

A Study of Clementianna's Particularized Conversational Implicatures in *Mirror Mirror*

Itsara Namtapi

Abstract—This study investigates the particularized conversational implicatures (PCIs) invited by Clementianna, an antagonist in a 2012 American comedy fantasy film based on the fairy tale *Snow White*. Brown and Levinson's off-record politeness strategy was adopted to analyze the queen's utterances that contained PCIs. The purpose of the study was twofold: to find the character's reason behind inviting each PCI and to examine whether social distance has an effect on the use of PCIs. Eleven PCIs which served various purposes were found in the queen's utterances. The most frequently used off-record strategy was to "give hints", which occurred seven times, whereas "overgeneralize", "use rhetorical questions", "overstate", and "be ambiguous" strategies were violated only once each. Social distance also seemed to play a prominent role; that is, the queen invited much more PCIs with "intimates" than with "friends" or "strangers", suggesting that indirect utterances corresponded to the social distance between the speaker and the interlocutor.

Index Terms—Mirror mirror, particularized conversational implicature, off-record politeness strategy, social distance.

I. INTRODUCTION

In everyday conversation, what is meant by the speaker's utterance is usually not part of what is explicitly said. One way to achieve this is using implicature as a means to convey implicit meaning. In order to understand what is implied, the interlocutor needs to rely on certain contextual assumptions available to him or her. Supposing, for instance, that a son asks his mother to take him to the zoo and she replies, "There are a lot of your favorite cartoons on TV today." It seems that the mother says something irrelevant to the son's request, but in fact she is indirectly trying to avoid taking her son to the zoo. Implicature is generated to "hint, suggest, or convey some meaning indirectly by means of language" [1] (p. 58). According to Grice [2], conversational implicature can be divided into two types: generalized conversational implicature (GCI), which does not require particular contextual condition, and particularized conversational implicature (PCI), which arises only under particular contextual conditions. The latter falls under the scope of this study.

A lot of research has been done in analyzing how some particular movie characters invite PCIs by violating Gricean Maxims, e.g. Pariah [3], Titanic [4], The Dark Knight Rises [5], From Paris with Love [6], and The Duchess [7]. The

characters in these movies invite PCIs for many reasons, e.g. to be humorous, to be satirical, to confuse, and so on. The present study aims to analyze the PCIs employed by the main antagonist Clementianna in "Mirror Mirror" who usually holds witty conversations with other characters. In particular, her reasons behind inviting each implicature, which serves various purposes and factors affecting the use of PCIs to violate the Gricean Maxims, will be investigated.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Background

1) Grice's cooperative principle

Grice [2] divides conversational implicature into two types: generalized conversational implicature (GCI) and particularized conversational implicature (PCI). The latter type was what the present study only concerned with since it is a conversational implicature that relies heavily on the conversational context and on specific background assumptions attributed to the interlocutors, whereas the former is inferable without reference to any special context. PCI is bound to Grice's Cooperative Principle and one way to invite it is to violate the four Gricean Maxims as follows:

- a. The Quantity Maxim: be informative
- b. The Quality Maxim: be truthful
- c. The Relation Maxim: be relevant
- d. The Manner Maxim: be clear

2) Off-record strategy

Brown and Levinson's off-record politeness strategy is implemented in this study to analyze PCIs employed by Queen Clementianna in the film. According to Brown and Levinson [8] (p. 211), "A communicative act is done off record if it is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act". One basic way to do a Face Threatening Act (FTA) indirectly is to invite conversational implicatures by violating Gricean Maxims. However, off-record utterances can be constructed in a number of ways. Brown and Levinson [8] list fifteen off-record strategies as illustrated in Table I:

B. Previous Studies

A number of studies have investigated the use of PCIs by popular movie characters. Listianni [3] analyzed utterances that contain PCIs in the "Pariah", one of the "Smallville" serial movie episodes. The result showed that there were fourteen conversational implicatures. The Maxim of Quality was violated the most and the Maxim of Quantity the least. Thao [4] analyzed utterances that contained both GCIs and PCIs made by two main characters, Jack and Rose, in Titanic.

