

A Pragmatic Approach to Literary Interpretation of fiction with reference to the Merchant of Venice

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Abstract

The most important function of language is its communicative function as it used to convey ideas, feelings, attitudes, etc. yet, it also has other functions such as its expressive function as by which it is used to produce literary discourse. Literary discourse is a type of language use as such pragmatic theories of speech act and implicature can be utilized to analyze literary discourse of fiction. Literary fiction is a type of discourse that is characterized by its multi-layered discourse since there are two different, though interrelated, levels of interaction; where different sets of interlocutors interact with each other.

The first layer involves interactions that take place among characters within the fictional discourse, whereas the other level involves the interaction in which both the playwright and the readers are engaged. These two levels are interrelated as the interaction between the playwright and the reader is guided by the interaction between among the characters inside the literary discourse.

The theory of speech act could have some bearing on the literary interpretation of fiction as it can be applied to the double-level discourse in the fictional discourse. The theory of meaning and implicature can also be applied to this type of discourse to shed light on the way meaning can be retrieved and reached by the readers of fiction. The paper explores how pragmatic theories of speech act and meaning can of use in literary interpretation of fiction using excerpts from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* as data for analysis.

1. Introduction

Language is a social product. As such, it is often used to perform social actions of which communication represents its basic function as interlocutors employ their communicative competence to exchange ideas, thoughts, feelings, impressions, etc. However, language has other functions in addition to its communicative function. In literature, language is used for aesthetic and expressive purposes to produce literary discourses that readers desire to enjoy. Hence, discourse used for communicative purposes and literary discourse are

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often studied and analyzed differently due to the different functions for which language is employed by its users. Nonetheless, it has become conventional wisdom in recent years to say that there is no principled way in which to distinguish between literary and non-literary discourse, since, as aptly pointed out by Short (1996:154), the same linguistic resources are used in the spoken and written languages.

Therefore, this paper is an attempt to apply the theories and approaches of language use, i.e. pragmatic theories, to literary discourse in order to investigate how they can be made use of in interpreting literary discourse. For the structures of literary discourse are not the only important part of the discourse, but also its functions as well as its conditions, production, processing and reception. Indede (2009:109) asserts that a pragmatic account of literature assumes that, in literary discourse, there is not only a text, but that the production (and interpretation) of such a text are social actions. Without this kind of cognitive analysis of literary communication, no serious insight can be gained into the emotive effects of literary interpretation involving our needs, wishes, desires, likings, and feelings. As such, in this paper it is hypothesized that speech act theory as developed by Austin and Searle and the theory of meaning as developed by Grice (1957, 1968, 1969, and 1989) and later by Sperbar and Wilson (1986)- as part of their relevance framework- can all be applied to literary discourse to make worthwhile contribution to the theory of literary interpretation.

In accordance with this proposal, several attempts were made to apply the theories of pragmatics to literary discourse, most important of which is Pratt's proposal to develop an approach of literary interpretation within the framework of speech act theory in her book "Towards a Speech Act Theory of Discourse" 1977. Van Dijk (2009) also sketches an outline for the pragmatics of literary discourse, as he also envisages literary communication as social action. An attempt will be made to develop an approach to literary interpretation through applying the major theories of pragmatics, i.e. speech act and theory of speaker's meaning, to *The Merchant of Venice*. The basic tenet for this approach is that literary discourse is a type of communication, though different from communication in ordinary language usages, which possesses the basic characterizations of any communication process. Due to lack of space, the investigation attempted in this paper will be confined to selected excerpts from *The Merchant of Venice*.

