

A Pragmatic Analysis of Shakespeare's Sonnets

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Abstract

Language can be used to imply information that is not actually stated. Poets not always state what they mean in their poems. Such way of using language falls within the domain of pragmatics. Thus, the aim of this study is to identify the covert layers of meaning or the figurative language styles in Shakespeare's sonnet 130 and analyze them from a pragmatic perspective in search of underlying meaning. The researchers analyzed the sonnet according to many pragmatic devices which were the focus of the study. They include implication, figures of speech, indirection, irony, reference and inference. The analysis showed that researchers did not find all of the pragmatic devices, but only found four of them, namely implication, figures of speech, irony, and reference. It also showed that pragmatic devices are of great importance to the text of the sonnet.

المستخلص

يمكن استخدام اللغة للإشارة إلى المعلومات التي لم يتم ذكرها بالفعل. لا يذكر الشعراء دائماً ما يقصدونه في قصائدهم. تندرج طريقة استخدام اللغة هذه في مجال البراغماتية. وبالتالي، فإن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تحديد التركيبات الخفية للمعنى أو أنماط اللغة المجازية في سونيت شكسبير 130 وتحليلها من منظور عملي بحثاً عن المعنى الأساسي. قام الباحثون بتحليل السوناتة وفقاً للعديد من الأدوات البراغماتية التي كانت محور الدراسة. وهي تشمل التضمين، والصور البلاغية، والمرآة، والسخرية، والإشارة والاستدلال. أظهر التحليل أن الباحثين لم يعثروا على جميع الأدوات البراغماتية، لكنهم وجدوا أربعة منها فقط، وهي التضمين، والصور البلاغية، والسخرية، والإشارة. كما أظهرت أن الأدوات البراغماتية لها أهمية كبيرة في نص السوناتة

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1.Problem of the Study

The main problem which this study tries to handle is that there are texts, lines, phrases and words in Shakespeare's sonnet 130 which are literally different from what they actually mean.

1.2.Aims of the Study

The aim of the study is to identify many pragmatic styles and figurative language tools used in Shakespeare's sonnet 130. It also aims at finding out the meaning behind the pragmatic and figurative tools and styles.

1.3 Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that Shakespeare's sonnet 130 contains several pragmatic tools that the poet used so as to make the poetic lines more interesting and effective.

1.4. Value of the Study

The researchers expect this study can benefit the reader who wants to know further about pragmatic and figurative tools, and it also can give deep understanding about these tools in other Shakespeare's sonnets.

Chapter Two :Theoretical Background

2.1 The Sonnet

A sonnet, as Thorne (2006: 32) defines it, is a poem of fourteen lines with a distinctive rhyming pattern having an iambic pentameter which includes ten syllables (one unstressed followed by stressed one in each line). Thorne adds that in a sonnet there are three quatrains (4-lined stanzas) and a rhyming couplet (2-lined stanza) with a rhyme constructed as abab cdcd efef gg, and it makes what is called a Shakespearean sonnet. If the three quatrains and the couplet have a rhyme scheme as abab bcbc cdcd ee, the sonnet is then called Spenserian.

Thorne (ibid) states that there is another form of a sonnet which is Italian or Petrarchan, which has is an octave (an 8-lined stanza) rhyming abbaabba and a sestet (a 6-lined stanza) rhyming cdecde, cdcdcd, or cdccdc. There may be variations or changes in the rhyme scheme of the sestet, but there will never be a couplet. The octave develops one idea; there is a volta or turn, and the sestet develops from the octave, changing, varying and completing the original thought. Moreover, the octave often presents a problem, situation or attitude and the sestet is used to give comment upon it. The volta or turn acts as a pivot or as a turning point on which the two sections are balanced.

Thorne (2006: ibid) further says that these are the most common forms of a sonnet. They are called the English sonnets. A sonnet gives and develops a different idea in each quatrain concluding the argument with an ingenious final couplet that finishes off or brings the argument to a close and resolves the tension created.

Thorne (ibid) expresses that the content of sonnets tends to deal with love, the problems of life, disorder and other complex issues or topics related to the poet. The strictness and rigidity of the form forces the poets to concentrate on their topic in a very focused way.

The sonnet, as Thorne (2006: 32) and Spiller (2003: 1) state, was invented about the year AD 1230, in the south of Italy; and by the end of the thirteenth century, thousand sonnets had been written, almost all in Italian exploring most of the varieties of its form and most of the possibilities of its subject matter. Bloom (2008: 4) states that the sonnet became a poetic tool and a means for poets to assert themselves as proficient in the art of lyric poetry. The story of the Romantic-era sonnet revival begins hundreds of years earlier in the aftermath of the English Renaissance when sonnets originally and rapidly increased in number.

