

Analyzing the Conversational Clashes in *North and South* from the Perspective of Literary Pragmatics

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to analyze the conversational clashes in North and South from the perspective of literary pragmatics, and to consider the guiding significance of such literary pragmatic analysis to practical issues. This study uses pragmatic presupposition theory to analyze the dialogue clashes in the novel: in terms of the inside dialogue structure the instantiating analysis method is adopted, and the result shows that the reason why the heroine in this novel finally got in love with John is that the two managed to achieve a deepening understanding of each other in their clashes, and finally chose to accept the large background represented by the each other; considering the outside dialogue structure, the qualitative classification discussion is conducted, and the conclusion is that the product of the creative discourse between the author and the reader is within a continuum and has great uncertainty. Besides, the study selects two social issues, "socially inept people" and the English major crisis, discusses whether literary pragmatics research can provide enlightenment for real social problems, and finds that combining with more other disciplines can inject stronger impetus into the development of the subject. This study contends that literary pragmatics is an independent discipline but it still needs to be further accepted by wider academic community, and that conducting more literary pragmatic exploration possesses its own guiding significance for practical issues. Meanwhile, this study hopes to provide some examples and support for the theoretical research of literary pragmatics, advocates more integration of theoretical application with real social problems, and make some contributions to the development of literary pragmatics.*

Keywords: Literary pragmatics; Pragmatic presupposition; *North and South*.

1. INTRODUCTION

When developing into a relatively mature state, a discipline tends to take steps to cooperate and integrate with other disciplines, and literary pragmatics was the very product of the intersection of literature and pragmatics when both of them had built their largely comprehensive subject framework respectively.

It is generally acknowledged that the study of literary pragmatics can be traced back to the 1970s. The application of pragmatic theories in literary analysis appeared earlier than the field of literary pragmatics was set. The earliest case of the application of pragmatics in literature abroad can be verified is in Van Dijk's *Pragmatics of Language and Literature* published in 1976. In 1988, the first International Symposium on Literary Pragmatics was held in September and the idea of setting the literary pragmatics study field was put forward. There were many discussions about approaching the literary study through a pragmatic path, represented by Pratt's *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* in 1977, Traugott and Pratt's *Linguistics for Students of Literature* in 1980, etc. The next crucial event in the development of international *literary pragmatics* is the publication of Sell's *Literary Pragmatics*, in 1991, which collected several earliest seminal papers on literary pragmatic analysis. This collection contributes so much to establishing the academic status of literary pragmatics that it is universally regarded as the first critical step in building the new field's "simple house". Entering the 1990s, literary pragmatics began to develop comprehensively and rapidly, both in theoretical structure building and applications involving various categories. Some researchers and their works can not be missed here, including *When Voices Clash: A Study in Literary Pragmatics* by Mey, a prominent scholar in the literary pragmatic field. In this book, the complex interrelationship among the literature, reader, author, and the fictional world is elucidated.

It is Hu Zhuanglin, one of the most renowned Chinese linguists, who first introduced literary *pragmatics* as a linguistic theory to the Chinese academic field in his *Pragmatics* released in 1980. During the recent two decades, Tu Jing's study on literary pragmatics is the most comprehensive and thought-provoking one. From 2002, Tu Jing began his study on literary pragmatics, including exploring its applications to certain fictions, clarifying the subject's boundaries, elucidating the field's research objects, theoretical principles as well as the overall theoretical structure, and so on. Remarkably, Tu Jing's clarification of the literary pragmatics as an independent new discipline in his article, *Literary Pragmatics: An Emerging Discipline* in 2004, is the most influential one.

And in his *An Outline of Literary Pragmatics*, Tu Jing said, “That is to say, literary pragmatics as an independent subject has not been generally admitted by the academic world. At least for now, it can only be said that literary pragmatics is still in its infancy. It is a new discipline under exploration and construction, and it is urgent to further improve the level of its related research (Tu Jing, 2005).” Apart from Tu Jing’s point of view, before or after Tu, there are still many other researchers’ contributions, pertaining to diverse directions in the intersection of literary analysis and pragmatics. Those mostly discussed theories and applications include speech act theory, implicature, politeness, relevance theory, text analysis towards the theme, character, relevant social issues (feminism, aging population, education, etc.) and so on.

After reviewing those previous studies, the following points can be very obvious: First, the status of literary pragmatics as an independent subject is still needed to be further proved and stabilized. Second, compared with other hotly discussed pragmatic theories like speech act theory, implicature, politeness, etc., the application of presupposition in literary analysis is not very much. Third, if the study of literary pragmatics is considered from a perspective of combining with social issues, the exploration can be further advanced in light of the constant development of human society. And these three elements are what this study will give priority to work out the corresponding supportive cases and supplementary ideas.