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The researcher found 67 PCIs and 37 GCIs invited by the two characters. Thao suggested that the implicatures were used as an effective tool of communication since nearly all of the conversational implicatures were successfully recovered by the hearer. It was also found that there were five reasons why the two characters produced GCIs, including to be sarcastic, and nine reasons for PCIs, including to show some feelings. Setiawan [5] analyzed dialogues in the Dark Knight and found that the Maxim of Quantity was flouted at the highest rate, whereas the Maxim of Quality and Maxim of Manner at the lowest. Characters in the movie were found to have various purposes in flouting Grice's Maxims, e.g. to ignore, to warn, to allow, to refuse, and so on. Moha [6] investigated conversational implicatures uttered by the main characters in "From Paris with Love" and found that nine utterances contained GCIs and thirteen utterances contained PCIs. In terms of PCIs, the purpose of violating Grice's Maxims are also taken into account. Most utterances that contained PCIs served many purposes, e.g. to command, to request, to satirize, to be ironic, and so on.

TABLE I: LIST OF OFF-RECORD STRATEGIES AND EXAMPLES

No.	Strategy	Example
1	Give hints	It's getting hot in here. (The speaker (S) gives a hint to the hearer (H) to turn up the air.)
2	Give association clues	I can't believe your house is bigger than George's. (Both S and H have been to George's.)
3	Presuppose	I lost my hat again. (S presupposed that he has done it before.)
4	Understate	A: How's your knee? B: Nothing serious. (Actually B's knee feels terrible.)
5	Overstate	A thousand roses can't compare to your beauty. (S exaggerates the beauty of H.)
6	Use tautologies	Boys will be boys. (S repeats the word to imply that people should not be surprised if boys or men act in a rough way as it is their nature.)
7	Use contradictions	A: Are you satisfied with your job? B: Well, yes and no. (B leaves A to interpret his contradictory answer.)
8	Be ironic	John is such a nice guy! (John has just cheated on his girlfriend.)
9	Use metaphor	Her dance is a great poem. (S leaves it to H to interpret his meaning, suggesting that the girl dances as beautifully as a great poem is composed.)
10	Use rhetorical questions	Why always me? (S asks a question that needs no answer.)
11	Be ambiguous	You look nothing like your pictures. (The statement could be a compliment or an insult.)
12	Be vague	Perhaps someone should have been more patient. (S intends to tell H that he should have been so by being vague.)
13	Overgeneralize	It's been a fantastic week for us but all good things must come to an end. (S uses the proverb to accept that enjoyable times cannot last forever.)
14	Displace H	Good boys don't make noise. (S wants H to behave himself but does not mention his name directly.)
15	Be incomplete, use ellipsis	Well, I've never seen you ... (S leaves his implicature hanging in the air by being incomplete.)

Up to this point, it is worth noting that the four studies

mentioned above have applied Grice's Cooperative Principle to analyze conversational implicatures. Kristiani [7], however, analyzed PCIs invited by two main characters in the Duchess, namely the Duke and the Duchess of Devonshire, based on Brown and Levinson's off-record politeness strategy. The researchers found 27 utterances that contained PCIs. In addition, they found that PCIs were mostly invited in the climax part and the Relevance Maxim was violated at the highest rate.

Brown and Levinson's off-record politeness strategy was adopted in the present study to analyze Queen Clementianna's utterances that contained PCIs in "Mirror Mirror", which is a 2012 American comedy fantasy film based on the fairy tale Snow White. The purpose of this study was twofold. First, it aimed to find the character's reasons for inviting PCIs to flout Grice's Maxims. Second, it examined whether social distance was a variable affecting the use of PCIs by the character.

There are two research hypotheses in this study as follows:

- 1) Clementianna invites PCIs to violate Grice's Maxims for some specific reasons.
- 2) Social distance affects the use of PCIs by Clementianna.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

The steps for collecting the data were as follows:

- 1) Watch the movie for several times to understand the whole story
- 2) Extract the movie lines that contain PCIs
- 3) Take note of all utterances that violate Grice's Maxims to analyze

B. Data Analysis

The procedure for analyzing the data was as follows:

1. Describe the data in the form of dialogues
2. Describe the situations and contexts
3. Analyze the PCIs invited by Clementianna to find out why she flouts each maxim.

In total, there were eleven PCIs invited by Clementianna to violate Grice's Maxims, as illustrated below:

Scene 1: (5:04)

Biron: My lady, I feel it is my duty to tell you of the rumors that I've been hearing.

