

# Examining Theories at Work: Speech Acts, Implicatures and Politeness in a Pragmastylistic Analysis of Anton Chekhov's *The Bear*

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**Abstract:** Through a descriptive qualitative method, Anton Chekhov's *The Bear* is examined for its use of speech acts, implicatures, and politeness. To surface the said theories, a stylistic analysis is conducted, following the principles of pragma-stylistics. Pragmastylistics is used in analyzing a literary piece towards arriving at particular themes, and in which the focus of analysis is how a speaker or writer chooses to realize their speech act in consideration of the intended meaning and effect of which towards an audience. The subject of the following analysis is a one-act play considered to be a farcical comedy depicting the story of a woman mourning her husband's recent death, amidst which she encounters and eventually falls in love with her deceased husband's creditor. The analyses focused on the employment of the pragmatic theories of speech acts, cooperative principles and implicatures, and politeness. The paper attempted ultimately to show through an analysis of dramatic text how words could mean differently or even have meanings at all when put into context.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, pragma-stylistics, stylistics, linguistics, language

## 1. Introduction

Pragmastylistics is a unique and interesting intersection between stylistics and pragmatics. On one hand, stylistics is oriented towards literary appraisal through various sophisticated linguistic and otherwise tools in arriving at unique meanings and forms. On the other hand, pragmatics is the marriage between semantics and syntax, or simply, the language that is in its context. Both theoretical and practical studies and examinations of its application — pragma-stylistics — have not yet been hopeful. It is an area therefore that is arguably rich in necessity for scholarship or research. The following is a pragma-stylistic analysis of Anton Chekhov's one-act play, *The Bear*, which surfaced through the theories of speech acts, cooperative principles and implicatures, and politeness. This arguably least-used but interesting lens in literary appraisal using linguistic theories such as pragmatics hopes to contribute to the steadily growing scholarship surrounding literature and language convergence, especially for instance, in the realm of literature and language education.

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## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Pragmatics and Stylistics: Pragmastylistics**

A complete and critical study of language is not without considering the context of its use (Black, 2006). Language, after all, is a tool for communication. In linguistics, the analysis and description of the relationship between language and context is realized in pragmatics (Hickey, 1993). Pragmatics basically deals with what is said by whom in which context, context encompassing not only what words were used to say what is said, but also the manner of speaking, the reception of the listener to what was said, and all other social conditions surrounding such a certain speech act.

Pragmatics or the study of how context affects meaning intersects with discourse analysis, in that discourse analysis looks at how language works in its context to produce its intended meaning when used in communication (Jucker, 2017). In other words, pragmatics is process-oriented while discourse analysis is product-oriented. It is important to distinguish both because, on the other hand, their convergence makes possible the birth of pragma-stylistics. Pragmastylistics is an important tool of analysis to bring forth answers to the questions of style and the effect of which towards achievement of meaning, in literary studies.

In pragma-stylistics, the focus of analysis is how a speaker or writer chooses to realize their speech act in consideration of the intended meaning and effect of which towards an audience (i.e., the listener or reader). Stylisticians in this case study how elements of context blend with those that are linguistic towards producing not only meaning, but also changes or any other effect on the reception and interpretation of either the listener or reader. In literary studies, pragma-stylistics contributes to the role of both pragmatics and stylistics in not only interpreting, but also appreciating literary texts (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, n.d.). Doing pragma-stylistics includes the analysis of the speech acts that speakers, particularly characters in a literary text, are involved in. Pragmastylistics is also at work when certain implicatures are interpreted by the readers or hearers because of certain violations of communication maxims. Finally, the construct of politeness can also be exploited in the study of how context affects meaning, and how either the writer or speaker uses or acts in which context to achieve their communication goal (Al-hindawi, 2018).

Pragmastylistics can take any piece of text, whether written or spoken, as a subject of analysis; and in any of the varying levels of linguistic examination for style determination towards meaning and effect (Ibrahim & Waheeb, 2017). It is, however, more interesting to see at work in the subject of dramatic texts. Dramatic texts, particularly dialogues, and monologues in a play or a drama in general, are a rich and interesting source of analysis for pragma-stylistics (Abushihab, 2015). In them, language is unique because it is not only meant to be read, if at all; but rather, it is meant to be performed, and in no less than a theater or stage (Davies, 1990). As a form of literature, drama is an interesting piece of text for its comprising elements all unified towards an artistic, performative expression. When, on the stage, drama is the marriage of literature and performance; in analysis and interpretation, it is the convergence of stylistics and pragmatics.

### **2.2. The Bear by Anton Chekhov**

The Bear is a one-act play written by Russian dramatist Anton Chekhov. Chekhov is a physician by profession, but this did not stop him from becoming one of the greatest storytellers in Russia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some would even consider him the founder of modern short story in his time. His works usually revolved around the upper and middle classes of the society of his time; and often his characters, especially in his dramas, were characterized more of having internal

struggles, rather than or aside from external conflicts. *The Bear*, among others, is one of his most popular works, albeit in the humorous or comedic genre.

The story depicts the story of a woman mourning her husband's recent death. One day, in the middle of her lamentations and while she was being consoled by her footman, her husband's creditor came to collect payment of the same husband's debt. Later in the story, after a squabble between the widow and the creditor, they kissed passionately, to the surprise and shock of the woman's servants.

Specifically, the abovementioned play involved two protagonists, Popova, the widow; and Smirnov, the creditor who came to collect Popova's payment of debt. Popova's husband, Nikolai, died 7 months ago in the story; and she still has not yet moved on from mourning. Her servant, the footman Luka tried to console her, explaining that she had not gone out of the house during those months following Nikolai's death; and she was therefore missing out a lot. Luka tried to convince Popova that she not lock herself up in the house and that she go out and meet people and do things other than mourning. Finally, along the story came suddenly the creditor, Smirnov.