2. Literary Discourse

As argued by Van Dijk (2009:148), the bulk of literary studies, both traditional and modern, focus on the analysis of the literary discourse and not on the processes of literary communication. He (ibid) maintains that there have also been an impressive number of studies relating to the psychological, social and

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especially historical "contexts" of literature, but there components of an integrated theory of literature have been both marginal and methodologically "weak" in the sense of being far from systematic theoretical and empirical research. Nevertheless, he (ibid.) contends that a sound theory of literature comprises both a theory of the literary text and a theory of literary contexts (including a theory relating the latter to the former). A pragmatic account of literature, as such, assumes that in literary communication there is not only a text, but that the production and interpretation of such a text are social actions in which the producer of the text; i.e. the author and the consumers of the text; i.e. the readers are involved. Mey (2001:788) alludes to this fact, though he clearly emphasizes the role of the reader, arguing that reading is a collaborative action where the discourse is reproduced and supplemented by the reader. He adds that reading of literary works is a cooperative re-creation of the discourse; as such the role of the reader is not perceived as merely a passive role, but rather an active and pivotal one, since s/he enters the world that the playwright creates. Hence, what the reader interprets is his /her own production along with the playwright (Ibid). Van Dijk and Mey's arguments are well entrenched in pragmatic theory; Thomas (1995:22) states that meaning in communication is a dynamic process, involving negotiation of meaning between addresser and addressee.

On the other hand, Searle (1981:85), highlighting the difference between different types of discourse, distinguishes between fictional discourse and literary discourse; he argues that some works of fiction are literary works, however, some are not. He (ibid) points out that most literary works are fictional, but by no means all works of literature are fictional maintaining that most comic books and jokes are example of fiction but not literature. Both Searle (1981:59) and Van Dijk (2009:143-4) agree that there is no clear-cut borderline to distinguish literary discourses from non-literary discourses. Since there is no decisive characteristic or set of characteristics which all works of literature have in common and which constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions for being a work of literature; literature should not be perceived as merely a particular set of discourses, defined on the basis of specific textual properties. Therefore, literariness cannot be defined in terms of literary discourse structures by themselves, but rather, as van Dijk (2009:144) argues, in terms of the role of such discourses as part of a socio-cultural interaction. By the same token, Searle (1981:59), in defense of this argument, lists three main reasons for refuting the literary-nonliterary dichotomy. He firstly states that there is no trait or set of traits which all works of literary work have in common and which constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions for being a work of literature. Secondly, he adds, literariness is an attribute given to a set of attitudes

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one takes towards a stretch of discourse not a name of internal property of the stretch of discourse, though he admits that taking these attitudes is not entirely arbitrary, but rather related to the function of properties of the discourse. Thirdly, he emphasizes that “the literary is continuous with the nonliterary. Not only is there no sharp boundary, but there is not much of a boundary at all”.

In order to be able to explain what the particular functions and effects of literature are, one must know how readers understand, evaluate, memorize, paraphrase, summarize, and reproduce literary discourse. Fowler (2009:237-242) indicates that readers should possess “Literary competence” in order to be able to interpret literary discourse adequately. He adds that literary competence can be subsumed under Hymes’s communicative competence. Van Dijk (2007: 1) insists that literariness of literary discourse should be interpreted in terms of the role of such discourses in process of socio-cultural interaction.

It is an undeniable fact that both literary and nonliterary discourses share some common characterizations; basically, both types of discourses are representation of the addresser’s conception of the world around him. The relation between these two types of discourse is interdependent, because as Walsh (2007:13) aptly indicates, literary fiction is usually understood to have a second-order relation to the real world, via the mimetic logic of fictional representation: it represents events, or imitates discourses, that native speakers produce in nonfictional modes of discourses. So even where the fiction is in some respects unrealistic, it is comprehensible in terms of its relation to familiar types of discourse. Pragmatics, then, can generate illuminating discussions in literary works, and hence a new perspective into literary interpretation, appreciation and criticism. Pragmatic notions such as cooperation, speech act, and relevance, can also shed light to the analysis of development of dialogues in novels and dramas.