Queen: Rumors?

Brighton: Well, there have been rumblings that the kingdom is close to destitute. If we were to join our two houses in marriage, I feel the gentry would be reassured that the kingdom was stable once again.

Queen: Brighton, a word, please.

Brighton: Yes, Your Majesty?

Queen: *Loose lips sink ships. (1)*

In this scene, the queen sits on the throne and plays chess with her servants by using them as human pawns. Baron, one of her ministers, steps forward and tells her that the kingdom is about to be destitute. Having been a bit irritated, the queen summons Brighton, her servant, and utters the idiom "loose lips sink ships" before asking him to take a royal decree stating that anyone rumoring or gossiping shall be put to

death. The idiom implicates that Baron, as well as other people, must no longer report rumors again. According to Brown and Levinson [8] (p. 226), though “the use of proverbs may be conventionalized to the extent of being on record, such generalized advice may serve as criticism.” Similarly, the queen uses “over-generalize” to violate Manner Maxim by using an idiom which may, to some extent, serve as criticism in this context. Her purpose is to warn people that they should not tell rumors or gossip again.

Scene 2: (6:17)

Queen: Snow White. *Is there a fire?* (2)

Snow White: I'm sorry?

Queen: Because I'm searching for an explanation as to why you would be out of your bedroom and in here, and my first guess was fire.

Snow White: I thought maybe I could come to the gala, you know, because today is my 18th birthday.

Queen: Is it, now? Oh, my, oh, my. E to F-3, please. Snow White, maybe it is time I ease up on you. Hmm? After all, you've done nothing to me, caused no problems. And yet... there is something about you that's just so incredibly... irritating. I don't know what it is, the slumped shoulders, the hair, that voice... Mm! I know what it is. I think it is the hair. I hate your hair. *I don't care if it's your 100th birthday.* (3)

In this scene, Snow White comes down from her bedroom and is spotted by the queen. The queen summons her and asks, “Is there a fire?” The question implicates that Snow White shouldn't have come out of her bedroom. This PCI is invited by the “give hints” strategy to violate the Relevance Maxim. Furthermore, Snow White also asks for the queen's permission to let her come to the gala since that day is her 18th birthday. That the queen replies “I don't care if it's your 100th birthday” implicates that she will not allow Snow White to join the gala. Here, the PCI is invited by the “overstate” strategy to violate the Quantity Maxim since the queen's response is considered an exaggeration. In this scene, her purpose for inviting the two PCIs is to be sarcastic and to refuse the request respectively.

Scene 3 (18:56)

Brighton: Pardon, your majesty, but... you have a visitor.

Queen: *I'm not in the mood Brighton.* (4)

In this scene, Brighton delivers the news to the queen that a visitor is coming to the palace. That the queen responds “I'm not in the mood” implicates that she will not welcome the visitor. In this situation, the “give hints” strategy is employed to violate the Relevance Maxim. Her purpose for inviting the PCI is to refuse to meet the visitor.

Scene 4: (20:28)

Queen: Send out the invites. Alert the caterer. I want you to organize a ball like this kingdom has never seen before. We are gonna sweep this kid right off his feet.

Brighton: Uh... Forgive me, Your Majesty, but I don't understand.

Queen: Brighton, the prince is rich. He's built like an ox. I'm going to marry him, and then my financial problems will be... solved.

Brighton: No, I understand that part. What I don't understand is how you intend to pay for the party.

It pains me to say this, but you're broke, my Queen.

Queen: Then go collect more taxes.

Brighton: Your Majesty, I don't know the last time you were in the town, but the people are starving.

Queen: *Do you have no imagination?* (5) Go tell the villagers that bread is meat, less is more, blah, blah, blah. Commoners love a good metaphor.

In this scene, the queen orders Brighton to organize a grand ball in order to impress the prince so that he will marry her. Brighton, however, sees no possibility how the queen can do so since she is broke. When Brighton informs the queen that she cannot get more taxes from commoners as they are starving to death, the queen then uses a rhetorical question that goes “Do you have no imagination?” Such a rhetorical question implies that Brighton is not clever enough to find a way to collect money from the commoners. The queen uses the “rhetorical questions” strategy to violate the Quality Maxim and her purpose for inviting the PCI is to be sarcastic.

