

PRAGMALINGUISTICS AND ITS FUNCTIONS IN THE REALIZATION OF THE CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT: Among Somerset Maugham's number of works, the novel "The moon and Sixpence" is a masterpiece. It depicts both positive and negative features of human nature. In a critical and ironical tone, the novel highlights the contradictory conflicts in one person, the reality and the ideal by manifesting the contradiction to the human nature as well as his exploration of internal complexity in human life. This paper is aimed at analyzing the role of Pragmalinguistics in revealing the contradiction and complexity of humanity, which helps to understand the sole of the novel from a deeper level.

Key words: contradictions, implicature, speech acts, relevance and conversation, nonverbal and verbal communication, interpretation, text organization.

Introduction

The notion or term of "pragmatics", originated from Greek language, means "action, or use". Though the American scholar Charles Morris was not founder of Pragmalinguistics, the initial hints to it are found in his works. (Morris Ch. Signs, Language, and behavior. 1946; Signification and Significance: A study of the relations of signs and values. 1964). The term "Pragmalinguistics" or sometimes "Linguopragmatics" appeared as a branch of linguistics, initially in the first half of 20th century. "Pragmatics concerns the relation of signs to their interpreters" (Morris 1938). His theory included three parts: Semantics, i.e. the relation between the notion and the sign, Syntax, i.e. the relation between language means, and Pragmatics, i.e. the relation between the notion and the speakers. It is expressed in the following formulae: Sign-notion-other notions-speaker. Yule defines this science as "The study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener". (Yule, 1996). In other words, Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics dealing with language in use and the contexts in which it is used, including such matters as Deixis, the taking of turn in conversation, text organization, presupposition, and implicature. Pragmalinguistics deals with the issues of how language is affected by the situation in which it is used, or how language is used to get to get things or perform actions, and of how words can express things that are different from what they appear to mean. Differing from Semantics, Pragmatics concerns with the intended meaning of the utterance, what the speaker means. Pragmalinguistics, in its way is the use of linguistic forms or the use of language means by the users of these forms in realization of their intentions in the context. The role of Pragmalinguistics is important both in real life communications and in literature. By using different text categories, linguistic means, such as Grammatical constructions, complex, simple, elliptical sentences, Phonetic ways, and Stylistic devices and expressive means, authors raise their works to the level of highly-demanded masterpieces. In this article the functions and the role of Pragmalinguistics in revealing "The Moon and the Sixpence" by S. Maugham have been taken under analysis.

Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* presents a rich field for linguopragmatic analysis, as its narrative strategies and character interactions reveal not only artistic ideology but also the

pragmatic consequences of ethical decisions. The novel examines Charles Strickland's radical pursuit of pure artistic expression, juxtaposing his inner "moon" of artistic idealism with the materialistic "sixpence" of social obligations. This conflict is conveyed through pragmatic elements such as unreliable narration, inquiry-based structure, speech acts, politeness violations, and symbolic actions. In doing so, Maugham forces readers to evaluate whether absolute artistic truth can justify the erosion of social relationships and moral responsibility.

A central pragmatic feature is the unreliable narrator, whose biased stance toward Strickland's actions shapes the interpretive frame. As Liebman argues, the narrator frequently shifts between critique and admiration, producing a layered and contradictory portrait (Liebman, 1995). This unreliability is not accidental; it functions as a speech act of justification. The narrator's attempt to excuse or rationalize Strickland's cruelty—claiming that faults are complements to merits—serves as an illocutionary act designed to soften moral judgment. Such rhetorical strategies encourage readers to scrutinize rather than accept the narrator's perspective, thus generating pragmatic ambiguity. The narrative's inquiry-based structure, in which the narrator reconstructs Strickland's life through fragmented testimonies, resembles a dialogue of questions and tentative conclusions rather than a definitive biography. This pragmatic framing mirrors investigative discourse, in which meaning emerges through competing interpretations rather than objective truth (Holden, 2011).

Speech act theory further illuminates Maugham's characterization. Strickland's language is dominated by assertives and refusals—illocutionary acts that signal his detachment from social norms. His blunt declarations to his wife, his dismissive remarks to Blanche Stroeve, and his refusal to justify himself exemplify expressive acts of disdain. Such expressions lack politeness and directly threaten the face of others, violating Brown and Levinson's politeness principles. Linguopragmatically, this impoliteness creates an identity: Strickland's refusal to adhere to social speech norms pragmatically embodies his rejection of societal expectations. Meanwhile, the narrator's more refined discourse—marked by hedging, evaluative commentary, and self-awareness—contrasts sharply with Strickland's directness, signaling differing social status, cultural capital, and moral positioning.