Despite Popova's instructions to Luka to not let anyone come to her as she was not yet ready to receive any guests, Smirnov forced himself still and entered Popova's room to introduce himself and his purpose of uninvited visit. Smirnov explained that he wanted to collect the payment of Nikolai's debt; however, Popova told him that she would not be able to pay at the moment, except on the day after tomorrow. Nikolai refused to accept no for an answer and vowed to stay there until he was paid. Eventually, Popova and Nikolai had a heated exchange where Popova called Smirnov a bear because of his rude behavior. Their argument eventually led to an invitation to duel using pistols. Luka went to ask for help from other people in the house. Meanwhile, Smirnov suddenly felt infatuated with Popova. He confessed his feelings to the woman, to her dislike and confusion. Eventually, however, even Popova seemed to have also felt the same way; and then she was grabbed by Smirnov and then kissed. The affair was witnessed by Luka, who just got back together with the gardener, the maid, and the others, armed with objects, ready to meddle in the supposed duel. The story ended there.

Chekhov's *The Bear* is considered to be a farcical comedy. The storyline was driven by absurdity, reflected not only in the language, for example, by the footman, Luka; but also in the actions portrayed in the play, when one sees it in action. Text-wise, the script containing the dialogues also exhibited lines that were absurd in nature. The scenes implied by the dialogues in the text, especially for example, the one where the two protagonists challenged each other to a pistol duel; and then Popova first asked Smirnov to teach her to use the weapon. Another one very important scene in the play was when eventually and suddenly, Smirnov, the male protagonist, got infatuated with Popova; and asked for her hand in marriage. This particular scene then led to the two finally kissing, as it turned out that Popova too caught feelings for the male protagonist.

While this literary piece was the subject of this paper's attempt at pragmatic stylistic analysis, a simple examination of the literariness of the work would extract themes from it like the duality of man, infidelity, Marxism, and feminism. This current paper tried to conduct a pragmatic stylistic analysis to arrive at these same themes as well. In this case, the pragmastylistics of the text focused on how certain speech acts were realized in the dialogues to drive the plot; how implicatures were made through the choices of words and language used in the context of the characters; and how particular grammatical nuances such as the use of nuances, albeit more cultural than intentional, added to the supposed depiction of the story towards the abovementioned themes and ideologies.

### 3. Method

Stylistic analysis by way of pragma-stylistics was employed to make sense of how Chekhov assumed context or the utterances in the story to drive the plot and eventually build a farcical comedy. Content analysis in the lens of the abovementioned underpinning led to the interpretation of the literary piece oriented towards the blend of pragmatics and stylistics, demonstrating how what is said is not always necessarily what is literally meant by speakers or perceived by the listeners or readers. In this current work, the literary text served as a rich source of descriptive data to extract particular speech acts or utterances that drove the plot. Chekhov's *The Bear* is characteristic of the said author's style and tendency towards humorous playwriting, among others. As it is common between pragmatic and stylistic analysis to delve into language in context and use, such a work as this of Chekhov's served well in this unique analysis. To examine the theories of speech acts in the text, Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1975) interpretations and categorizations were used as lenses; while the surfacing of notions of implicatures, and politeness in the exchanges in the play was informed by the work of Grice (1975). The original play is written in Russian, but the text analyzed in this work is an English-translated version of the same, by the translator Julius West (1916).

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1. Analysis and Interpretation of Chekhov's *The Bear* through Austin's and Searle's Speech Acts Theory

As a text in the form of a script or a dialogue, the story exhibited numerous instances of speech acts classifiable as locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. In Black (2006), a locutionary act is the production of a well-formed utterance in whatever language one is speaking. The illocutionary act is the meaning that one wishes to convey. Lastly, the perlocutionary act is the intended effect or intention of the message. The following dialogue lines exemplify the interplay of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts in the play:

*LUKA: It isn't right, madam.... You're just destroying yourself. The maid and the cook have gone off fruit picking, every living being is rejoicing, even the cat understands how to enjoy herself and walks about in the yard, catching midges; only you sit in this room all day, as if this was a convent, and don't take any pleasure. Yes, really! I reckon it's a whole year that you haven't left the house!*

*POPOVA: I shall never go out.... Why should I? My life is already at an end. He is in his grave, and I have buried myself between four walls.... We are both dead. (p. 2)*

Analyzing the abovementioned lines should first begin with understanding the context of the conversation, as far as the situation in the story is concerned. In terms of social roles, Luka was a faithful servant and possibly a long-time one, to Popova and her family. The drama opened to this particular scene and the dialogues, even without the spectacle of the stage and performance, should lead the reader to assume that Luka seemed to be an old butler, if better termed than a footman, to Popova. Luka seemed to be worried about the condition of Popova.

Understanding the said social roles or dynamics above then should lead to further analysis that the locutionary/illocutionary act first by Luka was giving an advice to Popova. The advice encouraged Popova to already stop mourning; and to begin moving on by getting out of the house more. Luka substantiated this piece of advice by mentioning how the other characters in the story were living

the days of their lives around them, like how the maid and the cook have gone fruit picking; and as absurd as it may have been, Luka also included in his examples the cat enjoying itself, catching midges. Luka furthered his advice by contrasting life in the convent with Popova's state of staying already too long a time in her room.

Meanwhile, the perlocutionary act or the intended effect of Luka's advice leads the analysis towards Popova's response. Popova basically refused to leave the house and go out. It could be seen here that not only did the locutionary act of Luka actually fail, but it also resulted in another locutionary act of Popova that now expressed entirely differently an idea and feeling, that is, hopelessness and surrender.