Scene 5: (31:28)

Queen: I want her killed.

Brighton: Killed? Your Majesty, isn't that a bit rash?

Queen: *She is a threat to everything.* (6)

In this scene, having scene Snow White at the gala, the queen feels very angry since Snow White did not obey her. She thus orders Brighton to kill the princess. When Brighton asks the queen whether her decision is rather extreme, the queen replies, “She is a threat to everything”, which implies that her decision was carefully thought out and that Snow White should die immediately. The queen uses the “give hints” strategy to violate the Relevance Maxim and her purpose for inviting this PCI is to give information.

Scene 6: (45:44)

Queen: You know, everyone has remarked what a wonderful dancer you were last night.

Prince: Thank you, Your Highness. I do have one question about the evening. There was a girl there. She had black hair and was very beautiful.

Queen: Beautiful?

Prince: Yes, I'd say she was the most beautiful girl I've ever seen.

Queen: Ever is a very long time.

Prince: No, no, no, I know this in my heart. I think she's the most beautiful woman in the whole world.

Queen: Agree to disagree. Let's leave it at that.

Prince: But do you know her? Ivory skin, black hair...

Queen: *Her hair is not black, it's raven, and she's 18 years old, and her skin has never seen the sun, so of course it's good.* (7)

In this scene, the prince is asking the queen whether she knows whom he has met at the gala. That she explains what the girl looks like implicates that she knows who the girl is, Snow White. The queen uses the “give hints” strategy to violate the Relevance Maxim since she does not tell the prince directly that she knows the girl. Rather, she chooses to describe her appearance, her purpose being to give information about Snow White.

Scene 7: (1:0:23)

Queen: Snow White... is a very erratic girl. Some would even call her high maintenance.

Prince: Love can be so difficult.

Queen: Love always is. I thought I had found my ideal man,

until he was... struck down in his prime.

Prince: You're right. We must honor the late king.

Queen: We must.

Prince: A fallen hero must be remembered.

Queen: Must.

(Prince handing the silver cup to the queen)

Queen: *Oh, no. Gold is my lucky color. (8)*

Prince: Of course.

In this scene, the prince unburdens himself to the queen about what has just happened in the forest. That is, he met Snow White but it seemed she was not as nice as she was at the gala. The queen knows that the prince would come to consult her, so she mixed a love potion with the wine in the silver cup. Having seen two cups filled with wine on the table, the prince picks them up and intends to drink with the queen to honor the late king. He hands the silver cup which contains the love potion to the queen. That the queen interrupts by saying "Oh, no. Gold is my lucky color." implicates that she wants the gold cup. The queen uses the "give hints" strategy to violate the Relevance Maxim, her purpose for inviting this PCI being to refuse the prince's offer.

Scene 8: (1:08:52)

Brighton: I was a cockroach. It was a nightmare. I was crunchy and small and frightened by exposure to light. Everybody tried to step on me! And then, in a strange turn of events, a grasshopper took advantage of me!

Queen: *All very fascinating, but it is my wedding day. (9)*

Having been cursed to be a cockroach, Brighton now turns back to being human. He then rushes to tell the queen what has happened to him. That the queen replies "All very fascinating, but it is my wedding day" implicates that Brighton should not continue talking anymore since that day is her wedding and she no longer wants to listen to his story. The queen uses the "give hints" strategy to violate the Relevance Maxim and her purpose is to refuse to listen to Brighton's story.

Scene 9: (1:24:18)

Snow White: The beast doesn't frighten you?

Queen: *He does whatever I want. (10)*

In this scene, Snow White encounters the queen in the forest. Also, the princess spots a gigantic dragon flying above her. She then asks the queen why the queen seems not to be frightened by the dragon. Her response that goes "He does whatever I want." implicates that she is not frightened and that she owns the dragon. The queen uses the "give hints" strategy to violate the Relevance Maxim and her purpose is to inform Snow White that the dragon belongs to her.

Scene 10: (1:28:23)

Reflection: A dark magic invaded the land. The kingdom fell into an icy despair.