As indicated by Steen (1999:111), the distinction between literary and nonliterary discourses should be based on pragmatic and/or behavioral set of characteristics. She (ibid) maintains that individuals perspective on the classification of discourse, for it is the individual who engages the linguistic object as product or stimulus for particular kind, it is the individual who performs the mental processes of production and comprehension in relation to the discourse as a particular kind, and it is the individual thereby participates in the more encompassing social processes of communicative interaction by means of the particular type of discourse in question. This assumption motivates us to adopt a cognitive psychological approach to discourse classification in the form of “prototypical categorization theory” (ibid). Steen, as such, alludes that the schema theory, as discussed by Cook (1994), is a viable solution for categorizing certain types of discourse as literary. In accordance with this

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argument, van Dijk (2007: 1) insists that literariness of literary discourse should no longer be conceived in term of structures by themselves, but rather in terms of the role of such discourses in process of socio-cultural interaction. In this respect, it should be emphasized that literary discourse and literary communication generally follow the principles holding for any kind of discourse and communication.

Therefore, van Dijk (2009:151-2) strictly denies the completely specific nature of literary interpretation as it is often postulated in traditional literary studies. In the same vein, Fowler (2009:237) maintains that what gives literature its attribute is the text in which it is expressed, and this text is some form of language. Thus, the inputs of linguistic inquiry are indispensable.

Notwithstanding, there are some subtle difference between literary and non-literary discourse that needs to be put in mind when analyzing literary discourse in terms of pragmatic theories of language use. Fictional discourse, as indicated by Kikuchi (2007:2) is a multi-layered discourse since there are two different, though interrelated, levels of interaction; where different sets of interlocutors interact with each other. The first layer involves interactions that take place among characters within the fictional discourse, whereas the other level involves the interaction in which both the playwright and the readers are engaged. These two levels are interrelated as the interaction between the playwright and the reader is guided by the interaction between among the characters inside the literary discourse. Short also (1996:169) argues that the prototypical structure of the drama discourse is made up of two levels the topmost level consists of an addresser (the playwright) giving the message to the addressee (the audience/ reader) embedded within this level the fictional world of the play.

Therefore, the two-level discourse structure, such as fiction, is more typical of drama as playwrights write plays for audiences and readers, but they do not communicate directly with their addressees. Instead, they communicate meanings indirectly to their audience by having their characters communicate with one another on stage. Consequently, there are two types of speech acts preformed by means the very same utterance produced by the character on behalf of the playwright, the first one is the act preformed by the character directed to the other character and the second act is the one performed by the playwright, which is directed to the reader. Both types of speech acts involve different sets of inference; i.e. implicature each related to two level of interaction inside the literary discourse of fiction.

3. Speech Act Theory and Literary Interpretation

There seems not to be a unanimous agreement over the feasibility and usefulness of speech act theory when applied to literary discourse. Some

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scholars are in favor of applying speech act theory to literary discourse such as Van Dijk and Short; others, such as Cook are not. Cook (1994:44-45), for instance, states that "speech act theory encounters serious problems when applied to literature and indeed less reciprocal discourse in general". This, he argues, is due to three reasons. Firstly, the inference of an illocutionary act in an indirect speech act depends on the addresser's, i.e. playwright's, correct assessment of the addressee's, i.e. reader's, knowledge, yet literary discourses have a degree of uncertainty about the knowledge of their addressee. Secondly, "overall intention, or in Austin's terminology perlocutionary speech act", in the case of literature, lack an overt purpose or no perlocutionary force at all. Thirdly, since interpretation relies upon mutual knowledge of relevant context, it is too difficult to determine the implied elements of relevant context. Although Cook's objections seem appealing, it can be answered with a counterargument. Firstly, it is now well known in modern narratology that the playwright upon producing a discourse, i.e. performing a speech act, takes into consideration the knowledge of his/her expected reader. This reader is termed the 'virtual reader' in narratology, cf. Guerin et al (2005:354-355). Secondly, the overall intention or the macro speech act, in Van Dijk's terminology, in the case of literature does have an overall purpose or perlocutionary force, and this will be accounted for in detailed in Section (3.2). Thirdly, as Short (1996:200) maintains, writing in general and literature in particular is more decontextualized than most speech, and this decontextualization is at its strongest at the beginning of the text, when the writer has not chance to provide the readers with details textual world we are about to step into. Therefore, the playwright has many strategies to guide the reader in order to construct a mutual and relevant context that help him/her interpret the literary work. Moreover, mutual context is joint production of relevant interpretation atmosphere; it is not the responsibility of the playwright alone or the reader alone. As explained above in section 2, van Dijk, Thomas and Mey all argue that interpretation is collaborative activity where both writer and reader are engaged.