2.2 William Shakespeare

Bloom (2008: 1) and Potter (2012: 1) say that William Shakespeare was a poet and a playwright, and he was born in Stratford-on-Avon on the 23rd of April 1564 into a family of some prominence. His father was John Shakespeare, who was a glover and merchant of leather goods who earned enough to marry Mary Arden, in 1557. John Shakespeare was a prominent citizen in Stratford, and at one point, he served as a senior member of the town and a law officer.

Vickers (2003: 2) states that Shakespeare was described as the glory of the British nation; the noblest genius, the greatest master of nature; and an immortal. He adds that Shakespeare is the most figurative writer in our language, who surpasses all others in his skill in versification, in moving the passions, in fascinating and restraining the attention, so that it is almost impossible to be guilty of excess in our applause of him. Moreover, Shakespeare was the greatest prodigy of dramatic genius the world ever produced, and he praised his vast invention, his wisdom and penetration of human nature, and strength and power of diction; above all, his genius which attained the highest degree of art.

Shakespeare, as Bloom (2008: *ibid*) adds, attended the Stratford grammar school, where he would have received an education in Latin, but he did not go on to either Oxford or Cambridge universities. Very little is recorded or said about Shakespeare's early life. The first record of his life after his baptism is of his marriage to Anne Hathaway in 1582 in the church at Temple Grafton, near Stratford. Their first child, Susanna, was born in May 1583 and twins, Hamnet and Judith, in 1585. Later on, Susanna married Dr. John Hall, but the younger daughter, Judith, remained unmarried. When Hamnet died in Stratford in 1596, the boy was only 11 years old.

Callaghan (2007: x) states that the sonnets were published in an easily portable quarto format, entitled ‘SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS. Never before Imprinted’, measuring five be seven inches. This volume of eighty pages has become one of the greatest works of English poetry. Callaghan adds that Shakespeare wrote 154 short poems or sonnets.

2.3 Pragmatics

Pragmatics, as Garmendia (2018: 13) argues, is often thought to analyze language in context. That is to say, pragmatics focuses on utterances: concrete events, intentional acts of speakers at specific times and places. Garmendia adds, the aim of pragmatics is to clarify what is said by an utterance (what a speaker is actually saying when using a sentence in a specific context). Another aim is that pragmatics also intends to explain what a speaker does via an utterance, beyond saying. Mey (2001: 6) argues that pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society. It is the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed. Pragmatics may take different forms. These forms are:

2.4 Implicature

Mey (2001: 45) argues that to imply means to fold or put something into something else. That is to say, that which is implied is folded in, and it has to be unfolded in order to be understood. Mey adds that an implicature is something which is implied in conversation, which means that something is left implicit in actual language use. Thomas (2013: 58) states that to imply is to hint, suggest or convey some meaning indirectly by means of language. The term implicature accounts for what a speaker can imply, suggest or mean, as distinct from what the speaker literally says. It means what the speaker conveys implicitly in an utterance. It is a primary example of more being communicated than is said. He adds that an implicature is made or generated intentionally by the speaker and may (or may not) be understood by the hearer. Thomas adds, Implicatures are inferences that arise to preserve the assumption of cooperation. People frequently mean much more than what is actually said. Sometimes, when we are talking with other people, it is easy to express an idea, but it is difficult to interpret the speaker’s utterance because every utterance needs to be interpreted based on its context. What is uttered depends on who, where, when, and in what occasion the utterance appears. For Aitchison (1987: 97), in an answer to the

question: 'What is for supper?' one is likely to receive a reply such as: 'Billy fell downstairs' which doesn't answer the question. The hearer draws implications from the utterance which are not strictly there in the linguistic meaning that Billy was supposed to make dinner, but now he cannot.

2.5 Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a word or words that are used to create an effect. It is when the meaning of certain words has a deep meaning which is different from the surface meaning. It is also a way of saying something other than the literal meaning of the words or the use of words in a transferred sense. So, it is an extra, original, non-literal use of language (Hall, 1981: 420). In other words, Hall argues, it departs from the literal meaning or the ordinary form of expression of a word in order to give the word another meaning, produce a greater effect and to give beauty and vividness of style. Giroux & Williston (1974:10) state that figures of speech are called figurative language, that is, language using figures of speech. It creates a special effect, clarifies an idea, and makes writing more colorful and forceful. Some types of figures of speech are simile and metaphor:

2.5.1.1 Simile

Gillespie, Fonseca, and Sanger (1994: 989) maintain that a simile is a direct comparison between two things, objects, actions or feelings that are shown to be similar in some way, i.e. objects of different kinds which have something in common. The comparison is made on the basis of a resemblance in one aspect. They add that similes are explicit because direct comparisons are addressed to comparisons that have similarities in them. When making something similar or equal to something else using indirect comparison, simile uses the words "like" or "as", for instance, 'her eyes are like diamonds' or 'as wise as an owl'.

