instance of generic deviation. At first sight, his writings are strictly private and personal in the form of diaries and letters which are ordinarily never for publicity or publication. This work is, however, a literary masterpiece in spite of its generic reluctance for publicity or its generic deviation.

Such artistic deviations or exceptions, in contrast to Matthew's view, can be well justified. For one thing, not all dramatic works can be put on the stage no matter what efforts playwrights may be making in their texts. For another, modern plays, especially plays of the Theatre of the Absurd go directly against the traditional cannon. The leading writer in this school, Eugène Ionesco, never seems to like the theatre while he himself has produced innumerous plays, which curiously are NEVER NOT intended for performance.

In the circle of art, Matthews may be right in every sense. However, in the circle of literature, just as a novel not intended for publication is not necessarily an exception to the work of a "great" novelist, a drama that is intended not to be performed is not necessarily a poor one. Actually the artistic forms the authors employ in deviation may best fulfill their specific needs in literary communication.

3.1.2 The Object of Study: Text or Performance?

I intuitively do agree to the point that the playwright writes primarily for the purpose of performance on the stage in the theatre. To my understanding, usually for a play or a piece of drama, the performance on stage may better accomplish the communicative process between the playwright and the audience than between the author and the reader. Yet, as dramatic creation is a kind of fiction-making, I am inclined to believe that the playwright writes for his readers in the first place, i. e. for theatrical producers, directors, actors and audiences, and some playwrights write MERELY for their readers, for they choose this generic form just because they see it the best for accomplishing their specific task in a literary-artistic manner, as a prose writer would sometimes like to express his ideas in a poem for better effects.

This situation certainly raises problems: What is the object of study in dramatic literature, text or performance? What is the appropriate approach to the study of dramatic literature, by reading the text or watching the performance? And what is the nature of our study, dramatic criticism or theatrical criticism?

Traditional dramatic critics often claim that the reading of dramatic literature is a dismally poor alternative to the theatrical experience itself, and there is no way to substitute for the interrelationship that exists between those who do and those who watch. Dramatic criticism of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s treated plays rather like poems, analysing metaphors, strands of imagery and so on, often lifting parts of plays out of context in order to treat them more or less as poems in their own right, because such criticism arose when the analysis of poetry was the most developed of the Anglo-American critical apparatus. Therefore, the study of drama assumes that the essential features, namely, the meanings which are said to be implied behind the words that the characters speak, and which are often made apparent to the audience in a theatre by the use of gestures, tone of voice and so on are only observable in performance, and this has led many recent critics to suggest that plays can only be properly understood and evaluated on the stage.

Luckily there are a number of considerations which suggest that the object of dramatic criticism should not be the theatrical performance, but dramatic text. For those who have no access to the theatre or for some reason have missed the performance of a certain play, the only practical remedy for their enjoyment of it is to read the text. In classroom activities of language and literature teaching, reading plays without necessarily watching their performance has been a common practice. In the stage production of plays, producers and directors have nothing but the text to rely on, since it is impossible for them to watch some performance of the play which they are going to put on stage. Even actors and actresses themselves are readers, who are usually given play texts and stage scripts to read before acting. And a production and performance of a play is only one of the possible interpretations of it. This point is crucial because a production of a play is in effect a play plus an interpretation of it, in just the same way that a reading of a poem must select one of a number of possible interpretations. And the

distinction works not just for value judgments about plays and performances but also in terms of whether or not a particular production of a play was a faithful one. Short (1989: 141) recalls his personal experience of hearing, after a performance of *Hamlet*, one academic tell another that what he had seen was "good theatre but bad Shakespeare". He says that in this case, both the play and the performance were deemed to be good but the latter was not thought of as being an accurate rendering of the former. This instance lends support to the logical and terminological distinction of the play text and the play in action.

But such an emphasis on the play text, as Short admits, does not suggest that critics should never go to the theatre. After all, general knowledge of theatrical conventions is part of the equipment that we have to possess in order to be able to understand this particular universe of discourse; but it does indicate that going to a performance of such and such a play is NOT a necessary condition for understanding it and responding to it sensitively. Therefore, while we distinguish literary and theatrical analysis, we should not go to extremes and take one as the poor relation of the other. Literary criticism should take the text as its object of investigation and develop techniques of textual analysis able to cope with the implied aspects of meaning. The theatrical criticism on the other hand has a perfectly valid area of interest in, for example, comparing different ways of performing the same scene in terms of (a) its theatrical effect, and (b) its faithfulness to the dramatic text. Literary criticism and theatre studies are distinct areas of study but they have overlapping boundaries. Hence the dialectical relation: critical analysis of a play text is likely to produce suggestions for the performance which have to be tested in the theatre, and a new performance of a play may well suggest an interpretation which no critic had ever thought of but which could only be evaluated by checking it against the text.

3.2 The Language of Plays

Traditional views on the language of plays can cause problems. First, the language of plays is one of the most difficult elements to isolate in the drama because of its "inextricable involvement with the character"

(Tennyson, 1967: 31). Second, the language of drama is taken to mean solely dialogue. A common view is that although novels and other literary forms may, and usually do, have dialogue, only in the play is dialogue "all of the language" (Tennyson, 1967: 31). Except for stage directions, the playwright uses no other words and dialogue assumes a much more important role in the drama than in the novel or poetry. Third, although for all practical reasons, the study of the language of the play is the study of dramatic language, it is held that the real business of a play is not even dialogue, but the imitation of an action. And dialogue is only a component, although indispensable.

These views commonly held in dramatic scholarship actually help us nothing in exploring into the nature of the play text. To judge the appropriateness of the language of a play, we take account of how well it suits the character speaking; but we get to know the character in great measure by the language he uses! It is a circle that is hard to break. In the stylistic study of the play or the dramatic text, the traditional notions of the language of drama are all the more inappropriate. Stylistic analysis of dramatic text must assumedly take everything the playwright has put down to paper, i.e. stage directions as well as what the characters are supposed to say.

3.2.1 Stage Directions as Part of Drama

Stage directions are in a very embarrassing position in the study of drama due to traditional views. Because stage directions are regarded as part of the theatre for stage performance, they are not taken as part of the play for enactment. While they are largely indispensable as part of the play text, they are often deliberately ignored by both dramatic critics and literary critics. Dramatic critics of play texts would say that the playwright uses no other words "except for stage directions". But what is the status of stage directions if dialogue is "all of the language" of drama? It is possible that many plays have been written without stage directions, but it does not follow that stage directions in plays can be ignored, as if they were unnecessary. My proposal is that stage directions are an essential part of the drama as communicative acts.

It is probably because of the feature that stage directions can explain themselves that these directions are taken as if extra. In many modern plays we can find extensive stage directions that provide information about character and mood, as well as the usual notations of entrances and exits and places where the action occurs. Without them, the reader lacks certain information to fill out his picture of the action. These stage directions include more than commentary on the action: they offer us background, character study, and sometimes minutiae of the appearance of a room or place. Since the aim of the realistic theatre has been to make visible actual places and circumstances and to emphasise their importance symbolically, much that earlier would have been suggested by the dialogue is explicitly spelled out in the stage directions. Since they are, however, still taken as "guides" for helping an acting company realise the play on a stage, ranging from statements of time and place, to pointers of specific actions, to interpretations of characters, they are likely to be taken as written for actors only. But the reader needs these directions to perceive the atmosphere and mood the playwright is trying to create.

Stage directions are cast in the form of informative prose, often printed in a font or type different from the "play" proper. So it is held that although stage directions are helpful material, this material is not "the essence of dramatic language" (Tennyson, 1967: 33). Despite the overwhelming proportion of dialogue, in some plays the stage directions are no less important for the study of the language of plays. A study of such plays must attach as much importance to stage directions (and performance instructions) as to dialogue. Stage directions are themselves essential parts of many modern plays or dramatic texts. Such directions are not meant to be pronounced and to be heard by the audience, but they are intended to be read by the prospective directors, stage producers, and actors/actresses for a performance. They are also actually read, if not intended to be, by readers of the play. Thus they can be taken as part of the playwright's "fiction". These directions or instructions are in language like ordinary language but are directed to the same end as the special language of the dramatic text.

Stage directions operate in rather different ways in different plays. Their importance varies, ranging from being optional to being absolutely

indispensable.

Many historical plays are written without stage directions, since information concerning the entrances, exits and setting can be inferred from dialogue. But a study by Nash (1989) through paraphrasing an episode of Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, shows that stage directions are optional only in the sense of being implicit, and it is only a matter of choice whether the playwright explicitly spells out stage directions.

In many modern plays, the use of extensive stage directions is not simply a matter of choice but one of importance. It is true that most stage directions, as Short (1998: 10) observes, only demarcate a specified range of appropriate behaviour rather than telling the performers exactly what to do or how. It is also true that, as Short points out, readers' schemata for certain scenes and actions will help them to "infer performance from text". However, some background information and specific behaviour for communicative effects have to be spelled out clearly in stage directions, which serve to produce symbolic or atmospheric setting, and to create a more effective interaction between action and dialogue. At the same time, stage directions are "real world" communications about fictional world communications: apart from specifying the usual notations on the stage, they provide background information and indicate non-verbal communication such as characters' laughing and crying at particular points of interaction, or silences in conversation turns. Although most of Bernard Shaw's stage directions may seem superfluous, when they were experimentally removed, the plays would be quite different: not everything is, or always is, available in and inferable from the dialogue. Without stage directions, the reader would lack certain information to picture the situation.

In most plays of the Theatre of the Absurd, stage directions are absolutely indispensable. The playwright provides lengthy and extremely detailed stage directions and performance instructions at extraordinarily high frequencies for particular literary purposes as well as for strict theatrical effects. An extreme case is Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words* (1956), where stage directions are the only language of the play, and, without stage directions, there would be no play.

In spite of their essential and irreplaceable functions in some plays,

stage directions are generally in a less privileged status and "down-played in significance" (Wales, 1994: 243). Whether lengthy or brief, in informative prose or in note form, stage directions are often printed in a font or type different from the dialogue, and when short of this visual formal difference, they are in most cases bracketed, as if extra.

Although stage directions are not pronounced by characters and heard by the audience, they are in fact read by actors/actresses and therefore indirectly work on the audience. For literary readers, stage directions are descriptive and narrative passages as part of the playwright's fictional text. Thus, a study of plays must attach as much importance to stage directions as to dialogue.

3.2.2 Dialogue as Communication

The term "dialogue" comes from Greek meaning *to converse*, which assumes at least two speakers. All dialogue is inherently dramatic since it presupposes some kind of encounter between two or more persons. But dramatic dialogue has special obligations, strengths and limitations because of the functions it must fulfil, and these are set by the nature of the drama itself.

Dialogue presents a paradox in the theatre. Because it keeps up throughout the drama, it becomes essentially unreal. On the other hand, the dialogue must still *appear* real. Even if nobody actually talks in the way as in the dialogue of the play, the dialogue must *seem* that they do talk that way, no matter how they say it. The quality of the dialogue, the words that the playwright puts on paper for his characters to say and for us to read, is what makes the difference between mundane dramas and great dramatic literature. Characters in the great dramas do not just talk; they speak a highly literate dramatic language. It holds the audience, it tells the story, it reveals the character, and it exposes the theme and idea.

Because the written dialogue is, until performance, the main part of the play itself. Unlike the novelist, the playwright cannot take refuge in unspoken descriptive passages to communicate his conception except for stage directions. Dramatic conventions permit certain words to be put

naturally into the mouths of characters, words that would appear awkward or extravagant from characters in a novel. There is another related paradox here: Even for dialogue to sound natural, it must be artificial. Dramatic dialogue, emerging from the conditions of the drama, may be characterised as having (1) economy (for mood and tune) to hold the spectator's interest; (2) appropriateness (actually felicity conditions for speakers involved); and (3) pace and artifice (it may not certainly be rapid and brief, it could actually be long, measured, and even slow in speeches) (Tennyson, 1967: 33).

3.2.3 Fictional Dialogue and Natural Conversation

Fictional dialogue is dialogue assumedly spoken or to be spoken by fictional characters, in almost all types of literature. Such dialogue is not like real, everyday, naturally occurring conversation in the sense that it is not genuine transcriptions of actual conversations. Features like corrections, hesitations, false starts, gap-fillers, etc. that frequently occur in everyday ordinary conversations do not normally appear in fictional dialogues. When these features of non-fluency do occur in fictional dialogue, there must be some significant value there precisely because we know that the writer has put them there on purpose.

In real ordinary conversations, interlocutors expect to have feedbacks now and then. But in fictional, especially dramatic, dialogues, it is rarely the case. In everyday life, if the listener stops giving feedbacks to his interlocutor in a conversation, the speaker may find that something has gone wrong. But in dramatic dialogues, whether there is any feedback from the listener, the speaker goes on talking as has been planned by the director or expected by the audience. Thus, we must be always aware of the fact that dramatic conversations and our understanding of them are dependent on special stage conventions. Conversational turns are chained together as a consequence of speech acts. The norm of one speech act to be followed by another enables us to predict with certainty the occurrence of conversation sequences. For instance, we normally expect a question to be followed by an answer, an offer by its acceptance or refusal, an order by that order being

carried out, a complaint by an apology, which is in turn followed by a statement of forgiveness, and so on. Patterns of linkage like this are part of the normal glue of conversation. It is rare for just one person to speak all the time, and when two or more people are talking, it is rare for more than one person to speak at the same time. Everyone seems to know instinctively when and how to swap turns, and consequently there is remarkably little overlap between turns by two different speakers, even when the conversation becomes very animate. Any deviation from relevant turn-taking norms, if not leading to breakdowns, can be meaningful.

Patterns of turn-taking have clear general connections with conversational power. Stage conventions for dialogues are not castles in the air; they are based on realities. So there are a number of respects in which naturally occurring conversations are similar to drama dialogue. In both types of communication, we observe conversational behaviour to infer the things people suggest (as opposed to what they state) when they talk, and we also use such behaviour to infer the things about people (or characters) which they might not even intend us to realize. Indeed, if there were no correspondence between ordinary conversation and drama, it would be difficult to see how dramatists could write plays and have us understand them.

In the play as an artefact, there must be some literary characteristics. For we do not usually expect casual conversations among friends to be literature, but we expect it of dialogue in a play. We do not expect to meet someone in everyday life exactly like a character described in the play. Even in an absurd drama, if the university professor in *The Lesson* or the academician in *The Gap* speaks in a way an illiterate miner does, or Hamlet speaks Cantonese, we would find it highly unnatural. So dramatic dialogue is in itself a convention.

Assuming the same principles in understanding fictional dialogue and naturally occurring conversation does not take it for granted that there is no difference between them. Despite the long tradition of literary theory on the one hand and the shorter tradition of linguistic studies extended to literature on the other, studies on the process of literary communication have not been highly developed. Hess-Lüttich (1985: 199-200) distinguishes interpersonal

dialogue and literary communication by the difference of message towards the addressee. He says that in everyday discourse, the message normally is directed toward a specific addressee, a hearer to be defined "socially and individually" . However, in literary communication, it is generally not directed to a specific addressee, but an audience to be defined "sociologically and statistically" . His discussion holds that fictional dialogue should not be characterised by terms such as "pretended illocutions" (Searle, 1975: 322) or "talk without consequences" (Ohmann, 1973: 61) because fictional speech cannot be defined in terms of an utterance of an author addressing a reader. So a possible solution to this problem, according to Hess-Lüttich (1985: 204), could start with considering the role of the author in producing the text and in re-producing structures of discourse on the basis of his sharing both the real and the fictional world.

In spite of the differences between fictional dialogue and actual conversation, Hess-Lüttich does not mean that fictional dialogue cannot be analysed linguistically. In fact, it has been found that there are certain similarities and differences between the two types of dialogue and discourse stylisticians regard discourse models as valuable to the study of dialogue in drama (Burton, 1980: 8, 96) and, more generally, in fictional texts (Toolan, 1985: 193). Burton's argument is persuasive that literary dialogues could be read as condensed forms of ethnographic observations of naturally occurring talk, and literary authors should be regarded as fellow researchers into the basic structures of verbal interaction. For, the author of a fictitious dialogue and the anthropologist or sociolinguist rely just as much on their personal experience, as do speaker and hearer, as well as on their practical knowledge of the structures and functions of interactional rules. Authors model communication on this practical knowledge, whereas linguists reconstruct it by supplementing their practical knowledge with their scientific insights into communication rule systems.

Dialogue in the drama, according to Burton's discussion, can sound like naturally occurring conversation. And when it is used and analysed as if it were a transcript of real conversation, it is an "extremely powerful heuristic device for the discourse analyst trapped into a way of seeing by other styles of data" (Burton, 1980: 96). Toolan (1989: 195) acknowledges that natural

conversation differs from fictional conversation in many ways. It is not merely that in fiction the talk is tidied up ... there are also literary conventions at work governing the fictional representation of talk, so that the rendered text is quite other than a faithful transcription of a natural conversation. However, certain structural and functional principles govern fictional dialogue, as they do natural dialogue, and in the former case as in the latter any witness (a reader or hearer) must recognise and attend to those principles in order to comprehend the dialogue.

3.3 Communication *in* and *of* the Play

By "*in* and *of* the play", I mean that literary communication takes place both inside and outside the play. In studying a play, the text should be treated as a series of communicative acts. Communication is based on the belief that people can come together and reach mutual understanding as their goal. The agreed-upon understanding comes about not by one subject trying to persuade the other, but by both sides providing grounds for agreement. The onus is placed on both speaker and hearer. Since this agreement is always negotiable and never stable, it is feasible to investigate dramatic texts with a less descriptive approach but view them as communicative discourse with text-reader as well as actor/audience participation. Discourse analysts' emphasis that a text can only be understood as an object embedded in a set of linguistic conventions is based on the fact that in everyday conversations, people usually act on certain principles of communication. We generally assume that the Cooperative Principle (which includes all other factors or maxims such as politeness, tact, etc.,) plays a certain role and therefore one should speak comprehensibly and answer questions relevantly, with a degree of information appropriate to his interlocutor and to the specific context of situation. For example, if one finds deviations from normal rules of communication, he/she is to assume that the speakers are observing the Cooperative Principle, along with other principles of the Interpersonal Rhetoric (Leech, 1983a), on a deeper level, and interpret their speech accordingly. Further, we have to consider other related factors in the production of speech utterances which may be chosen between possible

alternatives, or chosen out of a range of possibilities. Likewise, when we try to understand a conversation in the play, we have to interpret such utterances in the same manner, because characters in plays are believed to observe the same principles and plays have been interpreted in the same manner (See Short, 1989, 1996; Simpson 1989; and Leech, 1992).

Since similar situations can be observed between characters in plays in order for us to interpret play texts, when we find fictional conversations deviant from normal rules of communication, we should assume that the characters are observing certain principles of the interpersonal rhetoric on a deeper level, as people do in real conversations. Such an analysis of character-character interaction is one of the communication *in* the play. When characters communicate with each other directly, they send a certain message indirectly to the audience. At the same time, the play text is a medium through which the playwright is speaking to the readers as people communicate in other forms of written communication in terms of interpersonal rhetoric and interactional principles. In this way, we not only see how characters interact with each other in the fictional world, but also how the playwright cooperates with his audience and readers through the fictional text in the real world.

Short (1989: 143) suggests that the sensitive reader can do his work in interpreting plays in this very manner. And his important point is that we do not have to see the play in performance in order to understand the characters' words and their significance. According to Short, what dramatic criticism does need is a way of explaining how meanings are arrived at. And this discourse-oriented approach based on play texts may rescue dramatic criticism from "the invariability of performance analysis on the one hand and the inadequacy of traditional textual analysis on the other". Therefore, dramatic texts can be successfully studied, interpreted and even appreciated and assessed regardless of performance, whether the actual performances are successful or disappointing.

Earlier dramatic criticism neglects drama's generic characteristics, and its text-based mode of analysis (*N. B.* not in the sense of taking the play text as the object of study, but in the sense of treating the play text as a static text rather than communicative discourse) involves problems. Burton

(1980: 7-8) points out that the sort of features (e.g. phonological, lexical, syntactical) involved in traditional stylistic analysis are insufficient. And it seems "fairly obvious that if we want to consider play-talk and its degree of similarity to real-talk, discussing sentences, phrases, alliteration, polysyllabic words and so on, is not going to tell us a great deal. The only possible linguistic level to use as a basis for such an analysis is discourse" (Burton, 1980: 8). In her book, Burton modified Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) model and applied it to modern drama dialogue, mostly from the plays of Harold Pinter. Her textual analysis takes place in an area of language use not traditionally covered by stylistics. She systematically accounts for the alienated structure of the dialogues, in which numerous silences, breaking of rules for turn-taking serve to underscore the kinds of power relations which obtain in the dramatised conversations. Particularly innovative and useful are her proposals for challenging and supporting "moves".

Although Hess-Lüttich's discussions on the nature of dramatic discourse (1985) and on the interaction between the writer and his audience (1991) seem too complicated for practical purposes of play text studies, he does share the views of Burton and Toolan, who separately regard discourse as the possible linguistic level for a basis of dramatic text analysis and for the study of fictional dialogue. And he (Hess-Lüttich, 1985: 206) summarises three deficiencies in traditional studies of the theories of drama and literary discourse: (1) the lack of "theoretical abstraction", i.e. dramatic texts are often analysed without taking into account the socio-economic conditions of dialogue communication; (2) the lack of "precise methodology", i.e., dramatic texts are often analysed without applying linguistic and stylistic instruments, the interpretations rarely based on detailed analysis of the overall semiotic structure of discourse; and (3) the lack of "integrational perspective", i.e., literary communication is rarely contrasted with natural everyday communication, because textual research and discourse analysis is still far too much separated into either linguistic or literary approaches without much interchange of knowledge.

In writing a play, there is a cadence which the writer steals from the actual, transforming what is only possible into what really is. Just as actors

can transform words into living moments through their imagination, so can writers. Just as audience can appreciate the "living moments", so can readers. In analysing such texts, the interpersonal rhetoric factors attract so much attention and play such an important role that we are not simply reading a play text, but experiencing the interaction between characters and what each of the characters feel, and trying to catch what the playwright intends to convey to us through the play text.

Since the play text is in a sense actually "all of the trade" of drama or play, a special multi-level structure can be found in it: the character - character interactional level is parallel to another level, the playwright - audience interaction, which is at the same time embedded in the writer - readership interaction. While this double-purpose communication is recognised by dramatic/theatrical critics, the double-level communicative structure is revealed in discourse stylistics and literary pragmatics (See Short, 1989 & 1996; Hess-Lüttich, 1991). Short (1989: 149) has observed the embeddedness of drama at the level of discourse communication. According to him, when characters speak to characters on the stage, this discourse as part of what the playwright "tells" the audience is realised in a dynamic manner in accompaniment with theatrical art. While the characters communicate with the characters on the stage, they are at the same time communicating with the audience. By this process, the playwright communicates with the audience or reader, or as Short labels, from $Addresser_1$ through Message to $Addressee_1$, by way of an embedded process of communication between character and character, or as Short labels, from $Addresser_2$ (Character A) through Message to $Addressee_2$ (Character B). The diagram is as follows:

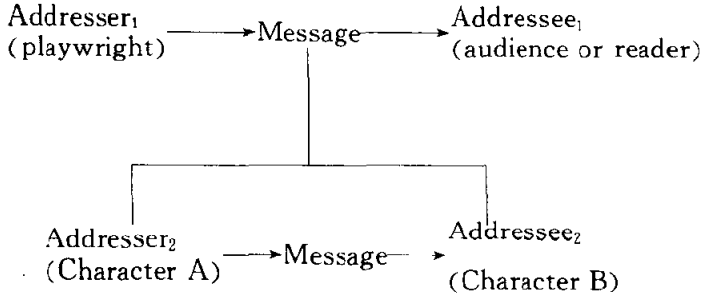

Figure 1 Double-level Structure of Dramatic Discourse
(from Short 1989· 149)

By this, Short proposes that "features which ... mark social relations between two people at the character level [$Addresser_2$/$Addressee_2$] become messages about the characters at the level of discourse which pertains between the author [$Addresser_1$] and audience/reader [$Addressee_1$]" (1989: 149). This observation directs attention from the first-level communication (*in* the play) to a higher level of communication (*of* the play). However, this does not seem to be the whole story. The "character-character" communication in the fictional world is, of course, part of the playwright-"audience/reader" communication in the real world, but a playwright also communicates with his/her readers through stage directions, which in turn bears in various ways on the communication in the fictional world. The discourse function of the dramatic text conveys multi-purpose messages, not only pragmatic message between characters and between characters and audience, but also literary message between the playwright and his readers, and between the playwright and the outside world.

In the study of plays, all possible relationships are to be considered. But in fact, the study of the play text without seeing the performance faces the problem of writer-reader relationship in addition to playwright-audience relationship. The readers of a play usually include all those who the playwright has in mind, or who have access to it: the stage producer, director, actor and actress, and those who wish to enjoy it but have no access to the theatre. Even those who have actually watched a performance of the play may wish to treat the play as text for literary appreciation.

With attention focused on character-character interaction, and on character-audience interaction if at all, the roles of the playwright and the reader have been largely ignored in traditional dramatic studies. However, Hess-Lüttich (1991) highlights the playwright in relation to the audience, saying that there is a communicative relationship between the playwright and his audience, although it is "implied in the text" and "not to be observed directly" (1991: 225-34). Likewise, Short (1989, 1996 & 1998) justifies the role of the reader in relation to the text and to the playwright, showing that reading is a valid means of understanding drama and therefore an alternative to watching performances. These insightful studies have brought to the fore the writer-reader relationship in dramatic studies. Nevertheless,

because of the functional difference between various readers, the study of a play text faces a much more complex writer-*readers* relationship in addition to the playwright-" audience/reader " relationship. Significantly, the "reader" of a play is a collective concept covering various kinds of readers: the director, the editor, the publisher, the stage producer, the setting designer, actors/actresses, etc. in theatrical situations and ordinary readers in their armchairs.

So the concept of $Addressee_1$ (in Short's diagram) is more complicated than it appears, since there are multiple parallel processes of communication between the playwright and the "reader" . Generally, there are several parallel processes of communication. First, the playwright sends Message to his readers through the play. Second, the playwright sends Message to his director and producer through the stage directions and written dialogue. And third, the playwright sends Message to his actors/actresses through part of the directions and the written dialogue. The actor/actress is actually $Addressee_2$ and $Addressee_1$. Although the dialogue between characters is meant to be embedded into the higher level of communication between $Addresser_1$ (Playwright) and $Addressee_1$ (Readers), in the reading process, a single reader of the dialogue would actually put him/herself into the position of both Character A and B, at the same time retaining his/her position as $Addressee_1$. Thus, I put all these readers together to form a larger concept called Readership, which may be $Addressee_1$ and $Addressee_2$, or with even more roles. This point may be made clearer by the following diagram (Fig.2).

Whether a playwright wishes his/her play to be performed in the theatre or to be read as literature, a play text cannot reach the audience or the general reading public directly. Thus the role of the readers standing between the playwright and the audience or the reading public can be crucial. The first of these readers may be the director or the editor and the publisher. In order for a play to win its audience in the theatre, a playwright first of all has to make his/her text win the director, without whose appreciation the play cannot turn from script to stage. Although plays are written primarily for performance, many modern playwrights do have a reading public in mind. Hence at the same time, the playwright has to think

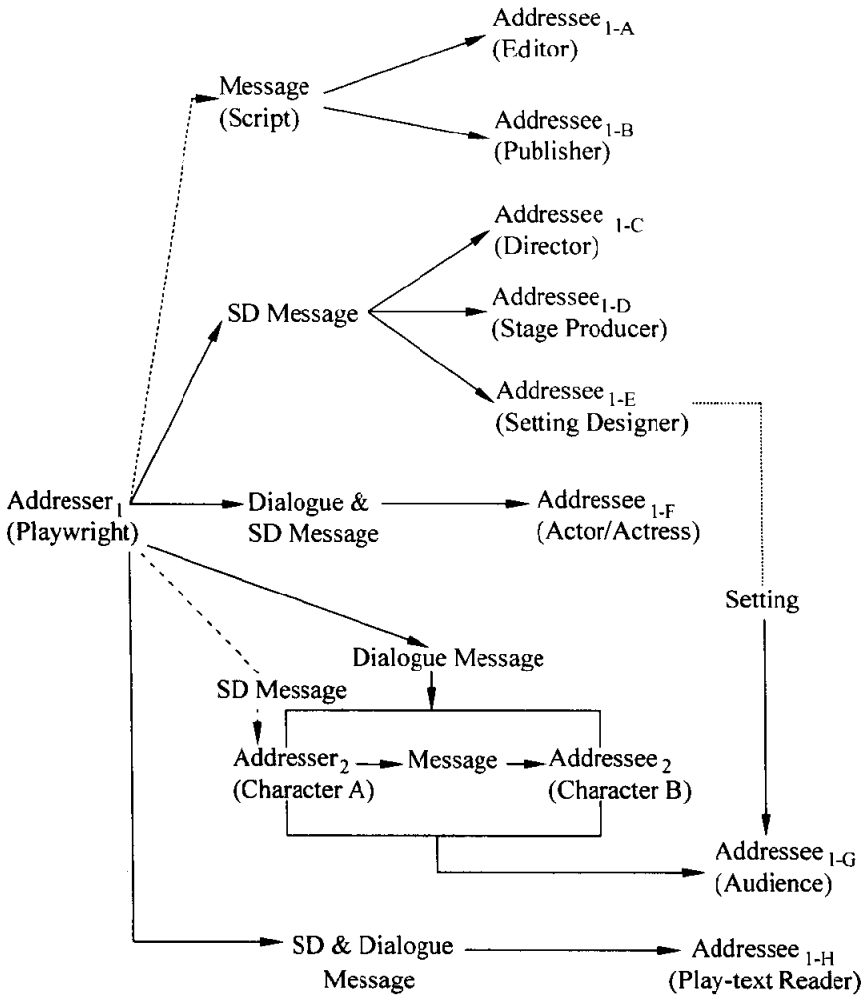

Figure 2 Multi-level Structure of Dramatic Discourse
(from Feng and Shen, 2001: 83)

of winning the editor and the publisher, without whose appreciation the play cannot turn from script to page. The next readers are the stage producer, the setting designer, and actors/actresses. The playwright has to address them in a proper manner, to make them actualise the setting and dramatise the dialogue plus action accordingly, passing the relevant message to the audience. For example, the playwright cannot, as a rule, specify the stage scenery in a way that the setting designer (as well as other people in the theatrical staff) finds frustrating or confusing. In short, a failure to win any of the reading individuals here will most probably fail the playwright's whole enterprise.

The director, the stage producer, and the setting designer are outside

the dialogue and action, but they are all Addressees of "SD (stage direction) Message" for different theatrical purposes: directing and supervising, producing and designing. Before acting, actors/actresses are readers of the play text—$Addressee_{1\text{-}F}$ of "Dialogue & SD Message". In acting, they become $Addresser_2$ and $Addressee_2$ of "Dialogue Message" respectively in the fictional interaction. The $Addresser_2$ receives relevant "SD Message" (e.g. performance instructions) from the $Addresser_1$ (presumably under the supervision of the director). Similarly, the setting designer receives the "SD Message" (e.g. setting instructions) from the $Addresser_1$ and actualises it (under the supervision of the director) on the stage, sending the message to the audience. These processes, indicated by dotted lines, are not visible to the audience as $Addressee_{1\text{-}G}$.