*We are both dead.* (p. 2)

So went Popova. In Searl's (1975) typology of illocutionary acts, this line from Popova is categorized as Declarative. Popova declared therefore, after explaining and realizing how she would no longer go out and how she is now buried in the four walls, that she is dead; that they were both dead already, her husband and her. Another interesting example from the text that illustrates locutionary/illocutionary and perlocutionary acts is below:

*SMIRNOV: [Sees POPOVA and speaks with respect] Madam, I have the honor to present myself, I am Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov, landowner, and retired lieutenant of artillery! I am compelled to disturb you on a very pressing affair.*

*POPOVA: [Not giving him her hand] What do you want?*

*SMIRNOV: Your late husband, with whom I had the honor of being acquainted, died in my debt for one thousand two hundred roubles, on two bills of exchange. As I've got to pay the interest on a mortgage to-morrow, I've come to ask you, madam, to pay me the money to-day.* (pp. 3-4)

Before the dialogue lines above, Popova was asking Luka to tell whoever suddenly rang the bell at the time that she did not want to receive anybody that day. Eventually, Luka came back to Popova, reporting that the sudden visitor was insistent in seeing Popova because of a 'pressing affair'; to which the widow hesitantly complied and therefore asked Luka to have the said visitor come in. From there on, the dialogue lines above ensued. Firstly, before the lines of Smirnov was a description of the supposed action of the speaker, enclosed within brackets. This signified that on the stage or in the mind's eyes of the readers of the text, Smirnov was supposed to act respectful towards Popova. The supposed respectful gesture, and as far as the cultural context of the story was concerned, was that Smirnov bowed his head and kissed the hand of Popova upon meeting. This was confirmed by the description of the supposed action as well of Popova when it was her turn to speak, being that she did not give her hand. The locutionary/illocutionary acts in these lines were that Popova was asking about what Smirnov wanted from her. This was even after Smirnov introduced himself first to the lady. Smirnov then proceeded to answer Popova and explained about his intention of coming, that was to ask her to pay the money that day. The story went on through the next dialogue lines that followed:

*POPOVA: One thousand two hundred.... And what was my husband in debt to you for?*

*SMIRNOV: He used to buy oats from me. (pp. 3-4)*

The intended message conveyed by Smirnov seemed to have not reached Popova, rendering his locutionary act useless as Popova instead asked what her husband was indebted for. In this particular case, however, while there was a breakdown of the locutionary/illocutionary acts of Smirnov since he was not able to get his expected answer, Popova's locutionary/illocutionary act was met with an aligned response from Smirnov, back. In other words, Popova did not outrightly answer or respond to Smirnov's asking to be paid on that day, which was the cause of his arrival; rather, she responded with another locutionary/illocutionary act that was then answered by Smirnov more correctly than how she did, with his.

*POPOVA: If Nicolai Mihailovitch died in debt to you, then I shall certainly pay you, but you must excuse me to-day, as I haven't any spare cash. The day after to-morrow my steward will be back from town, and I'll give him instructions to settle your account, but at the moment I cannot do as you wish.... Moreover, it's exactly seven months to-day since the death of my husband, and I'm in a state of mind which absolutely prevents me from giving money matters my attention.*

*SMIRNOV: And I'm in a state of mind which, if I don't pay the interest due to-morrow, will force me to make a graceful exit from this life feet first. They'll take my estate!*

*POPOVA: You'll have your money the day after to-morrow. (p. 4)*

The abovementioned extracts or lines demonstrate an example of Searle's (1975) Commissive class of illocutionary act. Commissive speech acts are those where speakers commit themselves to a future action. Popova explained that she did not have any spare cash with her to dispense and pay her husband's debt, so she committed that her steward would instruct to settle the account the day after tomorrow. To this, however, Smirnov responded that if he would not be able to pay the interest due tomorrow, his estate would be taken away. Notably, Popova maintained that she would pay the money the day after tomorrow. From here on, the exchange between the two characters started to become more heated:

*SMIRNOV: I don't want the money the day after tomorrow, I want it to-day.*

*POPOVA: You must excuse me; I can't pay you.*

*SMIRNOV: And I can't wait till after to-morrow.*

*POPOVA: Well, what can I do, if I haven't the money now!*

*SMIRNOV: You mean to say, you can't pay me?*

*POPOVA: I can't.*

*SMIRNOV: Hm! Is that the last word you've got to say?*

*POPOVA: Yes, the last word.*

*SMIRNOV: The last word? Absolutely your last?*

*POPOVA: Absolutely. (p. 4)*

Firstly, the response to Smirnov insisting that he did not want the money the day after tomorrow and that he did want it today is an example of a directive speech act. When Popova responded with the fact that she could not pay him that moment, interestingly there seemed to be a failure or a breakdown of communication between the two. This is said so because the following lines afterwards were Smirnov repeatedly asking or reconfirming what Popova meant that she could not pay him; to which Popova responded affirmatively, that she could not, indeed, pay him. Smirnov further verified this and asked if it was her last words that she had to say, and Popova affirmed. Smirnov can be depicted from his last line in this particular extract that he grew angrier or even more impatient, as could be assumed from his lines. It was as if Smirnov was already beginning to break away from calm and politeness and burst into madness.

Delving into the perlocutionary acts in the lines above, Popova wanted Smirnov to understand that the money could not be given at the moment. This was the intended effect of Popova's speech as she repeatedly maintained that she could not pay the money. However, this did not seem to materialize to Smirnov. This only made him rather more impatient and angrier. Within the bounds or context of their conversations starting from the moment Smirnov entered the scene and with his intention, it was clear that the repetition of the exchange between Popova and Smirnov, with the latter repeatedly confirming the former's assertions, demonstrated growing tension.

*POPOVA: [Her eyes downcast] Sir, in my solitude I have grown unaccustomed to the masculine voice, and I can't stand shouting. I must ask you not to disturb my peace.*

*SMIRNOV: Pay me the money, and I'll go.*

*POPOVA: I told you perfectly plainly; I haven't any money to spare; wait until the day after to-morrow.*

*SMIRNOV: And I told you perfectly plainly I don't want the money the day after to-morrow, but to-day. If you don't pay me to-day, I'll have to hang myself to-morrow.*

*POPOVA: But what can I do if I haven't got the money? You're so strange!*

*SMIRNOV: Then you won't pay me now? Eh?*

*POPOVA: I can't.*

*SMIRNOV: In that case I stay here and shall wait until I get it. [Sits down] You're going to pay me the day after tomorrow? Very well! I'll stay here until the day after to-morrow. I'll sit here all the time.... [Jumps up] I ask you: Have I got to pay the interest to-morrow, or haven't I? Or do you think I'm doing this for a joke?*

*POPOVA: Please don't shout! This isn't a stable!*

*SMIRNOV: I wasn't asking you about a stable, but whether I'd got my interest to pay to-morrow or not?*

*POPOVA: You don't know how to behave before women!*

*SMIRNOV: No, I do know how to behave before women!*

*POPOVA: No, you don't! You're a rude, ill-bred man! Decent people don't talk to a woman like that!*  
(p. 7)

The lines above demonstrate how the tension was growing between the two characters. Before this exchange, Smirnov has declared that he would not leave until he was paid. Popova walked out of the

scene for a while as she started to feel uncomfortable with Smirnov's tone of speaking. While the lady character was out of the scene, Smirnov began to get out of character or break the barriers between the audience and the characters/actors in the play as he started to think out loud; to rant about how miserable he was as he needed money, yet he did not know where else to get it or who to come to. He proceeded to maintain that he would stay in the place and not leave until he got paid. He was expressing how angry he was with the situation; he was threatening and almost cursing; and he swore to be stubborn and not leave until he got what he wanted.