2.5.1.2 Metaphor

Metaphor, as for Charteris-Black (2011: 31), is a shift in the literal meaning of a word or a phrase, where it is used with a new meaning that differs from another more basic meaning that the original word or phrase has, i.e. associating two unrelated ideas to create a third one.

Charteris-Black (ibid) adds, it is used to label an entity or a thing that belongs to something else or has an implicit meaning that is contrary to the common or literal meaning. According to Pardede (2008: 23), metaphor is literally carrying across or a substitution, and

it is an implied simile. A metaphor is generally considered to be one thing equated with another thing, as for instance, ‘a’ is ‘b’, where ‘a’ is something and ‘b’ is some non-related thing, but have some common ground which should be understandable. For instance, ‘you are a teddy bear’, or ‘my love is the rose of my heart’.

2.5.1.3 Indirectness

Thomas (2013: 119) states that indirectness is a universal phenomenon; it is found in all natural languages. It occurs when there is a mismatch between the expressed meaning and the implied meaning. Indirectness is a way of conveying a message through hints, questions, or gestures. Occasionally, as Thomas (ibid: 120) adds, we use indirectness because of some performance error — for example, if you temporarily forget a word or, through fear, nervousness, excitement, etc., cannot get it out. People may employ indirectness because they are avoiding a taboo word or topic, or to avoid embarrassment. The use of indirectness in these circumstances may lead the hearer to infer all sorts of things about you. Thomas adds, there are reasons why the use of indirectness is so all-pervasive, except to say that people obtain some social or communicative advantages from its use. These reasons are: the desire to make one's language more/less interesting, to increase the force of one's message, the speaker may have two or more competing goals, and politeness/regard for face. Let's consider the following example. *B (a non-native speaker of English) has been staying with A for several weeks. He has a passion for West Side Story and has just played the film's sound track right through for the second time in one evening:*

A: Would you like to listen to something else now?

B: No.

In order to avoid making a direct complaint to his guest, which could hurt his feelings, A suggests indirectly that he has had enough of West Side Story.

2.5.1.4 Irony

Colebrook (2005: 1) states that irony is saying what is contrary to what is meant; it expresses a meaning that is directly contrary to that suggested by the words. It is a humorous or sarcastic mode of speech, in which words are employed to give or convey a meaning opposite to the literal sense. Irony is a statement that the speaker's or writer's implicit meaning is very different from the pretending meaning. It is possible that the situation ends very differently than is generally

expected. For example, "The movie was very good, you fell asleep at the cinema" or " Lucky devil!"

2.5.1.5 Reference

Yule (2010: 131) argues that words themselves do not refer to anything. It is people who refer to persons or things. Yule defines reference as an act by which a speaker (or writer) uses language to enable a listener (or reader) to identify something. To perform an act of reference, he states, we can use proper nouns (Chomsky, Jennifer), other nouns in phrases (a writer, my friend,) or pronouns (he, she, it). It is sometimes assumed, Yule adds, that these words identify someone or something uniquely, but it is more accurate to say that there is a range of reference for each word or phrase. The words *Jennifer* or *friend* or *she* can be used to refer to many entities in the world. Sometimes, as Yule states, when we are not sure what to use to call things or refer to them, we invent names and expressions such as *the red drink*, which refers to wine. For Thomas (2013: 9), in order to understand an utterance, we not only have to assign sense to words, but also to assign reference (i.e. to say or determine in context who or what is being referred to). Mey (2001: 54) says that we use language to refer to things and persons, directly or indirectly. In direct reference, we use names that lead us to persons and things. In indirect reference, we need to recourse to other strategies, linguistic as well as non-linguistic, in order to establish the correct reference.

2.5.1.6 Inference

Inference, as Yule (2010: 131, 132) argues, is a process and additional information used by the listener to create a connection and association between what is said and what must be meant. For instance, you might ask someone *Can I look at your Chomsky?* and get the response, *Sure, it's on the shelf over there.* In this example, Yule says that it is made clear that we use names of people to refer to things. The listener has to operate with the inference: "if X is the name of the writer of a book, then X can be used to identify a copy of a book by that writer." According to Thomas (2013: 58), maintains that an inference is produced by the hearer, and to infer is to deduce something from evidence (this evidence may be linguistic, paralinguistic or non-linguistic).