Ordinary readers of the text can see more about the true essence of the play. And in one sense, only these readers of the text can see clearly how the writer treats the relationships between himself and the various readers. They can enjoy things that are never available to the audience. (For example, messages such as "We do not see the matches" in *The Lesson* (Ionesco, 1958: 54) and "Silence. The clock doesn't strike" in *The Bald Soprano* (Ionesco, 1958: 11) are only accessible to readers. Stage directions and performance instructions are originally intended to be read by the stage producer and director, not to be heard by the audience in the theatre. And, when the play is put on a stage, the audience in the theatre seats can never find the communication between the writer and his readers.

And there might be many more things that cannot be obviously enacted and perceived by the audience in the theatre. Although a reader of a play can never be pleasantly surprised, as Short (1998: 9) points out, reading is perfect and actors never fluff the lines. Hence it is the readers that can enjoy more of the play from a stylistic perspective. Only when the audience choose to become such ordinary readers of the text can they experience the play in a truer sense, enjoying it in a quite different way and hearing the playwright "speak" to people for both theatrical and literary purposes. In this way, they are really "watching" the play in the original, seeing with their eyes that the text speaks and getting a different version of understanding and interpretation. Thus, in spite of the dramatic conventions that a play is

written for performance, reading itself is a kind of performance in the minds of the readers. And the writer-reader relationship in the play should not be neglected just because of the tendency of writing plays for theatrical performance.

Thus, my concept of $Addressee_1$ consists of different kinds of people who "read" the play for different pragmatic purposes, including publishing, stage directing and supervising, stage producing, setting-designing, acting, or literary appreciation. It is these different pragmatic roles or purposes that lead the readers to respond to the play text in quite different ways.

It is regrettable that so far little critical attention has been paid to the communication between the playwright and the reader. And almost no attention has been paid to the fact that the communication on the macro-structural level actually involves several parallel processes of communication between the playwright and various types of readers wrapped in the collective concept of readers—"$Addressee_1$" .

3.4 Characteristics of Communication in the-Theatre-of-the-Absurd Plays

The philosophical foundations of the Theatre of the Absurd is existentialism which holds that the world is irrational, and human existence is absurd. The only destiny of human existence in this dangerous and alien world is a series of failures, and thus the world is incomprehensible and life is meaningless. Such plays show the world as an incomprehensible place by defying the traditional canons of play structure. To show us the irrationality and absurdity of the world, they can hardly be expected to resolve impossible situations logically, and their structure is designed to reinforce the theme of hopelessness and meaninglessness by its very lack of the traditional pattern which presupposes, however unconsciously, a pattern, an organisation, a meaning in life. Thus, the spectators see the happenings on the stage entirely from the outside, without understanding the full meaning of those strange patterns of events, as newly arrived visitors might watch life in a country of which they have not yet mastered the language. It is significant that the three most eminent writers in this school, Samuel

Beckett, Arthur Adamov, and Eugène Ionesco, although all living in France and writing in French, are all immigrants and must have experienced a period of adjustment to the country and its language (Beckett from Ireland, Adamov from Russia, and Ionesco from Romania). This fact is not only important to the analysis of the micro-level communication but also, to a greater degree, important to the analysis of the macro-level communication.

The conventional theatre is based on a known framework of accepted values and a rational view of life, always starting out by indicating a fixed objective towards which the action will be moving or by posing a definite problem to which it will supply an answer. In the conventional theatre the action always proceeds toward a definable end. The spectators do not know whether that end will be reached and how it will be reached. Hence, they are in suspense, eager to find out what will happen next. In the Theatre of the Absurd, on the other hand, the action does not proceed in the manner of a logical syllogism. It does not go from A to B but travels from an unknown premise X toward an unknowable conclusion Y. The spectators, therefore, are not so much in suspense as to what is going to happen next as they are in suspense about what the next event to take place will add to their understanding of what is happening. The action supplies an increasing number of different levels, but the final question is never wholly answered. Thus, instead of being in suspense as to what will happen next, the spectators are put into suspense as to what the play may mean. This suspense continues even after the curtain has come down. Not only are the members of the audience unable to identify with the characters, they are compelled to puzzle out the meaning of the play they have seen. Each of them will probably find his own, personal meaning different from the solution found by others. But he will have been forced to make a mental effort and to evaluate an experience he had undergone. In this sense, the Theatre of the Absurd is the most demanding, the most intellectual theatre. It may be riotously funny, wildly exaggerated and oversimplified, vulgar and garish, but it will always confront the spectator with a genuine problem, a philosophical paradox, which he will have to solve even if he knows that it is more probably insoluble.

As Esslin (1963) says, these plays do indeed confront their public with

a bewildering experience, a veritable barrage of wildly irrational, often nonsensical goings-on that seem to go against all accepted stage conventions. Some of these plays are labelled as "anti-plays" , neither the name or the place of action are ever clearly stated. The characters hardly have any individuality and often even lack a name; moreover, halfway through the action they tend to change their nature completely. The laws of probability as well as those of physics are suspended completely. For example, in *Jack or the Submission*, young ladies have two or even three noses; in *Amédée*, a corpse that has been hidden in the next room suddenly begins to grow to monstrous size until a giant foot crashes through the door onto the stage; and in *The Gap*, one can get many doctorates but fail in an elementary examination by getting nine hundred points in one subject. As a result, it is often not clear whether the action is meant to represent a dream world of nightmares or real world of actual happenings. Within the same scene, the action may switch from the nightmarish poetry of high emotions of pure knock-about or cabaret. And above all, the dialogue tends to get out of hand so that at times the words seem to go against the actions of the characters on the stage. It goes so far as to degenerate into lists of words and phrases from a dictionary or traveller's conversation book, filled with endless repetitions like a phonograph record stuck in one grove. Only in this kind of world can strangers meet and discover some shocking facts. For instance, in *The Bald Soprano*, after a long polite conversation and close cross-questioning, the two characters discover that they must be man and wife. If it were not a surprise for two people in the same neighbourhood or on the same street not to know each other, it would really be shocking for two strangers to realise that they are actually living under the same roof. The more surprising aspect is the manner in which the truth (if it is truth) is revealed to them: they are living in the same house, the same apartment, the same room, and sleeping in the same bed! Above all, everything that happens seems to be beyond rational motivation, happening at random or through the demented caprice of an unaccountable idiot fate. Yet, these wildly extravagant tragic farces and farcical tragedies, although having suffered their share of protests and scandals, do arouse interest and are received with laughter and thoughtful respect.

Unlike in the traditional theatre, in order to bring out the full meaning of the absurdist play, the actors have to act against the dialogue rather than with it, the fervour of the delivery must stand in a dialectical contrast to the pointlessness of the meaning of the lines. In the same way, the author implies that most of the fervent and passionate discussion of real life also turns around empty and meaningless clichés. Or, as Ionesco says in an essay on Antonin Artaud:

> As our knowledge becomes increasingly divorced from real life, our culture no longer contains ourselves (or only contains an insignificant part of ourselves) and forms a social "context" in which we are not integrated. The problem thus becomes that of again reconciling our culture with our life by making our culture a living culture once more. But to achieve this end we shall first have to kill the "respect for that which is written" ... it becomes necessary to break up our language so that it may become possible to put it together again and to re-establish contact with the absolute, or as I should prefer to call it, with multiple reality. ①

Ionesco's definition, "Absurd is that which has no purpose, or goal, or objective", ② can certainly apply to all plays of this school. Unlike Beckett and Adamov, Ionesco's absurdity has its own fantastic knock-about flavour of tragical clowning. But they all share the same deep sense of human isolation and of the irremediable character of the human condition.

According to Esslin (1963: 238), it is in its attitude to language that the Theatre of the Absurd is most revolutionary. It deliberately attempts to renew the language of drama and to expose the barrenness of conventional stage dialogue. Ionesco once described how he came to write his first play: he had decided to take English lessons and began to study at the Berlitz school. When he read and repeated the sentences in his phrase book, those petrified corpses of once living speech, he was suddenly overcome by their tragic quality. From then he composed his first play, *The Bald Soprano*. The absurdity of its dialogue and its fantastic quality springs directly from

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① Quoted from Esslin, 1963:240.

② Ionesco made the definition in a note on Kafka in 1957. See Esslin 1963:231.

its basic ordinariness. It exposes the emptiness of stereotyped language. He holds that what is sometimes labelled absurd is only the denunciation of the ridiculous nature of a language which is empty of substance, made up of clichés and slogans. Such a language has atrophied; it has ceased to be the expression of anything alive and has been degraded into a mere conventional token of human intercourse, a mask for genuine meaning and emotion. That is why so often in the Theatre of the Absurd the dialogue becomes divorced from the real happenings in the play and is even put into direct contradiction with the action. The Professor and the Pupil in *The Lesson* "seem" to be going through a repetition of conventional school book phrases, but behind this smoke screen of language the real action of the play pursues an entirely different course with the Professor, vampire-like, draining the vitality from the young girl up to the final moment when he plunges his knife into her body.

The request for the multiple reality of the world (which is real because it exists on many planes simultaneously and is more than a mere unidirectional abstraction) is in itself a search for a re-established poetical reality (poetry in its essence expressing reality in its ambiguity and multidimensional depth); it is also in close accord with important movements of the age: psychology and philosophy. The dissolution, devaluation, and relativisation of language is also the theme of psychology. Not everything we say means what we intend it to mean. For example, the philosopher Wittgenstein even tried to break through what he regarded as the opacity, the misleading nature of language and grammar; for if all our thinking is in terms of language, and language obeys what after all are the arbitrary conventions of grammar, we must strive to penetrate to the real content of thought that is masked by grammatical rules and conventions. Here, too, then is a matter of getting behind the surface of linguistic clichés and of finding reality through the break-up of language.

According to Esslin (1963: 241), the real content of such plays lies in the action. Language may be discarded altogether, as in Beckett's *Act Without Words* or in Ionesco's *The New Tenant*, in which the whole sense of the play is contained in the incessant arrival of more and more furniture so that the occupant of the room is, in the end, literally drowned in it. Here the movement of objects alone carries the dramatic action, the language has

become purely incidental, less important than the contribution of the property department. In this, the Theatre of the Absurd also reveals its anti-literary character, its endeavour to link up with the pre-literary strata of stage history.

The defiant rejection of language as the main vehicle of the dramatic action and the onslaught on conventional logic and unilinear conceptual thinking in the Theatre of the Absurd are by no means equivalent to a total rejection of all meaning. On the contrary, it constitutes an earnest endeavour to penetrate into deeper layers of meaning and to give a truer, because more complex, picture of reality in avoiding the simplification which results from leaving out all the undertones, overtones, and inherent absurdities and contradictions of any human situation. In the conventional drama, every word means what it says, the situations are clear-cut, and at the end all conflicts are tidily resolved. But reality, as Ionesco points out in the passage quoted above, is never like that; it is multiple, complex, multi-dimensional and exists on a number of different levels at one and the same time. Language is far too straightforward an instrument to express all this by itself. Reality can only be conveyed by being acted out in all its complexity. Hence it is the theatre, which is multi-dimensional and more than merely language or literature, which is the only instrument to express the bewildering complexity of the human condition.

Generally speaking, the absurd assumes a fundamental ridiculousness in the fact of being alive. Man knows, above all other creatures, that he will die and that whatever he accomplishes in his instant eternity is an exercise in futility. He waits endlessly for he knows not what; he hopes endlessly for something significant to happen, deprived of that hope, but never abandoning it. There are unseen and uncomprehended forces at work somewhere in the dim background, but nobody knows quite what they are or whatever it is that rules mankind, and it shows the often idiotic bumblings of human creatures desperately trying to find out what is happening, but unable to do so. The world will not stand still; things grow and diminish not only in size, but in shape and numbers, without reason. A series of sounds called language is meant for communication, but all too often prevents any meaningful communication at all. It is said that the plays of Ionesco are

among the very best representatives of Esslin's genre.

The-Theatre-of-the-Absurd plays go against the conventional plays in every sense, and some superficially striking linguistic features, among others, can be summarised as follows:

(1) Going to the extreme of the conventional view by taking dialogue as all of the trade of the play, thus without any stage directions, descriptions, and performance instructions (e.g. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*);

(2) Going to the extreme against the conventional view by providing no "essence" of the play, dialogue, thus with a combination of stage directions, descriptions, and performance instructions being the "play" proper (e.g. Beckett's *Act without Words*);

(3) An overwhelming proportion of lengthy stage directions, in contrast with traditional plays in general; short brief acting instructions that appear very frequently (as in most of Ionesco's plays where sometimes one piece of stage direction takes up more than a whole page, and where sometimes there are highly frequent appearances of performance instructions in the form of phrases or even single words.)

Of course these formal features are not all of the play. The use of language in the Theatre-of-the-Absurd plays is both ordinary and extraordinary, for a major part of the effect comes from its similarity to everyday talk. Some of the effect can only be appreciated by the reader against the background of, or in the light of, his knowledge of the norms of everyday talk. As such literary discourse bears similarities to everyday discourse, the deviations or instances of violation of conversation maxims are more obvious. One of the key features of both everyday conversation and dramatic conversation in the Theatre of the Absurd is repetition. Repetition is a central stylistic feature of the dialogue, since it operates on both levels of the texts creating harmony and disharmony. On the micro-level, between the characters, while they create meaning and promote interaction, characters use them to evade giving pertinent responses (violating the maxim of relevance), verbally dominate other characters (use of indirect speech acts) or show contrived involvement (for politeness). On the macro-level,

between the performance or text and the audience/readers, they may involve readers or viewers emotionally in the music patterns of the dialogue, helping to make the dialogue feel comfortable and make the audience laugh.

Another key feature is irrelevant responses and silences in conversation. Irrelevant responses and silences, like repetition which evades pertinent responses, bring disharmony as well as harmony. The seemingly disharmonious and nonsensical turns of the conversation are actually harmonious and meaningful for their own sake. In daily conversations, irrelevant responses may indicate that the speaker wants to shift the topic of the conversation, and silences may indicate that the speaker is thinking of what he has heard, that he is trying to find something to respond, or he lacks interest in what is being initiated in the conversation. They may also indicate that the speaker is trying to dominate his interlocutor by deliberately not committing himself, and thus his interlocutor feels forced to proceed in order to keep the conversation going. On the micro-level, they may indicate that the interlocutors are cooperating in a bizarre manner. On the macro-level, these features indicate a collapse of interaction in a seemingly on-going verbal interactional activity.

Since playwrights all the time take readers' possible reactions into their consideration, since they know that readers would never take it for granted if they find that the author is talking nonsense and really wasting their time, writers exploit language to permissible limits so long as literary convention allows. For, only a little more than usual repetition or nonsensical noise within appropriate limit creates artistic disharmony that may illustrate communication systems in a state of collapse. If such devices exceed the norm, the very process itself that the playwright applies in his work is immediately in a state of total collapse and the play text may be genuine junk devoid of any value whatsoever, let alone artistic value.

3.5 Existing Models of Analysis

There have been various approaches for analysing dramatic discourse. Most of them are based on models of conversation analysis at the level of discourse. The term "discourse", according to Carter (1989: 68), refers to

a level of language analysis and to the context in which all texts are invariably embedded. Since there can be a long list of analytical models approaching dialogue from different perspectives, such as Conversational Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Conversational Implicature, Politeness Phenomena, Phatic Communion, etc., they can be roughly classified as ethnomethodological, sociological, anthropological, sociolinguistical, philosophical, and pragmatic. It is very hard to make some clear distinctions between these different approaches since more often than not they are interrelated and overlapping in a number of ways.

Ethnomethodologically-oriented and sociologically-oriented analysis, commonly known as Conversational Analysis, is a model developed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), which produced many interesting insights into the workings of conversation. This analytical approach stresses speakers' own interpretations of the structure of interaction and attempts to account for the ways in which utterances are sequenced in conversation. Specifically, it focuses on the "common sense knowledge" and "practical reasoning" used by members of a culture, and seeks to explain how these members interpret the world around them and interact with that world. Ethnomethodologists are concerned with the interpretative processes which underlie the verbal and non-verbal acts, and how speakers employ certain techniques to make sense of interaction. They do not undertake large-scale quantitative surveys of social behaviour, but instead develop their theoretical constructs from detailed analyses of "everyday activities" ; and as much of human interaction is verbal interaction, a great deal of attention is directed towards Conversational Analysis. Because this approach is strongly data-oriented, work in such analysis often uses detailed transcriptions of actual talk as a means of gaining insights into the recurrent patterns and sequential organisation of naturally occurring conversation. But even though such conversation analysis has conducted detailed research on the opening and closing of a talk, few studies are devoted to the overall organisation of the talk.

Sociologically- and sociolinguistically-oriented studies of conversation have almost developed side by side with anthropologically-oriented studies. Halliday's systemic-functional grammar (1985) offers a sociological

perspective of the study of language. With this theory, scholars such as Berry (1981) and Martin (1992) are dedicated to complementing the work of scholars such as Coulthard, Brazil, and Montgomery in the University of Birmingham, called the Birmingham Model, or Discourse Analysis (DA). The Birmingham Model is originally based on Halliday's scale-and-category grammar, whose structure is made up of Sentence > Clause > Group > Word > Morpheme, and consists of a hierarchy made up of five levels: Interaction > Transaction > Exchange > Move > Act. Birmingham scholars lay their emphasis on the relationship between speech turns. Burton (1980, 1981) has developed this model and rendered it applicable to both casual conversation and drama text analysis, both theoretically- and practically-oriented. With Halliday's three metafunctions, ideational, interpersonal, and textual, Toolan (1988, 1989) and Nash (1989) have furthered Burton's model in analysing literary texts, especially dramatic dialogue.

Anthropologists and sociolinguists such as Brown and Levinson have studied the politeness phenomenon on the basis of Goffman's notion of "face". Philosophers such as Austin, Searle, and Grice have studied speech acts, conversational maxims from different perspectives. With the development of pragmatics as a discipline, Levinson, Leech and many more linguistic pragmaticians have studied language and communication from this perspective. With literature becoming the unavoidable object of study, more dimensions have been tackled. Work along this line of research includes those of Coulthard (1977 & 1985), Pratt (1977), Burton (1980), Leech (1983b & 1992), Toolan (1985, 1989 & 1990), Birch (1993), Short (1989), Simpson (1989a & 1989b), Nash (1989).

Pratt holds that the attempt of applying the Cooperative Principle to "clarify and correct the traditional Austinian view of appropriateness conditions by relating ones which hold for a particular speech act in a particular context to general rules governing all verbal discourse and indeed all goal-directed cooperative human behaviour" holds promise for those who are interested in "making a space for literature inside the theory of language use" (1977: 125). Tannen (1986) has discovered that the Cooperative Principle proves a useful tool for drama analysts, because in communication,

including that in drama, what people pay most attention to is often not the message embedded in conversation, but rather the meta-message such as attitudes of the speaker, power and solidarity implied by both participants as well as the unsaid inferences or hints in common terms. Birch (1993: 46-47) has almost the same points, saying that communication depends far less on what the words mean than many people realise. And conflicts between people seem to rest not on something that has actually been said, but on something that remains unsaid. According to Birch, to understand drama is to understand "how meanings are made by dialogic imperatives, rather than what is being said by words", if one wishes to understand the ways the characters can effect some sort of change upon each other. Initiations of questions are usually connected with power and control, so that questions are not necessarily information seeking but means of controlling or limiting other's contribution to the talk. It is often the dominant and the more powerful party that has the right to have such control.

With pragmatics, we can see the progression of the interaction between characters in a new light by supplying possible contextual details. These details may not be clearly presented by the playwright but are very important and necessary for understanding the situations the characters are in. For example, Nash's discussion (1989) of a piece of text in *Hamlet*, "Changing the Guard at Elsinore", uses three complementary methods of presentation: paraphrase, commentary, and synopsis couched in terms of pragmatics and discourse analysis. His paraphrase, as it seems, is actually a rewriting of Shakespeare's play for stage production. By paraphrasing speeches and adding stage directions, which he says may be "a difficult, sometimes self-defeating exercise", he is trying to "translate" the stylised colloquy and "throw light on the attitudes of the interlocutors" (1989: 37). And his stage directions are "notes on reactions and motives" (1989: 38).

In this discussion, Nash expounds the structure of discourse, speech acts and implicatures, and "face" and situational power relations involved in the play piece (1989: 29-35). For one thing, he finds that when the play begins: "not in so many words, it is true, but in so many interactions or exchanges between professional soldiers who are frightened and excited and behave, on the whole, rather unprofessionally" (1989: 24). Therefore he

asserts that the procedures supporting the analysis of the experience can be drawn from sociolinguistics and pragmatics. These studies are conveniently oriented to the description of literary works in which dialogue figures prominently, and can often throw light on the dual function of such dialogue, on the one hand as a reflex of "ordinary" conversation, and on the other as a literary artifice, an aesthetic structure with no more than superficial claims to naturalistic status. Furthermore, in describing patterns of conversation, he determines their structure as a complex of exchanges minimally represented as Initiation and Response, for "the patterning of the interaction accommodates a play of utterances which are not statements or descriptions but have other functions in the discursive process" (1989: 32). Unlike propositions, which can be declared true or false, utterances can in some way affect the shape and management of discourse. There is a distinction between "discourse acts" and "speech acts" in the illocutionary sense (See Stubbs, 1983: 148), but the common property of these interactional strategies is that they are functionally different from propositions, and express or imply different kinds of meaning.

By presenting a brief study of the transactional structure of the dialogue, of its component discourse acts, and of its evidences of power and deference in the management of language in formal situations, Nash says that discourse analysis in quite simple forms may enhance the interpretation of a text by bringing into sharp focus elements in the literary pattern not so clearly defined by other methods. He also finds that what is revealed about the "microtext" may have particular relevance to the interpretation of the "macrotext"—i.e., the scene, the act, or even the whole play. Discourse analysis, writes Nash (1989: 40-1), even when its object is so-called "naturally occurring speech", is largely concerned with the perception of how words work. This is emphatically and unavoidably the case when the object is a literary text.

Simpson's investigation (1989a: 43) also draws on a sociolinguistic framework designed for the analysis of naturally occurring conversation, and the framework is applied to the rather unusual dialogue which takes place between the characters in O'Brien's novel, in the hope that such an analysis will highlight the ways in which the conventions of "normal" talk can be

manipulated by a writer for special effects, thereby explain the comic impact of this fictional dialogue.

Simpson (1989a: 49) chiefly studies phatic communion based on Laver's observation concerning the physical movement and positioning of interlocutors during a phatic exchange, and says it is important to remember that perhaps the most important motivation behind phatic initiation is that the speaker wants to declare that his intentions are pacific.

Carter's contention (1989: 66) is that "all texts, to the extent that they are interactive, require analysis from within a dimension of discourse", insisting that language is not simply a medium beyond which exists the content or subject matter of the text. Weber (1989: 95) focuses his ideological analysis of literary text on linguistic modality, based on Fowler's theory of interpersonal features of language (1981) and Halliday's observation of modality and the polarity of values (1985: 337). According to Weber, since modality is that function of language which concerns the speakers or writer's attitude to, and commitment to, the content of what he says, more attention should be paid to this, for there have been surprisingly few linguistic analyses of modality in literary texts. Short (1989: 144-54) discusses such pragmatic aspects as speech acts, presuppositions, the Cooperative Principle in conversation, and the terms of address in dramatic discourse. Following his discussion, he goes into more general discourse relations from the use of the pronoun system together with the naming system in English in conversations between equals and unequals, a strange use of the pronoun system to refer to people present in the speech situation by the third person pronoun. He says that this occurs where it is assumed by the interlocutors that some other person is of such an inferior status as to debar him from making a reasonable contribution. One example is the way in which many parents talk over their children; another is where the interlocutors talk about people with disabilities as if they were not there, even in situations where the disability involved may not actually impair the ability to contribute to the conversation at all. ①

Short's analysis of Harold Pinter's *Trouble in the Works* (Short, 1989:

① For more, see Coulthard (1977: 170-181).

156-58) finds similar aspects of the two characters who by the end have changed and reversed their role relations that normally pertain between employer and employee, established at the beginning of the piece. He finds that the absurd nature of the role relations can be indicated by the vocatives. Short is obviously cautious about his approach, for he says that in spite of the initial work by Searle (1975) it is by no means clear how conversational implicature fits in exactly with the more general notion of indirect speech acts (1975: 162). And since no area of linguistic analysis can ever really be said to be complete, the stylistician has always to take the analysis he applies partly on trust. Otherwise, he would never begin his work at all (1975: 163).

Earlier models focused on the analysis of spoken discourse, based on the discovery that spoken discourse is highly organised and amenable to analysis using traditional linguistic concepts such as sequential and hierarchical organisation, system and structure, and so on. However, a problem still remains so far as structural analyses are concerned, e.g., which analytical model is the best. And there is still another problem of reliability or trustworthiness of the intuitions about discourse sequences (See Stubbs, 1981: 107). As Coulthard and Brazil (1981: 82) have noted, detailed theoretical discussion of the peculiar nature of verbal interaction or of the components and categories appropriate to describing it has been scanty, for there are no such theories as "Discourse Structure" or "Aspects of the Theory of Discourse" analogical to Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (1957) and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). Therefore, not only are there virtually no commonly agreed descriptive categories, it is not even clear what is the largest structural unit in discourse.

More recent models are pragmatics-oriented and are more reliable for analysing the contextual situations of dramatic texts in which communication is carried out. However, like traditional studies of drama, such studies focus their attention only on dialogue, leaving out stage directions as their predecessors did in dramatic analysis and their counterparts do in theatrical criticism. Of course some modern plays have no explicit stage directions and stage directions are implied instead. Nash's paraphrase by supplying stage directions for his analysis, as has been mentioned above, serves to underline

the implicitness, and therefore the importance, of stage directions for a fuller understanding. However, even Nash's own discussion only focuses on dialogue. In so doing, the contributions of the stage directions on the writer-reader level are lamentably ignored. Thus, it is not surprising that how the whole play text serves as a kind of dialogue or a means of communication between the playwright and the readership on a higher level, the marco-level, is left out. Since the part of text that is not meant to be pronounced by characters is an essential part of the whole play, a study of plays cannot overlook the interpersonal functions in this part. The point of the play, as a literary text, is that it is not only fictional dialogue between characters, but also real dialogue between the playwright and the readers.

3.6 Approaches Taken in the Present Study

My pragmastylistic approach is based on the following assumptions: (1) The maxims of conversation that characters in literary discourse observe are largely the same as, while not identical with, those involved in everyday and practical discourse in terms of interpersonal rhetoric, considering the peculiar nature of literary discourse that makes literature what it is; (2) Pragmatic principles are applicable to stylistic analysis of literary discourse on both levels of communication: character to character, and writer to reader; (3) An investigation into the special pragmatic nature of the dialogue between characters and the seemingly one-way "dialogue" between the author "with" his readers may have a profound bearing on revealing the significance of literature and on the analysis and interpretation of literary discourse.

With a pragmastylistic approach that includes a "top-down perspective from the very start" (Sell, 1991: xiv), I do not mean to deny the validity of systematically, lexically or phonologically based stylistic approaches to literary texts. As Simpson (1989) remarks, given that the subject of analysis is dramatic discourse, a discourse-oriented stylistic approach is clearly more appropriate than any other type, an approach including pragmastics in stylistics may better serve my purpose.

Most plays of the Theatre of the Absurd call for attention to both levels

of communication: some plays are composed of mere directions, without the essence of the traditional view of the play—dialogue, others carry extraordinary lengths of stage directions that contribute greatly to the whole play, still others are composed of mere dialogue like traditional plays. Based on studies of Pratt (1977), Tannen (1986), Carter (1989), Short (1989), and Birch (1993), among others, who have applied theories of pragmatics to the study of dramatic texts, a pragmastylistic approach here aims at dealing with what is more than the actual dialogue of the characters in the play, e.g. implicature, unsaid intentions, exercise of power, struggle for talk control, change of social relations, etc. and with the relationships between the playwright and the various readers on the macro level of communication.

As my analysis deals with plays where the interaction between the characters has special norms against the norms of everyday talk, such a study may hope to show the special nature of this genre, and at the same time hope to reveal the limitations of everyday communication principles and norms for dramatic text studies. A major advantage of pragmastylistic analysis lies in its heuristic power on both levels. While characters observe the Cooperative Principle and implicate their intentions, and to achieve their ends, the audience exploit the Cooperative Principle and maxims to infer the speakers' motives and uncover their conversational goals. While the playwright observes the Cooperative Principle to implicate his intentions and achieve his ends in producing the play texts, readers exploit the same Cooperative Principle and maxims to infer the writer's motives and uncover his goals in the process of literary interpretation.

Chapter 4

Interpersonal Relationships in *The Lesson*

This play is the second in the series by the prolific artist-writer, Eugène Ionesco, but will be the first in my analysis. Since the theatrical performance of his very first play, *The Bald Soprano* (1950), did not meet with initial popularity or success in Paris, Ionesco, in the process of writing his second play, and those that followed, most probably took into account the hard facts and the sociocultural factors together with audiences' conventional theatrical expectations. Since this play was written in such a historical and cultural milieu, his consideration of these factors might have played a very significant role in his wording of the text. For, in order for the play to conquer the audience in the theatre, any playwright first of all has to use his play text to conquer his readers. In a temporal sequential order, the stage producer and the director are usually the first of such readers. If, however, the playwright intends to have his plays published before being put on the stage, his first intended reader will be none other than the editor or publisher of his manuscript, without whose understanding and appreciation the play would most probably go to wastepaper baskets. This can be no more true in the case of Ionesco, who has to conquer every reader whose reactions toward his plays he cannot be too ready to predict.

The central event of the play is a private lesson going on in the home of

a capitalised Professor, who gives a lesson to his capitalised Pupil, a girl student. We know from the play that the Pupil actually represents a batch of girl students who come to the scene one after another, as if according to some settled schedule. The Pupil in this play wishes to undertake "all the Doctorates" , but the Professor devotes most of his pedagogical energy to ridiculously elementary arithmetic and philology. The absurdities of subtraction and addition, the desperate pedantry of the technicalities of comparative linguistics and language teaching of the Professor would surely defy even mathematicians and linguists or philologists. The transition of the play is actually described by the playwright himself in a lengthy piece of direction at the beginning of the text. The Professor, at the start of the play, is nervous and diffident, while the Pupil is vivacious and dynamic. As the play goes on, the Professor gradually loses his timidity and becomes increasingly domineering and aggressive, while the Pupil gets more and more passive. Eventually the Professor does what he is saying and murders the Pupil, "striking her dead" with a knife that is "either real or imaginary" . At the end of the play, not only do we know that this Pupil is the fortieth victim of the day, but also the forty-first is coming for a lesson of the similar nature.