Later eventually, Popova returned to the scene. She began speaking with her eyes "downcast" and told Smirnov that she was not used to all the yelling and shouting, especially from a man's voice in the house. She then proceeded to ask that Smirnov lower his voice, stop his loud rants, and leave in that instant. To this, Smirnov responded rather stubbornly instead. From here on, it could be sensed that Popova now began to grow impatient and rather backed against the wall. Her use of the adverbial phrase, "perfectly plainly" to emphasize her being very clear with her message showed her growing exasperation. Notably too, her entering the scene and beginning herself with her eyes downcast to perhaps show Smirnov further how she was indeed in mourning and sad; or even embarrassed because of the noisy rantings inside the house, did not work. Smirnov only proceeded to establish his stubbornness, his insistence that he be paid first.

Meanwhile, Smirnov responded using the same words that Popova used, which showed his exasperation, but at the same time too, his desperation; his having no choice at all but to do what he was doing, after all. This is confirmed by the next words he said in the same line, that is, he will have to hang himself tomorrow without the money being paid. Popova finally burst out, albeit not as explosive yet as Smirnov, and said,

*But what can I do if I haven't got the money? You're so strange!* (p. 7)

Notice as well in this particular line of the female character that she was also already out of things to say: Popova was backed against the wall. She did not know what to say anymore. She ended her line with a rather start at the insults that would later follow. Smirnov too seemed to have been left with nothing more to say than to have it repeated to him, as if it was not clear enough. When Popova repeated her answer, "No", then Smirnov repeated his earlier conviction as well of staying until he gets what he wanted. Soon afterwards, however, the scene would show in the text that Smirnov jumps up from his seat, perhaps for the text to emphasize how he grew more adamant and burst out accusing Popova of taking his situation as a joke. Popova then responded and implied that Smirnov seemed to think that he was in a stable. Smirnov caught this and condescendingly circled back to what he wanted: To have him paid and his interest be paid tomorrow as well. From here on, the exchange between the two characters finally broke down and away from the real topic; and then jumped into a very heated exchange starting from Popova accusing Smirnov of not knowing how to behave before women.

Examining the locutionary/illocutionary and perlocutionary acts at play in the exchanges, as well as individual expressions of the two, it could be assumed that definitely, firstly, Smirnov was being sarcastic and mocking with his response to Popova. Popova was accusing him of being rude and ill-bred, as well as ignorant of how to behave before women. This accusatory line affected a perlocutionary act in Smirnov but combatively. Smirnov's first response was an expressive speech



act; to which Popova perlocutionary response was a further annoyance and thus accusation to the male character as being rude and silly. Note that from this also one could make out that indeed, Smirnov was mocking and sarcastic with his exaggerating his being modest.

Meanwhile, Smirnov's second response when Popova called him silly and rude was a fervent attack against the person of Popova and all women, for that matter. Again, as an expressive speech act, Smirnov seemed to hope to gather a surrendering response from Popova from his argumentative speech against her and women in general. He defended himself by explicating women's seeming fickle-mindedness, conceitedness, and vagueness. He furthered this by comparing women and men, in the context of faithfulness and constancy in love. A deeper analysis of this speech of his was that Smirnov's background or experiences, the place where is coming from, his mindset not only about women of the day but also his romantic and personal life, as well as his views on love and his own sex group are laid out. Popova's accusing him of being ill-bred, rude, and ignorant of how to behave before women seemed to have struck a vein in him, indeed; and led him to burst out in anger in the scene.

*POPOVA: Then, according to you, who is faithful and constant in love? Is it the man?*

*SMIRNOV: Yes, the man!*

*POPOVA: The man! [Laughs bitterly] Men are faithful and constant in love! What an idea! [With heat] What right have you to talk like that? Men are faithful and constant! Since we are talking about it, I'll tell you that of all the men I knew and know, the best was my late husband.... I loved him passionately with all my being, as only a young and imaginative woman can love, I gave him my youth, my happiness, my life, my fortune, I breathed in him, I worshipped him as if I were a heathen, and... and what then? This best of men shamelessly deceived me at every step! After his death I found in his desk a whole drawerful of love-letters, and when he was alive—it's an awful thing to remember!—he used to leave me alone for weeks at a time and make love to other women and betray me before my very eyes; he wasted my money and made fun of my feelings.... And, in spite of all that, I loved him and was true to him. And not only that, but, now that he is dead, I am still true and constant to his memory. I have shut myself for ever within these four walls and will wear these weeds to the very end.... (p. 8-9)*

The perlocutionary force of Smirnov's response invited an expressive speech act as well from Popova which revealed also her mindset and context in general. In the lines above, when Popova dared Smirnov to verify who to him was faithful and constant in love, and Smirnov affirmed man to be which, Popova now began also bursting in anger. Her expressive act, informed further in the text by the bracketed detail, laughs bitterly, showing repressed pain and anger, especially towards her late husband. Popova did not think of her husband as faithful and constant in love, as far as her experience was concerned. She vehemently disagreed therefore with Smirnov's declaration that man is faithful and constant in love. Interestingly, from the lines of Popova, her utterances reveal that she seemed to be in two different places with what to do and to feel about her late husband - given that Nikolai betrayed her love, Popova seemed to be trapped with her idea of staying faithful still and regardless. Yet, it was also revealed in her words and expression how she also wanted justice for her negative experience; how she believed that men, particularly her late husband, are not at all faithful and constant in love. Her expressive act reveals this psychological dichotomy in her; she knew that her late husband betrayed her many times already; she knew therefore that there should be no use anymore in staying faithful, defending, and mourning for too long her late husband; yet, she still

does so. Her outburst revealed this frustration of wanting, but at the same time, not wanting to escape the trap of her life and love with her late husband.