Alternatively, several scholars such as van Dijk, Short and Pratt argue that speech act theory can be applied to literary discourse and as such, it can provide insight to literary criticism. Van Dijk (2009:151-152) maintains that any literary work including dramatic plays, is produced, read and understood as a speech act which needs not have the usual practical pragmatic functions, such as a (real) assertion, question, threat, or promise in our everyday conversation, but may have only or primarily a ritual function. This does not mean, of course, that the literary text may not function indirectly as another kind of speech act, e.g., indeed, an assertion, a threat, a promise, a congratulation, a question, a request or a protest. Finally, this specific pragmatic function of literature as a kind of

3.1. Serious vs. Pretended Speech Act in Literary Discourse

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fictional work, as a single utterance is the linguistic realization of the two different, but interrelated, speech acts. The first one is the non-serious, i.e. pretended or the fictional speech acts (Searle 1981:74-75) which performed by the characters created by the playwrights in the fictional world, the other speech act is the one performed by the playwright himself/herself by means of the utterance uttered by the fictional character. Accordingly, when a character in a play utters "I do" in response to the priest in matrimonial atmosphere, according to Searle (ibid) this speech act cannot be envisaged as a felicitous speech act, because the context is not appropriate and the interlocutors are fictional not real ones, and as such the felicity conditions are suspended. Moreover, Racanti (2007: 223-4) points out that pretense may normally occur in everyday uses and he produces the following example:

John to Bill: Ok I am stupid and I do not understand the matter. Why do you ask me for advice, then?

He (ibid) maintains that the first sentence "*Ok I am stupid and I do not understand the matter.*" Is not asserted by John, since what the sentence conveys "is something that John puts in the mouth of his addressee," who is Bill. Therefore, "the first part of the utterance displays Bill's assertion in echoic manner". (ibid.)

Yet, as Short (1996:197-198) indicates, speech acts like other acts, they all change the world in which they performed, as such the serious-pretended speech act classification proposed, by Searle (1981), can be adequately outdone by Short argument. since, both the serious and the non-serious, using Searle's terminology, can change the world in which they are performed; the one performed by the character within the fictional world modifies the fictional world in which it is performed, and the one performed by the playwright outside the fictional world changes, or at least attempts to, the reader's conception of the world. Furthermore, Racanti (2007:213) distinguishes between the real context of speech and the context in which the speech act is proposed to take place arguing that only the latter is relevant when it comes to determine the meaning of the utterance. Racanti's distinction raises the possibility of two illocutionary acts one for the serious speech act and one for the pretended. He (ibid: 220) maintains that the addresser "can pretend that the context is different from what it is", and if the pretense is made manifest to the addressee it will be part of the addresser's communicative intention, and as such the speech act is performed in a context different from the actual context of production. Therefore, fictions involve two contexts; viz, the actual context used to interpret the serious speech act performed by the playwright, and the pretended context used to interpret the pretended speech act performed by the characters. The concept of pretended context is not limited to literary and fictional discourses; it is also manipulated

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in ordinary use of language.

Van Dijk (2007:8) points out that semantically speaking; the assertions made in the world of fiction are true only in possible worlds which are alternatives to the real world. They are not lies, however, because the speaker does not want the hearer to believe that the story is true. So, stories of this kind may function as quasi-assertions, which are assertions which are not true in the actual world, and which therefore need not to be taken seriously as information relevant for the real-world interaction of the communicative context. Their social function, thus, is primarily based on the fact that the hearer may be, or is expected to be, "amused." This means that the hearer changes his attitude with respect not to some specific event or object outside the communicative situation, but with respect to the text and the context itself.