Paul Simpson has made an analysis (1989a) of this play on the basis of the politeness model proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978). He takes three short extracts from the key stages of the play to highlight the gradual and almost imperceptible process of the Professor's transition from diffidence to dominance, and the Pupil's decline into passivity. He demonstrates how the complete reversal in the interactive roles of the two main characters (the Professor and the Pupil) is signaled in the subtle variations in the linguistic strategies which the characters apply to communicate with each other. During the course of the play, or rather, of the Lesson, a gradual change occurs in their linguistic behaviour, i.e. (1) from the Professor's

(a) utmost politeness to least politeness, and to utter impoliteness;
(b) timidity and diffidence to dominance and aggressiveness;
(c) his being the less powerful interactant to the more powerful interactant

and (2) from the Pupil's

(a) utmost politeness to least politeness;

(b) confidence to hesitance, activity to passivity;

(c) being the more powerful interactant to becoming the less powerful interactant.

Here, the complete reversal, from asymmetry to equality and then reversed asymmetry, of the power relationship is dramatically manifested. Simpson's analysis on the relationship between the Professor and the Pupil can serve to assess the peculiar among the characters and display the oddity and absurdity of the play's dialogue. Although Simpson does drop a hint that a wider application of the politeness model may be used to account for the interaction between the implied authors and the readers of text, his analysis is mainly on the politeness in the play (dealing with the relation between characters dramatised within the world of mimesis) rather than the politeness of the play (dealing with the relation between the writer and the readers) as literary text.

From an overall point of view, pragmastylistically, the interaction of this play text is not just between the two characters, the Professor and the Pupil, as the title may possibly suggest. This play shows interactional relationships on much more complex levels. On a micro level, the interaction between the Professor and the Pupil seems of course the dominant feature of the play, but the third character, the Maid, is no less important a role in the course of the play, since she has certain vital interactional relationships with both the Professor and the Pupil in spite of her seemingly negligible role. On a macro level, the playwright interacts with his readers in varied ways through linguistic strategies. This can be seen from the slight differences in the way he treats his different readers, for example, the producer, the director, the actor(s)/actress(es), and the text "viewers".

The most striking superficial feature of this play is its interpersonal rhetoric manifested in the writer-director/actor (ess) channel via the extraordinary length of stage directions, which occasionally take up the space of a long paragraph or a whole page or even more than that, and in the writer-actor/actress channel via the comparatively short and brief directions for specific actions of performance, which more often take the form of a

single word, a participle or a participial phrase, with extraordinary high frequency in the text.

Another feature, which is typical of most of Ionesco's plays in general, is his manner of presentation: the superfluous display of theatrical conventionality in textual artificiality that keeps reminding the reader of being in a theatre situation by the use of a large number of theatrical terms such as "stage" , "curtain" , "scene" , "play" , "director" , "audience" , etc. for the artistic effect of fictionality. Most plays try hard to appear true to life by hiding elements that suggest artificiality in case they detract the readers' attention, so that the stage directions read like part of a story. However, in this play, pretensions are strongly manifested in the stage directions, forming a prominent characteristic of the text. In fiction-making, the writer pretends that everything he puts down is fictionally true, even if he knows that his readers won't take them as facts or happenings of the real world. But a playwright keeps suggesting to his director the ways of arranging the scenes and guiding his reader to understand his devices by imagining or pretending to be watching the play in performance. Thus, Ionesco time and again employs such lexical items as "in the course of the play" , "toward the end of the play" , "facing the audience" , etc. These key words, although may largely be thought of as conventions of drama, not only emphasise that it is a script intended as being performed, but also provide pseudo-felicity conditions for the play text.

While paying attention to stage conventions, Ionesco loads his play with metalinguistic terms and disciplinary terminology from philology, linguistics and mathematics. He also makes his characters' speech tautological and illogical. These are contrary to the principle of dramatic language and make it difficult for the audience and the reader to follow.

The analysis in this Chapter will be focused on two levels. On the macro-level, the interpersonal relationships will be probed from several angles, e.g. in terms of the text format of directions, and the interpersonal rhetorical devices applied by the playwright in the whole play text. On the micro-level, discussion will be focused on the triangular relationships of the characters in terms of their speech strategies and social relations. Both levels of discussion will touch upon the special nature of the language used for

communication in this play.

4.1 The Writer-Reader Relationship

After a paragraph of scene description at the very beginning, lengthy paragraphs of stage directions in narrative style and performance instructions descriptive in form and imperative in function appear in the play. These directions, in a textual format different from the dialogue in the play (italicised in print and included in square brackets), can be distinguished into two types according to formal syntactic completeness: stage descriptions and performance instructions. The two types have different addressees in relation to the playwright as the addresser. Directions of scenes and those addressing stage directors are more often descriptively worded, while directions addressing actors and actresses are more often prescriptively worded, sounding imperative and mandatory. Of course in some parts of the directions this distinction is not clear-cut, for it seems that the director and actors/actresses are being addressed at the same time. In stage directions the writer does indirectly address actors and actresses through the director, and in performance instructions which address the actors and actresses there are certain descriptions which actually address the director indirectly. Perhaps this is important for accounting for the complexity of the play. General stylistic studies of play texts have so far ignored this area and existing models cannot effectively account for the complexity of the addressees.

In stage directions, the spatial deictic forms and forms of addressing are pragmatically selected. For example, at the very beginning, when the playwright is prescribing, or describing, the scene, he writes,

> SCENE: ... *To the left, a door opens onto the apartment stairs; to the right, another door opens onto the corridor of the apartment. Upstage, a little left of centre, ... On the right stands a provincial buffet. The table doubles as a desk, it stands at stage centre. ...* ①
>
> (Ionesco, 1958: 44)

① In this quotation and all those that follow throughout the book, italicization is original, and underlining is my emphasis.

At the end of the play, another direction goes,

> [*The Maid and the Professor take the body of the young girl, one by the shoulders, the other by the legs, and move towards the door on the right.*]
>
> (p.78)

In reading these, we are impressed by the spatial deictics Ionesco chooses. Questions may arise in the mind of the reader, like "To whose left?" , "To whose right?" , "What is the specific location of 'a little left of centre'?" , and "'On whose right' stands a provincial buffet?" . It seems very important if we consider whose shoes the writer is in when he is sitting in his armchair committing himself to paper. He is referring to the left/right side of the director standing on the stage or off the stage as one among the audience facing the actors and actresses. Because this is written for the director, the writer puts himself on a common footing with the director and the audience in the theatre, as if he were one of them, or rather, of us readers, watching the development of the scene. For example, the use of "we" in the following instructions makes the point more obvious:

> [*When the curtain rises, the stage is empty, and it remains so for a few moments. Then we hear the doorbell ring.*]
>
> (p.45)
>
> [*The Maid comes in, ... She rushes in, slamming the door to the right behind her, and dries her hands on her apron as she runs towards the door on the left. Meanwhile we hear the doorbell ring again.*]
>
> (p.45)
>
> [*We do not see the matches, nor any of the objects that are mentioned. ...*]
>
> (pp.54-55)
>
> [*They exit. The stage remains empty for several moments. We hear the doorbell ring at the left.*]
>
> (p.78)

By using "we" repeatedly, Ionesco clearly tries to shorten his distance to his reader (not audience, just because it is only the reader that can see how the playwright treats the relationship between himself and his addressee who may be either a director or someone sitting in an armchair enjoying the text

of his play). When he asks the director to arrange the setting or any other reader to imagine the scenes, instead of putting it like "The doorbell rings" (or "You hear the doorbell ring"), and "Do not let the audience see the matches" (or "Do not use real matches"), he puts them as "Then we hear the doorbell ring" , and "We do not see the matches" , etc. Clearly, the empathetic uses of the pronoun "we" indicate the playwright's sense of sharedness with the receiver of the message by assuming himself as part of his readers. By such pragmatic empathy, the playwright is purposefully putting himself into the position of the addressee and trying to shorten the distance between himself and his readers (especially the director), so as to win their cooperation in action. Such empathetic uses not only appear at this level, but appear more frequently at the micro-level in the dialogue between the Professor and the Pupil and between the Professor and his Maid, which will be discussed in the following sections.

It should be noted that, although empathetic uses are not unusual in daily conversations and classroom teaching activities, the phenomenon remains unaccounted for in pragmatic studies of written discourse and in the field of literary criticism. This is not merely an issue of the writer's (addresser's) intention "to cooperate with" , but one of his intention "to try to win the cooperation of" , the reader (addressee) in action. And this point is not quite within the concerns of discussions on the Cooperative Principle in terms of relevance and politeness.

The descriptive style in these directions gives us an impression that the playwright is not simply designing the settings of a play by giving orders on what the director should do, but is viewing a happening together with the director. By converting the commonly used imperative to declarative sentences, he changes what Searle (1969) calls directives into representatives and expressives, to fulfill the purpose of descriptive suggestion and expressive prescription. In such directions, we can immediately sense strong traces of politeness from the writer who expects friendly cooperation from his readers, especially the director.

The tact maxim described by Leech (1983a: 132) is actually involved here, but with a little difference toward the different other. For actions that require efforts straight from the director, the author uses more descriptives

than directives to "minimise cost to other" . But for actions that require efforts straight from the actors and actresses via the director, the author places strong modality in the description, e. g. the use of "must" . As in written communication in general, the writing is a once-and-all job, and the writer "speaks" all the time and finishes holding the floor before readers can "hear" what he has said. Because he cannot adjust his speech strategies according to the reactions of his audience for feedback, his written speech (text) thus carries a tone of general imposition. In dramatic texts, the stage directions assume to be actually orders, not simply story-telling, which is part of what makes this literary genre unique. For the reader, these directions are purely descriptive, but for the director and actors/actresses, they are both descriptive and imperative. Therefore, even if the imposition is not explicitly spelt out, the modals of "must" , "should" , and "be to" , etc. are implied in the stage directions. The explicit/implicit distinction of the uses of modals only serve to give the addressees different feelings of imposition. The playwright is aware of his choice of modals for different degrees of imposition on different addressees. For instance,

> [*The Maid exits; the Pupil draws in her legs, holds her satchel on her lap, and waits demurely. . . . During the course of the play she progressively loses the lively rhythm of her movement and her courage, . . . Towards the end of the play her face must express a nervous depression; . . . the transition from one manner to another must of course be made imperceptibly.*
>
> . . .
>
> *During the course of the play his timidity will disappear progressively, imperceptibly. . . . Of course the voice of the Professor must change too, . . . while the Pupil's voice changes from the very clear and ringing tones that she has at the beginning of the play until it is almost inaudible. In these first scenes the Professor might stammer very slightly.*]
>
> (pp. 46-47)

The use of the modal "must" here deserves attention. In the writer-director channel, acts requiring efforts to be made by the director are politely instructed or requested, while acts requiring efforts to be made by actors and

actresses through the director's acts (requiring, supervising, etc.) are more directly instructed, baldly addressed. The "rigidity" of the above quoted instructions is not meant wholly toward the director who has to obey the writer's instructions, but toward suggesting the director's effort in requiring his actor and actress to act according to the instructions and his effort in seeing that the instructions are carried out word by word. In a sense it is the playwright's attempt to win friendly cooperation from the director. In the writer-actor/actress channel, this modality helps the required cooperation from the actor and actress with the director who seems to be only carrying out the instructions as the author requires. In the writer-reader channel, readers of the text may find such instructions function to them more like dramatised description and narration, rather than conventional stage directions which merely give instructions. The imperativeness is addressed to double-addressees. On the first level, it is marked by friendly cooperation, and on the second level, it is marked by strong imposition. This, as I have found, is another characteristic of dramatic language different from that of ordinary communication.

Furthermore, the use of hedges to soften or weaken the impact of face-threatening acts is also significant in the above quoted directions. "Of course" occurs twice in sentences where the modal "must" occurs, and the hypothetical modal "might" occurs in the last sentence. They strategically soften the tone of the author. In the clause "the transition from one manner to another must of course be made imperceptibly", instead of using a syntactic pattern similar to the previous one with "she" as the Theme in Halliday's term (1985) in the information structure, the author chooses to put it in a passive with "the transition" as the Theme, in an effort to impersonalise the imposition in the wording. All his addressees may feel kind of rhetorical politeness from the writer, because no one may find himself or herself being directly addressed, instructed, or ordered, while actually everyone involved is. By this the author seems to presuppose that he knows well enough that his director can certainly accomplish the required effects of an imperceptible transition, the girl acting the Pupil can certainly fulfill the role. Similarly, in the clause "Of course the voice of the Professor must change too", where the Professor's performance is prescribed, the

author puts "of course" in a prominent position to tone down his imposition that the word "must" in the sentence may carry. By the use of hedges, the writer might wish to impress his reader that he is merely reminding the director in a by-the-way manner. In communication, a polite and cooperative speaker tends to overestimate his interlocutor and therefore deliberately underestimate himself by making his statement seem an unnecessary reminder to the listener while it is essentially an assertive and directive. Here by belittling himself and assuming good knowledge of the *other*, Ionesco is actually applying a politeness strategy based on the Cooperative Principle and on approbation and modesty maxims proposed by Leech (1983a: 132), i.e. "maximizing the praise of other" and "maximizing the dispraise of self" . When the actor and the actress read this part of the directions, they do not feel that they are being commanded, but the author is simply telling them what to do and how to act. Other readers of this play text, who are clearly not the addressees, may immediately notice that the author is definitely making commands.

Instances of the author's politeness toward the director can be found from the author's adherence to the Tact maxim, i.e. his acts of reducing the costs of the director and giving the director freedom in the production according to his "preference" . By doing this, he is actually giving the director more power, putting the actor and actress at the disposal of the director. For example, toward the end of the play when the Professor finds a big knife and uses it to kill his Pupil, the direction goes,

> [*He goes quickly toward the drawer where he finds a big knife, invisible or real according to the preference of the director* . . . .]
>
> (p.73)

Actually the directors of his plays have done their jobs according to their preferences more than Ionesco expects. In the version under my analysis, there are seven footnotes in different places for a production of Ionesco's first play *The Bald Soprano*, which uniformly start with "In Nicolas Betaille's production, . . ." to indicate their differences from Ionesco's original design. In whatever way, the actor concerned must certainly listen to the director and do as he requires.

In connection with the choice of an "invisible" knife, it is worth noting

that the objects mentioned in the play are almost always described and prescribed by the playwright as "imaginary". For the text reader, he may focus more sharply on the significance of such invisible objects in relation to the theme of the play. He will certainly ask questions such as: What is it like when the Professor writes on an imaginary blackboard with an imaginary piece of chalk? At a time when he is talking about absurd arithmetic like whether four is larger or smaller than three, and how many units there are between three and four, it is presumably necessary to explain, in normal lesson situations, with the help of the concrete objects like real blackboards and chalk. What is it like if an actor "brandishes" an imaginary or invisible knife in his hand now and again while talking? How is the act of murder accomplished if the Professor only "strikes" his Pupil "with a very spectacular blow", and "a second slash of it", which makes her drop dead? How ridiculous such acts may appear in the theatre? Obviously, the absurdity of the play does not only lie in the character-character dialogue, but in the designing of the stage performance proper.

There is a noticeable subclass in the stage directions that may be labelled as performance instructions. They do not involve much direct effort of the director, but simply provide principles for the director's supervision of the actor/actress's performing. They are often in note-form, syntactically incomplete, descriptive in style and without many rhetorical devices, as distinct from the directions discussed above, perhaps out of the principle of dramatic language: economy. Yet it is to be noted that such instructions are not always economical. On the one hand they seem to be strict requirements for performance, telling the actors what to do and how to act. On the other hand, these instructions serve to explain or tell the reader of the play text complexities involved in certain moments of acting. Even syntactically complete instructions are not like the kind in the stage directions which have to be carried out through the director, but by the actor himself or the actress herself, as in:

[*A gleam comes into his eyes and is quickly extinguished; he begins to make a gesture that he suppresses at once.*]

(p.50)

[*He rubs his hands together. The Maid enters, and this appears to*

irritate the Professor. She goes to the buffet and looks for something, lingering.]

(p.50)

Here the trace of fiction-making is obvious. The interaction is taking place in a channel from the writer to the reader. In this process, the actors and actresses (at this time being readers) act accordingly (the director supervises accordingly) and play text readers read them as part of the fiction. For syntactically incomplete instructions, they are more like part of fiction in note-form.

Pupil [*turns quickly with a lively and self-assured manner; she gets up, goes toward the Professor, and gives him her hand*]

(p.47)

Pupil [*searching her memory for a moment, then, happily guessing*]

(p.47)

[*They sit facing each other at the table, their profiles to the audience.*] (p.50)

Pupil [*taking notebooks out of her satchel*] (p.50)

Professor [*wittily*]: Without leaving your seat!

Pupil [*appreciating his joke*]: Like you, Professor. (p.50)

Pupil [*hesitant*]: Yes, Professor. . . . (p.57)

Pupil [*very quickly*]: That makes . . .

Professor [*astonished*]: No. I do not think so. . . . (p.58)

Pupil [*desolated*]: No, Professor. (p.59)

Professor [*with authority*]: Quiet! What do you mean by that?

(p.60)

However, whether the stage directions are long or short, complete or incomplete, they share one thing in common: They are not only instructions to the director for stage production. They are also the playwright's explanations for the goings-on of his story and narrative descriptions that are indispensable to his fiction in relation to the literary reader.

4.2 Character-Character Relationship

Ionesco refers to all his three characters throughout the play, as in most of his plays in general, in a critically abnormal way. He capitalises them as

"Professor" , "Pupil" , and "Maid" in the first place, giving them no names of individual identity, and then refers to the old man as "the Professor" , the young girl as "the Pupil" and only very occasionally as "the young girl" and the middle-aged house maid mostly as "the Maid" throughout the directions except letting the Professor address her by the name "Marie" in the dialogue. By this device, Ionesco foregrounds their peculiar personality and implies their abnormal relationship.

In the dialogue of the play, the way characters interact with each other as designed by the playwright is all the more significant. I find that of all the features worth commenting, especially impressive in revealing their relationship is the way of addressing and deictics. The Professor is addressed throughout the play as "Professor" ; the Pupil is addressed by the Professor as "young lady" and "miss" , referred to as "that girl" , addressed by the Maid as "miss" and referred to as "the lady" , while the Maid is addressed as "madam" by the Pupil, addressed as "Marie" by the Professor. For example,

> Professor: Marie! ... [*He points to the Pupil:*] She doesn't understand anything, that girl. ...
>
> (p.72)
>
> Maid: Precisely, Professor. You will do better not to start the lady on arithmetic. ...
>
> (p.51)
>
> Maid: Good morning, miss.
>
> Pupil: Good morning, madam. Is the Professor at home?
>
> (p.45)

There is a patterning of interpersonal attitudes and ruled change of addressing each time when there is a change in attitudes. In fact there is a complex network of interpersonal relationships in a right-angled triangular form: the Professor-Pupil relationship, the Professor-Maid relationship, and the Maid-Pupil relationship, with the Professor-Pupil relationship being the hypotenuse, the Maid-Pupil relationship being the shortest side, and the Professor-Maid relationship being the side whose length is in between. The differences in interpersonal rhetoric on different sides of the triangle are striking.

4.2.1 The Professor-Pupil Relationship

The Professor-Pupil relationship has been discussed by Simpson (1989a). However, since such a relationship takes a major part of the play and the progression of the conversation violating conversation norms has not been covered, a further discussion may reveal the application of interactional principles involved here, which bears significance to the two other interpersonal relationships on the triangular form. In addition to Simpson's analysis based on politeness model on the gradual transition or inversion of the Professor-Pupil relationship, I find that the very first encounter of the two main characters takes place on a bizarre footing. The Professor not only thanks his student repeatedly for coming to him on time or even in a hurry for the Lesson, but also shows excessive politeness by apologising for having kept the pupil waiting for a matter of moments, while the Pupil assumes a position where she is capable of issuing the pardon. For the first phatic question on whether the student has had any trouble finding the house, the Professor starts by asking the Pupil's excuse as if his question might be offensive in some way. Not only is this out of place in phatic situations but also the arrangement is directly contrary to the normal or conventional asymmetrical teacher-student power relationship:

Professor: That's fine, miss. Thank you, you didn't really need to hurry. I'm very sorry to have kept you waiting ... I was just finishing up ... well ... You will excuse me, won't you? ...

Pupil: Oh, certainly, Professor. It doesn't matter at all, Professor.

Professor: Please excuse me ... Did you have any trouble finding the house?

Pupil: No ... Not at all. I just asked the way. Everybody knows you around here.

(p.47)

Intuitions of language use tell us that there is a bizarre relationship from the very start between the Professor and the Pupil. It is common sense that one who wishes to get a doctorate and listens to a university professor's lectures

is normally referred to as a "student" rather than a "Pupil" . While readers can discern this abnormality, the audience may not find the significance of the playwright's design of the relationship. And the audience may well ignore it even if they hear it from the Professor's speech, "I expect that you ... that you are the new pupil?" , taking it as an instance of informal synonym for "student" . We can also see that the Professor treats the Pupil in an abnormal way by addressing her as "young lady" in his first greeting, and then "miss" , because normally he should be addressing her by the name, which is curiously never given in the play. And the Pupil addresses the Professor by his profession throughout the episode:

Professor: Good morning, young lady. You ... I expect that you ... that you are the new pupil?

Pupil [*turns quickly with a lovely and self-assured manner; she gets up, goes toward the Professor, and gives him her hand*]: Yes, Professor. Good Morning, Professor. As you see, I'm on time. I didn't want to be late.

Professor: That's fine, miss. Thank you, you didn't really need to hurry. I'm very sorry to have kept you waiting ... I was just finishing up ... well ... You will excuse me, won't you? ...

Pupil: Oh, certainly, Professor. It doesn't matter at all, Professor.

(p.47)

Throughout the play, the Professor addresses his student as "young lady" for 19 times, as "miss" for 39 times, and towards the end of the play, he even addresses her as "my pet" . There is both a quantitative and qualitative change from the more formal and polite "young lady" to the least formal, impolite and even intimate "my pet" . And the student's addressing also changes from the more formal and polite "Professor" to an absence of any form of address indicating informality (a simple "you" in "How do you want me to take it?" , p.65) instead of a more formal and polite "How should I take it?" to achieve the same effect of using no forms of address) and to an even irritating curse, "Skulldugger" (p.70), as the play goes on. These abnormalities in their relationship contribute a lot to the effect of the unexpected disastrous ending. As the phatic communion proceeds, we see

that the Professor is too hesitant and therefore asking for pardons and permissions from the student time and again, while the student assumes a take-for-granted position of issuing these pardons by forgivingly sweeping the apologies aside.

In the dialogue that follows, the Professor is in an inferior position of being questioned twice by the student, who not only seems to control the topic of the conversation but also proves more knowledgeable and better-informed (for the Professor's replies to both her questions are "No"). In this atmosphere, when he wants to gain control of the conversation, he has to ask for permission to put her a question that is actually too common-sensical, and squanders his generous compliments on her when she provides an unassured answer after "searching her memory" and then "happily guessing":

Professor: No, I don't know it either, young lady, but if you'll permit me, can you tell me, Paris is the capital city of ... miss?

Pupil [*searching her memory for a moment, then, happily guessing*]: Paris is the capital city of ... France?

Professor: Yes, young lady, bravo, that's very good, that's perfect. My congratulations. You have your French geography at your finger tips. You know your chief cities.

(pp.47-8)

Furthermore, the Professor shows even greater empathy towards the girl by his frequent use of the deictic pronoun "we", which makes the beginning part of the Lesson more like a process where the Professor and the Pupil are doing something for a common purpose and in their common interests rather than the former is giving the latter a lesson. There are numerous examples of this kind, "We can't be sure of anything, young lady, in this world" (p. 48), "We will try, miss, to do our best" (p.49), "Now, if this doesn't bore you ... shall we begin?" (p.50), "Let's return to our arithmetical knitting" (p.51), "This is not addition any more, we must subtract now" (p.52), "Let's try to deduce it together. Would you like to count?" (p.53), "Let's leave it for the moment. Let's go on to another exercise ..." (p.59), "... so that we may chart our future course ... We will try to prepare you at least for the partial doctorate" (p.59). In this play, "we" are used 7 times,

"our" 4 times, and "let's" 16 times.

As dramatic language bears similarity with everyday discourse, these empathetic uses of pragmatic deixis can be accounted for by principles of everyday talk. They may serve for the purposes of phatic communion, persuasion, order, or disguised imposition, in a strategically diplomatic manner. For example, in everyday conversation, we often hear some individual who is solely responsible for making decisions pronouncing statements such as "After *our* consultations, *we* are of the opinion that ..." to reinforce "their" points in question which actually belong to the speaker alone. This "our" and "we" serve to impersonalise the speaker and give the listener(s) an impression that the speaker is merely passing some decisions made by a group rather than he is making a personal assertion, in order to avoid possible protests or strong objections from the listener(s). In another case, when he intends to change his interlocutor's beliefs and persuade him into doing something in a different way, he may start by saying "*Let's* consider the problems *we* will possibly meet with and see how probable *we* can succeed in the way you insist. First, ..., second, ..." . In other similar cases, when an adult wants to discipline a child or to persuade him to do something he might not like to, he may start with a compliment and say "*We're* good kids, and *we* should behave *ourselves*" or "*Let's* do *our* homework first before playing games, OK?" Clearly, the deictic "we" and "our" in these cases do not necessarily include the speaker concerned, he uses these deictics only to achieve pragmatic effects to approach the listener psychologically by giving him a sense of sharedness, making him feel that the speaker is acting with him toward a common goal. Such strategies are often effective in persuasions. In fictional dialogue in dramatised settings, very similar scenes may appear that make the same point. Let me take an extract from Leech and Short's analysis (1981: 306) of a passage from Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Part I) for example. This part of the novel, as Leech and Short have found, demonstrates the authoritarian nature of the mental hospital. What starts as a reasonable request for information ends in the total subjugation of Mr. Taber and the Big Nurse. But what is of relevance to my point here is the extract of the dialogue between the patient and the nurse within this passage. The patient, a "big,

griping Acute" and known as a "troublemaker" , not knowing what the capsules he is required to swallow are, starts asking a question and is not satisfied with the answer.

"Wait just a shake, honey; what are those two little red capsules in here with my vitamin?"

"It's just medication, Mr. Taber, good for you. Down it goes, now."

"But I mean what *kind* of medication. Christ, I can see that they're pills—"

"Just swallow it all, shall we, Mr. Taber—just for me?"

It is the patient that has to swallow the capsules, not the nurse. But the nurse pretends to be on the same footing with the patient by ordering him to swallow them while flirtatiously reassuring him by "shall we ... just for me?" to achieve the goal of persuasion, or verbal control and domination.

Although it is arguable that many teachers tend to use "we" ("our" and "Let's") in their teaching, the use of these pronominal forms by the Professor in Ionesco's play is by no means conventional in the light of its particular context. Such empathetic use itself is not striking if we think of many classroom situations of primary schools where teachers talk to their pupils. But this is a talk between a university professor and a doctoral candidate, where the teacher is not Teacher but Professor, whereas the lecture is not Lecture but Lesson and the student is not Student but Pupil! And the Professor's speech is prominently extraordinary in this way. Normally, it is the Pupil who has to do whatever the Professor orders (or even forces) her to do out of necessity as part of her training or preparation for the qualifying test, not that they are jointly accomplishing a certain task that is in their common interest. In the end, the Professor turns out to be the Pupil's purposeful murderer, rather than a "friend" . The frequent use of this superficially empathetic and friendly forms is deceptive both to the student and the general readers. The readers might be led into the trap of assuming that the Professor is so friendly to the pupil and concerned about her progress that it is unlikely to do anything harmful to her, let alone killing her as Ionesco actually designs in the catastrophic ending. The most interesting example may be "Aah! We are going to lose our temper" (p. 68),

where "we" and "our" are emphatically but strategically used. One cannot fail to see the strategic evasion of responsibility and blame for the possible consequences. It is not difficult to imagine what one might do when he is out of temper, and more surprisingly, when both people are out of temper. The Professor takes the consequences as what would happen for the benefit of them two, or out of any reason other than due to the Professor himself.

In contrast, the Professor, when giving the Pupil overzealous congratulations, clearly claims and emphasises them as his own by using the first person possessive "my" instead of simply conforming to the norm by saying "Congratulations" , while he uses a large number of "our" elsewhere. And two of the three uses of "your" in one breath indicate that he takes "French geography" and "chief cities" as, in a similar nature like her finger tips, all things of her own.

Professor: Yes, young lady, bravo, that's very good, that's perfect. My congratulations. You have your French geography at your finger tips. You know your chief cities.

(pp. 47-48)

This suddenly indicates the Professor's attitude of non-involvement in the matters being talked about. Normally, in such situations we can expect sentences like "You have our French geography at your finger tips. You know our chief cities" . In fact the Professor is clearly degrading himself in such a manner.

From the very start, the Professor repeatedly apologises and asks the girl to pardon him for nothing obviously done wrong. This excessive over-politeness of the Professor is directly contrary to the way things are normally done and is certainly meaningful in some other way. As the play goes on and the lesson starts, he asks for pardoning and permits more frequently for what he should be doing without showing any laborious politeness. In everyday life, when a host treats a guest, a warm "Please sit down" is normally polite and hospitable enough, while the Professor here not only over-politely asks the girl to sit down but goes a step further to ask for her permission to let himself sit down opposite her. At her agreement, he seems anxious to show his gratitude for her "kindness" , as in

Professor: Then, if you'll permit me, pardon me, please, I do think

that we ought to get to work. We have scarcely any time to lose.

Pupil: Oh, but certainly, Professor, I want to. I beg you to.

Professor: Then, may I ask you to sit down ... there ... Will you permit me, miss, that is if you have no objections, to sit down opposite you?

Pupil: Oh, of course, Professor, please do.

Professor: Thank you very much, miss.

(pp.49-50)

Immediately following this part of the interaction, there is a verbal struggle for inferiority out of paradoxes of politeness between them at the start of the lesson, where each struggles hard for being at the other's disposal, as in:

Professor: Perfect, miss. This is perfect. Now if this doesn't bore you ... shall we begin?

Pupil: Yes, indeed, Professor, I'm at your disposal.

Professor: At my disposal? ... Oh, miss, it is I who am at your disposal. I'm only your humble servant.

(p.50)

As the lesson really bores and hurts the Pupil, she begins to complain politely, then more and more strongly until she protests wildly, about her toothache. Then the scene becomes a verbal duel: the Pupil is no longer polite to the Professor and the Professor assumes his dominance and is not humble any more, starting warning, cursing, and threatening her:

Pupil: You're bothering me, Professor. I've got a toothache.

Professor: Son of a cocker spaniel! Listen to me!

(p.68)

Irritated at the Pupil's repeated interruptions of complaints and protests, the Professor's threatening becomes stronger and he starts torturing her physically.

Pupil: Oh dear! My tooth ...

Professor: Silence! Or I'll bash in your skull!

Pupil: Just try to! Skulldugger!

[*The Professor seizes her wrist and twists it.*]

Pupil: Oww!

Professor: Keep quiet now! Not a word!

(p.70)

Pupil: Toothache!

Professor: Ill-mannered . . . It can't go on like this, it won't do, it won't do, it won't do . . .

(p.72)

As the lesson becomes more boring and hurting till the girl feels pains all over her body, her wild protests go beyond the Professor's endurance. The enraged Professor suddenly puts what he says into action, as he forces the Pupil into practicing the word "knife" repeatedly and monotonously, brandishing it in his hand, striking her down onto the chair with "the first blow" and making her dead with "a second slash" of it. The Professor's transition from diffidence to confidence, dominance, and finally aggressiveness takes place in a really gradual and imperceptible manner, but there is an element of abrupt graduality and obvious imperceptibility.