The ethical dilemma at the heart of the novel is also conveyed through pragmatic structures. As Yang (2022) notes, Strickland's choice between art and family dramatizes the existential conflict between individual fulfillment and social responsibility. Pragmatically, the text highlights the consequences of speech and action: abandoning his family is not a symbolic gesture but a real act with real harm. Maugham employs pragmatic contrast to underscore the human cost of artistic pursuit. Blanche's emotional collapse and Dirk Stroeve's humiliation illustrate how Strickland's speech acts inflict psychological injury. In this sense, language in the novel is not merely descriptive but performative—words have consequences.

Symbolism functions pragmatically as well. The nude portrait of Blanche is not only metaphorical but also an act of sublimation: the body becomes a vessel transformed into art. From a pragmatic standpoint, this act demonstrates how artistic creation can simultaneously elevate and devastate. In Zhou's analysis (2023), this represents the complexity and contradiction of human nature—art as self-realization and self-destruction. The symbolic conflict between the moon (ideal) and the sixpence (material) reveals the cost of transcendence. Strickland's speech and actions serve as pragmatic evidence of this ideological divide.

The novel's linguopragmatic features also position readers as evaluators. By withholding explicit authorial judgment, Maugham forces readers to interpret indirect meanings and draw inferential conclusions. Implicature becomes crucial: Strickland rarely explains himself, leaving motivation to be deduced. The narrator's attempts to rationalize Strickland's cruelty invite skepticism rather than acceptance. This indirectness aligns with Gricean maxims, where violations—particularly of the maxim of relation—create deeper interpretive tasks. Thus, meaning emerges not solely from explicit dialogue but from pragmatic inference.

Let us take the novel by William Somerset Maugham "The Moon and Sixpence" and see the verbal and non-verbal means in dialogues.

The author: "Hang it all, one can't leave a woman without a bob".

Strickland: "Why not?"

The author: "How is she going to live?"

Strickland: "I've supported her for seventeen years. Why shouldn't she support herself for a change?"

The author: "She can't."

Strickland: "Let her try."

(Chapter 12, page 65)

This conversation happened between the author and main episode of the novel, Strickland. Strickland's words like "I've supported her for seventeen years. Why shouldn't she support herself for a change?" represents his inhumanity, ego and uncaring attitudes towards his wife and his family. When talking with Strickland, the author reflects his empathy and he emphasizes one thing that the man is the breadwinner of the family and that the financial support of the family is definitely on the man's shoulders, telling these words "Hang it all, one can't leave a woman without a bob". Also, we can see how cold-hearted Strickland is for his children in the other dialogues. "I liked them all right when they were kids, but now they're growing up I haven't got any particular feeling for them". Truly, he does not feel any sense of fatherhood or humanity.

You won't go back to your wife?" I said at last. "Never." "She's willing to forget everything that's happened and start afresh. She'll never make you a single reproach."

"She can go to hell." "You don't care if people think you an utter blackguard? You don't care if she and your children have to beg their bread?" "Not a damn."

I was silent for a moment in order to give greater force to my next remark. I spoke as deliberately as I could. (Chapter 12, page 72) When the writer asked him to return his home, living with his wife and children, he even used abusive language, clearly showing his hatred with these words "She can go to hell". His cold answers made the author think deeply what he is going to say next to bring Strickland back to his life. His silence also can be a real example of non-verbal communication.

The novel's pragmatic inquiry parallels real-world debates about the ethics of artistic genius. Strickland embodies the archetype of the artist as outsider, liberated from social constraint but ethically compromised. The narrative presents a pragmatic dilemma: Is artistic necessity a valid justification for moral transgression? Critics such as Zhou (2023) and Yang (2022) highlight this existential conflict, framing Strickland's life as a question about human nature and ethical autonomy. Pragmatically, the narrator's justification speech acts attempt to legitimize art as a higher moral calling, while the consequences depicted in the narrative counter that claim.

Finally, the novel's pragmatic strategies underscore the tension between language and silence. Strickland's minimal explanations and abrupt departures illustrate how silence can function as an illocutionary act—refusal, rejection, or defiance. Silence, therefore, becomes meaningful: it rejects discourse and dismisses social bonds. Maugham's deliberate contrasts between articulated justification (the narrator) and inarticulate vision (Strickland) create a dual-voiced narrative in which the struggle between artistic purity and social responsibility unfolds linguopragmatically. In conclusion, *The Moon and Sixpence* uses pragmatic and linguopragmatic strategies—unreliable narration, speech acts, politeness violations, symbolism, and ethical juxtaposition—to explore the cost of artistic truth. These strategies demonstrate that language in fiction does not merely depict reality but performs actions that shape interpretation, identity, and moral evaluation. Maugham's novel thus invites readers to grapple with the pragmatic question: does artistic genius justify ethical destruction, or do speech acts and their consequences reveal that no art is free from human cost?