Following these were more heated exchanges between the two characters, that eventually led to Popova calling Smirnov a bear; and then Smirnov challenging a duel of pistols against the lady character. The storyline went from here until its unexpected denouement, that is where the same two characters seemed to have fallen in love with each other and kissed, to the shock and surprise of everybody in the house who supposedly came to the rescue.

#### **4.2. Analysis and Interpretation of Chekhov's The Bear through Grice's Cooperative Principle and Implicatures**

Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle deals with describing how meanings different from the text or utterance form is conveyed and is particularly received and interpreted by the listener or reader. When humans communicate with one another, it is assumed within the conversational context that the speakers understand one another, even implicitly. Unstated meanings are bounded by what Grice called maxims. When these so-called maxims are violated, implications from what was said, over what was literally conveyed, are received and interpreted. Grice calls this flouting a maxim.

The literary text at hand was analyzed in light of Grice's Cooperative Principles approach, particularly how maxims were violated and implicatures were made on the part of the hearer or hearers between and among the characters in the story. Chekhov's *The Bear* is rich with samples of how Grice's theory works out. In Cooperative Principles, the maxims are as follows: maxim of quantity; maxim of quality; maxim of relation; and maxim of manner. When these maxims are either flouted or violated, which actually happens rather more often when it happens with linguistic rules, implicatures arise. Meaning, in a speech situation, the speaker and the listener are assumed to share a common context, such that even when maxims of conversation are broken, there is still comprehension between the two. The listener should always be able to understand what the speaker should be implying. This does not happen in a situation where the speakers and listeners or readers do not share a common context or are not on the same planes of reality. Examined below in this light are the following lines from *The Bear*.

*LUKA: It isn't right, madam.... You're just destroying yourself. The maid and the cook have gone off fruit picking, every living being is rejoicing, even the cat understands how to enjoy herself and walks about in the yard, catching midges; only you sit in this room all day, as if this was a convent, and don't take any pleasure. Yes, really! I reckon it's a whole year that you haven't left the house!*

*POPOVA: I shall never go out.... Why should I? My life is already at an end. He is in his grave, and I have buried myself between four walls.... We are both dead.*

To note, dramatic texts are a good source of samples where conversational maxims and implicatures could be best examined. Dramatic texts, like that of a one-act play, in this case, Chekhov's *The Bear*, usually opens with a scene that does not necessarily begin from the original start of a usual story; it is, after all, just a slice of life on stage (Davies, 1990). Plays usually begin anywhere within any day at any stage of the character's life. Yet, even so, the audience and readers are expected to understand what the plot would be about. In other words, even when a dramatic text begin not at the literal start of a story, but rather in the middle or anywhere else, the audience or readers would mostly automatically get it easily; implications are mostly automatic among them.

The extracted lines above are from the opening scene of *The Bear*. In it, Luka was saying that something is not right. What was this something that Luka was pertaining to, and why was it not right? As an example of cataphora on one hand, Luka's lines were operating in the context of the story being about Popova's dead husband. Luka was speaking implying the death of Popova's husband, and more importantly, how it affected the lady character. The audience or readers would imply this and understand why the story opened with Luka stating that something isn't right and that Popova was just destroying herself, among others. It could be implied from the opening lines that Luka was trying to convince Popova to go out and already stop mourning and being miserable. In Grice's cooperative principles, the maxim of quantity and relation were violated here.

The second line demonstrated the same idea. Popova was saying that she shall never go out; that why would she, in the first place, go out, when her life is already at an end it is because he is dead. The lines did not explicitly say that he was dead. But from its use of grave, it could be implied that it meant that he was already dead. Further examining the implications in the lines, this he was probably very important to Popova as it caused her to believe that her life too was already at an end. Even when these lines would be taken into isolation, notwithstanding the rest that follows, it could be inferred that Popova was referring to the death of her husband; and that Luka was trying to console her as she hasn't gone out for almost a year in mourning for such tragedy. It could be further inferred just from here that Popova regarded her husband highly in her life.

*POPOVA: [With determination] I must ask you never to talk to me about it! You know that when Nicolai Mihailovitch died, life lost all its meaning for me. I vowed never to the end of my days to cease to wear mourning, or to see the light.... You hear? Let his ghost see how well I love him.... Yes, I know it's no secret to you that he was often unfair to me, cruel, and... and even unfaithful, but I shall be true till death, and show him how I can love. There, beyond the grave, he will see me as I was before his death.... (p. 2)*

Another extract above exemplifies a violation of maxim and therefore infer an implication from the conversation between the two characters, in this case, between Luka and Popova. As the storyline went on, Luka was trying to convince Popova to go out as she was missing out a lot from the outside. Popova in response and with determination, shunned the idea and vowed to never cease mourning her husband's death, whose name, notably, was just only mentioned here in this part of the script. In light of Grice's conversational maxims, once again the maxim of quantity was violated in the lines,

*Yes, I know it's no secret to you that he was often unfair to me, cruel, and... and even unfaithful, but I shall be true till death, and show him how I can love. (p. 2)*

This is so because Popova spoke assuming that Luka already knew the secret of her husband being unfaithful and cruel to her. On the end of the readers or audience, this line,

*There, beyond the grave, he will see me as I was before his death.... (p. 2)*

also violated the same maxim. The readers or audience are left with it to imply that Popova will not change the way she was and remain the same just as how she was before her husband died.