4.2.2 The Professor-Maid Relationship

The dramatic arrangement of the Professor and the Maid is also worth noting. The Professor, aged 50 to 60, supposedly an old bachelor or widower, is alone with the Maid, aged 45 to 50, in the house. The fact that the Maid has a lover (Father Auguste) revealed at the end of the play suggests that she is most probably in a single state, and the play never suggests she has a home or family of her own. That is no coincidence! Actually the relationship between these two people is extraordinary and complex. In spite of the brief appearances of the Maid who has short contacts with the Professor in the play, her role is nevertheless more important than it seems to be. The Professor, the master of the house, is constantly bossed around by the Maid. The play starts with the Maid and ends with the Maid. In the course of the lesson, she cuts in for three times. Her speech indicates that they are on terms more intimate than that of the common master-servant. In her first appearance which seems to irritate the Professor (Why?), she "goes to the buffet and looks for something, lingering" (p. 50). When the Professor does not want the Maid to hang

around bothering him while he is talking to, or rather, approaching the young lady, he issues his order for the Maid to leave in a very intimately polite manner, and their interaction is far beyond normal:

Professor: . . . . [*To the Maid*:] Have you finished, Marie?

Maid: Yes, Professor, I've found the plate. I'm just going . . .

Professor: Hurry up then. Please go along to the kitchen, if you will.

Maid: Yes, Professor, I'm going. [*She starts to go out*.] Excuse me, Professor, but take care, I urge you to remain calm.

Professor: You're being ridiculous, Marie. Now, don't worry.

Maid: That's what you always say.

Professor: I will not stand for your insinuations. I know perfectly well how to comport myself. I am old enough for that.

Maid: Precisely, Professor. You will do better not to start the lady on arithmetic. Arithmetic is tiring, exhausting.

Professor: Not at my age. And anyhow, what business is it of yours? This is my concern. And I know what I'm doing. This is not your department.

Maid: Very well, Professor. But you can't say that I didn't warn you.

Professor: Marie, I can get along without your advice.

Maid: As you wish, Professor. [*She exits*.]

(pp. 50-1)

While the Professor is talking to the Pupil, he turns to the Maid. His utterance is an indirect speech act, in which the question serves as an order for her to leave. The Maid of course knows too clearly what the Professor means, so she not only answers his question but also hesitantly adds an incomplete sentence possibly meaning that she is just leaving or she is going to . . . (?). Then comes the Professor's direct order ("Hurry up then") followed by "Please . . ." and "if you will". The Maid's next utterance proves her lingering around. While she accepts the Professor's order, she gives him advice by urging the Professor "to remain calm". At this, the Professor, in the presence of the Pupil, criticises the Maid out of his dignity. The Maid's reply seems to take the criticism very lightly, and at the same time sounds like a retort. When the Professor's criticism goes on, the Maid starts warning, "But you can't say that I didn't warn you". The

Professor criticises the Maid by saying "This is not your department" (p.51) certainly suggests a harsh rejection of the gossiping of the Maid around. But one may also be led to find more implications behind his words. Since this is not the occasion for the Maid to give orders, there must be an occasion on which the Maid rightly does. So there is some implication in the Professor's comparison of the home situation with a university department, while the fact is that the word "department" is exclusively associated with the Professor and the Pupil, never with the Maid. Instead of a direct rejection or stronger criticism, the Professor is only suggesting the inappropriateness of the Maid's ordering as his protest. The relation between them is all the more unusual, with the Maid being the real boss and the Professor being linguistically powerless.

Normally, when the master is with guests, servants have no right to interfere except providing necessary dutiful service. It is the master who is in a dominant position ordering servants, never the case that the servant gives orders to, warns, and even threatens, the master. But in this play, the Maid not only bosses the Professor on academic matters as to what is to be taught, but also warns the Professor just as adults do to their children. Socially or academically, this is not in keeping with her schooling and (academic and social) status. When the Professor sweeps away her advice in the presence of the Pupil, the Maid just starts warning. Short (1989: 144) writes that a servant cannot, given normal circumstances, threaten a master. If he does so in a play, it "signals a change in their relationship". And "commands, like threats, are not accessible to all of the participants in a particular speech situation and therefore mark clear social relationships". Obviously the Professor must do something to cover up the situation in order to save his own face when he is being ordered and warned by his Maid in the presence of the Pupil. In the dialogue that follows, the Professor tries to explain the Maid's "absurd interruption" to the Pupil. It is another effort to defend his own dignity. However, the Pupil is not so naive as not to see the significance of the Maid's speech and their delicate relationship. While the Professor interprets the Maid's interruptions and warning as good-willed for the sake of his own health, the Pupil rightly interprets the Maid's acts as evidence of devotion to and love for him.

Professor: Miss, I hope you'll pardon this absurd interruption ... Excuse this woman ... She is always afraid that I'll tire myself. She fusses over my health.

Pupil: Oh, that's quite all right, Professor. It shows that she is very devoted. She loves you very much. Good servants are rare.

Professor: She exaggerates. Her fears are stupid. But let's return to our arithmetical knitting.

(p.51)

When the Maid cuts in for the second time, it is the moment when the Professor is in the process of teaching the lady arithmetic. The Maid enters and struggles for attention, but the Professor does not let her stay and talk. Such rudeness and impoliteness of the Professor can be generally found on two extreme occasions: between individuals on hostile relationships and between individuals on too intimate relationships.

Maid [*entering*]: Hmm, hmm, Professor...

Professor [*who doesn't hear her*]: It is unfortunate, miss, that you aren't further along in specialized mathematics ...

Maid [*taking him by the sleeve*]: Professor! Professor!

...

Professor: I hear that you will not be able to qualify for the total doctor's orals ...

Pupil: Yes, Professor, it's too bad!

Professor: Unless you ... [*To the Maid:*] Let me be, Marie ... Look here, why are you bothering me? Go back to the kitchen! To your pots and pans! Go away! Go away! [*To the Pupil:*] We will try to prepare you for the partial doctorate ...

Maid: Professor! ... Professor! [*She pulls his sleeve.*]

Professor [*to the Maid*]: Now leave me alone! Let me be! What's the meaning of this? ... [*To the Pupil:*] I must therefore teach you, if you really do insist on attempting the partial doctorate ...

Pupil: Yes, Professor.

Professor: ... The elements of linguistics and of comparative philology ...

Maid: No, Professor, no! You mustn't do that! ...

Professor: Marie, you are going too far!

Maid: Professor, especially not philology, philology leads to calamity ...

Pupil [*astonished*]: To calamity? [*Smiling, a little stupidly:*] That's hard to believe.

Professor [*to the Maid*]: That's enough now! Get out of here now! Get out of here!

Maid: All right, Professor, all right. But you can't say that I didn't warn you! Philology leads to calamity!

Professor: I'm an adult, Marie!

Pupil: Yes, Professor.

Maid: As you wish.

[*She exits.*]

(pp. 59-60)

When the Maid starts cutting in, she only utters "Hmm, hmm, ..." to call the Professor's attention, signaling that she is about to say something. But the Professor either does not hear her or is deliberately ignoring her, holding the floor tightly and giving her no chance to talk. Then the Maid takes him by the sleeve and starts shouting. The process of the Maid's verbal contact plus body contact with the Professor indicates that their personal relation is quite close and intimate. Normally body contact is allowed between intimate individuals, not between those on social terms. The Maid's shouting to the Professor also indicates a sudden inversion of their social status. Of course the Professor pays no attention to her and still keeps on talking to the Pupil. Then, when the Professor feels much chagrined, his speech starts from a request of letting him alone, to strong protests which are at the same time orders for her to go away, while still talking to the Pupil. When the Maid pulls the Professor's sleeve again shouting and the Professor pretends not to know what she is up to, still not paying any attention to her while not stopping his talk to the Pupil, she starts ordering "No, Professor, no! ... You mustn't do that! ..." , trying to stop him from talking on philology. At this moment, the Professor resumes his social status in the presence of the Pupil, with his speech therefore getting stronger to order her to get out

of the place. The Maid's response to it indicates her superficial obedience, but she adds a warning to him, seeming to know well the consequences of the situation. Such warnings can of course be found in conversations where an experienced side or a social superior gives them to a less experienced or a social inferior, who knows nothing of the possible consequences and later might surely regret over what he is doing now if he does not pay heed to what he is being told. The Maid obviously puts herself in a condescending position, just as a mother warns her naughty boy who must take the possible consequences without herself taking any responsibilities.

The Professor's "Let me be" is no longer as strong as the orders he issued previously, and sounds somewhat like a child begging for freedom from the control of his mother. "I'm an adult, Marie!" is functionally like a child's saying to his mother "Don't worry, I'm grown up, Mum" . The only difference is the Professor's "Marie" in place of the child's "Mum" for addressing. The Professor is certainly behaving in a manner of intimacy commonly found between adults of different sexes. The Maid's repetition of the reply before she exits, "As you wish" , is equivalent in function to "Let's see if you can behave yourself as you say" , implying her further warning and a let's-wait-and-see attitude. This strongly indicates her intention of evading any possible responsibility, paving the way for actions she has to take later. Anyway, her manner seems to be in an advantageous position, dominating and imposing on the Professor.

The third time the Maid enters is a moment when the lesson is going on with difficulty. At the call of the Professor who is worried and anxious for help, she enters. She points out that the Professor is going too far, but the Professor replies that he is able to control himself, to "stop in time" . The Maid then says, "That's what you always say. I only wish I could see it." When she is reprimanded by the Professor for her remarks on the "final" and the "chief symptom" , she refuses to stay and starts to exit. At the Professor's insistence, she simply replies, "Don't ask me" and exits, leaving him in desperation. This situation is familiar enough in everyday life. When someone refuses to listen to the advice given, the giver feels let down and therefore refuses in turn to cooperate and often replies in such a way. This utterance also implies a conditional "If you choose not to listen to what I say

to you, what you do is none of my business" .

The fourth time she enters is a moment similar to the previous one. And this is the longest episode of her contact with the Professor. At the call of the Professor when the "calamity" has come true, "Marie! Marie! My good Marie!" , she is about to enter. However, at her appearance, the Professor seems to have changed his mind and asks her to withdraw. She enters "wearing a stern expression" , condescendingly assuming an air of dignity. Thus the Professor seems exactly like a child having done something wrong and waiting for a milder punishment, because he is doing everything to find excuses and heaving blames on the Pupil who is already dead there. The Maid starts commenting and questioning in a "sarcastic" manner, making the Professor feel strongly guilty. At his provision of excuses, she retorts him "very harshly" , which makes the Professor tremble ("[*trembling*]"). Then comes her accusation against the Professor:

> Maid: And today makes it the fortieth time! ... And every time it's the same thing! Every day! You should be ashamed, at your age ... and you're going to make yourself sick! You won't have any pupils left. That will serve you right.
>
> (p.76)

When the irritated Professor curses the student and tries to find further excuses in order to evade the responsibility, the Maid just names him "Liar!" . At his attempts to do the same to her, she takes actions to spike the attempts, "giving him two loud, strong slaps" making him falling on his prat onto the floor sobbing. Her speech at this time becomes stronger than ever, calling him "Little murderer! bastard!" . She orders him to put the knife back, and the Professor is in her complete control and thus showing submission. Then she seems to turn a little milder and affectionate, acting just as a mother is scolding her boy, "didn't I warn you ..."

Almost immediately, the Maid's attitude seems to have a drastic change. When the Professor swears to her that he did not kill the girl on purpose, although she knows it is nothing but a lie, calling him "Liar! Old fox!" , she turns to feel sorry for the Professor, affectionately calling him "a good boy" when she thinks she has conquered him. She offers so much

help to the Professor in disposing of the girl's corpse with the help of her lover, Father Auguste, and that wins the Professor's enormous gratitude. The Professor's addressing her as "my little Marie" and praising her "You're a good girl, Marie ... very loyal ..." are intimate responses to her affection. After everything is properly settled, there comes the scene exactly the same as the very beginning of the play, with the Maid's dominating and solo performance on the stage.

It is also to be noted that the Maid addresses the Professor as "sir" twice in the play. This may be a minor point. But considering the deviation in the patterning of forms of address throughout the play, this change is meaningful. Just as the Pupil most of the time addresses her teacher by his title as "Professor" and her change indicates a change of her attitude, so does the Maid. Addressing him as "Professor" has already become a norm in this play, although not in line with real sociolinguistic practices. For example, Ervin-Tripp (1969) gives a very brief description of the rules for American English,

> A priest, physician, dentist, or judge may be addressed by title alone, but a plain citizen or an academic person may not. In the latter cases, if the name is unknown, there is no address form (or zero, 0) available and we simply no-name the addressee. ①

According to Ervin-Tripp, a physician and a Ph. D. can be addressed as "Doctor" alone, without a last name, "Professor" , like "Mister" , "Mrs." and "Miss" cannot be used in the same way. Whenever the last name is unknown in these cases, there is no lone title. It is just this dramatic pattern that shows that the Maid's "sir" is unusual. While Ervin-Tripp also says that an older male addressee may be called "sir" if deference is intended as an optional extra marking, we may well take the Maid's use of it for ironical purposes, if not for deference. When the Professor calls the Maid to enter and she is late to respond to his orders, he just blames her, "When I call you, you must come! It is I who gives you orders, do you hear?" , the Maid seems calm enough to face the blaming, addressing him for the first time "sir" ("Don't get into such a state, sir, you know where it'll end!" (p.72)).

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① Quoted from Wolfson (1989: 83).

This shows her sullenness toward the Professor, the sudden removal of their close relationship. Towards the end of the play when the Professor heaps compliments and flatterings on her, showing great intimacy out of gratefulness, she unexpectedly leaves the Professor at a farther distance, addressing him for the second time "sir" ("That's enough. Come on, sir." (p.78)).

This line of the story serves to show that the Professor and the Maid are a pair of individuals working hand in hand killing the girls who come to have lessons one after another. Their joint efforts actually take place on a very well-settled basis. At each critical moment the Maid enters to bother the Professor, her role, however, does nothing in preventing the foreseen tragedy from happening. In fact, the Maid is more catalytic in the Professor's assault of his girls than she seems to be. It is just that she herself seems immune to his attacks.

4.2.3 The Maid-Pupil Relationship

The Maid and the Pupil only have had three brief contacts throughout the play, with the first being direct only on phatic terms. When the Maid welcomes the girl at the beginning of the play, she addresses her as "miss" ("Good morning, miss."), which implies her attitude toward, and evaluation of, the student. Addressing the girl as "miss" of course indicates her politeness and respect for the guest, while she never refers to the girl as "girl" or "pupil" but as "the young lady" . Except that after the girl is killed she refers to her as one of the pupils, she never seems to take her as a young girl, but as a lady, which implies a strong sense of maturity and womanhood of the Pupil, a likely object for victimisation. On the other hand, when the girl returns the Maid's greetings, she addresses the Maid as "madam" , obviously showing respect, in opposition to an otherwise simple "Good morning" . So in the rest part of the play there is not a clear picture of the relationship between the two females, because they do not seem to have direct contact. During the Maid's next appearance, while she advises the Professor not to lecture on philology and warns him of the possible consequences, she seems to indirectly warn the Pupil of the coming danger

by what she calls "calamity" . This does astonish the Pupil who only acts by smiling her disbelief "a little stupidly" . It is this numbness and stupidity that leads her to the final disastrous ending.

4.2.4 Violence and Sexuality

Another clear pattern in the process of the struggle for power and dominance may lead to an interpretation of violence and sexuality. The Professor's lustfulness and sexual orientation accompanied with violence are evidently suggested in this play. Ionesco's choice and the arrangement of the three characters (the aged protagonist and two females, one middle-aged and the other fresh and young, deliberate dismissal or omission of the Professor's wife) in the play with the scene of having lessons at home possibly suggests a reading which may reveal a sense of violence and sexuality.

For example, in the stage directions (p.46), the vaguely worded (the Professor's) "final gesture" in "... to such an extent that when he makes his final gesture, she no longer reacts" may, at first sight, suggest nothing of this point. However, this line becomes striking to the eyes when we pay attention to each of more minor details in the linguistic behaviours of both sides. The "lewd gleam" in the Professor's eyes was mentioned twice: the first time it is "quickly extinguished" , the second time it is "quickly repressed" , then it "will become a steady devouring flame in the end. ... more and more nervous, aggressive, dominating, until he is able to do as he pleases with the Pupil, who has become, in his hands, a pitiful creature" (p.46). From the paradoxical situation of the Professor's showing negative politeness, the girl's lively response to Professor's questions, we can see that the line of this thought is evidenced by a trail of explicities in a clear patterning. From her act of getting up and giving the Professor her hand (p.47), together with the gleam in the Professor's eyes which is quickly extinguished, his making a gesture while suppressing it at once (p.50), one can naturally come to understand that the Professor's over-polite request of asking for permission to sit opposite her (p.49) is a tentative step fathoming the way toward intimacy. The girl's reply "Yes, indeed, Professor, I am at your disposal." (p.50) is somewhat problematic. She might have noticed

the Professor's "lewd gleam" in the eyes, but she agrees to let the Professor sit near and face-to-face with her, and declares her willingness of being at his disposal. At this, the Professor's effort to struggle for being at the girl's disposal and her humble servant (p.50) is not merely an act of politeness out of politeness paradox, but also a flirtatious act at the same time. Here the Professor uses "we" twice hesitantly and then changes to "I" in the same manner to see the girl's reaction toward his almost imperceptible yet deliberate advancing. From the next sentence on, the Professor uses "we" twice more without any trace of hesitation he has previously felt and shown. Next, the Professor's rubbing his hands together, while talking, is an instinctive or sub-conscious movement to cover up his anxiety, nervousness, and embarrassment. When the Maid appears at this moment, this seems to irritate the Professor (p. 50). This is also an important clue to the interpretation. Why does the presence of the Maid lingering around seem to irritate the Professor? Of course the Professor does not like being interrupted. But here the Maid's interruption might be both an interruption of the Professor's trace of thoughts and an interruption of his progressive intimacy towards the girl. Obviously the Maid sticks to the scene, much to the disappointment and annoyance of the Professor, to warn the Professor or urge him to remain calm. This could be an act of her urging him to keep sober-minded or be physically calm, opposite to being [sexually] excited.

Next, the Professor's speech to the Maid, "I am old enough for that" (p.51) is also ambiguous: it may imply that (1) he is old and experienced enough to behave himself properly; (2) he is in powerful control of himself as not to get excited easily; (3) he is still powerfully strong or potent; (4) he is aged and impotent; (5) he is unable to commit further crimes or he is too weak, hence there is no worrying on the side of the Maid.

When the Lesson has started, the Maid makes a suggestion to the Professor "You will do better not to start the lady on arithmetic" (p.51). The use of "the lady" to refer to an eighteen-year female pupil indicates the Maid's attitude in social settings. For one thing, it indicates her respect for the Pupil. For another, it indicates the Maid's attitude toward the Pupil's girlhood and virginity, hence suggesting an implicit sense of her maturity and a likelihood of assault that will inevitably follow. The Professor's

following remark "She is always afraid that I'll tire myself. She fusses over my health" (p.51) to the Pupil serves the same purpose of covering up the real content of the woman's utterance, deliberately misleading the Pupil into the bargain. By this he has successfully covered up his evil plan, if any, and, at least, averted the attention of the Pupil, who might have otherwise been brought onto her guard. Hence he assumes an intimate attitude toward the Maid while he speaks to his girl student, purposefully putting her off guard so that she would not suspect anything unusual in store for her. The effect of this speech act is proved by her response: "Oh, that's quite all right, Professor. It shows that she's very devoted. She loves you very much. Good servants are rare." (p. 51) Actually this is just what the Professor wants to happen. So he continues: "She exaggerates. Her fears are stupid. But let's return to our mathematical knitting." (p. 51) This is the Professor's progression toward the Pupil. But the Maid foresees the disastrous consequences (if she herself is not an out-and-out accomplice) and somehow fusses over the effect of the arithmetic on the girl's doom—being sexually and fatally attacked. Then when the pupil replies, "I'm following you, Professor", he "[*wittily*]" orders: "Without leaving your seat!" This is clearly not to be understood literally, for Ionesco designed the Pupil answering in an appreciative manner as "[*appreciating his joke*]: Like you, Professor." (p. 51) Literally, what the Professor says is an order of "Be seated, never move." But at the same time it is a play of words for a joke in response to the girl's "I'm following you.", which is also ambiguous. The reader is here obliged to ask for the reason for the Professor's joking utterance: whether it is an act of flirtation based on the Professor's interpreting the ambiguous terms like "following you" and "Like you" in his own favour.

When the Pupil can no longer sit still and keep listening, the Professor switches to a dramatically different code, which is a sociolinguistic variety incompatible with a professorship—cursing her as "Son of a cocker spaniel!" while demanding her attention and ordering her to keep listening (p. 68). Later his threatening ("Silence! Or I'll bash in your skull!" (p. 70)) suggests violent body contact. And the girl's reply (Yes! yes! yes! yes! What more do you want ... ? (p.71)) to the Professor's question ("... Do

you understand?") is also ambiguous. On the one hand, it expresses her impatience and rebellious attitude, and on the other it seems to be an inviting question, implying her willingness to give anything he wants from her. The Professor's mentioning of "one of the inexplicable curiosities of the vulgar empiricism of the common people" , "one of the aberrations of human nature" , "purely and simply instinct" (p. 71) in explaining the nature of languages clearly equates verbal behaviour with instinctive behaviour. While it superficially suggests nothing, it does suggest something on a deeper level. The girl's tooth aches till her feet, head, her ears, and then "I hurt all over ..." (p. 73) to "I've got a pain ... my throat, neck, ... oh, my shoulders ... my breast ..." , "my hips ... my thighs ..." , "my breast ... my stomach..." (p. 74) in conversational turns with the Professor's repeated "Knife ... knife ... knife ..." are more subtly explicit in the manner. Thus the Professor advances: "That's what I am going to do to you, and then they won't hurt you any more, my pet." (p. 73) The girl's acts of caressingly touching the parts of her body as she names them: "... My eyes ..." (p. 74) are more flirtatious, suggestive and seductive, which are most probably the cause for "the final gesture" of the Professor.

At the Professor's attack, the Pupil cries "Aah!" and "then falls, flopping in an immodest position onto a chair" . Her position of falling down clearly implies the Professor's act of sexual violence. Ionesco here refers to the Professor as "the murderer" and the Pupil as "his victim" , both shouting "Aah!" simultaneously. It is common-sensically obvious that the exclamations from a murderer and his victim cannot be the same, that of the former coming out of accomplishment of a vicious act (if it can be so called) while that of the latter coming out of suffering from desperate agony. So the way the playwright puts it is significantly suggestive of an orgasmic instinct. Not accidentally, in Marcel Cuvelier's production, the repeated enunciation of the key word "*couteau*" by the murderer and the victim was also unambiguously orgastic (See Esslin, 1980: 147). Take the stage directions at the end of the play for example:

> [*Pupil also cries "Aah!"* then falls, flopping in an immodest position onto a chair which, as though by chance, is near the window. The murderer and his victim shout "Aaah!" at the same moment. After the

first blow of the knife, the Pupil flops onto the chair, her legs spread wide and hanging over both sides of the chair. The Professor remains standing in front of her, his back to the audience. After the first blow, he strikes her dead with a second slash of the knife, from bottom to top. After that blow a noticeable convulsion shakes his whole body.]

(*p.* 75)

This part of the play strongly suggests sexuality and the act of Professor's sexual attack—raping. The girl's "immodest position on the chair" , her being a "victim" , the Professor's striking her [dead] "from bottom to top" with a "knife" that is either "real or imaginary" ... Our intuition immediately reminds us what is being implied in the process. What is it with which the Professor accomplishes his decisive act? If it is a real knife, it is too unsymbolic and hence not meaningless enough for Ionesco's purpose. But Ionesco clearly says that it can be either real or imaginary. If it is an imaginary knife, what on earth is it? Why should it be possibly imaginary? Clearly it suggests that the act is sort of imaginary. Since imaginary acts with imaginary implements can only be demonstrated with one's hands and body parts accompanied by appropriate gestures, a "noticeable convulsion" displayed by the Professor seems to add to interpretations of bodily functions along this line. Most probably this is what Ionesco is implying. The Maid's speech that follows seems to lead to the same reading. For example:

MAID: And today makes it the fortieth time! ... And every day it's the same thing! Every day! You should be ashamed, at your age ... and you are going to make yourself sick! You won't have any pupils left. That will serve you right.

(p.76)

When the Maid finds out that another girl or young lady has been victimised, she feels disgusted at the Professor's repeated acts ("the same thing") for days on end. If it is a simple case of murder, what has it to do with the Professor's necessity of feeling ashamed and his ageing condition and the possibility of being or getting sick? What will happen to the Professor or to them two when he has no more pupils left? "That will serve you right" indicates the Professor will have to face a situation similar to sort of

punishment as a result of his wrongdoings. Do they regret the situation or else what is the significance? Also when the Professor intends to do the same thing to the Maid, she is quick enough to derail his attempt, saying "I'm not one of your pupils, not me." (p.76) Here there is a presupposition that the Maid takes it for granted for pupils to be attacked by the Professor one after another.

MAID: I can't help feeling sorry for you! Ah! you are a good boy in spite of everything! I'll try to fix this. But don't start it again ... It could give you a heart attack ...

(p.77)

MAID: Don't worry... The least thing you can do is cover her up with her smock, she's not decent that way.

(p.77)

From the last scene we can see that the Maid is, in a sense, an out-and-out accomplice with the Professor who murders or rapes (anyway, "victimises") his girl students one after another. The funniest thing is that the Maid is double-faced. On the one hand, she is an upright woman, getting outrageous at the Professor's animalistic act. On the other hand, she is an accomplice, fondling and kindling him in doing the same thing repeatedly. What keeps happening at the Professor's home does not really upset her much. Instead of getting sick at the sight, she warns the Professor of possibly getting sick. The phrase "feeling sorry" is ambiguous. The Maid's "Ah! You are a good boy ..." is a fondling remark against the normal social relation between a maid and the house-owner. "Don't start it again" is a warning, likely to be given to a naughty boy by a school teacher or his mother. "It could give you a heart attack" indicates the speaker's loving admonition to the hearer.

Although this girl is the fortieth that have been attacked, the Maid's speech in the scene at the end "She's certainly in a hurry, this one!" indicates that she already knows (or according to some planning in advance) that it is another girl student arriving, not a boy. From this circular movement, we can safely deduce that the previous thirty-nine victims and the coming forty-first are all girls about the same age. This peculiar actuality points to one conclusion: This pair of individuals, although not a couple, are

a pack of maniacs working hand in hand in victimising individuals of the fair sex in the prime of their life.

Several noticeable points of the movement can be found here. The discomfort of the Pupil announces itself when she is suddenly overtaken by a violent toothache. And the sexual connotation of this climatic moment of the play is quite openly indicated. It can be assumed that the Professor kills the girl because her toothache enables her to escape from having to listen to his instruction. This is actually a symbol of all forms of dictatorship. The Maid's handing the Professor a swastika armband at the end of the play certainly carries political connotations. It is only a minor aspect of the main proposition, which hinges on the sexual nature of all power and the relationship between language and power as the basis of all human ties. The Professor dominates the pupil, but he in turn is dominated by the Maid, who treats him like a fond, if disapproving, mother, spoiling her naughty child by ultimately overlooking his most flagrant pranks. The point of the play is surely that the pupils always get a toothache, and the Professor always rapes them and kills them. The murder we witness is his fortieth on that single day. And the play ends with the forty-first victim arriving for her Lesson.

4.3 Language and Patterns of Communication

According to the model of dramatic communication, the playwright is not merely speaking through stage directions, but also through characters' dialogue, to his audience and readers. The above discussions of writer - reader relationship and character-character relationship can reveal the interpersonal relations based on what the characters say and how they say, as chosen by the playwright. But the way the whole play is stylistically presented is also chosen by the playwright. A study of the playwright's style of using language can help contribute to the interpretation of the overall message of the play on the macro-level of literary communication.

This play is a Lesson comedified in a stage situation. And since most lessons are verbal activities, so the means of applying the medium of language in this play is crucial for its general theme. The playwright's exploitation

of the interpersonal rhetoric is tactical, for he mostly lets the characters violate conversation norms and maxims in order to serve his own purpose.

First, the playwright heavily loads the play with technical or disciplinary terms of arithmetic and linguistics, deliberately using metalanguage in the speech of the Professor. It is impressive in that the speaker is far removed from conventional talks by making his speech formal and technically difficult to follow, even for language professionals. For example, such items as: the Pupil's perception of "plurality" (p. 50), the Professor and the Pupil's plan to "arithmetise" (p. 51), "a figure, a number, elements of numeration" and "[to] subtract two twos from three threes" (p. 57), "idioms and linguistic groups", "veritable voids, tombs of sonorities" (p. 62), "irrational assemblages of sounds", "articulation", "the vocal cords", "vibrate or uvulate, or fricate or jostle against each other, or silibate" (p. 63), and many more in the Professor's explanation of phonetics in comparative philology appear, much to the distress of the Pupil who tries desperately to follow but finally fails.

Second, the playwright aims to show that language does not help communication, but actually hampers it. Tautology, illogicality, and absurdity against the background of normal rules of communication are prominent. By these devices, the ambiguities, complexities, and inexplicabilities are exhaustively revealed to show the meaninglessness and impotence of language. In the Professor's lecture, he talks of a large number of imaginary languages that are superficially the same yet distinguished by subtle differences. The differences within the language he is using are all imperceptible to the ear of the audience and the eye of the reader. In explaining the importance of pronunciation (pp. 64-5), the Professor is faced with the basic impossibilities of communication and his words cannot carry meanings because they deviate from normal associations for each individual. This is one of the reasons why he cannot break through to the Pupil. His personal experience in the context is illogical and almost ridiculous, and the examples of differences are pointing to nothing because they are phonologically identical:

Professor: ... I was very young, little more than a child. It was during my military service. I had a friend in the regiment, a

> vicomte, who suffered from a serious defect in pronunciation: he could not pronounce the letter *f*. Instead of *f*, he said *f*. Thus, instead of "Birds of a feather flock together," he said: "Birds of a feather flock together." He pronounced filly instead of filly, Firmin instead of Firmin, French bean instead of French bean, go frig yourself instead of go frig yourself, farrgo instead of farrago, fee fi fo fum instead of fee fi fo fum, Philip instead of Philip, fictory instead of fictory, February instead of February, March-April instead of March-April, Gerard de Nerval and not as is correct—Gerard de Nerval, Mirabeau instead of Mirabeau, etc., instead of etc., and thus instead of etc., instead of etc., and thus and so forth. However, he managed to conceal his fault so effectively that, thanks to the hat he wore, no one ever noticed it.
>
> (pp.64-5)

In the pattern of "instead of X", "he pronounced X", there is no discernible phonological difference between his two paradigms of examples in any way. Since it is not graphically or eye-dialectally differential, leaving even the acoustic phonetician, the sociolinguist, the dialectologist, even the French phonologist (in the original script and theatrical performance) at a loss. It is extremely abnormal for the text readers and even more abnormal for the audience in the theatre. Not only are the audience in the theatre puzzled at what the Professor is saying, but also the reader, a highly sensitive reader, will be puzzled at what is being talked about.