Thus, it can be argued that both speech acts are felicitous as both are interpreted in completely different context, namely the fictional context which is limited to the fiction itself, and which is included in the other context as perceived by the reader at the higher level of interaction which involves the playwright and the reader. The fictional context is part of the actual context and so is the speech act performed by the characters as they lead the reader to realize what kind of speech act the playwright is performing. Hence, the speech act performed by the character when addressing another character in the fiction is felicitous within the limit of the fiction itself, whereas the speech act performed by the playwright when writing an utterance in the fiction is felicitous as perceived by the reader.

In accordance with Short's argument (ibid.), the change made by means of the pretended speech act performed by the character within the fictional world of the play results in a change in the reader's comprehension of the play, and consequently in his/her view of the world. The change in the state of affairs inside the fictional world of the play and the real world in which the reader lives and to which s/he reacts is made by analogy, as the reader makes comparisons between the two worlds and then works out analogy between the fictional world and the real world. Short (1996:195) maintains that, by observing the pattern of speech acts used by the character, the reader can better understand to the characters and how they are related to one another.

This is more adequately conceived of in the well-known court scene in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, the Duke performed a speech act of pardon in Act IV Scene I:

DUKE: That thou shalt see the difference of our spirits,
I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it:
For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's;
The other half comes to the general state.

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Which humbleness may drive unto a fine.

According to Searle, this speech act is not a serious speech act since the entire context is fictional and so is the interlocutor, and it is merely a "parasitic speech act" that could not make any change in this state of affairs. However, this speech act is felicitously performed by the Duke within the fictional world of the play, since the context in which the speech act is performed is appropriate and satisfied all felicity conditions required. The only difference is that the speech act is performed within the fictional world. As such, it would be inaccurate to argue that the Duke could not perform the speech act of pardon felicitously in court scene of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. The same argument can be used to analyze another utterance produced by the Duke in the same act, i.e. Act IV, Scene I.

DUKE: Upon my power I may dismiss this court,
Unless Bellario, a learned doctor,
Whom I have sent for to determine this,
Come here to-day.

Here the Duke clearly manifests the power he possesses which, in return, entitles him to perform the speech act of dismissal of the court.

Searle (ibid) perfectly presented the difference between the speech act performed by the playwright, the authorial speech act in Walsh (2007:20) term, and the speech act performed by the character in the play. He clearly distinguishes between the two arguing that only the authorial speech act can be accounted for as a serious speech act. As argued by Searle (ibid) and many others including Short (1996: 1996), the authorial speech acts are often assertions performed by the playwright in order to describe the context of the events within the play, the attitudes of the characters, their relations with each other and the way they interact in the play. In the below exchange taken from *The Merchant of Venice* Act IV, Scene I, the authorial communicative intention, i.e. assertions about the context and the characters, can be clearly explained:

DUKE: You are welcome: take your place.

Are you acquainted with the difference

That holds this present question in the court?

PORTIA [dressed like a doctor of laws]: I am informed thoroughly of the cause.
Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?

DUKE: Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

PORTIA: Is your name Shylock?

SHYLOCK: Shylock is my name.

At the higher level of interaction where the playwright and the reader are engaged in a communicative interaction in the extract above, Shakespeare performs a series of assertions in order to describe the function of the characters

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involved in the scene and clarify the relation among them. The duke uses his power to perform a coercive speech act, i.e. order, which in turn, is an indication for the speech act performed by Shakespeare, i.e. assertion, about the duke's power to issue orders in the court of law. The same is true for the utterances produced by Portia disguised as a young lawyer; she employs her social role as a lawyer, which entitles her a certain type of power, to perform an order to which both Antonia and Shylock are obliged to answer accordingly.