*SMIRNOV: I don't want the money the day after tomorrow, I want it to-day.*

*POPOVA: You must excuse me; I can't pay you.*

*SMIRNOV: And I can't wait till after to-morrow.*

*POPOVA: Well, what can I do, if I haven't the money now!*

*SMIRNOV: You mean to say, you can't pay me?*

*POPOVA: I can't.*

*SMIRNOV: Hm! Is that the last word you've got to say?*

*POPOVA: Yes, the last word.*

*SMIRNOV: The last word? Absolutely your last?*

*POPOVA: Absolutely.*

*SMIRNOV: Thank you so much. I'll make a note of it. [Shrugs his shoulders] And then people want me to keep calm! I meet a man on the road, and he asks me "Why are you always so angry, Grigory Stepanovitch?" But how on earth am I not to get angry? I want the money desperately. I rode out yesterday, early in the morning, and called on all my debtors, and not a single one of them paid up! I was just about dead-beat after it all, slept, goodness knows where, in some inn, kept by a Jew, with a vodka-barrel by my head. At last, I get here, seventy versts from home, and hope to get something, and I am received by you with a "state of mind"! How shouldn't I get angry.*

*POPOVA: I thought I distinctly said my steward will pay you when he returns from town.*

*SMIRNOV: I didn't come to your steward, but to you! What the devil, excuse my saying so, have I to do with your steward! (pp. 4-5)*

This particular exchange between Popova and Smirnov shows how the misunderstanding between the two was beginning. Firstly, even while Popova already made it clear that she would pay through her steward on the day after tomorrow, Smirnov seemed to have not grasped it completely and even asked for clarification about it repeatedly. As mentioned earlier, it could be inferred from here that there was already a growing tension between the two characters; and that Smirnov particularly was coming from a different place, a violation of the maxim of relation. Smirnov began airing what he went through and why he was angry. To this, Popova only repeated what she said to him regarding paying through her steward. Notably, this response from Popova was in the process, a violation of the maxim of relation as well. It seemed that she deliberately ignored the ranting of Smirnov after all and just asserted her point. Popova tried to follow the maxim of manner by attempting to be clear and on-point with her response, relating to the original topic of their conversation. However, Smirnov smacked this response from Popova by rather twisting the lady's words and saying that he didn't come to her steward but to her. This was probably again coming from Smirnov's already burdened emotional status of that day, as he had been through a lot, as he explained, before coming there.

Even when Popova walked out of the scene, implying that there was not a point anymore in continuing such conversation with an angry man, Smirnov still continued airing his frustrations. He flouted a maxim here, which was a maxim of relation again; and proceeded to rant about his day. His speech act continued violating the maxim of relation especially when noticeably, he also went on noticing or describing the appearance of Popova; as if beginning the symptoms or signs that he

was in fact attracted to the lady, in the first place, even before he realized her being brave and strong headed. This could be analyzed from the extract below:

*SMIRNOV: Get out! [Exit LUKA] Ill and will see nobody! No, it's all right, you don't see me.... I'm going to stay and will sit here till you give me the money. You can be ill for a week, if you like, and I'll stay here for a week.... If you're ill for a year—I'll stay for a year. I'm going to get my own, my dear! You don't get at me with your widow's weeds and your dimpled cheeks! I know those dimples! [Shouts through the window] Simeon, take them out! We aren't going away at once! I'm staying here! Tell them in the stable to give the horses some oats! You fool, you've let the near horse's leg get tied up in the reins again! [Teasingly] "Never mind...." I'll give it you. "Never mind." [Goes away from the window] Oh, it's bad.... The heat's frightful, nobody pays up. I slept badly, and on top of everything else here's a bit of fluff in mourning with "a state of mind."... My head's aching.... Shall I have some vodka, what? Yes, I think I will. (p. 6)*

The same instance of Smirnov noticing the appearance and referring to Popova as something else, even while he was mad, could be seen in this extract below, suggesting that throughout the story, or at least beginning from when Smirnov saw her, he started to notice her and he was led to be attracted further down the plot.

*SMIRNOV: [Teasing her] Silly and rude! I don't know how to behave before women! Madam, in my time I've seen more women than you've seen sparrows! Three times I've fought duels on account of women. I've refused twelve women, and nine have refused me! Yes! There was a time when I played the fool, scented myself, used honeyed words, wore jewellery, made beautiful bows. I used to love, to suffer, to sigh at the moon, to get sour, to thaw, to freeze.... I used to love passionately, madly, every blessed way, devil take me; I used to chatter like a magpie about emancipation, and wasted half my wealth on tender feelings, but now—you must excuse me! You won't get round me like that now! I've had enough! Black eyes, passionate eyes, ruby lips, dimpled cheeks, the moon, whispers, timid breathing—I wouldn't give a brass farthing for the lot, madam! Present company always excepted, all women, great or little, are insincere, crooked, backbiters, envious, liars to the marrow of their bones, vain, trivial, merciless, unreasonable, and, as far as this is concerned [taps his forehead] excuse my outspokenness, a sparrow can give ten points to any philosopher in petticoats you like to name! You look at one of these poetic creatures: all muslin, an ethereal demi-goddess, you have a million transports of joy, and you look into her soul—and see a common crocodile! [He grips the back of a chair; the chair creaks and breaks] But the most disgusting thing of all is that this crocodile for some reason or other imagines that its chef d'oeuvre, its privilege and monopoly, is its tender feelings. Why, confound it, hang me on that nail feet upwards, if you like, but have you met a woman who can love anybody except a lapdog? When she's in love, can she do anything but snivel and slobber? While a man is suffering and making sacrifices all her love expresses itself in her playing about with her scarf and trying to hook him more firmly by the nose. You have the misfortune to be a woman, you know from yourself what is the nature of woman. Tell me truthfully, have you ever seen a woman who was sincere, faithful, and constant? You haven't! Only freaks and old women are faithful and constant! You'll meet a cat with a horn or a white woodcock sooner than a constant woman! (p. 8)*

The extract above could be more on the inference that Smirnov was coming from a different place, that is, perhaps having been hurt in the past and having encountered women and other experiences

that shaped his thinking about them negatively; but it is notable how he referred to Popova as a poetic creature; and again, noticed her appearance after all. Meanwhile, this is again a violation of the maxim of relation. Smirnov almost went out of the way to say those hurtful things and finally struck a nerve within Popova even when his initial and most important goal in coming after all was just to be paid. Even so, he brought in the conversation his own context that Popova did not know anything about, after all. This contributed to further misunderstanding, and later on, the quarrel that finally ensued.