Third, great effects are created by repetition in this play, including repetition of words and phrases in one utterance and repetition of utterances between conversation turns. They either indicate rapid movements in certain parts of the play or the sluggishness of certain processes where the characters just repeat for no clear reason while trying to find something proper to go on talking. The most overwhelming lexical repetition is the Pupil's in her response to the Professor. For instance, her "Yes, Professor! Good, Professor! Thanks, Professor!" (p. 57) suggests her eagerness in being a good student and impressing the Professor, and her "I've got a toothache. Yes, yes, yes." (p.66) suggests a strong feeling of annoyance,

demanding a rapid ending. While the Professor says "Good, let's go on. I tell you, let's go on ..." (p.66), his speech act indicates that he is going to slow down and prolong the process, making the Pupil more desperate. This indication can be traced from such repeated verbal contacts where both are struggling for his or her purpose, the Professor for dominance and control while the Pupil for freedom and emancipation. The Pupil protests "My teeth ache, ache, ache." (p.66), and the Professor insists "Let's go on, let's go on, go ahead and answer, anyway." (p.66). While the Pupil provides the required answers, the Professor remarks "That's wrong. That's wrong. That's wrong." (p.67), "Certainly not, certainly not, since ..." (p.68), "But it's so simple! So simple!", "But in order to have it, one must study, study, and then study some more." (p.68).

Towards the end of the play, when the Pupil's protests become incrementally repetitive, from "toothache" to "ache" and to "Ache! ache! ache!" (p.69), this indicates a process of change from impatience to anger and then to fury. The rapid repetition of the student's "Yes! yes! yes! yes! What more do you want ...?" (p.71) and the repetition of the Professor's "It can't go on like this, it won't do, it won't do, it won't do ..." (p.72); the Maid's mentioning of "the final symptom! the chief symptom!" (p.72), the Professor's "Stupid! stupid! stupid!" (p.72) all help to stress the characters' emphasis when language seems so impotent and so unimpressive.

The most often repeated item is, of course, "knife" (p.74), at the critical stage of the play. Then "toothache". "I've got a toothache" and "I have a toothache"—35 times from weak to strong to painfully weak. Each time when the Pupil protests, the Professor ignores and keeps on talking or lecturing, forcing her into doing repeated practice, and the talk does not come to an end just because of a special power relationship between the two characters. Only when the pupil's protests become too frequent and strong or even unbearably offensive to the Professor does he order her to be "seated" and "keep quiet", until in the later stage he shouts out some terrific warnings and curses, only with one or two "Forget about your teeth." (p.66) It is the Professor's deliberate indifference to the Pupil's repeated complaint of toothache that brings the play on the way to a climax.

The way the Professor gives this Lesson directly points to the

interpretation of the theme of the play. For example, there are many word plays involved: (1) The use of ambiguous and polysemic terms, such as "count" in the Professor's "the thing that counts—for in arithmetic it is always necessary to count—the thing that count is ..." (p.59). (2)The use of vague and superordinate terms, such as the Professor's "final gesture" (p.46), where "final" can be interpreted as something that is "last", "decisive", "destructive", and "putting an end to", and "gesture" can be simply interpreted as "an expressive movement", or "movement of the hand or the head to indicate or illustrate an idea, etc." . This is often associated with something done to convey a mild and kind intention, never with something violent and hostile, and which is unexpectedly connected with the Professor's act of striking and killing the Pupil.

The most dramatic moment is when the Professor switches to another exercise on comparative philology. As a normal mode of instruction or teaching of a lesson, it appears theoretical enough. However, as the Pupil turns to be equally theoretical, the Professor rejects it as "too theoretical" while he himself is never practical. His speech is full of formal choices. In stead of "I do not agree with you" , he says "I'm obliged to contradict you" (p.52); instead of "Remember it" , he says "Remember it *until the hour of your death*" (p.62; original italicisation). Not only is the Professor's speech very formal, like reading lecture notes on a formal occasion, but filled with the key terms of the theme of the play. Absurdity and illogicality are all ironically explicitised in the characters' speech, like the Professor's labeling the Maid's interruption as "absurd interruption" (p.51), the principles he is explaining as "only logical" (p.61) but actually illogical.

Absurdities of language use and repetition in the characters' speech make their conversation meaningless and far from the point. The Professor himself seems to be aware of the impotence of language, so he explicitly stresses this point in general in his explanation while saying "It can not be explained." (p.58). The complexities of cumbersome numbers and figures involved in multiplication such as "three billion seven hundred fifty-five million nine hundred ninety-eight thousand two hundred fifty one, multiplied by five million one hundred sixty-two million three hundred and three thousand five hundred and eight" (3,755,998,251 x 5,162,303,508) (p.58)

are absurdly tiresome, violating the maxim of Manner. When the Pupil has surprisingly provided the answer so quickly as "nineteen quintillion three hundred ninety quadrillion two trillion eight hundred forty-four million two hundred nineteen million one hundred sixty-four thousand five hundred and eight" (19, 390, 002, 844, 219, 164, 508), the Professor is, more surprisingly, quick enough to discover that it is not right, for everything except the last figure is incorrect by being too small by one, and immediately negates her answer, correcting it laboriously as "nineteen quintillion three hundred ninety quadrillion two trillion eight hundred forty-four million two hundred nineteen million one hundred sixty-four thousand five hundred and nine" (19,390,002,844,219,164,509) in an even more cumbersome manner instead of correcting the last figure for brevity and emphasis. When the Professor's repetition of this point reaches its end, the usual phonetic stress can be well lost in the monotony of reproducing the large part of the utterance and hence the part that is being corrected is not foregrounded and the actual effect of correction is not at all significant. It is, ironically, only in this literary comic situation can Grice's maxims of Quality and Manner be exploited to the extreme. While the Pupil can add but fails to grasp the possibility of substraction, she can multiply astronomical figures in a flash. This actually evokes a serious question of learning in the Lesson. When the Pupil explains to the baffled Professor that she can remember all possible multiplications as if there were a possible multiplication table ("I've memorised all the products of all possible multiplications." (p. 59)), the situation becomes even more absurd because it is surely *impossible* for anyone to remember the products of all possible multiplications. Just as a one can possibly remember all the words (which is highly unlikely) in a language without being possibly able to remember all the sentences these words can possibly make up, so it is possible for one to memorise all the rules and formulae in multiplications but not all the products of all possible multiplications! But ironically, she has previously admitted that she can count to infinity, which is only sixteen (p. 53).

Weakened and reduced to helplessness, the Professor resorts to other concrete means to explain his arithmetic. With the help of the student's nose and ears, sticks and matches (p. 55), etc., the Professor is making the explanation more baffling, leaving the Pupil nowhere nearer to his points. Thus her tentative question following his expounding, "Sticks are really

figures and numbers are units?" is meaningfully meaningless. Caught in such a dilemma, the Professor does not seem to know what he himself is explaining. Later he resorts to other possible means to aid his explanation, from objects at hand to faraway things that are desperately insignificant. For example, in explaining the soldier's effectively concealing his pronunciation defects, the Professor mentions the soldier's hat, "thanks to the hats he [the soldier] wore" (p. 65), which seems not only highly irrelevant but quite wide of the mark in terms of the point concerned.

Esslin (1980: 146-7) has noted that there is more about language in this play than a demonstration of the difficulties of communication. Language is also shown as an instrument of power. As the play proceeds, the Pupil who used to be eager, lively, and alert is gradually drained of her vitality, while the Professor, who used to be timid and nervous at the beginning, gradually gains assurance and domination. It is clear that the Professor derives his progressive increase of power from his role as a giver, a very arbitrary prescriber of meanings. Because words must have significance he decides to give them, the Pupil comes under his dominance, which finds its concrete, theatrical expression in her "murder" . The Maid, in turn, dominates the Professor. She is somewhat like a malignant mother figure turning a blind eye to his child and keeping spoiling him, but she is not surprisingly, immune to his attacks with the same knife—simply because she is not one of his pupils who are subject to the victimisation of language and power. It is the Maid who finally sums up, or "fixes up" , the situation where the Professor remains helpless and totally obedient.

Considering the sexual and sadistic nature of the play, we can almost hear Ionesco most probably saying that even behind so harmless an exercise of authority as in the Lesson, violence and domination, aggressive and possessiveness, cruelty and lust are present. Ionesco just uses the technique of the anti-conventional theatre to bring this implication to the fore. Although language serves as the means of instruction of the Lesson, imparting information and knowledge, the action becomes more and more violent, sensuous, and brutal. Although Ionesco himself labels this play "*A Comic Drama*" , it is a pessimistic drama in essence.

Chapter 5

Violation and Observance of Maxims in *The Bald Soprano*

The Bald Soprano (or "The Bald *Prima Donna*") is the first of Ionesco's plays and is also the first true piece of the Theatre of the Absurd①. This play strikes me by its illogically logical interpersonal communication and the absurd relations between the characters in the play by the peculiar treatment of Ionesco. It is superficially illogical but profoundly logical for the playwright's communicative purposes. Ionesco (1956) himself stresses that the point of the play is an expression of the human condition and its implicit anguish, which he attempts to convey by breaking down cliché-ridden and formulaic "social language". He explains the point as follows:

> One fine day, some years ago now, I had the idea of making a dialogue by stringing together the most commonplace phrases, consisting of the most meaningless words and the most worn out clichés that I could find in my own or my friends' vocabulary—and to a lesser extent in foreign language manuals.
>
> My initiative was ill-rewarded: overcome by a proliferation of corpse-like words, stunned by the automatism of conversation, I

① *A Handbook to Literature* (5th edn.), by Hugh Holman *et al*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. 1986. p.2.

> almost gave way to disgust, unspeakable misery, nervous depression. ... The play caused a great deal laughter. I was utterly amazed, for I thought I had written "The Tragedy of Language!"
>
> (From Ionesco, 1963)

Clearly, Ionesco's intention is to make use of the everyday nonsense of lexical strings to reveal the absurdities of language with artistic expertise. As Ionesco himself is multi-lingual, he knows the trade of language play too well. For every expression in the play, we can find a norm against which Ionesco's is a deviation in usage.

The play does not seem to have a central event. Two English couples are talking nonsense all the time. It starts in a very unusual manner, with one character tirelessly repeating everyday trivial matters while the other failing to respond anyhow. When the Martins come as guests to the home of the Smiths, the four individuals mechanically repeat the name of a Bobby Watson, or a lot of Bobby Watsons, whom they seem to know. While the talk goes on, there appear so many Watsons who are not the same, not only by name, but by facial characteristics, which makes it very hard to distinguish who is being referred to or being talked about. This directly goes against the principle of economy in naming people and things, and it is against Saussure's theory on differential relations between linguistic signs. The confusion and disorderliness reminds us of the impossibility of assigning one filename to two different files in the same directory in computer work, where no identical filenames are allowed in one certain system (e. g. a directory or subdirectory). Ionesco's creation of the characters goes against the nature of naming. What is more ridiculous is that when the Martins begin to talk, the husband and the wife do not even know each other, except remembering one has possibly met the other somewhere sometime before. With repeated exclamations of "Curious!", "How bizarre!" and "It's possible", they start searching their memories or recollecting their experiences. Only after laborious recollections do they realise that they have come to London on opposite seats next to the window in the same compartment on the same train, and that they are living on the same street, and staying in the same room in the same hotel, even sleeping on the same bed. It is only at this time that they realise their husband-wife relationship.

However, a new problem arises: They have exactly opposite opinions on their only daughter, as Mary the Sherlock Holmes tells the audience (p.19). Toward the end of the play, the characters seem unable to speak normally any longer, so their shouts become incrementally louder and louder, ending with a new circular start almost the same as the beginning of this round.

When first performed on the stage, this play was coldly received. Although the actors, short of money for publicity, turned themselves into sandwich men and paraded across the streets with their boards for about an hour before the performance, the theatre, however, remained empty. According to Esslin's description (1980: 141), more than once, there were fewer than three people in the theatre, money was given back to these people and the actors/actresses went home. About six weeks later the play was finally given up. So the initial unpopularity itself proves the very characteristics of this "anti-play".

Burton (1980) has devoted a whole chapter to a stylistic analysis of this play. And she chooses the text to start her stylistic analysis in that this play is widely known as one specifically about "communicative incompetence". As Kenneth Tynan's comment (1958) goes,

> Ionesco's is a world of isolated robots, conversing in cartoon-strip balloons of dialogue that are sometimes hilarious, sometimes evocative, and sometimes neither, on which occasion they become profoundly tiresome. ①

According to Burton (1980: 25), the dialogue of this play text is strikingly interesting for her purposes since it seems to be simultaneously presenting and implicitly commenting on features of both dramatic dialogue and everyday conversation. Her impression of the text is that the dialogue teases out the conventions of both stage interaction and real interaction, making strange the machinery of both. There is neither plot development nor character development in any straightforward sense. Episodes follow each other with little sequential motivation. Referential material is continually proposed and then contradicted—often in the immediately next utterance—

① Quoted from Burton (1980: 24).

and then finally dropped. Apart from occasional utterance connected with an individual character's occupation, or sex stereotype, there seems no discernible rationale for the allocation of particular utterances or particular characters. In successive episodes, the point of the interactions as shown seems to be the demonstration and observation of general principles of either stage or everyday interaction. These too are brought into focus and exploited, often only to be neglected as the next episode and the next set of interactive principles are brought in.

Her stylistic analysis therefore divides this play into what she sees as eleven episodes according to the grouping or sets of participant characters on stage. And for most part this happens to correspond with sharply differential shifts in both style and topic, in what the episode is about, in what the characters are doing, and how they are behaving and talking. As Burton comments, her major approach is discussing discourse by leaving aside all ideas about the author, editor or producer, or any other background figure, and is only concentrating on what happens when an utterance is produced by a character on the stage, being heard by both the characters and the audience simultaneously (p.174).

My analysis of this play will focus on the interpersonal interaction in terms of the playwright's "observance" of pragmatic principles and characters' violations of interactional principles, to show how they communicate while deviating from all cooperative and politeness maxims in abnormal structures of conversation. Attention will be given to strategies of verbal interaction at different levels for the overall effect of the text. Ionesco's early plays were written at a time when no pragmatic principles and other theories of linguistic and sociolinguistic communication were available, and the playwright's role in the exploitation of language and communication through drama is thus all the more valuable for analysis in the light of the interpersonal rhetorical principles. And the world of the characters who cannot properly communicate was interestingly revealed while Ionesco had no explicit and systematic knowledge of what Dell Hymes defines as communicative competence (1972).

5.1 Violations on the Macro-Level of Communication

On the macro level, the most prominent feature of the play is the playwright's exploitation of language. The stage directions throughout the play have absurd relations with the characters' dialogue, while Ionesco provides background information of the play for the readers and audience, he designs his characters to act in a manner contrary to the background. Instances of observance or violation of pragmatic principles are dramatically displayed so that the audience and readers can have quite different impressions of the talk in the play. At the very beginning, the "SCENE", the Gricean maxims are violated just for dramatic effects. For example, the playwright not only presents the "stage" situation in extraordinary detail with very brief nominal phrasal units in the sentential form, standing side by side with normal grammatical sentences, but also loads them with certain lexical items in repetitive patterns.

What initially strikes the reader is Ionesco's use of Epithet. The most prominent epithet is "English", which is repeatedly used as modifiers for seventeen times qualifying possibly everything, ranging from items that can be qualified as English such as "Englishman" or "Englishwoman" to those that are apparently not characteristic of England at all, such as "evening", "silence", "clock" and its "strokes".

> SCENE: *A middle-class English interior, with English armchairs. An English evening. Mr. Smith, an Englishman, seated in his English armchair and wearing English slippers, is smoking his English pipe and reading an English newspaper, near an English fire. He is wearing English spectacles and a small gray English mustache. Beside him, in another English armchair, Mr. Smith, an Englishwoman, is darning some English socks. A long moment of English silence. The English clock strikes* 17 *English strokes.*
>
> (Ionesco, 1958: 8)

With such items sitting together carrying the feature or supposed feature of Englishness as the playwright sees them, a bizarre arrangement is

both comprehensibly and incomprehensibly made in a mixed manner, which can make the whole thing seem perplexing. By the ambiguous and contextually polysemic epithet "English", Ionesco may mean that the items are at least related in some sense to Englishness. The "English newspaper" Mr. Smith is reading can be either an English language newspaper or a newspaper that is published in England, or one that is characteristic of English in style. But the same rule of semantic interpretation does not seem to apply to other items, for how can things like a fire be labelled as English or characterised with an English nature? Similarly, a mustache can be of a style kept by a typical English man, and a pair of socks he wears can be called "English socks" if he insists, in the sense that they are made of English fibre or made in England, but what is typical or distinctive of "English silences"? One is intuitively led into thinking about whether they differ from those in other cultures in terms of their particular communicative values or pragmatic meaningfulness. One can also say that he has seen an English clock, meaning a clock made in England or the kind of clock typically seen in an English home. However, can anyone distinguish strokes of clocks in terms of national or geographical styles or features? When the English clock strikes 17 times on the stage, which is unusual even if it means 5:00 p. m., the audiences in the theatre immediately feel something unusual. Normally a monotonous repetition of 12 strokes is enough to get on one's nerves unless each stroke dramatically becomes louder or more significant and meaningful. Following this line, even a small step forward would go to another extreme, for example, a clock striking 13 times is surely out of order. And the readers in the armchair may start thinking about the playwright's intentions of designing such unusual strikings, and therefore trying to find the significance of the peculiar pattern.

The repetition of the lexical item "English" constitutes a unique pattern, a pattern that violates the Gricean maxims on the one hand and forms cohesive ties on phonological and syntactical levels on the other. Behind the repetitious manner, the playwright is actually telling the readers what he himself sees the world to be. Not only does the epithet "English" appear seventeen times, but also the English clock strikes exactly as many times, and the correlation between them is implied in a neat correspondence.

Each time the playwright uses the epithet "English", he is deliberately violating the maxim of Manner for intentional purposes, and by the "17 strokes" he is at the same time violating the maxim of Quality in everyday life, for no clock strikes so many times whatsoever except when it is out of order. And the maxim of Quality is further violated by the opening speech of the first character, Mr. Smith, who exclaims "There, it's nine o'clock.", because her exclamation provides conflicting information with what the clock has provided. Thus the very start of the play offers an amalgam of the reasonable and the unreasonable. It can be meaningful only if the couple were using the clock to tell the time of an alien world, or were using a different timing system that is known to themselves.

By the opening speech of Mrs. Smith, Ionesco achieves at least two purposes. In her speech, Mrs. Smith mentions many more items and uses two more times of "English", which becomes a repetitive pattern, producing quite different effects on the reader and the audience:

> Mrs. Smith: There, it's nine o'clock. We've drunk the soup, and eaten the fish and chips, and the English salad. The children have drunk English water. We've eaten well this evening. That's because we live in the suburbs of London and because our name is Smith.
>
> (p.9)

For the audience, Mrs. Smith's first eight moves or initiations in the whole dialogue with her husband is an opening or introductory part of the whole play, and therefore she is providing necessary background information. For text readers, however, Mrs. Smith is merely providing redundant information following Ionesco's stage directions. While she is violating the principle of economy in dramatic convention and the maxim of Quantity for the reader, she is only rightly observing the conversational maxim of Quantity for her own addressees, the audience. It's noticeable that readers may not react as strongly to Mrs. Smith's violation of the maxim of Quantity as they would do in other kinds of written communication because they are aware that it is not Ionesco who is addressing his readers but that it is Mrs. Smith who is addressing her husband in the play world and the audience in the theatre.

While Ionesco lets Mrs. Smith repeat the epithet "English" , he at the same time lets Mrs. Smith use terms of reference for emphasis. For example, Mrs. Smith's uses of Determiners indicate her specific reference of the items and further emphasises their supposed English nature, e.g. the Definite Article "the" to qualify "soup" , "fish and chips" , "salad" , and "suburbs of London" and the Demonstrative Pronoun "this" to qualify "evening" for definite reference. For the audience, Mrs. Smith's speech certainly has exophoric references without a clear context, while for the text readers, her speech has anaphoric references and they may naturally think about the previous context—the stage scene. The use of "English" in the present context together with "suburbs of London" and the common English name "Smith" goes so well with the whole context that while Ionesco makes his character deliberately mention what are already too obvious to the reader, he alerts the audience for his own purpose.

In the extract quoted above, Mrs. Smith's providing such information as their living in the suburbs of London and their name being Smith further enhances their typical English-*ness*. At the same time she violates the maxims of Quantity and Manner, being redundant and tautological on two levels. On the level of writer-reader communication, since Ionesco has emphatically used the epithet "English" for so many times in the SCENE, Mrs. Smith's speech is made to appear redundantly organised with unnecessary information. And her exclamation concerning time creates a conflicting situation by violating the maxim of Quality. On the level of playwright-audience communication, Ionesco's design of Mr. Smith's opening speech is not at all a violation of the maxim of Quantity. For the audience, who have not read Ionesco's stage directions and cannot supposedly recognise that the items specified on the stage are English-*ly*, that their name is a typical English name Smith, and that they are living in the suburbs of the capital city London, this piece of "extra" information may be necessary, conforming to the maxims of the Cooperative Principle. On the level of character-character communication, Mrs. Smith is talking about what is already known to her husband, who reasonably pays no attention to what she is saying. However, in the channel of character-audience communication, Mrs. Smith's speech is not violating the maxim of Quantity

and therefore not redundant and tautological at all.

What is more redundant and tautological, as far as Mr. Smith is concerned, is Mrs. Smith's following speech containing items such as the good potatoes, the not rancid salad oil, the fresh fish, the number of helpings they have had, the too salty soup with too many leeks and not enough onions, the boys' drinking beer, etc. etc. For Mr. Smith, his wife may be extremely boring and tiresome, thus displeasing. For both the reader and the audience, however, Mrs. Smith's speech provides new information. But they understand that the couple have had the supper together, so it is not necessary for her to mention to her husband all these details, which is why her husband shows no interest in her. But this cannot be simply labelled as redundancy and tautology in terms of the effect the play wishes to convey. Such deviation on the levels of playwright-reader and character-character communication serves as appropriate informativeness on the level of character-audience communication.

Redundancy and tautology, according to Grice's discussion (1975), may have certain functions in the communicative discourse. Over-informativeness is informative at the level of what is implicated. In putting down redundant words, Ionesco is not being repetitious and uninformative, but is deliberately designing the situation where the character is not able to find a more informative or interesting topic to elicit her interlocutor's conversation. On a higher level the playwright is presenting to the readers and the audience a typical awkward situation where the speaker is feeling kind of nervous. Thus, Mrs. Smith's violation of the Gricean maxims shows her gossiping nature. The playwright is cleverly passing such information to his readers through the mouth of the woman herself by her uninteresting speech. It is just this kind of repeated emphasis that indicates the very bizarre nature of things in the eyes of the playwright. Ionesco creates this impression through the overemphasized repetitional pattern against all maxims: Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner.

When the playwright provides background information that the English clock strikes seventeen strokes, Ionesco is deliberately providing conflicting information for the readers. When the audience in the theatre hear the clock striking 17 times and the actress exclaiming 9 o'clock, they are immediately

struck by the conflict. And they will certainly ask which is right.

The English clock striking seventeen English strokes also indicates some bizarre features of the Smiths. If the English clock strikes wrongly, at least one party of the couple should be surprised at the unusual number of strokes. Mrs. Smith, however, exclaims at the fast flying of time rather than feel surprised at the clock's striking wrongly, evidently taking it as normal. On this basis, either the audience in the theatre or readers in the armchairs will ask: Which is right, the clock or Mrs. Smith? What is the relationship between the striking of the clock and her exclamation of time flying? Thinking about the momentary confusion, they will surely conclude that either the clock is out of order, or the woman is out of her senses. However, Mrs. Smith's time is more probably right for an evening scene after such a large supper. Mrs. Smith's following speech is not normal for her husband in that she is talking for herself just for the sake of talking, where the point is in the talking proper. At the same time, it provides some new, though trivial, information for the audience and the readers.

There is another pattern in the play where the striking of the clock, which is obviously out of order, alternates with silences. When silences appear in conversations, the clock seems to dutifully fulfill its own task by striking freely and arbitrarily. The most curious phenomenon is that the silence coordinates with the striking of the clock so well that each silence is proceeded or followed by the striking of the clock.

[*Another moment of silence. The clock strikes seven times. Silence. The clock strikes three times. Silence. The clock does not strike.*] (p.11)

[*The clock strikes five times. A long silence.*] (p.12)

[*A moment of silence. The clock strikes twice, then once.*] (p.17)

[*A rather long moment of silence. The clock strikes 29 times.*] (p.18)

[*The clock strikes as much as it likes. After several seconds, Mr. and Mrs. Martin separate and take the chairs they had at the beginning.*] (p.19)

There is some significance related to the clock and the frequency of silences. When there is a silence, there is a striking. Even when the clock does not

strike, it still serves as a structural turn. The most curious of the alternation is in the first piece of stage direction quoted above: After the clock has struck three times followed by a silence, it does not strike any more. The pattern of alternation could have stopped at the silence, unnoticed, but Ionesco, thinking that we may expect a striking according to the pattern, clearly spells it out and thus provides a piece of information that is textually overinformative while carrying no informative value against the maxim of Quantity. Dramatically, this is not a violation of any maxim, for it tells us that the regularity or pattern of alternation suddenly comes to a breakdown. When there is a silence, there is a reference to the clock, whether striking or not. It is not important for the characters how many times the clock strikes, but it is important for the clock to take the turn, to make contributions in any sense. While the clock makes no contribution, it is to some extent making a contribution there. Experience tells us that a clock does not always strike except when it does on the hour, or in some cases, on the half hour. Compared with the frequencies of striking and the time strikings take, it should be normal that the clock does not strike, except when it should strike but somehow fails to do so as an unusual case which becomes worth mentioning for certain significance. Here the clock's striking or not striking seems an absolute step in this alternation with silences, with the clock contributing in its own way. This is just like the situation of the talk between the Smiths where the listener may or may not contribute verbally. Just as the talk goes on and the interpersonal relation is maintained, the silence prevails and the suspension is somehow hard to get rid of. The clock's failure to strike indicates some out-of-order phenomenon in this already ridiculous sequence, constituting, in a sense, a case of foregrounding.

The striking of the clock at the same time alternates with characters' speeches between structural turns and produces stage effects. In some other modern plays it is not difficult to think of the situation where the framing of particular utterances by the striking of the clock would indicate temporal or chronological transference like backward and forward flash, which would suggest a disjunction between the references before and after the striking of the clock. In this play, the disordered time seems to make the characters'

talk more striking. But the clock is clearly unreliable and without a formal relationship with the talk, and the stage directions intend to offer absurdity rather than formulate rational circumstances. Ionesco clearly says that the striking of the clock is for stage purposes: "the striking must be so loud that it makes the audience jump" (p. 19) and that it "underlines speeches" (p. 20). By such design, he is correlating the striking with what the characters feel.

> [*Mr. and Mrs. Smith sit facing their guests. The striking of the clock underlines the speeches, more or less strongly, according to the case. The Martins, particularly Mrs. Martin, seem embarrassed and timid. For this reason the conversation begins with difficulty and the words are uttered, at the beginning, awkwardly. A long embarrassed silence at first, then other silences and hesitations follow.*]
>
> (p. 20)

We can find some inconsistency in Ionesco, who is deliberately violating the maxim of Quality. While he provides clues for the unreliable and absurd nature of the clock, he makes use of the unreliable for reliable purposes.

Another point is that Ionesco makes the communication context of the play world unusual by giving us more than one world. Not only does he put the actors in a different world from ours, but also he puts characters on the stage in different worlds. Although characters are in a world not the same as ours, stage performance usually makes it seem that we are brought into the same world with them. What they feel is just what we should feel. And what we feel is just what they want to make us feel. However, this rule does not apply here. What works on the audience does not work on the actors at all. And what the audience hear is not heard by characters on the stage.

Mary is such an unusual character who seems to live in a rather queer world. In her first appearance, she delivers her speech introducing herself in a way as if she were not in the same world with the Smiths:

> Mary [*entering*]: I'm the maid. I have spent a very pleasant afternoon. I've been to the cinema with a man and I've seen a film with some women. After the cinema, we went to drink some brandy and milk

and then read the newspaper.

(p.14)

Actually, Mary has come into the scene to report to the Smiths the arrival of their guests, the Martins. However, she is not speaking directly to the Smiths. Instead, she is speaking to the audience, providing background information of the story. For the readers who have already read the table of characters of the play text, Mary's first sentence may seem to be unnecessary information. But without her self-introduction, the audience in the theatre will not supposedly recognise her just from her costume and manner who she is. It is not clear whether the Smiths are hearing her. But the Smiths' sarcastic comments that follow show that they have heard their maid, and they seem to have suddenly admitted Mary into their world. Later, when Mrs. Martin approaches Mr. Martin "without haste" and they embrace "without expression", the clock strikes once, but "very loud", so loud that the audience are made to jump. However, the Martins, curiously, "do not hear it" (p.19).

When the couple are seated, with their arms around each other falling asleep, the clock's striking some more times has no effect on them. What is more unusual is that when Mary comes onto the stage and addresses her audience (p.19), Ionesco designs this character to take care not to disturb the couple. Thus the couple do not know what Mary is going to do and say as well as the loud striking of the clock.

[*They sit together in the same armchair, their arms around each other, and fall asleep. The clock strikes several times. Mary, on tiptoe, a finger to her lips, enters quietly and addresses the audience.*]

Mary: Elizabeth and Donald are now happy to be able to hear me. And I can therefore let you in on a secret. Elizabeth is not Elizabeth, Donald is not Donald. And there is the proof: the child that Donald spoke of is not Elizabeth's daughter, they are not the same person. ... It is in vain that he thinks he is Donald, it is in vain that she thinks she is Elizabeth. He believes in vain that she is Elizabeth. She believes in vain that

he is Donald—they are sadly deceived. . . . [*She exits.*]

(p.19)

Mary's furtively delivered speech is providing information only for the audience or the reader. She deliberately chooses to speak at a time when the Martins are asleep and unable to hear, and she is taking great care not to arouse them from their sleep. This is a clear violation of the maxims of Manner and Relevance. While the information is so important for the Martins, she only addresses the audience, leaving out the most important addressees and leaving them in the dark. Of course, Ionesco is providing conflicts for the story to be unfolded. If the couple heard what Mary says, there would not be a situation of the following conflict between them. What is more, Mary, at this time of the play, has almost no relation with other characters in the play, speaking in others' absence while they are physically there. The couple, supposedly asleep, behaves in a way as if nothing were happening around them. What is more prominent is that Mary seems to be only an outsider of the play, an addresser to the audience and living in a different world away from others. Later when she enters, she enters two worlds, the physical stage world and the social world of the play. She enters the first world without any difficulty, but is not allowed when she wishes to enter the second world. As she asks timidly for a chance to tell a story in the presence of the two couples and the Fire Chief, she is impolitely interrogated by her masters, the Smiths, ridiculed by the Martins, and condescendingly treated by the Fire Chief, and then reproached by the Smiths again:

Mary: Madam . . . sir . . .