3.2. Micro-Macro Speech Act Dichotomy and Literary Discourse

The concept of macro speech act is relatively well established concept in pragmatics, it was first used by van Dijk (1977(1989):232); he points out that a series of speech acts can function as a higher level speech act. There seems to be several social and cognitive foundations to the notions of macro acts in general and macro speech act in particular (van Dijk, 1980:174,293). Macro speech act could refer to the overall purpose or perlocutionary force of a discourse or a stretch of utterances in a discourse. This notion can be of great importance to the argument adopted in Section (2); within the fictional world and on a larger scale, a sequence of speech acts performed by one of the characters may add up to an overarching macro speech act whose value maybe different to different characters within the fictional world and the reader at the audience level which consequently results in different understanding of the characters and hence leads to the situation of dramatic irony (Short, 1996: 204). Antonio's speech in act IV, Scene I of *The Merchant of Venice*, cited below, can be analyzed in term of the macro speech act of condolence even though it is composed of a series of micro speech acts, i.e. assertion, request, greeting, request, assertion, etc. Antonio is trying to console himself and his friend Bassanio before the penalty is carried out.

ANTONIO: But little: I am arm'd and well prepared.

Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!

Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you;

For herein Fortune shows herself more kind

Than is her custom: it is still her use

To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,

To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow

An age of poverty; from which lingering penance

Of such misery doth she cut me off.

In the same vein, and at the higher level of interaction, the author-reader level, the playwright often performs a series of speech acts, i.e. assertions, to express the characters' attitudes, beliefs, feelings, etc. towards events within the fiction and/or other character. The actual speech act performed by the playwright when addressing the reader is often assertion as s/he produces

assertion about how the plot is unfolding or to provide a description of the characters' feelings, attitudes, etc. or show the relation between the characters in the play. These series of assertions made by the playwright add up to the macro-speech act performed which is usually described as distinctive literary speech act of writing a fiction, as defended by Pratt (1977, as cited by Walsh 2007:21). Pratt (ibid) proposes distinct category of speech act called "narrative display text". Therefore text only has a "literary function" when taken as a whole, (van Dijk, 2007:11). Yet, the notion of macro speech act may be link to the literary notion of theme as it demonstrates the main topics of the literary works in the eyes of the reader/ interpreter. Of course this requires a lot of analysis for different types of literary discourse, and for lack of space and time, this paper will not deal with this task.

4. Inference Making Process in Literary Discourse

Reading it is not simply understanding each sentence and recovering referential content and collecting information; it is the effects that the writer, as text producers, set out to obtain, using the resources of language in their efforts to establish a "working cooperation" with their readers and /or audiences, the consumers of the texts. Therefore, the goal inference making strategies in literary texts is not simply the pursuit of communicative intention, but rather to signify the literary appreciation and aesthetic taste and effects of the discourse as produced by the author. Reading as such is collaborative activity, in which both readers and authors participate (Mey, 2001: 788). The author employs his/her knowledge, skills, and talent to produce the literary discourse, whereas the reader makes use of his/her knowledge of the world, experience and literary taste to create a relevant understanding of this discourse. Mey (ibid.) eloquently argues that reading is a cooperative process of active re-creation, not simply a passive and determined use of some "recreational fallacy". Short (1996:204) also alludes to the notion of cooperative reading as he points out that the value of an utterance, and consequently the speech act, may be different to different readers which results in different understanding. This is, as Mey (2001:788) put it, as much as the playwright depends on the reader, as a presupposition to his/her activity, the reader is dependent on the playwright for guidance in the world of fiction. Furthermore, the reader has to work out two types of inferences, the one related to the lower order interaction utilizing the pretended context signified by the playwright and the at the higher order interaction utilizing the actual context.

Since the collaborative reading is not merely a heated pursuit of the author's intention throughout the literary discourse, this requires literarily-oriented inference making process. As such Grice's framework of implicature encounters serious problems when applied to literary interpretation, since it focuses on the

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communicative intention of the discourse producer. Gricean theory of meaning has been, and still is, the most accepted theory of linguistic meaning. Grice first produced his theory in 1957 in his seminal paper "Meaning". This theory is based on the dichotomy of natural vs. non-natural meaning. Grice holds that what a word "means" derives from what speakers mean by uttering it; and he further holds that "what a particular speaker or writer means by a sign on a particular occasion may well diverge from the standard meaning of the sign" (Grice 1957:381).