### 4.3. Analysis of Politeness Markers in Chekhov's The Bear

Politeness is a social phenomenon that is not natural but is an act or function performed by man to affect the force of their speech acts (Al-Duleimi et al., 2016). In pragmatics, politeness is an interesting dimension that theorists looked into in examining how context should influence language use, in general. In Brown and Levinson (1987 as cited in Black, 2006), politeness in people emerges because one is motivated to maintain 'face', at least in the sociological sense; and maintain a sense of self-worth in front of others. To Leech (1983 as cited in Black, 2006), a number of maxims revolving around the principles of 'minimizing the expression of impolite beliefs' and 'maximizing the expression of polite beliefs' were introduced, such as modesty, tact, approbation, and generosity. Black (2006) argues that politeness should be considered or seen on different levels of narrative organization. Black differentiated discourse analysis in light of politeness theories on narrator and reader level, from character-to-character level. Accordingly, politeness may be challenging to examine at the character-to-character level; although there are similarities between the realms of the narrator-reader interaction; and the character-to-character.

In Chekhov's The Bear, the plot was basically driven interesting by the main conflict, that was when Popova insulted Smirnov and compared him to a bear. This is an example of a face-threatening act or FTA in the text. FTAs are illocutionary acts (Embugushiki, 2014) that threaten or harm, in this case, a character's negative face (positive v. negative face, as stipulated by Brown and Levinson).

*SMIRNOV: I wasn't asking you about a stable, but whether I'd got my interest to pay to-morrow or not?*

*POPOVA: You don't know how to behave before women!*

*SMIRNOV: No, I do know how to behave before women!*

*POPOVA: No, you don't! You're a rude, ill-bred man! Decent people don't talk to a woman like that!*  
(p. 7)

In these particular lines or exchanges between the two characters, Smirnov began to be more condescending against Popova, which resulted to her eventually calling him rude, ill-bred, and ignorant of how to behave before women. While it could be noticed that in the beginning of the scenes since Smirnov entered, he was polite first in attempting to introduce himself well; and then in explaining what he was after on his arrival, the exchanges between the two, albeit Popova similarly tried to be polite towards Smirnov despite her mourning condition, escalated quickly to a heated conversation. Even before this scene, Smirnov actually already began to be irritated, if not yet rude,

when he heard Popova's reasoning that she could not pay the money at the moment, especially because of her current state of mind.

*POPOVA: If Nicolai Mihailovitch died in debt to you, then I shall certainly pay you, but you must excuse me to-day, as I haven't any spare cash. The day after to-morrow my steward will be back from town, and I'll give him instructions to settle your account, but at the moment I cannot do as you wish.... Moreover, it's exactly seven months to-day since the death of my husband, and I'm in a state of mind which absolutely prevents me from giving money matters my attention.*

*SMIRNOV: And I'm in a state of mind which, if I don't pay the interest due to-morrow, will force me to make a graceful exit from this life feet first. They'll take my estate! (p. 4)*

Upon knowing that Popova would not be able to give him his money, Smirnov showed signs of beginning aggression or outbursts in his response, as presented above. Probably Smirnov was coming from a place of desperation and worry as the unpayment of the owed money to him would mean that his estate would be taken from him. From here on, Smirnov becomes more and more agitated, desperate, and angry, even to the point of almost going mad, throughout the story, even after Popova walks shortly out of the scene, perhaps not being able to take it to her anymore the veiled but gradually revealing disrespect or impoliteness of her unexpected visitor.

*POPOVA: [Exploding] What? How dare you say all that to me?*

*SMIRNOV: You may have buried yourself alive, but you haven't forgotten to powder your face!*

*POPOVA: How dare you speak to me like that?*

*SMIRNOV: Please don't shout, I'm not your steward! You must allow me to call things by their real names. I'm not a woman, and I'm used to saying what I think straight out! Don't you shout, either!*

*POPOVA: I'm not shouting, it's you! Please leave me alone!*

*SMIRNOV: Pay me my money and I'll go.*

*POPOVA: I shan't give you any money!*

*SMIRNOV: Oh, no, you will.*

*POPOVA: I shan't give you a farthing, just to spite you. You leave me alone! (p. 9)*

The exchange above shows how Popova now began to explode as well in anger, this, especially after their short debate on faithfulness and love between men and women. Popova finally burst in anger as she could not believe how dared the male character say those rude and disrespectful things to her. Smirnov responded to Popova's outburst with sarcasm and proceeded further with mocking and condescension in the succeeding exchanges. *Popova could be seen here in the text being infuriated with Smirnov's impoliteness and disrespect. The following lines show the climax of their argument.*

*POPOVA: I ask you to go away!*

*SMIRNOV: Give me my money.... [Aside] Oh, how angry I am! How angry I am!*

*POPOVA: I don't want to talk to impudent scoundrels! Get out of this! [Pause] Aren't you going? No?*

*SMIRNOV: No.*

*POPOVA: No?*

*SMIRNOV: No!*

*POPOVA: Very well then! [Rings, enter LUKA] Luka, show this gentleman out!*

*LUKA: [Approaches SMIRNOV] Would you mind going out, sir, as you're asked to! You needn't...*

*SMIRNOV: [Jumps up] Shut up! Who are you talking to? I'll chop you into pieces!*

*LUKA: [Clutches at his heart] Little fathers!... What people!... [Falls into a chair] Oh, I'm ill, I'm ill! I can't breathe!*

*POPOVA: Where's Dasha? Dasha! [Shouts] Dasha! Pelageya! Dasha! [Rings.]*

*LUKA: Oh! They've all gone out to pick fruit.... There's nobody at home! I'm ill! Water!*

*POPOVA: Get out of this, now.*

*SMIRNOV: Can't you be more polite?*

*POPOVA: [Clenches her fists and stamps her foot] You're a boor! A coarse bear! A Bourbon! A monster!*

*SMIRNOV: What? What did you say?*

*POPOVA: I said you are a bear, a monster!*

*SMIRNOV: [Approaching her] May I ask what right you have to insult me?*

*POPOVA: And suppose I am insulting you? Do you think I'm afraid of you?*

*SMIRNOV: And do you think that just because you're a poetic creature you can insult me with impunity? Eh? We'll fight it out!*

*LUKA: Little fathers!... What people!... Water!*

*SMIRNOV: Pistols! (pp. 10-11)*

In the abovementioned lines of exchange, no signs of politeness at all were seen anymore. Both of the characters were already in their most furious; bursting in anger, mocking each other; and finally, Popova in particular stung Smirnov with an insult, comparing his behavior to a bear, a monster. The drama became more intense with Luka's appearance too and when in the midst of the two, and in an attempt to meddle, he fell ill. The scene eventually led to a challenge posed by the two to each other, a duel with pistols.