Mrs. Smith: What do you want?

Mr. Smith: What have you come in here for?

Mary: I hope, madam and sir will excuse me . . . and these ladies and gentlemen too . . . I would like . . . to tell you a story myself.

Mrs. Martin: What is she saying?

Mr. Martin: I believe that our friends' maid is going crazy . . . she wants to tell us a story, too.

Fire Chief: Who does she think she is? [*He looks at her.*] Oh!

Mrs. Smith: This is really uncalled for, Mary . . .

(pp.34-5)

There is a display of social relationship in terms of power here. It is socially proper for Mary, an inferior to the Smiths, to behave hesitatingly. Mrs. Smith's "What do you want?" is a most direct interrogative delivered without any politeness considerations. This is reinforced by Mr. Smith's "What have you come in here for?" , which serves as a reprimand rather than a question. Both the interrogatives indicate their assumption that Mary's presence or intrusion is not welcome.

The Maid, Mary, seems to be in the same world with another unusual character, the Fire Chief, who does not seem to have personal identities and even a name as other characters do, and is addressed simply as "Mr. Fire Chief" . The Fire Chief shares a lot with Mary. After he rings the doorbell and the door is opened, he slips into a world different from that of both the characters and the audience/reader: he is not present and cannot be found. Not only Mrs. Smith finds no one outside, the audience and readers cannot see and imagine who is there and what is happening. When others criticise Mary for butting in indiscreetly, he surprisedly discovers that Mary is his acquaintance and she is the one who extinguished his "first fires" (p. 35). When Mr. Smith says that their maid has "not been properly brought up" (p. 35), the Fire Chief criticises them for having "too many prejudices" (p. 35). When Mary finally gets a chance to recite a poem in spite of strong protests, she does so "in honour of the Fire Chief" and is thus pushed offstage by the Smiths (pp. 36-7). While Mrs. Martin criticises Mary's poem as sending "chills up the spine" , the Fire Chief regards it as "marvelous" (p. 37).

Mary and the Fire Chief are both in and outside the play world. While Mary lives in the same world with the Smiths physically, she is not in their social world. While she is on the stage with the Martins, she is not in the same world with them, as is shown in her second appearance telling us the secret of the Martins. In terms of her social status, she does not belong to the world of both the couples, as is shown in her third appearance offering to tell a story. Curiously, she seems to be in the same world with the Fire Chief, who is not a clear personality. Mary's speech (p. 19) is like telling a story, longer than any piece of talk of the two couples, and the Fire Chief's story (pp. 32-3) is much the same. While Mary's story is for the readers and audience, the Fire Chief's story is practically for no one. His story is simple

enough: His brother-in-law had a cousin. However, in the mouth of this Fire Chief, the story turns out to be an extremely redundant and complicated one-sentence structure, for he uses 22 attributive clauses in recursive procession in one breath before being interrupted and there are altogether 34 attributive clauses in his one-sentence story, which makes the story a laborious practice of pattern drills on attributive clauses rather than a story.

The Fire Chief's appearance is bizarre and mischievous. His tricks make Mrs. Smith at a loss, and cause quarrels between the couple on whether there is someone outside when the doorbell rings and whether the door should be opened. His explanation to the Smiths is based on illogical progression of reasoning, taking the particular happening as general regularity of the happenings in the world:

Fire Chief: I am going to reconcile you. You both are partly right. When the doorbell rings, sometimes there is someone, other times there is no one.

Mr. Martin: This is logical to me.

Mrs. Martin: I think so too.

Fire Chief: Life is very simple, really. [*To the Smiths:*] Go on and kiss each other.

(pp. 26-7)

The Fire Chief's explanation sounds unreasonable. He himself is actually as unreasonable as he can be. When he comes, the "fire" starts in the house. When he speaks, the fire is put out by his reconciling the couple. He takes his mischievous coming as being "on official business" (p. 27), asking secretively whether there is a "fire" (p. 27) in their house. While he causes fires or disharmony, his task is to "extinguish all the fires in the city". In a sense, he is outside the play world. At the end of the play, it is the Fire Chief who utters "the bald soprano" (p. 37) which is irrelevant to the situation but has meaningfully become Ionesco's title for the whole play. And after "[*General silence, embarrassment.*]", Mrs. Smith replies "She always wears her hair in the same style" (p. 37). The irrelevant turns of talk exchange without any specific reference of "she" only makes the audience and readers at a loss, who cannot find any clues to "she" in the previous context.

It seems that the playwright, in order to make his work more striking and understandable, uses modified idiomatic expressions to show that his characters are highly competent in abusing the language. For instance, normally when a person who has interrupted others says "Go on and . . ." , he or she means retreating and let them resume their work being done. This work is certainly public and ritualistic, not private and affectionate matters such as kissing and the like, according to cultural and linguistic norms. But the Fire Chief's "Go on and kiss each other" (p. 27) is a direct modified version of the everyday utterance. And when he takes leave at the end of the play, Mr. Martin bids him farewell instead of anything like a good trip, a successful interview, a merry holiday, etc. but a good fire ("Good luck, and a good fire!" , p.37). And the deliberate exploitation of attributive clauses in the Fire Chief's story may be the best example for abusing the language, which will be discussed in the next section.

Since in dramatic discourse one level of communication is embedded into another, the macro-level communication already involves the micro-level communication. The playwright not only communicates with the readers through stage directions, but also through the dialogue of the characters, because in the dialogue, not only one character addresses another, but also the characters' dialogue as a whole addresses the audience at the same time. In the next section, I will mainly focus on the way characters observe and violate rules of communication. As the talks in this play manifest conditions of communicative incompetence, the structural turns in the dialogue can reveal not only the social relationships and power relations of the individuals, an issue discussed in the previous chapter, but also how and what maxims of conversation are violated at the micro-level to achieve the desired effect.

5.2 Violations on the Micro-Level of Communication

By making the characters talk nonsense, produce self-contradictory statements against Austin and Searle's speech act theories, Ionesco makes up peculiar patterns in his play world where characters are not aware of their

violating maxims of the Interpersonal Rhetoric. And the absurd patterns of communication in this play have become a norm in the play itself. Characters may speak without any purpose, or they may talk without common cooperative goals, just producing self-contradictory, repetitive, irrelevant and illogical comments that lead the conversation nowhere. Turns in conversation are not properly taken up by interlocutors, and responses are abnormal judging by accepted rules of talk exchange.

Searle (1969) uses two terms "input" and "output" to cover the large and indefinite range of conditions under which any serious linguistic communication is possible. While output covers the conditions for intelligible speaking, input covers the conditions for understanding. Together they include such things as that the speaker and the hearer know how to speak the language; both are conscious of what they are doing; the speaker is not acting under duress or threats; they have no physical impediments to communication as deafness, aphasia or laryngitis, they are not acting in a play or telling jokes etc. But Ionesco is exactly making his play obviously a parody. In foregrounding the staginess of the play, he is surely pointing out to us quite clearly that normal input and output do not apply. As for the husband and wife, Burton finds that Ionesco uses what Schegloff (1968) calls a "standard joke of the society" :

> A tired husband returns from the office, sinks gratefully into his easy chair and opens the evening paper to the sports page. His nagging wife, however, wishes to unburden herself of the accumulated troubles of the day and begins an extended monologue. Routinely she leaves a slot of silence and he dutifully inserts "Yes, dear" , until, dimly aware that all is not as it appears to be, she says, "Are you ignoring me?" and he replies "Yes, dear" .
>
> (Quoted from Burton, 1980: 32)

However, Ionesco's pattern is more pragmatically striking. While Mrs. Smith talks and Mr. Smith responds in much the same way as the wife and husband in the standard joke, Mr. Smith responds (or sometimes does not actually respond) in a safer manner than the husband in the joke.

5.2.1 Nonverbal Feedback

When Mrs. Smith goes on with her talk in the same manner at the beginning of the play, Mr. Smith's responses to her gossip-like talk are more significant than what Mrs. Smith actually says. Each time when she talks, her husband responds in the same unusual manner:

Mr. Smith: [*continues to read, clicks his tongue.*]
Mrs. Smith: ....
Mr. Smith: [*continues to read, clicks his tongue.*]
Mrs. Smith: ....
Mr. Smith: [*continues to read, clicks his tongue.*]
Mrs. Smith: ....
Mr. Smith: [*continues to read, clicks his tongue.*]
Mrs. Smith: ....
Mr. Smith: [*clicks his tongue.*]
Mrs. Smith: ....
Mr. Smith: [*continues to read, clicks his tongue.*]
Mrs. Smith: ....
Mr. Smith: [*continues to read, clicks his tongue.*]
Mrs. Smith: ....
Mr. Smith: [*continues to read, clicks his tongue.*]
Mrs. Smith: ....

(pp. 9-10)

These clickings of the tongue have strong pragmatic implications. By the same non-verbal "response", he may mean everything that is necessary for each structural turn he has to fulfill. Mr. Smith may be trying to indicate his casual or pretended attention to his wife out of politeness considerations, and at the same time he saves a lot of trouble and cleverly avoids committing himself, which violates the conversation contract according to the Cooperative Principle (and politeness maxims). Normally, when one party makes some contribution and leaves space for the other, the situation requires the other to make certain contributions and fill the gap. When a hearer in a conversation keeps silent or fails to respond to certain initiations

of dialogue, his act is considered uncooperative and very impolite, even rude. However, at this point of the play, when Mr. Smith does not respond to Mrs. Smith's initiations, the wife takes her husband's failure to make verbal contributions for granted and keeps talking in her own way. Each of the normal but abnormal tongue-clicking in place of direct replies or verbal comments that his wife is expecting may show his disinterest in her talk and his indifference, false politeness, genuine uncooperativeness under the guise of superficial cooperation. Ironically this non verbal turn only signals his "attention" and may be taken by the wife as encouragement for her to go on talking as she likes.

According to Burton's discussion (1980: 26), Mrs. Smith's opening moves can form a kind of monologue. Ionesco is just presenting us "with some sort of parody of the openings to traditional, fourth-wall bourgeois theatre plays" , and he is presenting an extended version of an equally well known clichéd verbal situation which focuses on the trivia of wife-to-husband domestic small talk. Yet, we should not stay on the literal level but take Ionesco's strategies as his means of making the play bizarre to convey some deeper significance to the readers/audience.

Once we bear in mind that the talk in the play carries no practical communicative value, we feel that Mrs. Smith is talking just for her own purpose, or simply for no purpose at all. Then Mr. Smith's clicking of his tongue for eight times in response to his wife's comments or questions that are trying to initiate conversations are to a certain extent reasonable and pragmatic in the context, although strikingly out of place. The "talk exchange" between the couple violates normal interactional principles and maxims on a comic basis, where Mr. Smith does not verbally respond but avoids being rude by the all-purpose tongue-clicking.

Although Mr. Smith's non-verbally realised turns appearing at strict structural breaks in Mrs. Smith's monologue out of a slight consideration of politeness may have complex implications, one thing is obvious: he is not listening to her and he is the dominant "speaker" or participant. Although his wife seems to be the real speaker, she is still the subordinate participant. For Mr. Smith not only ignores her talk, but also makes no response to her direct questions "Why is that? Usually it is you who eats more." and "At

the table did you notice how he (their boy) stared at the bottle?" (p.9).

5.2.2 Illogical Discourse Control

While Mrs. Smith enjoys her control of the conversation by going on talking, it is only when she talks about the yogurt, the stomach, the kidneys, and the appendicitis and apotheosis, all the way to the good doctor who always operates on himself first in absurd logical relations that Mr. Smith begins his very first real turn of the talk, or real contribution to the conversation, by a retorting question, "But how does it happen that the doctor pulled through while Parker died?" (p. 10). This can suggest that Mr. Smith, after rudely ignoring his wife by not listening to her nagging, is trying to stop her boring and illogical reasoning, based on his observance of the maxim of Quality. Mrs. Smith provides an answer that appears logical, "Because the operation was successful in the doctor's case and it was not in Parker's" (p.10). However, this remark is based on the absurd premise that a doctor, who is not ill, should always successfully operate on himself (which is apparently impossible in normal life) before operating on the patient. Along this line of absurd argument, Mr. Smith gains the real control of the dialogue and goes on saying "Then Machenzie is not a good doctor. The operation should have succeeded with both of them or else both should have died" (p.10). For Mr. Smith, "a conscientious doctor must die with his patient if they can not get well together, and a captain of a ship goes down with his ship into the briny deep, he does not survive alone" (p.11). To his wife's somewhat more reasonable comment that "One can not compare a patient with a ship", Mr. Smith does not respond directly, just concluding that "All doctors are quacks", then adding an absurd and obviously irrelevant comment, "only the Royal Navy is honest in England" (p.11). This last statement seems to explain something while it actually explains nothing at all. It is hardly convincing enough to make his wife shut up, but only invites her rejections.

His wife's rejections that follow serve the purpose of continuing the topic. Because such a nagging woman does not seem to care what is being talked about, the point of her speech seems to lie only in carrying on the talk

itself. However, Mr. Smith does not feel like showing any interest in the topic his wife strives to keep under discussion, leaving a pause and "[*still reading his paper*]" (p. 11). Then all of a sudden, he offers a new topic, obviously out of surprise. The introduction of a new topic is an act of contributing to the talk and getting control of the conversation, ending his wife's dominance of the talk in which he has not the least interest.

Mr. Smith [*still reading his paper*]: Tsk, it says here that Bobby Watson died.

Mrs. Smith: My God, the poor man! When did he die?

Mr. Smith: Why do you pretend to be astonished? You know very well that he's been dead these past two years. Surely you remember that we attended his funeral a year and a half ago.

Mrs. Smith: Oh yes, of course I do remember. I remembered it right away. But I don't understand why you yourself were so surprised to see it in the paper.

Mr. Smith: It wasn't in the paper. It's been three years since his death was announced. I remembered it through an association of ideas.

(p. 11)

Mr. Smith's exclamation in the first utterance out of surprise clearly announces that there is something new and relevant to them two. And he clearly says that Bobby Watson's death is reported in the newspaper he has been reading. Therefore, Bobby Watson may be presumably someone within their shared knowledge according to Mr. Smith's supposed observance of the maxims of Quantity and Manner. This can be proved by the fact the Mrs. Smith does not ask who the man is, and her reference to him as "the poor man" indicates her knowledge or their common knowledge of him. Newspapers, as a rule, only carry news or something new about past events. So this presupposes, and Mrs. Smith therefore reasons, that Bobby's death is a recent or sudden happening. Thus Mrs. Smith's exclamation of her astonishment at the "news" is cooperative and polite feedback for her husband's utterance. However, her husband does not seem to appreciate her feedback but finds her response absurd, expressing his puzzlement at her

unreasonableness for pretending to be astonished. Mr. Smith's statement is a direct act of letting his wife lose face, making her feel foolish at her own linguistic behaviour. Mrs. Smith, realising that she has made a fool of herself, tries to save herself some face, and answers "Oh yes, of course I do remember. I remembered it right away" . Her speech is strategic in that her use of the word "remember" is ambiguous. It may mean that she has the memory of Bobby Watson's death that occurred a year and a half ago and that she has just called back to her mind the memory. In her reply to her husband's "You surely remember ..." , she uses the present simple form to indicate the state of her having the memory of his death. In her next use of the word, she uses a simple past form and an adverbial phrase "right away" to indicate a specific action of her having just brought to the mind such a memory. In fact, since Mr. Smith's starting a new topic in an astonished manner may normally assume certain relevance to his reading, Mrs. Smith, expecting what is new in it, reacts in the same fashion and her reaction may be appropriate in every sense for a cooperative act. But Mr. Smith derails her efforts and undermines the rationale for her doing so, criticising her for violating the maxim of Quality. Interestingly, Mr. Smith himself is violating the maxim of Quality by providing inconsistent information all the time.

In the excerpt quoted above, Mr. Smith first says "it [the newspaper] says here that ..." and leads his wife into the trap, and then he says "It wasn't in the paper" when asked about the reason for getting "so surprised to see it in the paper" . What follows is his remark that Bobby Watson "has been dead these past two years" but they "attended his funeral a year and a half ago" . What is more ridiculous is his next utterance, "It's been three years since his death was announced" . One cannot find a definite reference of time about Watson's death because of Mr. Smith's violating the maxims of Quality and Manner. This very absurd communication reveals another fact: Mr. Smith not only dominates the conversation as he does at the beginning of the play, but also controls his wife through the conversation which he leads to wherever he likes and his wife has nothing else to do but follow, right or wrong. Once Mr. Smith is asked for reasons, he provides no reason at all, leaving his wife baffled and thus the fateful loser in the verbal duel.

Candlin *et al*. (1983) have shown that once the dominant speaker has introduced the topic for discussion, it becomes very difficult for the other participant to introduce and warrant a different topic. To do so without violating interactional norms and appearing impolite requires a degree of communicative competence which by no means all speakers possess. Thus the dominant speaker controls the discourse and the subordinate speaker only contributes. Mrs. Smith's nagging actually does nothing to control the topic of the conversation and Mr. Smith is in the position of either contributing nothing or introducing a new topic. This signals the fact that he is a really dominant speaker or controller of the interaction. His introduction of a new topic rudely breaks his wife's control and offers something irrelevant to his wife's topic.

Thomas (1989: 135) describes some conversational strategy signals which offer insights into the way in which a dominant speaker may deliberately limit the discoursal options of a subordinate interlocutor. Once the limit of the conversation is set by the dominant speaker, it should follow that the subordinate interlocutor has no chance of introducing a new topic or making similar contributions. If he does, it would be considered as impolite and irrelevant.

It is generally accepted in pragmatics that utterances are relevant or irrelevant only in context. However, it is the dominant speaker in an interaction that has the power to define the context. It is he who can determine what is and what is not discoursally relevant. In this part of the play, we can see that the wife, Mrs. Smith, has been trying to dominate the conversation by keeping her husband on her own topic. Her husband's ignoring her seems to leave much room for her to make necessary but useless contributions. But his very first question actually spikes all her efforts of defining the topic of the dinner they have just had. While the discussion of the doctor and captain is still on its way, Mr. Smith actually redefines the limit of the conversation, making himself really the dominant speaker: "Here is a thing I don't understand. In the newspaper they always give the age of the deceased persons but never the age of the newly born. That doesn't make sense." (p. 11). Mr. Smith's comment is apparently against the common practice of journalism as well as common sense, for it is only the

deceased persons' ages are relevantly mentioned in the column of obituaries, not those of the newly-born or anyone else. While he questions the relevance of newspaper reporting, he himself is violating the maxim of Relevance without knowing it.

It is interesting here that the wife replies "I never thought of that!" . Since both of them are struggling to control the conversation, each sticking to his and her own topic, the wife may not be interested in what is being introduced out of her irritation at losing the floor. Thus there seems to be a breakdown.

5.2.3 Silence and Delayed Response

The interaction between the Smiths is fortunately interrupted by the arrival of the Martins, the second couple. And the initial encounter of the two couples takes place in a very special situation. While Mr. Smith is showing courtesy to his guests by politely asking excuses for having made them wait for so long, his wife, by contrast, is "furious" and claims they have had nothing to eat all day, while expecting their guests. This directly conflicts with the large supper Mrs. Smith talks about at the beginning of the play. While Mr. Smith also tells us that the Martins have arrived "without prior notice" and the hosts have "hurried to dress for the occasion" (p.20), his wife says they "have been waiting for four whole hours" . When someone hurries to dress for the occasion of meeting his guests who arrive without prior notice, it is certainly the case that he gets to know the arrival too late. However, according to Mrs. Smith, they started waiting four hours ago, but they have not changed their clothes yet. The husband aims to show his politeness and hospitality by showing respect to the guests, only failing to meet them earlier just for the purpose of dressing themselves for the occasion, making it more formal. But Ionesco gives the readers the information that when the Smiths enter from the right, they are "[... *wearing the same clothes*]" (p.20). This proves that Mr. Smith is telling a white lie and he is not as hospitable as he pretends to appear. When the couple are showing their politeness and hospitality in different ways, the situation becomes very awkward: Mrs. Martin seems embarrassed and

timid. Thus the following conversation starts "with difficulty", accompanied by "a long embarrassed silence at first" and "other silences and hesitations" (p.20) that follow.

The situation of the two couples' first encounter seems awkward not only for the guest couple, but also for the host couple. The Smiths realise that they have been successful in making a fool of themselves by their pretensions and over-zeal. The Martins have detected the conflicts in their speeches and know clearly the host couple are telling lies, and thus they feel out of place and uneasy. So the following conversation cannot hang on a proper topic.

[*Mr. and Mrs. Smith sit facing their guests. The striking of the clock underlines the speeches, more or less strongly, according to the case. The Martins, particularly Mrs. Martin, seem embarrassed and timid. For this reason the conversation begins with difficulty and the words are uttered, at the beginning, awkwardly. A long embarrassed silence at first, then other silences and hesitations follow.*]

Mr. Smith: Hm. [*Silence.*]
Mrs. Smith: Hm, hm. [*Silence.*]
Mrs. Martin: Hm, hm, hm. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Martin: Hm, hm, hm, hm. [*Silence.*]
Mrs. Martin: Oh, but definitely. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Martin: We have all colds. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Smith: There is no draft. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Martin: Oh no, fortunately. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Martin: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Martin: Do you feel well? [*Silence.*]
Mrs. Smith: He's wet his pants. [*Silence.*]
Mrs. Martin: Oh, sir, at your age, you shouldn't. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Smith: The heart is ageless. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Martin: That's true. [*Silence.*]
Mrs. Smith: So they say. [*Silence.*]
Mrs. Martin: They also say the opposite. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Smith: The truth lies somewhere between the two. [*Silence.*]
Mr. Martin: That's true. [*Silence.*]

(pp. 20-1)

Here silences intervene speeches in a neat pattern. There is an obvious point that no one wants to offer a topic for the conversation, let alone have control over it, for they do not have a proper topic even for phatic purposes. As far as phatic talk is concerned, in order to avoid uncomfortable silences and lay a foundation for further interaction with new acquaintances, it is up to the hosts to initiate interesting topics. However, the first four lines of "speeches" are all not exact verbal contributions at all. Mr. Smith just utters "Hm" to cover up his own embarrassment, followed by a silence expecting someone else to take up the turn. When the suspense becomes too nervous, Mrs. Smith, for the same reason but unable to find anything meaningful to cover up the situation, or to mask her own embarrassment and nervousness, just repeats her husband's "Hm", followed by another nervous silence. In their participation in the talk, from Mr. Smith and his wife to Mrs. Martin and her husband, the meaningless "Hm" appears in an incremental manner. Thus, these silences play a more prominent role in this part of the interaction than what the characters actually say.

5.2.4 Phatic Communion and Relevance

Normally, phatic communion is used to fill the gap before an appropriate topic is found on initial encounters. With phatic communion, the atmosphere immediately becomes relaxed, then silences can be avoided. Malinowski (1972: 151) defines such ritualistic linguistic behaviour as "a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words" and in such situations words are used "to fulfill a social function and that is their principal aim", but they do not necessarily arouse interest in the listener. Fowler (1981: 84) sees the function of such language use as people performing "routine vacuities" in verbal interaction. Lyons (1981: 143) sees it as "felicitous expression" that emphasises the "notion of fellowship and participation in common social rituals". Simpson (1989: 49) notices that the most important motivation behind phatic initiation is that the speaker wants to declare that his intention is pacific. According to Laver (1975: 226), there seems to be a strong tendency for the "incomer" to initiate the exchange of phatic communion. But the host couple are nervous

and embarrassed and their own awkward behaviour makes the guest couple more uneasy, and thus the Martins do not feel in a position of opening a friendly talk by normal phatic communion. Laver (1975) also points out that the speaker "asserts a claim to sociolinguistic solidarity with the listener" (p. 226), but the Smiths have made it impossible for the Martins to contribute a "comfortable initiation, free from tension and hostility, of the interaction's" (p.227). If the Smiths had made it possible for the Martins to offer a good topic for phatic exchange, the talk would proceed smoothly. Without correct follow-up of the phatic exchange, the situation is thus comic. In communication, silences at wrong times may result in strong impoliteness and rudeness, and hostility toward the listener. If the silent gaps are not filled by the listener who is expected to speak up, the same results may arise. But in this case, where the participants seem to be deprived of the faculty of speech and unable to keep up the social relationship, the communication has come into a very difficult situation.

These characters' talk only maintains certain social relations of the interlocutors, with all normal rules of communication and exchange utterly flouted. They can make irrelevant remarks that have nothing to do with the situation, or they can deliberately announce something that implies significance but actually turns out to be quite banal and trivial. For example, Mrs. Martin declares that she witnessed something "extraordinary" and "really incredible", which causes others' eager expectations. But the story itself turns out to be extraordinary and incredible in the sense of being insignificant and trivial.

Mrs. Martin: In the street, near a café, I saw a man, properly dressed, about fifty years old, or not even that, who ...

Mr. Smith: Who, what?

Mrs. Smith: Who, what?

...

Mrs. Smith: ... What was this man doing?

Mrs. Martin: Well, I'm sure you'll say that I'm making it up—he was down on one knee and he was bent over.

Mr. Martin, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Smith: Oh!

Mrs. Martin: Yes, bent over.

Mr. Smith: Not possible.

Mrs. Martin: Yes, bent over. I went over to see what he was doing . . .

Mr. Smith: And?

Mrs. Martin: He was tying his shoe lace which had come undone.

Mr. Martin, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Smith: Fantastic!

(pp. 21-2)

Mrs. Martin's attempt to tell something new leads the Smiths to supply cooperative and polite feedback just as Mr. Smith did to his wife previously. They politely ask for details of her story by repeating "Who, what?" , for the Smiths assume that Mrs. Martin certainly has something unusual and new in store for them. Thus Mrs. Smith's question, "What was the man doing?" , is a cooperative conversation move for Mrs. Martin to go on with the story. However, Mrs. Martin intentionally keeps the suspense by "he was down on one knee and he was bent over" , which carries no valid information but at the same time presupposes something more serious and significant. Then it is reasonable for all the other three characters to exclaim "Oh!" , waiting for her details. However, Mrs. Martin deliberately repeats what is obviously insignificant, without proceeding to what they are expecting. When she finally exposes the riddle, it is ridiculously common and trivial, but the others still seem to have enjoyed the story for its fantasy.

5.2.5 Nonsense and Communicative Incompetence

When an "outsider" , the Fire Chief, comes into the house, Mr. Smith gives an absurd account of why the Fire Chief is not an outsider, against what his wife takes him to be.

Mr. Smith: Oh, my dear, this is not so serious. The Fire Chief is an old friend of the family. His mother courted me, and I knew his father. He asked me to give my daughter in marriage if ever I had one. And he died waiting.

(p. 24)

This is not only an example of the mixed-up interpersonal relations but also

an instance of sarcasm directed at the insane reality. A mother courted her son's old friend, and a father asks the latter to give him his daughter in marriage if ever he had one! Normal family relationships are suddenly in a state of breakdown in an irrational and incomprehensible world, and the readers and audience from outside the world cannot make head or tail of it according to normal rules of communication and norms of the society.

Without a rational ground for reasoning, the characters' talk wanders from one point to another. Silences seem to play a major role and they also go together with hesitations and false starts of each interaction on this level. Towards the end of the play, the situation becomes more difficult. For example,

> [*Following this last speech of Mr. Martin's, the others are silent for a moment, stupefied. We sense that there is a certain nervous irritation. The strokes of the clock are more nervous too. The speeches which follow must be said, at first, in a glacial, hostile tone. The hostility and the nervousness increase. At the end of this scene, the four characters must be standing very close to each other, screaming their speeches, raising their fists, ready to throw themselves upon each other.*]
>
> (p.39)

Seeming to be deprived of the faculty of speech, the characters on the stage cannot communicate in normal ways. With more frequent and longer silences, their speeches become more and more nervous and even the striking of the clock becomes as increasingly nervous. We see a situation where language not only fails to help with communication but actually hampers human interaction, where friendly contacts are characterised by nothing but a gradual move to the opposite pole, from embarrassment and nervousness to fury and hostility just because of improper use of language, or rather the impotence of language in the meaningless and incommunicable world. In their interactions, there is nothing but series of sound sequences carrying no meaning, speeches that serve no practical purpose and having no communicative value. Normal rules of communication suddenly do not apply at all in this specific setting.

> [*All together, completely infuriated, screaming in each others' ears.*

The light is extinguished. In the darkness we hear, in an increasingly rapid rhythm:] . . .

(p.41)

[*The words cease abruptly. Again, the lights come on. Mr. and Mrs. Martin are seated like the Smiths at the beginning of the play. The play begins with the Martins, who say exactly the same lines as the Smiths in the first scene, while the curtain slowly falls.*]

(p.42)

It can be said that the play text itself forms a certain norm, which is different from what the reader can expect in normal situations accounted for by the Cooperative Principle and the maxims. Halliday (1973: 103 ff.) discusses a very similar point in considering the problem areas of norm and deviation. He says that the text leads the reader to expect certain types of pattern which are the norm of the text. Mr. Smith's locating the news of Watson's death and his wife's adjusting her speech accordingly for the sake of cooperation conform to the norms of the talk. And Mr. Martin's illogical comments such as "There is no second class in England, but I always travel second class" (p. 16) together with Mrs. Smith's comment on the bald soprano's wearing her hair in the same style are all absurd nonsense in the eyes of the sensible individuals who can sober-mindedly think and reason by means of language. But within the text, the illogical and absurd patterns, which constitute the norm in the text, serve to carry deep meanings of the playwright. Under the assumption of shared knowledge and the existence of the cooperative behaviour, characters can produce statements against all maxims of the Cooperative Principle. They talk about things that are non-existent, making their interlocutors butting in and then appearing stupid and nervous. One can declare telling a story and ask his audience to promise not to hear (e.g. the Fire Chief's comments before his story of "The Dog and Cow" (p. 30)). They can try to be cooperative and polite by violating interpersonal rhetorical maxims for no obvious rationally rhetorical purposes. With nervousness and embarrassment, they only produce utterances without any logical progression of reasoning. Even when their communication results in breakdowns, they do not seem to be aware of it and just keep on talking.

5.3 Summary

There are close connections between the special features of the play and interpersonal relations. On the two levels of communication, violations of conversational maxims are essential for the interpretation of the play. If we bear in mind that Ionesco is writing a play about language, we can see how serious a play he is writing and what questions he is raising. Ionesco said that he started to write for the theatre just because he hated it, and for all practical purposes he never went to the theatre. He bluntly gave the following comment:

> I derive no pleasure from it, and did not participate in it. The playing of the actors disturbed me: I was embarrassed for them. The situations seemed arbitrary to me. There was something false in it all, I thought.
>
> (Ionesco, 1963: 77)

In spite of his dislike of the theatre, Ionesco wrote a play "almost against his will" (Esslin, 1980: 137). When he decided to learn English and he obtained an English coursebook in 1948, he set to work by conscientiously copying whole sentences from his primer with the purpose of memorising them. Reading them attentively, he found that he was not only learning English, but also learning some astonishing truths, something he already knew, i.e., there are seven days in the week; and something he already knew perhaps but had never seriously thought about or had forgotten, i.e. *the floor is down*, and *the ceiling is up*. He therefore found that they seemed suddenly as stupefying as they were indisputably true.