Chapter Three : Practical Part

A lot of Shakespeare's sonnets utilize different devices, by which their words and poetic lines have hidden meanings. Thus, in this study, we are going to show how words and lines suggest something different from the mere surface meaning. What follows is a presentation of the full text of 'sonnet 130' and its analysis.

*My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.*

3.1 Implicature

Implicature can be found in line 1 *My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;* as the poet uses a simile to compare his mistress' eyes to the sun. Since her eyes are not like the sun, then her eyes are not bright. The speaker invokes the sun because of its physical characteristics: it is bright, brilliant, sparkling. While the line doesn't tell the reader anything about the mistress's eyes, we know that her eyes lack these characteristics. By implication, they might be dark or cloudy. Perhaps her eyes have a dark color; perhaps they are ugly; perhaps they lack the sparkle of a quick wit. Again, in line 2 *Coral is far more red than her lips' red,* there is an implicature by which the poet tries to imply that she his mistress does not have red lips. Moreover, line 3 *If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun* implies that she has gloomy and blackened skin. In addition, line 4 *If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head* implies she has fizzy and black hair. The use of implicature continues throughout the poem, especially in the final couplet which implies that the speaker loves her for who she is.

3.2 Figures of Speech

3.2.1 Simile

The first line of sonnet 130 *My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;* is a negative simile; it negatively compares one thing to another, using the word *like*. The poem's speaker compares his mistress' eyes to the sun, although he negates this comparison by saying that her eyes are not like the sun or not bright or beautiful. This expresses the idea that the poetic voice feels the mistress has bright eyes, but they are still pale compared to the sun and its bright strength.

3.2.2 Metaphor

One of the metaphors used in the poem is found in line 4 when he compares her hair to the wires *If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head*. The wires growing on her head are her hair, which leads to picture that her hair is black and straight.

3.3 Irony

The poem starts with simple negation of resemblance situation where similarity is insisted upon as a custom. The first line *My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;* shows the clear picture of verbal irony, and verbal irony means the poet or speaker of the poem says one thing, but he or she actually means another meaning. The poet says something, but we understand another. For instance, in the poem where his mistress eyes are comparing with the sun, lips with coral, breast with snow and blackness with wire hair. This shows the false comparison, showing the negative aspect of his mistress. The speaker had seen different color of rose like red and white, but he did not see roses in her cheeks. It shows the irony towards his mistress. He compares her breath with bad smell, not with the perfume which is more delight. Disparity, contrast and disharmony are the major aspect of irony.

In the third quatrain, the lines show that the beloved likes to hear his mistress speaks, but the sound is not pleasing than the music, and he never saw a goddess walks on the ground, but he only saw his beloved walking in the ground. This also shows irony.

We can also find the use of irony in the final couplet *And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare / As any she belied with false compare*. Here, Shakespeare ironically comments on the epithets used by contemporary poets. These two last lines show that he really thinks she is beautiful and lovely.

The irony in Sonnet 130 is that although the speaker seems to be describing an ugly woman about whom one might not expect to see love poetry written, he is actually describing a truer and greater love than poets who exaggerate their lovers' beauty and greater than false comparisons. He undermines his mistress and compares her to unattractive things, yet he still appreciates her and sees her as a beautiful person. He emphasizes his undying love, despite the words that he uses to describe the mistress. And by this, the poem is a genuine description of true love.

3.4 Reference

The poet in sonnet 130 uses specific words and phrases to enable the reader to directly identify certain entities. For instance, in the first line, the noun phrase *My mistress' eyes* is used to refer to the woman whom the speaker of the poem loves. By using the possessive adjective *My*, we understand that the speaker means and refers to someone he feels he belongs to and loves. Such phrase is repeated in line 12 for the same purpose. Moreover, in line 13, the speaker uses *my love* to refer again to the woman he loves. However, the subject pronoun *she* in the last line refers to any woman in the world who may have been misrepresented by any false and exaggerated comparison. Through *she*, the speaker enables us to broaden our reference and refer to any woman in the world.

Chapter Four : Findings and Conclusions

Based on the analysis of Shakespeare's sonnet 130, the researchers have reached the following conclusions:

1. The pragmatic analysis of Shakespeare's sonnet 130 reveals that the poet uses various devices to convey implied meaning.
2. The use of figures of speech is vital as they help the reader understand the text easily, make it more concrete, beautiful and effective, and add emotive associations to it. Poets and writers resort to using several rhetorical devices in their poems in order to add depth, meaning and colour to the text.
3. No word or phrase or sentence in sonnet 130 has shown the use of the two pragmatic forms, i.e., indirectness and inference.
4. Readers of poetry can find out the implied meaning by digging deeply into the text and linking the text to linguistic and extralinguistic context of the poem.

5. Meaning can be communicated by implication rather than by direct statement.

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