The seriousness of the scene did not last long as it shifted to Popova asking the help of Smirnov to teach her first how to use a pistol. An absurd comedy, the scenes quickly paced towards Smirnov finally confessing, after realizing, that he was indeed in love with Popova. Suddenly, he wanted her hand in marriage. Popova understandably refused; but after a while, and as shown by her sudden indecisiveness in asking Smirnov to leave, she yielded.

*SMIRNOV: Come along then. But I warn you, I'm going to fire in the air.*

*POPOVA: That's the last straw! Why?*

*SMIRNOV: Because... because... it's my affair.*



*POPOVA: Are you afraid? Yes? Ah! No, sir, you don't get out of it! You come with me! I shan't have any peace until I've made a hole in your forehead... that forehead which I hate so much! Are you afraid?*

*SMIRNOV: Yes, I am afraid.*

*POPOVA: You lie! Why won't you fight?*

*SMIRNOV: Because... because you... because I like you.*

*POPOVA: [Laughs] He likes me! He dares to say that he likes me! [Points to the door] That's the way. (pp. 12-13)*

The scene as depicted above in the dialogue portrayed how the two characters, initiated by Smirnov, suddenly and comically fell in love with each other. Before these lines above, the scene was still with the two throwing insults at each other. Smirnov particularly began to realize how he was attracted to Popova because she accepted her challenge to duel. According to him, he hadn't seen yet a woman like her.

*SMIRNOV: She is a woman! That's the sort I can understand! A real woman! Not a sour-faced jellybag, but fire, gunpowder, a rocket! I'm even sorry to have to kill her! (p. 11)*

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*SMIRNOV: I absolutely like her! Absolutely! Even though her cheeks are dimpled, I like her! I'm almost ready to let the debt go... and I'm not angry any longer... Wonderful woman! (p. 12)*

Notably though, upon realizing how wonderful of a woman, how unique she was, and therefore how he liked her, Smirnov went back to being polite again, especially when he started teaching Popova how to use a pistol. In the text, this analysis is also informed by the bracketed acting directions such as the marker that indicated they were already examining the pistols; and when Smirnov thought aside about her eyes and how she was an inspiring woman. Furthermore, the use of ellipses in the dialogues of the characters commanded action accompanied by their words or instructions, specifically for the teaching of use of pistol.

*SMIRNOV: [Examining the pistols] You see, there are several sorts of pistols.... There are Mortimer pistols, specially made for duels, they fire a percussion-cap. These are Smith and Wesson revolvers, triple action, with extractors.... These are excellent pistols. They can't cost less than ninety roubles the pair.... You must hold the revolver like this.... [Aside] Her eyes, her eyes! What an inspiring woman!*

*POPOVA: Like this?*

*SMIRNOV: Yes, like this.... Then you cock the trigger and take aim like this.... Put your head back a little! Hold your arm out properly.... Like that.... Then you press this thing with your finger—and that's all. The great thing is to keep cool and aim steadily.... Try not to jerk your arm. (p. 12)*

The following lines are of Smirnov when he confessed that he almost loved Popova. Interestingly, at this point, the perlocutionary effect of the text seemed to have shifted from tense leading towards heated argument and fight; to a tense leading towards romantic build-up.

*SMIRNOV: [Loads the revolver in silence, takes his cap and goes to the door. There he stops for half a minute, while they look at each other in silence, then he hesitatingly approaches POPOVA] Listen.... Are you still angry? I'm devilishly annoyed, too... but, do you understand... how can I express myself?... The fact is, you see, it's like this, so to speak.... Shouts] Well, is it my fault that I like you? [He snatches at the back of a chair; he chair creaks and breaks] Devil take it, how I'm smashing up your furniture! I like you! Do you understand? I... I almost love you! (p. 13)*

Finally, and in the conclusion of this analysis, the plot from here on drove to its unexpected ending; is when Popova eventually yielded, albeit at first indecisive about what to do in the face of such a rash confession, to the intensity of the moment. Smirnov eventually gave in to the moment too, and grabbed Popova and kissed her.

The indecisiveness of Popova near the end of the story, and as demonstrated pragmatically using ellipses and the lowering of the guard, albeit without any marked return to the initial state of politeness between the two, demonstrated the theme of man's duality, after all. While the text was a comedy in nature, it could not go away from bringing to light questions of morality, especially against the canvas of such a situation: A widow whose husband just died less than a year, suddenly falling in love with the latter's creditor, who berated and disrespected her in the process, before the two of them yielded to passion. The pragmatics of the text as demonstrated in the locutionary/illocutionary and perlocutionary acts that added the tension, first built around an upcoming quarrel; and then around an unexpected romance; brought the story to its end with the two characters who were at the beginning, enemies to each other, eventually becoming unexpected lovers.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper attempted to analyze Chekhov's *The Bear* using pragma-stylistics. The analyses demonstrated the application of pragmatic theories in analyzing the styles employed by the author to achieve unity of the text, drive the plot towards a satisfying ending, albeit in light of the nature of the literary piece, and bring forth themes of duality of man, questions of morality such as death, infidelity, and even faithfulness in love and life. There were also, in the story, themes related to feminism. The analysis furthermore focused on how the characters communicated with each other, with the nuances of communication or language in context; and their leading up to the climax, which was the big argument or fights, through examining patterns of diction and cues to mood and mindset shifts, as reflected in the locutionary acts in the dialogues, among others. In particular, the application of pragmatic theories of speech acts, cooperative principle and implicatures, and politeness shed light into how language is assisted by context to realize fully its use whether in speaking or in writing.

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