Finding the mechanical practice of these nonsense strings of words and phrases absurd, Ionesco intended to write a play in order to treat his friends by giving it a title, *L'Anglais sans Peine* (English without Pains). While the play was being rehearsed for performance, an actor representing the Fire Chief in the play pronounced *institutrice blonde* (blonde schoolteacher) instead of *cantatrice chauve* (bald soprano) by mistake. Ionesco was present and immediately realised that this was a far better title than the original or the later *L'Heure Anglaise* (The Hour of English), or any other he had

thought or been thinking of. And so the play became *La Cantatrice Chauve* (The Bald Soprano). And at the end of the play, a deliberate reference to the bald soprano was made. When the Fire Chief was leaving, he creates general embarrassment by asking about the bald soprano, and after a painful silence, receives the answer that she still wears her hair the same way. What is obviously absurd about Ionesco's treatment of the play is that there is not only no such bald soprano in the whole play, but also there is no complete story and conflict. Nor are there characters of distinctive personality. And the title has nothing to do with the whole play, which is one of Ionesco's strategies of dealing with the absurdity of human life and of writing against the tradition.

As Ionesco (1956) says, the point of the play is an expression of the human condition and its implicit anguish, which he attempts to convey by breaking down cliché-ridden and formulaic "social language" . True to his words, readers can find in it that some characters seem to speak English very well in the performance in French.① In spite of all the characters' seeming language proficiency dramatised in French, they are handicapped by their communicative incompetence without any knowledge of what is wrong. By providing information for the readers and the audience against various maxims, the playwright cooperates with them in a meaningful manner. By letting the characters produce meaningless and irrelevant utterances broken by pauses and silences violating conversational maxims, conversational contract, and social interactional rules, Ionesco is dramatising the situation of verbal *mis*communication.

The two couples display the kind of family relationships that are the despair of Ionesco's world, where the basic pattern is that the wife is nagging and usually plays the part of the less important role limited by the husband's discourse control strategies. The couples can no longer talk normally just because they can no longer think normally; they can no longer think normally just because they can no longer feel passions as other people

① According to the notes on pages 38 and 39 of this play in *Four Plays* (Ionesco, 1958), Mr. Smith pronounced the seven days of the week starting from Monday, and Mr. Martin shouted "Charity begins at home" , in English.

do. They are not themselves because they have lost their identities. And they are interchangeable in that they assume the identity of others. This is very much like the situations of traditional foreign language learning where one asks questions mechanically and the other answers passionately, without any thought of what they are producing, like practicing tongue-twisters. And the end of the play parodies a situation of a relay-race exercise in the primary school classroom:

Mr. Smith: It's!
Mrs. Martin: Not!
Mr. Martin: That!
Mrs. Smith: Way!
Mr. Smith: It's!
Mrs. Martin: O!
Mr. Martin: Ver!
Mrs. Smith: Here!
...
All Together: It's not that way, it's over here, it's not that way, it's over here, it's not that way, it's over here, it's not that way, it's over here!.

(pp.41-2)

While the couples are different, they cooperate extremely well in a sense. And the climax comes when all join in one effort to repeat the sentence in chorus (p.42). Not only is one character on the stage interchangeable with another, but also the two couples are interchangeable, for the play ends and thus begins with the Martins doing exactly what the Smiths were doing at the beginning of the play. This circular repetition and the following larger circularity of the play beginning again "with the Martins, who say exactly the same lines as the Smiths in the first scene, while the curtain softly falls" make up a still larger circularity that exactly symbolises the circular life in the actual world.

Under the clear patterns of the play, there are several points meaningfully leading to the interpretation of the theme. The bald soprano is an absurd and irrelevant figure of the play, and it is the image that symbolises all those characters who cannot communicate properly but who

can only shout as a soprano does on the stage. The bald soprano always wearing her hair in the same style is an image embodying contrasts, the rational and the irrational. No less significantly, while one says he remembers something happening in such and such a way, he at the same time says it is impossible for it to have happened. When one actually has nothing worth talking about, he speaks in a pretentious manner, signalling a call for hearers' attention to something noteworthy. While the Fire Chief is on official business, he plays mischievous tricks. While he causes quarrels in the house, he says that he is to put out all fires in the city. While he is hurrying to somewhere else, he says the errand is unimportant. When characters hear something common and uninteresting, they seriously claim to have heard something meaningful and marvellous. These illogically related contrastive features deviating from the norms of the real human world undermine the smooth passage of interpersonal communication. We not only find quarrels between couples, but also disharmony in the whole situation, where the characters cannot properly speak but shout furiously and meaninglessly. In a sense, the situation of contrasts shown by the impotence of language in interpersonal interaction is just the irrational, disorderly, and meaningless world meaningfully created by Ionesco and symbolised by the bald soprano always wearing her hair in the same style.

Chapter 6

The "Gap" in *The Gap*

While the two plays analysed in the previous chapters are representative of Ionesco's early dramatic writings, *The Gap* was written in 1969, at a later stage in his writing career. It depicts a brief episode of life with language that seems ordinary enough, forming a contrast with Ionesco's other "typical" plays of the absurd.

The central event of *The Gap* is that early in the morning the Academician and his Wife are faced with the surprising news that the erudite scholar, who is in possession of so many doctorates, honorary doctorates, and holding positions in a host of prestigious institutions of academic learning, has incredibly, while not too surprisingly, failed in a baccalaureate examination for some qualification. This is a "gap" which he somehow has to fill up in his academic history. In spite of the apparent unnecessity for this venture, the Academician who has been seeking and enjoying fame and glory all his life felt confident of passing the examinations and was encouraged, or was forced by certain circumstances, to take them. Hence he is destined to face the absurd failure and the consequent frustration and humiliation.

This play does not seem extraordinary at first sight as far as interpersonal interaction of the characters is concerned. While superficially appearing to be devoted to character-character communication, it is in fact more devoted to writer-reader communication, however. Through this

disguised conventional form of drama, the playwright is showing on a deeper level the absurdities of the world. Hence, this play is, in a sense, typical of Ionesco's way of writing: its brief and ambiguous title, the characters involved, the academic setting and the content of the talk. And the characters, "The Friend" , "The Academician" , and "The Academician's Wife" , all capitalised and without proper names, are concerned about the passing and failing of examinations of "The Academician" , a learned figure in a university or many universities. Curiously, the last character in the Table of Characters, "The Maid" , is designed but never appears in the play at all! Although the President succeeding the Academician is not mentioned in the Table of Characters, he really plays a quite important part in the background as the fourth character. This can be nothing but Ionesco's deliberate deviation from dramatic norms.

While this style is typical of Ionesco, the play itself presents differences that are also striking. First, the whole play is extraordinarily short compared with Ionesco's other writings. Second, this play seems as ordinary as most non-absurd modern plays in terms of the textual layout, without many lengthy stage directions and laborious performance instructions appearing now and then. Third, it conveys what is absurd to us in logical and readily comprehensible language. By this unusual design, Ionesco touches several of the basic aspects of the "absurd" , shown in a world in which the rules can change without notice and its inhabitants find that logic and meaning have somehow slipped out of their lives.

The interpersonal interaction in this play text is not among four characters, as Ionesco deliberately suggests at the beginning, but between only three participants. On the micro-level, the interaction between the Friend and the Academician's Wife seems to be the dominant part, while the fourth character, the Maid, plays no role at all. This open declaration of four characters against the actual three with one absent is an intentional and purposeful deviation, which violates the maxims of Quality and Quantity. Or it can be understood that Ionesco deliberately violates the maxims of Quality and Manner by first declaring a four and then presenting a somewhat different four. This format consisting of contradictions is designed only to show the inconsistency of the play world.

Unlike Ionesco's other plays, *The Gap* shows "strict" observance of interpersonal interactional principles, making it seem just the display of an episode of daily life. It does not put too much emphasis on theatrical conventionality and textual artificiality and avoids reminding the readers of being in a theatre situation by theatrical terms such as "stage", "scene", "play", and "director" for another type of artistic effect. Ionesco puts the stage directions in a little different manner from the those in *The Lesson* or *The Bald Soprano*: instead of a simple "on the right" or "to the right", he explicitly emphasises the audience ("A door to the right of the audience." (p. 965)). However, except for mentioning the audience once and the curtain twice, there is no other indication of staginess throughout the play. This feature makes the text rather like a prose fiction consisting of dialogues. Thus on the macro-level, this short text actually displays the writer - reader relationship more obviously than the playwright - audience relationship.

In reading the play, one may be struck by the different speech strategies for politeness purposes *in* and *of* the text. The setting given by the playwright can be taken as a complete mini-story. On a higher level, it serves as part of a larger discourse of the play by providing insufficient information to the theme. The speech strategies in the talk between the Wife and the Friend are stylistically different from those in the following talk when the Academician joins in. The analysis will focus on the interpersonal relationships from several angles. While the theme of the play is based upon very common topics of life, the relationships between characters that are manifested through questions and responses presuppose social superiority of one character to another, and their calmness or uneasiness are both indicated by flouting the maxims of conversation. While it is a light and comic play, it is seriously thought-provoking.

This play assumes to be one-act. But in terms of interpersonal interactions, it can be divided into several parts for the purpose of analysis. The first part is the introductory "Set", where the playwright gives a detailed description of the setting but provides no direct and obvious information for the event of the play, compared against the way he does in *The Lesson*. The second part is the first episode that takes place between the Wife and the Friend, who deliberately speak against the maxim of Quantity

by using general and vague pronominal terms to withhold specific information from the audience and the reader, who are kept in suspense and at a loss for what is happening. The third part is the second episode, the crucial section of the play, which starts with the Academician's entrance, and details of the event are gradually provided by the talk between the three characters. The last part is the concluding episode that describes the consequences of the event and the disastrous situation the Academician is unexpectedly put into after news of his failure has got around. It starts with the Academician's interacting with the outside world on the phone, and progresses until he takes off his sword and breaks it, tears down all his decorations, throws them on the floor and steps on them.

6.1 The Set: The Playwright Tells and Shows

In describing the Set, Ionesco gives us an impression of the showiness of the Academician with superfluous display of what seems to him the most important: diplomas and certificates. The very manner of the display implies absurd vanity of the man before he comes into the scene, and this description-like setting casts an unusual picture of the protagonist who, before coming into the scene, is always behaving in an abnormal way.

> *Set. A rich bourgeois living room with artistic pretensions. One or two sofas, a number of armchairs, among which, a green, Régence style one, right in the middle of the room. The walls are covered with framed diplomas. One can make out, written in heavy script at the top of a particularly large one, "Doctor Honoris causa."* This is followed by an almost illegible Latin inscription. Another equally impressive diploma states: "Doctorat honoris causa," again followed by a long illegible text. There is an abundance of smaller diplomas, each of which bears a clearly written "doctorate".
>
> *(Ionesco, 1969: 965)*

This setting clearly indicates the inhabitants' artificial showiness rather than artistic intellectuality. Instead of artistic "decorations", Ionesco puts it as "pretensions", which implies the unnaturalness and the very opposite of

"artistic" . With all the walls covered with diplomas, the environment suggests poster boards rather than walls in a living room, something against everyday practice. Diplomas are not normally put on walls as pictures are, but when the holder of diplomas intentionally has them framed and put on walls, the very manner suggests nothing but the exhibitionist nature of the holder. However, these diplomas only form a dim picture to the readers and the audience: while they are impressively displayed, they are "illegible" .

> *As the curtain rises, one can see The Academician's Wife dressed in a rather crumpled robe. She has obviously just gotten out of bed, and has not had time to dress. The Friend faces her. He is well dressed: hat, umbrella in hand, stiff collar, black jacket and striped trousers, shiny black shoes.*
>
> (p.965)

It is the Academician's Wife who comes first onto the stage. Her manner of dressing shows that she has got up in a hurry to meet the guest Friend who is paying an unusual and unexpected early visit. An early visit in the morning, as a rule, carries a metamessage of urgency and importance of the matter concerned. It is already assumed that the Friend has come not on account of himself, but on account of his host or friend. It can be seen from the fact that not only the host and hostess are not readily expecting the guest, but also the hostess receives her guest quite informally out of hurry and haste, apparently quite concerned with the news the visitor is bringing to them. Thus, a clear contrast is presented between the Wife and the Academician who take the metamessage of the Friend's early visit differently, with the former reacting in a hurry and the latter taking his time. Another contrast is presented between the two earliest characters in the play, the Wife and the Friend, who is "well dressed" from head to foot, very formal and stern, just as the Academician always does and will appear in a few minutes.

6.2 Episode One: The Wife and the Friend

In contrast to the beginning of *The Bald Soprano*, which has more than sufficient information on what is going to happen, this play begins rather

abruptly. Not only do the audience know nothing about what is going to happen, even the readers have no idea on what is in store for them. The wife is straightforward and the Friend is most "careful" by beating about the bush, or trying to say what is unspeakable. The reader/audience may feel that the Wife and the visiting Friend are talking about some kind of taboo, or something which people concerned do not dare to mention directly. Pragmatically, what the Wife is eager to know is assumed to be obvious for both sides in their micro-context, and what the Friend does not directly mention is a way of accomplishing the task in a cooperative manner. However, sociolinguistically and sociopragmatically, their carefully-worded vague references seem to be dealing with some contextually evident taboo. While the Wife avoids direct mentioning out of her own face considerations, the Friend talks in a similar manner out of his own politeness strategy to cooperate with his conversational partner, the Academician's Wife.

The Wife: Dear friend, tell me all.

The Friend: I do not know what to say.

The Wife: I know (it).

The Friend: I heard the news last night. I did not want to call you. At the same time, I couldn't wait any longer. Please forgive me for coming here so early with such terrible news.

The Wife: He didn't make it! How terrible! We were still hoping. . . .

The Friend: It's hard, I know (it). He still had a chance. Not much of one. We had to expect it.

The Wife: I didn't expect it. He was always so successful. He could always manage somehow, at the last moment.

The Friend: In that state of exhaustion. You shouldn't have let him (do it)!

The Wife: What can we do, what can we do! . . . How awful!

The Friend: Come on, dear friend, be brave. That's life.

The Wife: I feel faint: I'm going to faint. [*She falls in one of the armchairs.*]

The Friend: [*holding her, gently slapping her cheeks and hands*] I shouldn't have blurted it out like that. I'm sorry.

The Wife: No, you were right to do so. I had to find (it) out

somehow or other.

The Friend: I should have prepared you (for it), carefully.

The Wife: I've got to be wrong. I cannot help thinking of him, the wretched man. I hope they won't put it in the papers. Can we count on the journalists' discretion?

The Friend: Close your door. Don't answer the telephone. It will still get around. You should go to the country. In a couple of months, when you are better, you'll come back, you'll go on with your life. People forget such things.

The Wife: People won't forget (it/them) so fast. That's all they were waiting for. Some friends will feel sorry, but the others, the others....

(pp. 965-6)

It is the Wife who initiates. She starts by asking the Friend something which only they know contextually, and the Friend's response carries no more information to either the audience or the reader. The uses of "it", "news" and the zero form "(____)" objects only refer to something within their shared knowledge. Brown and Yule (1983) have discussed the pronominal form "it" in some detail. According to them, the pronoun "it" is one of the expressions used by speakers to refer to "given" entities, typically uttered with low pitch in spoken discourse. Because of its lack of content, this *it* is often one of the test-case items for any theory of reference. Once this pronominal appears in isolation, many linguists suggest that it is actually not a referring expression, but can only be used co-referentially. While this *it* is an example of deixis in specific contexts, Brown and Yule term *it* as "pragmatically controlled anaphora" (1983: 214-5). This kind of anaphora covers all expressions the speakers use in referring on the basis of which the hearer will be able to pick out the intended referent given in certain contextual and co-textual conditions.

But the paradigm of pronominal deixes such as "that", "them", even "the news", etc., are contextually insufficient for the readers/audience of the play. Fortunately, most literary writers produce their works in the position of speakers addressing their hearers or audience (cf. Chapman, 1989), and out of the Cooperative Principle and related maxims of the

interpersonal rhetoric, they write, according to Tyler (1978: 227), from the hearer's point of view. Thus, it is up to the hearer or the reader to make out what is being referred to. Naturally the readers and the audience of this play are directed to finding specific references in the characters' talk.

At the same time the Friend's manner of breaking, or his hesitation to break, the news carries a clear message that what the Wife wants to know is shockingly unspeakable. The Wife is observing the maxim of Quantity in her own way, speaking what is only contextually sufficient, and at the same time observing the maxim of Manner, speaking in a rather direct manner as is required in the context. The Friend is observing the maxims of Tact and Politeness, speaking in an indirect way in order to tone down the shocking impact on his interlocutor. He uses subjunctive statements "You shouldn't have let him", "I shouldn't have blurted it out like that. I'm sorry", and "I should have prepared you, carefully", as his strategies of breaking the news in a rather polite and empathetic way. His statements, the first reproaching the Wife and the second and third apologising for his own indiscretion, are not, in ordinary senses, reproaches and apologies, but speech strategies for politeness. His indirectness offers insufficient information on both levels, and the Wife sensibly infers what is implied and therefore what the result is. When the Friend has accomplished his tough task of breaking the news politely, tactically, and indirectly, he then explains peripheral matters concerning the news, only to cover up his own uneasiness considering that the Wife is feeling humiliated.

From the conversation in this brief episode, readers can sense that something serious and incredible has happened, threatening the face of "the man". It is only suggested that what is involved is something that "will still get around", is one of "such things" people will not easily forget and something that "all they are waiting for". It is something that "some friends will feel sorry" for but others (who are at least not their friends) will certainly enjoy for some reason. When the main character, the Academician, enters, the manner of the whole talk is changed and the topic is gradually touched upon and the event unfolded, with the Wife's impolite comments suddenly coming to the topic which the readers are concerned about. The Wife's criticism and the Friend's reproaching suggestions form a verbal duel

with the Academician's excuses and explanations. In this process of both threatening and saving the face, the Wife and the Friend act differently toward the Academician, but the Academician is always the face-loser, the defeated party and the controlled participant in discourse, no matter what he says and how he behaves verbally.

6.3 Episode Two: The Academician Fails

It is interesting that the Academician does not seem to know anything about his Friend's early arrival. Clearly, the couple have been aroused from their sleep, since the Wife has got no time for dressing herself properly for receiving guests. Normally it is impossible that the Wife knows about the visit while the husband does not. Readers as well as the audience will certainly wonder what the Academician is doing at backstage during that period of time. Contrary to normal happenings in daily life, the Wife comes out in a hurry while the husband is doing his masculine "make-up", decorating himself from head to foot. The Academician's appearance shows that he does not like to break his long-lasting routine of dressing and decorating himself whenever possible, so he does not seem to be in a hurry to come out even if he actually knows about the Friend's visit. When he comes, he presents a picture rather contrastive to his wife's:

> [*The Academician comes in, fully dressed: uniform, chest covered with decorations, his swords on his side.*]
>
> (p.966)

Curiously, the Academician even does not seem to know that his wife has got up, therefore knowing nothing about his friend's visit. When he starts to speak, he behaves as if he were surprised at his wife's early rise. It is after he notices his wife that he notices his friend's presence. When he sees the Friend, he does not seem to be surprised at his early arrival, only greeting him with a very casual "You have come early too" and asking calmly, "What's happening? Do you have the final results?". A problem arises immediately: If the Academician knows nothing of the friend's arrival, what is the use of his taking his time and decorating himself early in the morning? His formality (with decorations and sword) only indicates his intended

appearance on a very formal occasion. Yet he neither knows his wife's being in the living room nor the presence of the guest! This is quite illogical. Normally, when one has guests, he should first greet the guest out of respect and hospitality according to norms of social interaction. But the Academician notices and greets his wife first! While the Academician seems a little surprised at his wife's early rise and the friend's early visit, he does not seem to sense anything unusual, as his wife does.

The Academician: Up so early, my dear? [*To The Friend*] You've come early too. What's happening? Do you have the final results?

The Wife: What a disgrace!

The Friend: You mustn't crush him like this, dear friend. [*To the Academician*] You have failed.

The Academician: Are you quite sure?

The Friend: You should never have tried to pass the baccalaureate examination.

The Academician: They failed me. The rats! How dare they do this to me!

(p.966)

The Academician's casually greeting-like questions to the Friend can be interpreted in two ways. When uttered calmly, the questions can be taken as phatic and therefore indicating his own confidence in and assurance about what the final results the Friend is bringing to him. When uttered surprisedly and anxiously, the questions can be taken literally as indicating his uneasiness. Curiously, Ionesco does not specify how the questions are asked and to be asked, as he often does in other absurd plays. So it is totally up to the readers' preference or imagination how the interaction goes on.

The news of the results is broken to the Academician in a rather harsh manner, by the Wife's "What a disgrace!" . This exclamation pragmatically sets the scene, and the Academician immediately knows what has happened from his wife's indirect but impolite speech act, whereas the audience and readers are still kept in the dark, knowing nothing about what on earth has happened. Instead of directly answering the Academician's checking question, the Friend addresses the Wife. By two pronouns *you*, the Friend

addresses two different persons. The Friend's first statement "You mustn't ..." is a reproach, which serves two purposes. While it is impolite to the Wife, it is polite to the Academician. When the Friend observes the maxim of Quality by telling the truth, "You have failed" , he is at the same time observing the maxim of Tact out of politeness. However, on the macro-level, he still violates the maxim of Quantity by providing no further information for the readers and audience. The only important bit of information is carried in the word "fail" , and readers and the audience may possibly relate this word in common and intuitive association with a test or examination. It is only in the Friend's response to the Academician's checking question that the word "examination" appears, giving the readers and the audience a slight idea of the disgraceful event. On the one hand, we have the impression of an erudite scholar with so many diplomas. And on the other hand, we are faced with the figure of this learned scholar failing in a baccalaureate examination! When his confidence is threatened and his fame so harshly destroyed at the release of the "final results" , the Academician can no longer remain elegant, scholarly, and gentlemanly, therefore venting his rage by means of speech strategies incompatible with his status.

The rest of this episode is actually the focus of Ionesco's story. For in what follows, the Academician is reduced to a state of helplessness by the harsh facts revealed to him step by step. Except for Mathematics in which such a "humanist professor" may not be too well-trained basically, it can be taken for granted that this Academician should have certainly passed all others as easily as can be. Nevertheless, it turns out that he has got zeros in the first three (i.e. Mathematics, Latin, and Greek) and a flunk in the last (i.e. Composition), for which he has scored nine hundred points. Before he can feel some relief at the sure success of having passed it far above the mark on a normal grading system which will raise his average marks greatly, it is ruthlessly revealed to him that the passing grade is ironically one thousand on the basis of two thousand points in marking. Not only do the grading and marking systems seem out of place, but also the change of the regulations seems to be unknown to the man who used to be the very chairman of the board of examiners!

At first, the Academician does not believe the results, attributing them

to a possible mistake of the Friend who saw the posters in darkness. When this doubt is removed by the Friend, the Academician's immediate reaction is a conclusion that he has been unfairly treated on purpose, "They are doing everything to ruin me!" (p.966). The fact that the results are publicised in the evening with spotlights does carry implications of certain deliberation. Out of consideration of his own face, he thinks of destroying the posters by vulgar means that are despised by integrated individuals who respect truths. So he suggests to, and at the same time reprimands, his friend, "You could have bribed the concierge into pulling them down" (p.966). This is a direct contrast to the Academician's inclination to put up everything honourable and showy. Deep in his heart is the desire to show only the bright side of himself, with diplomas framed and put on walls for his own appreciation and for attracting other people's attention. Once something happens against his will, he thinks of covering it up immediately just for the purpose of exhibiting his "bright" side. But the presence of the police guarding the posters makes the event more bizarre, for it not only suggests prevention of the possibility of a riotous situation in academic circles, but also indicates a sense of violence and brutal power at the same time. Normally we do not expect involvement of police in situations of publicising the results of examinations, as in situations of financial nature. When this essentially scholarly and intellectual matter involves one of the state machines—police, we immediately sense some deliberate exercise of power and brutality in the academic setting. Not only is everyone there to get a look at the list, but also people are standing "in line" under police's order-keeping.

With his name on top of the disgraceful list, what the Academician is most concerned is who are looking at the posters. He quite rightly supposes from his experience that the viewers are people who do not know, or know of, him: the parents of the candidates. However, this time things seem quite extraordinary. Present may be all his rivals and colleagues, who have been attacked for ignorance by the Academician when he was the chairman of the board of examiners. Faced with his wife's definite belief that all his rivals and colleagues are there, the Academician realises the impact of the results on his credit and therefore believes that there must be some mistakes in the whole undertaking. When faced with the humiliating results of tests, the

Academician-professor has great confidence in his performance in Composition. But against a sudden change of the marking system, he feels disgraceful. However, neither the Wife nor the Friend takes the situation as ridiculous. The Wife thinks it fair since everyone is graded in the same modified system, and only the Academician is suffering from "a frightful persecution complex". The Friend has a reasonable explanation for the change, referring to the old system and the time of Napoleon (p.967). Then come the Academician's remarks.

The Academician: Utterly outmoded. Besides, when did they make those changes? It isn't legal. I'm chairman of the Baccalaureate Commission of the Ministry of Public Education. They didn't consult me, and they cannot make any changes without my approval. I am going to expose them. I'm going to bring government charges against them.

The Wife: Darling, you don't know what you are doing. You are in your dotage. Don't you recall handing your resignation just before taking the examination so that no one could doubt the complete objectivity of the board of examiners?

The Academician: I'll take it back.

(p.967)

It is only at this moment that the Academician realises the importance of power, without which he is not consulted any more and changes are made without his approval. When he is about to exercise his power to do himself justice by bringing government charges against those who are trying to persecute him, he has forgotten all about the impossibility to resume his power: He has resigned the position just for the purpose of objectivity of the board of examiners. Like a man who desperately struggles to survive right after he has kicked off the bucket, the Academician is now in a miserable and helpless condition, only to hear his wife's nagging blame.

The Wife: You should never have taken that test. I warned you. After all, it's not as if you needed it. But you have to collect all the honours, don't you? You are never satisfied. What did you need this diploma for? Now all is lost. You have your

Doctorate, your Master's, your high school diploma, your elementary school certificate, and even the first part of the baccalaureate.

The Academician: There was a gap.

(p.967)

Here the readers may sympathise with the Academician, thinking about his reasons for taking such a batch of tests. As the Friend says, the Academician is a conscientious person and therefore he is right in filling the gap. While the Academician himself is reasonable, what makes him take the doomed step is unreasonable: his failure to pass the second part of the baccalaureate examination at college led to the suspension of his Master's degree, and he was told to have no problems in passing it if he would like to try again. However, the Wife knows too well about her husband, who is insatiable for fame and honours and is appreciating his diplomas whenever possible, even at night. While the Academician says it is necessary to take the test, he really does it out of his greed for more honours in the name of perfection. When his wife airs his dirty linen in public, he finds a rather awkward excuse that explains nothing ("What can I do when I have insomnia?" (p.968)) but only shows a contrast in his personality. And this contrast is also a sign of powerlessness and helplessness.

When the Academician is trying to find various excuses for not having done well in the examination, the Wife exposes the truth frankly, agreed to by the Friend.

The Wife: What you've written has nothing to do with the subject.

The Friend: Your wife is quite right, friend. It has nothing to do with the subject.

The Academician: Yes, it has. Indirectly.

The Friend: Not even indirectly.

The Academician: Perhaps I chose the second question.

The Friend: There is only one.

The Academician: Even if there was only that one, I treated another quite adequately. I went to the end of the story. I stressed the important points, explaining the motivations of the characters, highlighting their behaviour. I explained the

> mystery, making it plain and clear. There was even a conclusion at the end. I can't make out the rest. [*To The Friend.*] Can you read it?
>
> (p.969)

When the Academician further argues, against the maxim of Quality, that his answer has something to do with the subject "indirectly" , the Friend observes the Agreement maxim and takes a firm stand with the Academician's Wife by repeating her statement in an even more frank manner. There is a clear change in the Friend's attitude. When the news of the test results was violently broken by the Academician's Wife at the beginning of the play, the Friend reproaches the Wife for being too harsh and impolite. Yet, at this stage when the truth is to be driven home to the Academician, the Friend strictly observes the maxims of Quality and Manner, without the slightest politeness toward the Academician. However, when we read on, we find that the Wife's and the Friend's speeches do carry some rhetorical politeness, since their saying "... has nothing to do with ..." may be understatements for the Academician's irrelevance, his "illegible" writing, or "mere scribbling" merely out of his pretensions to write. When The Academician keeps finding excuses or possible explanations to save his face against the maxim of Quality (by saying that his writing has something to do with the subject "Indirectly"), the Friend turns to be more frank, contradicting him with "Not even indirectly" . With the second round of face-saving effort, the Academician explains that he might have chosen the second of the two questions, the Friend retorts, "There is only one" . The interesting point is that the Academician insists on having "treated another [question] quite adequately" , "even if there is only one" there. This leaves the audience wondering whether the Academician is muddle-headed or the system that his thought and behaviour actually follow is abnormal. The only sensible point that the audience or the reader can make is from the fact that the Academician does not even recognise his own writings. When the Academician further insists on laboriously and stubbornly, asking the Friend to read what he cannot read, the Friend's reply interestingly violates the maxim of Manner out of politeness considerations.

The Friend: It's illegible. I don't have my glasses either.

The Wife: [*taking the text*]: It's illegible and I have excellent eyes. You pretended to write. Mere scribbling.

(p.969)

While observing the maxim of Quality, the Friend makes his speech politely ambiguous. It may mean that the text is illegible to him just because of his poor eyesight without his glasses. At the same time it may serve the function of a refusal to read it, simply emphasising its illegibility and intelligibility. It is the readers/audience who have to interpret what the Friend means, and whether the Academician's test papers are illegible in the sense of being not clearly readable or totally unintelligible. Fortunately, one thing seems to be certain: the Academician produced something ridiculous. The Wife's remark in agreement to the Friend's further emphasises the Academician's poor performance. She thinks the marks are "justified", and the Friend agrees to the statement that anyone would lose in such a case. These interactions indicate that the Wife and the Friend are on the side of truthfulness, for what they say is in every sense reasonable and logical.

The Wife: Since you treated the wrong subject, and treated it badly, setting down only titles, and writing nothing in between, the mark you received is justified. You'd lose your case.

The Friend: You'd most certainly lose. Drop it. Take a vacation.

The Academician: You're always on the side of the Others.

The Wife: After all, these professors know what they're doing. They haven't been granted their rank for nothing. They passed examinations, received serious training. They know the rules of composition.

(p.970)

It is after these interactions that a clearer picture is presented about the Academician. In spite of his illogical assertion that his wife and friend are "always on the side of the Others", readers can see that it is not that "Others" are acting against him or persecuting him, but that he has performed really badly by writing nothing, in spite of his many honorary doctorates and titles. However, the conclusion cannot be so simple: in such examinations of a queer nature, there is still something more to probe.

What is bizarre about the examinations is the very necessity of the

Academician's taking them. Moreover, as the Friend says,

The Friend: The questions asked at the baccalaureate are usually known in advance. You were admirably situated to get this particular information. You could also have sent in a replacement to take the test for you. One of your students, perhaps. Or if you wanted to take the test without people realizing that you already knew the questions, you could have sent your maid to the black market, where one can buy them.