The Gricean framework, as such, could yield some utility at the character-character level, but at the author-reader level it is doomed to failure. Since literary interpretation is not always associated with the most plausible assumption about intentions or the default meaning, but it is rather a balance between the best literary appreciation and the most relevant interpretation of the discourse. This requires putting Grice's notion of implicature under scrutiny when applied to literary discourse. Like the theory of speech act, the theory of implicature can be applied to the two levels of drama discourse, i.e. the higher level of author-reader and the fictional level of character-character level. Nonetheless, different implicatures arise as one is related to the inference made by the reader and the inference made by the character within the fictional world. Consider the following example from *The Merchant of Venice*, Act II Scene II.

GOBBO: Alack the day, I know you not, young gentleman:

but, I pray you, tell me, is my boy, God rest his
soul, alive or dead?

LAUNCELOT: Do you not know me, father?

GOBBO: Alack, sir, I am sand-blind; I know you not.

LAUNCELOT: Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might fail of
the knowing me: it is a wise father that knows his
own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of
your son: give me your blessing: truth will come
to light; murder cannot be hid long; a man's son
may, but at the length truth will out.

GOBBO: Pray you, sir, stand up: I am sure you are not
Launcelot, my boy.

At the character-character level, the implicature arises from Launcelot's utterance to his father is that you are not wise enough to know me. However, at the higher level, several implicatures arise, one of which could be related to the intertextuality of the utterance with Telemachus's expression in *The Odyssey*, Book I, Line 765: "My mother," answered Telemachus, "tells me I am son to Ulysses, but it is a wise child that knows his own father". Shakespeare's reversal of Telemachus's utterance creates a nice comparison between the father-son

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relation in *The Odyssey* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

The other implicature may also be related to the father-son relationship which is one of the themes in the play. Since Lancelot never makes clear that he loves his father, but teases him instead it seems Lancelot takes advantage of his father's blindness and the fact that he doesn't really know him. This could be an interesting parallel to the relationship between Jessica and Shylock. We're never really clear on whether they love each other, but it is clear that Shylock doesn't really know who Jessica is. Jessica, like Lancelot, betrays her father, but while Lancelot does it in jest, Jessica's betrayal is much graver and seriously calls her love and loyalty into question.

As such, on the character-character level, the aim of the inference making process is the pursuit of communicative intention of the addresser, which comes in accordance with Grice's theory of implicature. Nonetheless, the aesthetic and expressive charge of the literary discourse is often expressed and interpreted at the higher level of author-reader level where the reader is involved in a process of interpretation based on his knowledge of the world and encyclopedic knowledge. Therefore, the interaction at the character-character level is often oriented to pure communicative functions. The implicature arises at the character-character level is of weak literary value, it is often a courier of the aesthetic value which is reached by author-reader-level interpretation.

Alternatively, on the author-reader level, the aim of the inference-making process is to confirm, adapt or change the readers' representation of the world and their world views. This process is related to broader discourse not just the simple utterances where the role of the notion of macro speech act become essential. The reader cannot reach a reliable interpretation at this level if the macro speech act performed is not conceived of. This process could be related to the literary notion of themes. It is very important to bear in mind that more than a single implicature can arise at this level of interaction, because a single reader may reach different conclusion about the way the characters behave or interact with each other which encourage different, and sometime contradicting, interpretations. Additionally, different reader may not reach the same conclusions and as result may not make the same set of inferences. Grice's theory of implicature does not allow flexible space for different interpretation since it is a speaker-oriented theory and built upon the notion of a single and well defined communicative intention of the utterance producer.