Queen: And the queen realized if she wanted to remain the most beautiful in all the land, *Snow would have to do what Snow does best. Snow would have to fall. (11)*

In this scene, the queen is talking to her reflection. That she utters "Snow would have to do what snow does best. Snow would have to fall." implicates that Snow White must die if the queen wants to be the most beautiful person in all the land. The queen uses the "be ambiguous" strategy to violate the Manner Maxim. In this context, "snow" can mean pieces of ice or "Snow White". In addition, fall can mean either "to

come down from the sky" if it collocates with "snow" as pieces of ice or "to die" if collocates with "snow" as "Snow White". Her purpose for inviting this PCI is to give information that Snow White must die.

The following table summarizes the purposes for inviting all eleven PCIs to flout Grice's Maxims:

TABLE II: PURPOSES FOR INVITING EACH PCI

Strategy	Maxim violated	Purpose	No. of occurrence
Overgeneralize	Manner	To warn	1
Give Hints	Relevance	To be sarcastic	1
Use rhetorical questions	Quality	To be sarcastic	1
Overstate	Quantity	To refuse	1
Give Hints	Relevance	To refuse	3
Give Hints	Relevance	To give info	3
Be ambiguous	Manner	To give info	1

As can be seen from Table II, Clementianna invites eleven PCIs in total to violate Gricean Maxims. Relevance Maxim was violated at the greatest rate, while the Quantity and Quality Maxims were violated at the lowest rate. The most frequently used off-record strategy is "give hints", which occurs seven times, whereas the "overgeneralize", "use rhetorical questions", "overstate", and "be ambiguous" strategies are violated only once each. In terms of purposes for producing PCIs, Clementianna violates Grice's Maxims to refuse and to give information four times each. She violates Gricean Maxims to be sarcastic and to warn once and twice respectively.

IV. DISCUSSION

As shown in Table II, all eleven PCIs are invited for one of the four purposes i.e., to be sarcastic, to refuse, to give information, or to warn. It is worth noting that one strategy can be used to serve more than one purpose; for example, the queen uses the "give hints" strategy to serve three purposes, i.e. to be sarcastic, to refuse, and to give information. Up to this point, it can be said that the first hypothesis is confirmed since Clementianna invited PCIs to violate Grice's Maxims for some specific reasons as mentioned above.

When the social distance between the queen and her interlocutors is taken into consideration, it seems that this variable affects the use of the PCIs invited by the queen. There were five interlocutors conversing with the queen when she invites PCIs to violate Grice's Maxims, i.e. Brighton, Baron, the prince, Snow White, and Queen Mirror Mirror (i.e. her reflection). To categorize how close these five people are to the queen, the researcher employed a three-scale social distance continuum adapted from Boxer [9] as shown below:

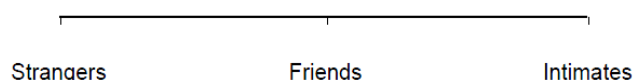


Fig. 1. A three-scale social distance continuum (Boxer, [9]).

With this continuum, four of the characters are grouped as "intimates". Only the minister Baron is grouped as a friend. It should be noted that when the queen first meets the prince, she converses with him but does not invite any PCIs at all.

Once their relationship is tighter, she does invite a few PCIs. Indeed, her loyal servant “Brighton,” her stepdaughter “Snow White,” and her reflection “Queen Mirror Mirror” can be grouped as “intimates”. Those who can be grouped as “friends” with whom she converses in the story are some of her ministers, servants, and the prince’s servant. Only a few commoners with whom she converses are grouped as “strangers”. This reflects that the queen tends to invite more PCIs with those very close to her than those who can be considered her “colleagues (i.e. the ministers),” “servants”, or “strangers (i.e. the commoners).” The second hypothesis is thus confirmed since social distance affects the use of PCIs invited by the queen. That is to say, the queen invites PCIs at a higher rate with “intimates” than with “friends” or “strangers”. It is also worth noting that most of the PCIs are invited to create humor in this comedy and a high degree of intimacy is often associated with a high degree of humor [10].

V. CONCLUSION

The present study sheds some light on the fact that one off-record strategy can be employed to serve many purposes as mentioned earlier. Furthermore, the social distance between the queen and her interlocutors does matter in that the queen tends to invite much more PCIs when conversing with those who are categorized as “intimates” than when conversing with those categorized as “friends” or “strangers”. This is probably because humor tends to be generated when the degree of social distance is low. Further research can be conducted to generalize the findings of the present study and to cover every utterance in the movie which can be analyzed in terms of both PCIs and GCIs.

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