(p.968)

At the Friend's comforting advice of unreal conditionals ("You were admirably situated to..." , "You could ..."), the Academician does not regret over his regrettable fault for not taking necessary actions preparing himself, but only thinks it queer why he can have failed in Composition. Ironically, he himself cannot recognise his writing in the photostat! Common sense tells us that an illegible writing unrecognisable to the writer himself cannot possibly be legible to any other. Normally irrelevant answers and illegible writings certainly get no marks. But the Academician's writing in Composition has got nine hundred points, which is ridiculous at first sight and more so when one realises that the grade is given quite by accident, based on the part of the composition that is legible.

The Friend: The subject to be treated was the following: "Discuss the influence of Renaissance painters on novelists of the Third Republic." I have here a photostatic copy of your examination paper. Here is what you wrote.

The Academician: [*grabbing the photostat and reading*] "The trial of Benjamin: After Benjamin was tried and acquitted, the assessors holding a different opinion from that of the President murdered him, and condemned Benjamin to the suspension of his civic rights, imposing on him a fine of nine hundred francs. . . ."

The Friend: That's where the nine hundred points come from.

(p.969)

This situation certainly leads our attention to the board of examiners. And sure enough, this is just the Academician's concern in devastation. Everyday jokes of unfair competition based on the assumption of fairplay are absurdly dramatised in the play. When we read or hear that someone proudly claims to have beaten a world tennis champion or an international chess gold medalist, the presupposition is that things happen in a normal system according to fair rules of the games. When it turns out that the triumphant "winner" has beaten the champion or the gold medalist in events where they are laymen, such as bridge for the former and weight-lifting for the latter, we realise it is only a joke, and the initial excitement and sensationality are only fictional. The point of such jokes is an appreciation of the bitter irony therein. In the Academician's case, although the composition of the board of examiners for the tests is as ironical and fictional as everyday jokes, we feel that Ionesco is really telling us something serious.

The Academician: Who was on the board of examiners?

The Friend: For Mathematics, a movie star. For Greek, one of the Beatles. For Latin, the champion of the automobile race, and many others.

The Academician: But these people aren't any more qualified than I am. And for composition?

The Friend: A woman, a secretary in the editorial division of the review *Yesterday, the Day Before Yesterday, and Today*.

(p.969)

When the brutal truth is revealed to the Academician, not only does the man feel desperate, but also the general readers feel that the world has become really problematic and disorderly. While the Academician seems unable to think properly, he is quick enough to find the crux of the matter and attributes the result of the composition to political "vengeance" and abuse of power. This realisation seems to remind him of the necessity to exercise his power to render the examinations "null and void" in the normal mode of thinking.

6.4 Episode Three: The Academician and the Outside World

While the Academician wishes to exercise his power to invalidate and nullify the test results for the unfair-play imposed on him, he resorts to the President, his friend, for help.

The Academician: Now I know. This wretch gave me a poor grade out of spite because I never joined her political party. It's an act of vengeance. But I have ways and means of rendering the examination null and void. I'm going to call the President.

The Wife: Don't. You make yourself look even more ridiculous. [*To The Friend.*] Please try to restrain him. He listens to you more than to me. [*The Friend shrugs his shoulders, unable to cope with the situation. The Wife turns to her husband, who has just lifted the receiver off the hook.*] Don't call!

(p.969)

However, in doing this, he himself is actually playing unfairly, for he has failed many other people when he was chairman of the board and once he himself is failed by others, he instinctively thinks of resorting to authorities in power for invalidation of the whole test. The Academician simply ignores his own absurdity and only sees absurdity in others. The Wife and the Friend are sober-minded enough to foresee the consequences, but they cannot stop the Academician. While we expect sympathy and help from his friend, the President, to do him justice and correct the situation, the result naturally comes to be a rejection. While this rejection is no surprise, the manner and reasons for the President's rejection are ridiculous. The President does not, as we may reasonably expect, turn his requests down, but simply hangs up on the Academician and refuses to talk to him, on the grounds that the President's mother does not allow him make friends with "boys at the bottom of the class" (p.970). While this is based on the normal happenings in the real world where people do not like to have any

associations with someone disgraceful, the manner of the President's rejection is more interesting than absurd. Normally when people refuse to participate in something but do not want to appear impolite, they resort to diplomatic strategies by finding some false excuses or even telling white lies. However, the reference to, or the role of, the President's mother makes the President appear both childlike and childish. A president is someone supposed to be in excellent leadership and expected to at least hear his subordinates' explanations or complaints before making decisions. Yet this President is an unknown figure who speaks and behaves exactly like a kid, "I don't want to talk to you. My mummy won't let me make friends with boys at the bottom of the class". And the reason for the President's keeping aloof from him in fact casts a more childish, or even clownish, picture of the Academician. This is the only role played by the President through the mouth of the Academician, but it represents the absurd outside world that the Academician interacts with. While this is the first blow he has received, it foretells a series of blows that are expecting him, which are implied in the play.

6.5 Summary

The most obvious gap is in the Academician's educational record and it is this gap that has set in motion a series of catastrophes far beyond rationality. While this gap is clearly stated by the playwright and his characters, a series of less obvious gaps are suggested and revealed in *The Gap*. Ionesco treats the gaps in such a way that they are invariably connected with his treatment of the characters (e.g. the Maid who is never present and plays absolutely no role, and the Chief Registrar and the President who are not present but play important roles behind the curtain). It is only the text readers who can detect Ionesco's inconsistency, as they do in reading *The Bald Soprano*. The readers may expect four characters but finally find fewer, or far more, than that number. The audience will certainly find no conflict concerning this point. What is the same for both the text readers and the audience is that the three real characters' interaction is closely related with what is outside the play world and they may therefore have almost the same impressions about the characters' speech strategies. On

a deeper level, the playwright proves himself excellent in deviating from established rules of communication or social interaction. While cooperating with his audience/readers, or expecting their cooperation with him, Ionesco creates an illogical world. While the examinations (in Mathematics, Greek, Latin, and Composition) seem serious and unproblematic in themselves, there is no consistency in the systems concerned, where examiners are chosen absurdly and points are given as arbitrarily and absurdly as can be. The violations of normal verbal interactional rules as manifested in the behaviour of the Academician who behaves rather awkwardly, of the President who assumes the role of a little school boy, and the whole society that has no observable principles, all point to the conclusion that the world is disorderly and meaningless. It is not far-fetched, therefore, to interpret these absurdities as symbolising the gaps between the Academician and the face-threatening world.

As is shown by the analysis, there are obvious gaps in the behaviour of each character. From the Academician's exhibitionist behaviour in displaying his diplomas and honours at the beginning to his furiously getting rid of them at the end; from the Wife's allowing the Academician to exhibit and appreciate his honours to her reacting strongly to him at the release of the disgraceful results of the examination; and from the Friend's sympathising with the Academician, hesitating to break the news, reprimanding the Wife for breaking it so harshly, to his advisory reproach toning down the shocking impact, all the way to his calling a spade a spade in criticising the Academician for having written nothing sensible, we can see that there are some similarities between Ionesco's characters in different plays. For example, the Academician is somewhat like the Professor in *The Lesson*, and the Wife treats the Academician in a way similar to that the Maid treats the Professor before and after the attack of the Pupil in *The Lesson*. Based on the readers' common experience, the playwright suggests that the Academician is a man of contrasts, and the Wife and the Friend are respectively inconsistent in their own manner of behaviour throughout the play.

Ionesco is actually showing us a more important aspect of "face-threatening" phenomenon, the conflict between the Academician's eccentric fame-seeking behaviour for his positive face and the world outside him that

threatens it all the time. It is not so much the Academician's face-threatening speech acts (FTAs) but rather his face-threatening behaviour and his way of life that his positive face is threatened and he risks losing his own face all the time. It is not the Wife's and Friend's speech acts that hurt the Academician so much but what the outside world really does that really hurts him. The image of an academician is certainly a symbol of erudition, and the Academician in this play is a professor and used to be the President of an academic organisation. Yet he fails bitterly and incredibly in an immediate post-secondary examination. The point is that when one is suddenly put into a situation of having to cover the distance from pride to humiliation, to experience the drastic transition from confidence to diffidence, powerfulness to helplessness, he may find that the effect of the face-losing too great to bear. It is just because the Academician cannot keep consistent rules in preserving his positive face that he is destined to meet the despair. With this inconsistency, the Academician cannot cover the gaps between him and his other self. When confident, he keeps the habit of decorating himself with honours for exhibitionist purposes. When deconfidenced, he just reacts strongly by every means that is incompatible with his social identity, only to lose face out of his strong desire to preserve it.

Ionesco, through this comic drama, is actually being most serious and realistic. He implicitly questions the rational norm for all these happenings and the significance of titles and honours in relation to one's fame and face. He bitterly satirises the systematicity of certain academic practice where rules of selection and competition are as absurd as anywhere else. Through the role of the Friend, Ionesco conveys to us that there are no principles for fair competition and impersonal judgment. Since questions for examinations can be known in advance, can be bought at the black market, and the tests can be taken by replacements, and in real-world situations, there are cases of replacements taking tests or even "ghost writers" producing dissertations for academic degrees, we almost hear Ionesco loudly asking: what indeed is one's positive face and professional reputation based on? Scores of diplomas, three times of Nobel prizes, innumerable honours, or a seemingly insignificant portion of a bachelor's program decades ago?

The Academician: Think of it! I lectured at the Sorbonne, at Oxford, at American universities. Ten thousand theses have been written on my work; hundreds of critics

> have analyzed it. I hold an *honoris causa* doctorate from Amsterdam as well as a secret university Chair with the Duchy of Luxembourg. I received the Nobel Prize three times. The King of Sweden himself was amazed by my erudition. A doctorate *honoris causa*, *honoris causa* ... and I failed in the baccalaureate examination!
>
> (p.970)

It is the immeasurably high pressure that makes the Academician linguistically incompetent. It is this pressure that deprives him of his faculty in coping with the situation through the very language in which he is supposed to have been highly proficient. That is why he has failed to produce anything relevant to the subject and even anything legible during the nightmarish examinations, where his writing is illegible even to himself!

Naturally, the Academician's impressive and glorious past with numerous halos does not in any way help save his face in such an embarrassing and humiliating situation. It is only shame and disgrace that cause the utter collapse of the Academician's confidence in himself and therefore the total demystification of all the fame and honours that he has been struggling for. This actually reflects a common theme of Ionesco. Like the Pupil in *The Lesson*, the Academician is reduced to hopelessness and helplessness, revealing to him the harsh fact that his whole life is devoid of meaning. Against this backdrop, we may well see that the framed diplomas covering the walls for "artistic pretensions" may possibly be duplicated forms of the same original copy, and his having received the Nobel Prize for three times may possibly be only one in triplicate. As he realises the meaninglessness in all this, he suddenly breaks his sword and rips all these diplomas from the walls and stamps them into oblivion. In so doing, the Academician is strongly driven by the instinctive desire to preserve his own face. Simultaneously funny and terrifying, the fate of the Academician triggers off a series of questions concerning the sensibility of all this happening for readers as much as for the Academician himself. This is the very story and its moral we get from Eugène Ionesco.

Conclusion

An interdisciplinary study of language and literature certainly poses problems for its practitioners. Since stylistics has been a problematic subject, some recent work still takes it as an "elusive and slippery topic" (Bradford, 1997: 1). Since pragmatics is a protean concept which has as many definitions as there can be, pragmasylisitcs is an even more protean concept with no definite theories and practices. Thus, the problems are even more strongly felt in the present case of a pragmastylistic study of literary/dramatic texts.

The trend of new interdisciplinarity generally sees the study of literature as a practice drawing from both linguistics and literary criticism. A study of language and communication without taking into account literary communication is not complete, but literary texts provide a special kind of data for such studies. All literary theories need to be grounded in theories of communication, which, in turn, can enrich theories of linguistics and communication. Pilkington (1989: 49) holds that literary studies should comprise two distinct but related disciplines: humanistic and theoretical. On the one hand, interpretative and evaluative literary criticism is essentially humanistic, and on the other hand, a theoretical discipline is possible if based on theoretical literary pragmatics that seeks to describe and explain the readings that literary criticism produces. The present study of dramatic texts from a pragmastylistic perspective has proposed a theoretical framework for detailed analysis of play texts in terms of interpersonal communication and

aims at a richer interpretation of the message the author conveys to the readers and the audience. This approach is certainly not the same as literary criticism, but it hopes to throw light on a less impressionistic study of, and offer an alternative to, the study of literature. As Carter (1982: 5) writes, a principled analysis of language can be used to make our commentary on the effects produced in a literary work less impressionistic and subjective.

Based on the inseparability of the principles of cooperation and politeness in human interaction, my discussion has confirmed that it is possible to reinterpret Grice's Cooperative Principle and the maxims as involving all politeness factors in the light of what Leech calls the "Interpersonal Rhetoric". And my discussion of the two related aspects of the Cooperative Principle has distinguished the principle proper from the maxims, the former being an abstract, prescriptive, and imperative code binding the addresser and addressee, sender and receiver, writer and reader, and the latter as concrete, descriptive and hence interpretative tools for working out what is implied by what is said or written. This distinction has, to some extent, conveniently solved the problems caused by the widespread view that cooperativeness and politeness are conflicting, with one overweighing the other. It highlights the abstract aspect of the imperative cooperative code which is essential to communication, and at the same time it corrects Levinson's implication that the Cooperative Principle and the maxims are the same (1983), and Leech's view that the CP and the PP are purely descriptive (1992). It proposes that it is only the concrete maxims that are descriptive and interpretative.

In order to see how pragmatic principles and maxims work in literary communication, I have applied the Interpersonal Rhetoric to the study of play texts in general and the-Theatre-of-the-Absurd play texts in particular, with more dimensions and more channels of communication on the macro-level found in the play texts. Traditional study of drama tends to focus on performance and is merely theatrical criticism, leaving out the stage directions and taking dramatic dialogue as different from everyday talk. More recent discourse-oriented studies of dramatic texts are different from traditional theatrical criticism and a number of practitioners have applied linguistic models used for daily conversation analysis to the analysis of

dramatic dialogue.

But even this approach is not unproblematic. Firstly, discourse-oriented analysis of drama still focuses its attention on dramatic dialogue, largely giving no attention to stage directions as their predecessors did in theatrical criticism. This is because while the play text is in the form of stage directions and dialogue, the textual format conforms to conventional views that the dialogue is all of the play, with stage directions printed in different fonts and types within brackets. Hence stage directions are justifiably left out and their contributions on the writer-reader level are lamentably ignored. While stage directions are indispensable to the play, they are regarded as if they were not really part of the play. Since the part of the play that is not pronounced by actors and actresses on the stage is an essential element of the whole text, a pragmastylistic study of plays with an interpersonal orientation cannot overlook the interpersonal functions in this part of the text. Most plays of the Theatre of the Absurd call for attention to this sub-discourse, to its stylistic and contextual contributions to the whole play.

Secondly, existing discourse analysis of drama only focuses on the interaction *in* the play between/among the characters, playing little or no attention to the interaction *of* the play between the playwright and all those who read it. Before the tangible play text, anyone who wishes to understand it (for whatever purpose, whether for stage production or for enjoyment of its literary merits) is first of all a reader. But different types of readers have different practical purposes which are fully considered by the playwright who adopts different speech strategies for his own rhetorical purposes, and therefore the different types of readers can have different feelings from the way they are being addressed. By the statement that different types of readers feel differently, I do not mean by the conventional notion in literary criticism that different individuals get different impressions and interpretations on the same literary text, but that different types of readers as different addressees are treated differently through different channels of communication and addressed by means of different speech strategies by the playwright.

The study assumes that the play text is in a dialectical relationship with

theatrical production and performance, with the former being the constant and the latter being variables, and therefore the writer - reader relationship cannot be ignored in plays despite the fact that plays are generically assumed to be performed rather than to be read. Thus the study has found that

(1) The macro-level communication not only includes the traditional playwright - audience relationship, but also the writer - reader relationships are more obviously manifested. Significantly, the readership of the play is a much larger concept than is generally realized, including all those who read the text: the director, stage producer, actors/actresses, as well as the readers in their armchairs who either have watched the play's performance or just enjoy the literary merits without actually seeing the performance;

(2) The playwright does not simply cooperate with his "interlocutors" who are "listening to" his speech in the form of writing, but also makes efforts to win their cooperation. This is a point that remains untouched by theories of either the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle, or any other principles of the Textual Rhetoric.

In terms of the writer-reader relationship, three specific aspects deserve our particular attention. First, the playwright's primary purpose is to conquer his readers rather than the audience. His choice of modals, deixis, hedges, speech act verbs, as well as his empathetic use of pragmatic particles have shortened the distance between himself and his readers. Second, his speech acts are more like telling the readers what is happening than what people should do in production or performance. Third, the playwright treats different readers of his texts differently, giving a lot of power to the director, addressing his actors in a rather strict manner and sternly putting them at the disposal of the director.

As regards the dialogue, it is in fact not merely micro-level communication between characters, for there is always the presence of the writer. And characters' speech strategies are what is given them by the playwright, and their violations of conversation maxims are just part of the playwright's special observance of the pragmatic principles for literary communication. The playwright may deliberately declare something in the

scene and lets his characters violate the maxim of Quality. He may provide insufficient information for his readers and then lets his characters violate the maxims of Quantity and Manner, talking without providing further useful information to the readers and the audience. He may provide detailed or even redundant information for his readers and then lets his characters repeat what is already obvious and make no sensible contribution to the conversation. It is interesting that what is redundancy to the readers is sometimes new information to the audience, who know nothing about the written scene. And an awareness of the writer's way of observing interpersonal maxims can certainly help us to understand more about the overall structure and the progression of the play.

In the interactions within the play texts, meaningful social interactions of the characters are instantiated by their speech acts. The characters not only violate maxims of the principles of the Interpersonal Rhetoric, but also violate social norms of politeness and power relations through speech acts inappropriate to their status. Conversations proceed without meaningful interactions and turns are often not taken up normally but intervened by embarrassing silences and pauses, with one interlocutor rudely ignoring the other or impolitely taking over someone else's control of the discourse. These phenomena cannot be conveniently accounted for by the Cooperative Principle and the maxims of cooperativeness and politeness without considering the larger sociolinguistic and socio-cultural context of the plays.

While pragmatic principles are essentially applicable to the analysis of fictional dialogue, dramatic discourse works on various levels: character-character, character-audience, playwright-audience, and, above all, playwright-readers. Since literary writing in general embodies two levels of communication, it involves interpersonal aspects in and of literature. While characters in the dramatic discourse observe largely the same principles as people do in everyday and practical discourse, the writer observes largely the same principles as people do in ordinary communication. It is only against this norm that deviations are created for special purposes, and therefore the investigation into and the revelation of the special pragmatic nature of the dialogue between characters and the seemingly one-way communication between the author and his readers may have profound effects on revealing

the significance of literature and on the analysis and interpretation of literary discourse.

As interpretation is based on intuition, stylistic analysis based on linguistic description sometimes faces a paradoxical situation. As Carter (1989a: 67) points out, analysis and interpretation are largely guided by intuitions and again limited by them. Thus it should be incautious to claim too much validity for the interpretation. According to Pilkington (1991: 48), one of the key questions asked by current literary theory is: how do we interpret literary texts? He suggests that questions about evaluation should be as important to the literary theorist as questions about interpretation, and that the question of value is the central fact that literary theory has to explain.

Stylistic analysis of literature certainly involves literary interpretation. Halliday (1973 &1983) makes a clear distinction between stylistic analysis and text analysis in general and relates stylistic analysis of literature with literary interpretation. Based on the sequential relationship of linguistic description→ analysis → interpretation → criticism, Halliday (1983: ix-x) points out that stylistic analysis "always involves acts of interpretation". Although analysis and interpretation are conceptually different, they "may be interleaved one with the other", or they "may not even be distinguished operationally at all". Textual analysis is thus a matter of polarity and literary interpretation is a matter of gradation and degree, for "an analysis may be right or wrong, but an interpretation may not, but more or less convincing, more or less penetrating and deep" (1983: x).

In the process of interpretation, the study shows that more literary values can be revealed in the play texts under analysis. The interpretation of the power relationships between various addressers and addressees based on their interpersonal rhetorical speech strategies in conversations can suggest more about Ionesco's thematic implications. For example, interruptions are prominent in *The Lesson*, and the reverse is true of *The Bald Soprano*, where one interrupts the other, not for the purpose of controlling the dialogue but for the purpose of controlling his interlocutors who cannot properly respond. While the Academician in *The Gap* is superficially the dominant speaker, he is actually controlled by all those around him. Thus,

focused attention to the situations of talk control can contribute to more convincing interpretations of what deep implicatures are suggested concerning the lesson that Ionesco is giving us, the bald soprano who always wears her hair and the irrecoverable gap of the Academician that Ionesco is displaying to his readers and the outside world.

Conventional models of conversation analysis or discourse analysis, useful as they are, cannot fully reveal the overall communication effects of play texts. Although impressionistic literary criticism may result in similar interpretations of these plays, a pragmastylistic analysis of play texts as literary communication may result in systematic, more explicit and more convincing interpretations. Analysis of interpersonal rhetoric on both the micro- and the macro-levels may more profoundly reveal the image of the characters, their social relationships and dramatic changes, and it may also help reveal more about the theme of the plays, by probing into the playwright's extreme exploitation of language from a dynamic perspective. Although such analysis is not free from limitations, it may contribute to theories of dramatic criticism in its own way and may be of some use to stage production and theatrical performance. More importantly, it hopes to broaden the scope of literary stylistics which has up to now paid the least attention to the literary genre of drama.

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后　记

当年完成博士论文之日，本研究的基本理论框架就成型了，其中的部分阶段性研究成果已发表在国内及国际语言学与外国文学的学术刊物上。虽然总体上得到了导师们和同行专家的肯定，自己也一直在进行修改和充实，但三年来还是不敢急于出成专著，因有三怕：一怕自己的某些观点经不起进一步的实践检验。刘润清教授在与我合著英文版《语言学理论与流派》（南京师范大学出版社）的过程中常常说“一书既出，‘驷马难追’”。二怕没有哪一家出版社愿意出这种几乎没有销路的书。申报选题的过程本身就是语用学中涉及的FTA[①]。三怕即使哪家出版社错爱拙作愿意出版而自己却没有拉赞助的能力，也没有时间和精力更拉不下面子去推销。我虽然研究荒诞剧，但在生活中还是不敢挑战荒诞。假如要我拿上自己的 vanity publication[②]，逢人便自我介绍加宣传：“这是我的专著，你们图书馆能不能买一本？”这句话我就是提前在心里练上一百遍也是无法说出口的。虽然这也许与我是否具备足够的“语言能力”和正常的“交际能力”有关，但绝对不是我在本研究中涉及到的“交际无能”（communicative incompetence）。

这三怕，现在看来对我其实是好事。

首先是第一怕。这个“怕”字使我能够去掉浮躁，潜心思考并不厌其烦地字斟句酌，在创新中不忘求无瑕。随着研究的进一步深入，找到了些许乐趣，有些成果也得到了学术界的进一步承认，寄出的论文被 *Language and Literature* 和 *Gothenburg Papers in Computational Linguistics* 等国际学术

① Face-Threatening Act：威胁面子行为。

② 自费出版物。也可望文生义理解为“用于炫耀的出版物”或“满足虚荣心的出版物”。

刊物匿名审稿后接受并发表，后来也收到了其他一些国际学术刊物的来信约稿。我从此渐渐地对自己的研究更加充满信心，也慢慢地淡忘了第一个“怕”字。

2001 年岁末，我幸运地得到了清华大学人文社会科学学院专著出版基金的资助，加上清华大学出版社愿意出版少量非盈利性书籍的远见卓识，我的后两个“怕”字基本上就不存在了。在此我要向清华大学和清华大学出版社表示衷心的感谢。

在付梓之际，我要感谢北京大学和北京外国语大学先后八年来对我的培养，感谢清华大学外语系两年来给我的支持，感谢所有指导和帮助过我的老师和同事。

我要再次感谢三位直接栽培我的恩师——我的硕士导师胡壮麟教授、博士导师申丹教授和博士后导师刘润清教授。我能师从他们治学，是我一生的荣幸。

1992 年，胡壮麟教授收我为徒攻读语言学硕士学位。在这期间，我就幸运地同时受到了申丹教授和刘润清教授的教诲。胡教授担任中国英语教学研究会副会长和北京大学英语系主任，教学科研行政多肩挑。他是向国内学术界系统介绍语用学理论的第一人，也是最早向国内介绍系统功能语法理论的三位学者之一，连续为我们这一届研究生开设了《语言学史与理论流派》、《系统功能语法》、《语篇分析》、《理论文体学》等一系列课程。此外，他还定期在学术沙龙上做专题讲座。1993 年秋季，他邀请北京外国语大学刘润清教授在北京大学为我们开设研究生课程《语言学研究方法》。北京大学当时最年轻的文科博士生导师、英国爱丁堡大学哲学博士申丹教授的学术讲座和她开设的《文学文体学》课程、李赋宁教授的学术讲座和《英语史》课程、王逢鑫教授开设的《语义学》和《外语教学法》课程都使我受益匪浅。在跟他们做学问期间，我深切地体会到什么叫做“知识渊博”，真正明白了什么叫做“望尘莫及”。

老师们高尚的人格魅力给我留下了深刻的印象，使我真正知道了做人比做学问更难而且更重要的道理。胡壮麟教授虽是系统功能语言学家 M. A. K Halliday 培养出来的专家，但在学术上并不墨守一家一派之学说。他以研究系统功能语法理论而著名，同时在转换生成语法理论、社会语言学、语言习得、语言教学、语用学、语篇分析、文体学、符号学、文学理论等领域都有深入的研究。他从不迷信学术权威，但在遇到不同学术观点时，总是能兼容并蓄，善待异说。他平易近人，慈祥如父，弟子们私下亲切地称他“胡大爷”。我最难忘的还是他对自己的老师和前辈的关心和尊重。1994 年春，为我们下一级研究生开设《英语史》的美国专家生病住院，胡壮麟教授特请年事已高的前系主任、

《英语史》(商务印书馆)作者李赋宁教授"救急"。闻讯后赶去旁听的人把文史楼三层的一间教室占得满满的。第一次课上,胡教授陪李先生来到文史楼三层的一间教室并陪我们听,确切地说,是陪李先生讲。李先生拿着一张张手写的卡片精神饱满地走上讲台,讲解那些类似天书的古英语,如数家珍,不用看卡片就能随口背诵出大段大段的古英语经典文献。他把英语语言的发展线索和在不同时期的发展变化,讲得活灵活现,在引用经典文献并在黑板上书写时总是一气呵成。他那惊人的记忆力、超渊博的知识、老骥伏枥的精神和大师所特有的潇洒给我们留下了深刻的印象。我与许多人一样是慕名旁听,所以坐在教室后面只顾聆听并做笔记,等我看见胡壮麟教授轻轻走上讲台时,才猛然发现黑板上快要写满了。我站起来正要走上前去,胡教授微笑着示意我别动,自己小心翼翼地在李先生旁边擦起黑板来。就这样,年遇古稀的博士生导师李先生讲着、写着,年过花甲的博士生导师胡先生陪我们听着、擦着。我们怀着钦佩的心情看着、记着。这种令我们难忘的事情,我相信全世界恐怕也不多见。

在北京大学期间,我发现处处有榜样,处处有学问。经过恩师们言传身教和反复训导加上自己一番努力得到了不少收获。但是明知自己先天愚钝惟恐勤不能补拙而有辱师门,毫不敢放松对自己的要求。

在我攻读硕士学位期间,胡壮麟教授的《理论文体学》等课程和申丹教授的专题讲座以及他们分别在国际权威学术刊物上发表的论文使我在文体学领域也开阔了视野。申丹教授为我指定的一系列书籍,使我走上了语言学与文学的交叉研究之路。在胡教授的支持下,我于 1995 年考取了申丹教授的博士生,专攻文体学方向。

申丹教授教学科研双肩挑,同时有不少社会工作(她是北京大学学术委员会委员、北京市人大常委、全国人大代表)。她在 *Poetics* 和 *Style* 等权威国际学术刊物上发表的论文,对国际知名学者的理论提出的挑战,受国内外学术界瞩目。她在学生时代就是学校艺术体操队的骨干。繁忙的工作、丰富的生活内容,使她在同龄学者中出类拔萃,并兼任英国 Belfast 女王大学客座教授。无论她有多么忙,总能定期安排时间专门指导我的学习和研究,从不放过我的报告和论文中的任何一个 overgeneralization 或 overstatement。这期间我提交的每一篇报告和发表的每一篇论文都经过了她的仔细批阅。在这期间,胡壮麟教授和刘润清教授依旧关心和鼓励我的学术成长,回答我的问题,赠书赠论文给我。他们在自己的专著《当代语言理论与应用》(北京大学出版社)、《语篇的衔接与连贯》(上海外语教育出版社)和《西方语言学流派》(外语教学与研究出版社)上,亲切地签名并写上对我进行鼓励的话语。1995 年秋,我急需一

本国内无法找到的国外原版书。当时胡教授正在香港中文大学应邀讲学并做学术研究，我便写信求援。前后不到十天，胡教授的复印件随着邮包就到了我的手中。

学问越做越觉得自己知道得太少。于是在获得博士学位后，有幸进入北京外国语大学在刘润清教授的门下做博士后研究。北京外国语大学同样庞大的学术群体，与北京大学稍有不同但同样严谨的治学风格及其图书馆富有特色的专业藏书，对我的知识结构形成了有益的补充并使我的治学方法进一步走向成熟。刘润清教授先后师从语言学家许国璋先生和英国语言学家 Geoffrey Leech 教授，也是教学科研行政多肩挑的学者（退休前曾任北京外国语大学语言研究所所长、中国外语教育研究中心主任、中国英语教学研究会秘书长、《外语教学与研究》主编等职）。刘润清教授是国内最早介绍美国语言学家派克的法位学理论的学者，也是国内最早评论 Leech 的礼貌原则的学者。在他细心指导并修改我的论文和研究报告的过程中，给了我不少难得的启发。同时我还得到了外国语言研究所姚小平教授、王克非教授和其他老师的支持和帮助，也得到了英语系何其莘教授、吴冰教授、吴一安教授、陈国华教授、张中载教授等的指导、关心和鼓励。

在我科研的道路上，还有许许多多的人无私地帮助了我。英国诺丁汉大学的 Ronald Carter 教授、里兹大学的 Katie Wales 教授、兰开斯特大学的 Michael Short 教授、贝尔法斯特大学的 Paul Simpson 教授、爱丁堡大学的 John Joseph 教授、美国斯坦福大学的 David Porter 博士、北卡洛莱纳大学的 Elizabeth Stephens 博士、清华大学外语系杨永林教授、刘世生教授、崔刚教授都对我提供了直接的帮助和支持。在此向他们一并表示衷心的感谢。

最后要感谢清华大学出版社外语编辑室覃学岚副教授和吴锦老师，没有他们无私的鼎力支持，这本书是不会这么快与读者见面的。

作者

2002 年 2 月

于北京 清华园

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