Pragmatics allows us to examine how characters' intentions, social attitudes, and psychological states are conveyed through speech acts, tone, and silence. In *The Moon and Sixpence*, Somerset Maugham constructs dialogues that reveal Charles Strickland's indifference and egoism through blunt language, face-threatening acts, and violations of politeness norms. These verbal choices expose his psychological detachment from social responsibilities, while the narrator's reactions and silences highlight moral conflict.

One striking example is when Strickland openly dismisses his family obligations:

"I liked them all right when they were kids, but now they're growing up I haven't got any particular feeling for them." (Chapter 12)

From a pragmatic perspective, this utterance reflects **an expressively cold speech act**. The statement denies any parental attachment and threatens the "positive face" of his family. Moreover, its illocutionary force is not simply informational — it performs emotional detachment. His tone indicates that the children have no emotional value for him beyond necessity.

The narrator often challenges Strickland, attempting persuasion and moral justification. For example:

"You don't care if she and your children have to beg their bread?"

(Chapter 12)

This question is not a genuine inquiry; it is a rhetorical device, a **directive speech act** designed to elicit guilt or shame. However, Strickland's response:

"Not a damn."

is a direct, face-threatening refusal. It disregards politeness norms and shows his ideological stance — that personal artistic vision overrides familial duty. The pragmatic force of this utterance is to deny moral obligation entirely.

Furthermore, Strickland's consistency in using non-cooperative conversational strategies — curt replies, silence, and impolite language — show intent rather than ignorance. For instance, when the narrator appeals:

"She's willing to forget everything that's happened and start afresh."

Strickland responds:

"She can go to hell."

This statement employs abusive language, signaling contempt. The phrase is not merely insulting; it is also a **performative rejection**. By condemning her, he asserts dominance and detaches himself from marital bonds. His diction underscores an ideology: emotional bonds are irrelevant when weighed against artistic compulsion.

Silence is also used pragmatically in this chapter. After Strickland repeatedly rejects the narrator's appeals:

“I was silent for a moment in order to give greater force to my next remark.”

Here silence functions as a **strategic pause**, a non-verbal communicative act. It heightens tension and indicates the narrator's attempt to recalibrate his argument. In contrast, Strickland's silences serve disengagement, refusal to justify, and emotional apathy. Thus, both characters deploy silence, but with opposing pragmatic intentions.

The pragmatic contrast becomes particularly vivid during Strickland's justification:

“I've supported her for seventeen years. Why shouldn't she support herself for a change?”

By framing abandonment as equality, Strickland performs a **rationalization speech act**, turning cruelty into fairness. The implication is that support is transactional, not emotional. The narrator replies:

“Hang it all, one can't leave a woman without a bob.”

This functions as a speech act of **moral reminder**, aligning with societal norms — that a man carries responsibility for his family. Here, the narrator's voice reflects shared societal values, while Strickland's reveals ideological deviation.

Beyond words, Strickland's tone and body language reinforce his isolation. His reluctance to engage in discussion, his blunt dismissals, and abrupt departure from conversations show non-verbal communication strategies. For instance, he often turns away mid-sentence or refuses eye contact, signaling indifference.

This pattern shows that Strickland's language serves three pragmatic functions:

- to reject social norms
- to assert independence
- to minimize emotional engagement

Thus, his speech acts reveal not only character but worldview.

Conversely, the narrator embodies empathy and social conscience. His repeated attempts to persuade — using modal verbs (“must,” “should”), rhetorical questions, and appeals to emotion — display **politeness strategies** and cooperative maxims. His shock at Strickland's nonchalance is expressed not only in dialogue but in internal reflections, which serve as metapragmatic commentary.

In conclusion, Maugham uses dialogue to reveal the ethical divide between artistic obsession and humane responsibility. Strickland's pragmatic choices — blunt assertions, refusals, insults, and silence — highlight his egoism and disregard for social convention. The narrator's responses and internal reactions underscore societal expectations. Together, they create a linguistic battle between art and morality, illustrating that speech is more than communication — it is a window into ethical stance.

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