Black (2006:81-82) argues that upon reading a literary text, the reader is disposed to pursue possible implicatures many of which will be very weak. The reader is often encouraged to look for implicatures more actively than when reading the newspaper or engaging in normal conversation. According to relevance theory, for an utterance to be relevant it only requires that it makes the

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maximum cognitive changes in the addressee's environment at the minimum cognitive cost (Sperper and Wilson 1986). Therefore, it seems that relevance theory does not encounter the same difficulties that Gricean framework encounters when applied to literary discourse, since relevance theory is not as speaker oriented as the Gricean framework is. Relevance theory gives the reader more freedom to reach the most relevant conclusions about the speaker's intention, which in its turn, allow for different interpretations. Relevance theory is a better framework for higher level analysis of the discourse as allows possibility of making several, and sometimes contradicting, implicatures. As such several "weak" implicatures can arise at the higher order level not always a single implicature, and the default interpretation at this level is the least plausible and favorable. As Black (ibid.) puts it, the variety of encyclopedic knowledge that the reader brings to reading will affect the implicature s/he achieves and her/his assessment of them. Hence, the more the reader brings to the text the richer the interpretation may be. This is also true for longer stretches of discourse and most likely to the concept of the macro speech act the author is attempting to perform in the literary discourse.

5. Conclusions

1. There are two different speech acts performed by means of each utterance in literary discourse, i.e. the one at the lower order level which is often felicitous within the world of the literary text itself which is performed by the characters, and the one performed by the author when indirectly addressing the reader through the characters.
2. Two different sets of implicature may arise from each utterance. The implicature related to the lower order level of interaction, i.e. character-character level, is often straightforward and related to the communicative intention of the addresser; whereas at the higher level of interaction, i.e. playwright- reader level, is different and often more complex implicatures, because it depends on the knowledge of the reader and his previous experience.
3. Several "weak" implicatures may arise at the higher order level not always a single implicature, and the default interpretation at this level is the least plausible and favorable. This type of implicature is often related to longer stretches of discourse and most likely to the concept of the macro speech act the author is attempting to perform in the literary discourse.
4. Relevance theory is a better framework for higher level analysis of the discourse as it allows the possibility of making several, and sometimes contradicting, implicatures.

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الخلاصة

ان اهم وظيفة للغة هي وظيفتها التواصلية لانها تستخدم لنقل الافكار والمشاعر والمواقف...الخ. ولكن هناك وظائف اخرى لاتقل اهمية كالوظيفة التعبيرية للغة التي تستخدم فيها اللغة لانتاج الخطاب الادبي بشكل عام او السردى على وجه الخصوص. ان الخطاب الادبي هو نتاج استخدام اللغة في سياق معين لذا فان النظريات

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التداولية يمكن ان تستخدم لتحليل هذا النوع من الخطاب، وان السرد الادبي يمتاز بتعدد مستويات الخطاب لان هناك مستويين مختلفين، لكن مترابطين، من مستويات الخطاب يشتمل كل منهما على نوعين مختلفين من المستخدمين.

المستوى الاول يشتمل على التفاعل اللغوي بين الشخصيات داخل العمل السردى بينما يشتمل المستوى الاخر على التواصل بين القارئ و الكاتب المسرحي. ان المستويين اللذين يشتمل الخطاب السردى عليهما هما مستويان مترابطان لان الخطاب بين القارئ والكاتب المسرحي يوجه الخطاب بين الشخصيات داخل العمل الادبي. ان نظرية الفعل الكلامي يمكن توظيفها في عملية تحليل الخطاب السردى اذ يمكن ان تستخدم لتحليل الخطاب السردى الثنائي المستوى، وان نظرية المعنى والتلويح يمكن ان توظف في هذا النوع من الخطاب لتسليط الضوء على الية الوصول الى المعنى عند المتلقي. وهذا البحث يحاول ان يستكشف كيفية توظيف النظريات التداولية في تحليل الخطاب السردى من خلال استخدام نماذج من مسرحية شكسبير " تاجر البندقية"