Taking Mrs. Gaskell’s *North and South* as a case study, the previous related studies will be briefly summarized as follows. It is generally admitted that there are two clear turning time points in the international studies on Mrs. Gaskell. Before the 1960s, relevant works were mainly biographies. Additionally, critics at that time also researched Mrs. Gaskell’s consideration and demonstration of social issues in her renowned works, including *North and South*. These social issues, such as feminism, industrialization, urbanization, form of government, geographical difference, social and cultural distinctions, etc., have since the very beginning been always closely associated with studies on Mrs. Gaskell and her works. Marked by the hundredth anniversary of Gaskell’s death in 1965, researches about her began to enter a new stage where the related study became more comprehensive and popular. Except for biographies, the trend of discussing her social issues consideration, comparing her with some other writers, and conducting more text analysis on her different works came into being. Entering the 1990s, the relevant studies just achieved more development and gained more momentum both in applied literary analysis theories and explanations on those involved social issues. It is safe to conclude that, Mrs. Gaskell and her works have attracted much attention in the literary field. However, from the perspective of literary pragmatics, the relevant study is very limited, both in quantity and coverage. In particular, there is scarcely any application of presupposition in Mrs. Gaskell’s works. Accordingly, the case study of this study will contribute a little to breaking these limitations and bridging the above gaps.

Thus the study conducts exploration from the perspective of literary pragmatics to analyze the conversational clashes in *North and South* by using the pragmatic presupposition theory. Several case studies will be conducted at the micro level of the novel by taking some dialogues as discourse examples, and at the macro level, the discussion will be shown in a categorized situation-by-situation and qualitative manner. After these practices and analyses, this study will also try to reflect on them in light of some contemporary social issues, aiming to cast light on and extend the practical significance of the literary pragmatics practice.

The outline of this study is as follows. Chapter One is the introduction to the study. Chapter Two, the theoretical foundation, comprising the introduction to discourse, literary pragmatics, and pragmatic presupposition, provides theoretical support for the study. Chapter Three comes to the application of pragmatic presupposition, analyzing different layers of *North and South*’s discourse structure through examples analyses or qualitative categorization. Chapter Four reflects on the former exploration concerning practical issues including socially inept people and nowadays English major’s crisis. Chapter Five is the conclusion, including findings and limitations of the study, and also some suggestions for further study.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

In this chapter, after the general definition of discourse, the thesis will correspondingly elucidate the theory of literary pragmatics which will go down to a more detailed clarification of the pragmatic presupposition.

2.1 Definition of Discourse

When it comes to discourse, many disciplines with long histories can give their own definition and analysis paradigm, including, but not exclusively, linguistics, communication, cognitive science, psychology, logic,

sociology, anthropology, philosophy, education, artificial intelligence, etc. This list can continue to go on and on. According to Mey, discourse was defined as “the ensemble of phenomena in and through which social production of meaning takes place” by Mumby and Stohl (Mey, 2006). This general understanding of discourse can give some useful implications for the following introduction to literary pragmatics.

2.2 Introduction to Literary Pragmatics

There is no denying that, since literary pragmatics entered a rapidly-developing stage in the 1990s, many scholars have put forward their definitions for literary pragmatics as an independent discipline. Mey is one of the most influential researchers in this field. He wrote several seminal books for literary pragmatic study and was a contributor of the “Literary Pragmatics” part to *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (2006). And in this study, Mey’s idea about literary pragmatics is adopted.

According to Mey, “Literary pragmatics studies the kind of effects that authors, as text producers, set out to obtain, using the resources of language in their efforts to establish a ‘working cooperation’ with their audiences, the consumers of the texts. Such efforts rely on a precise understanding of the conditions of use of those resources when directed at a particular audience among the consumers of the literary work. These pragmatic effects cannot rely on the linguistic elements involved alone ... what is required beyond those linguistic techniques is a thorough exploitation of all the contextual factors determining the use of those linguistic items (Mey, 1999)”.

To understand this definition, we can approach it through these three aspects: the investigated subject, its study objective, and the involved methods and theories of analysis.

First, the investigated subject, namely literary works. To combine with pragmatics, which traditionally explores natural spoken discourse involving interpersonal communication in certain social and cultural contexts, and also always situated in specific spatial and temporal points, this study subject should be viewed as communicative, that is, to involve addressers and addressees, and also be discussed in light of its contexts, time and space. Considering this, a dual-level structure of the fictional discourse put forward by Leech and Short (2007) gives us an easy explanation: on the surface of this structure flows the “working cooperation” and communication between the reader and the author, while inside the text there is a fictional world of narrators and characters where communication and dialogue are also indispensable and obvious.

The “working cooperation” is to call the dialectical relationship between the author and the reader. To make a literary work succeed, the writer should create it in light of his/her shared general knowledge with the reader side so that it can affect the reader to some extent; meanwhile, to consume a literary product, the reader should actively participate in reading, understanding, and commenting on it. That these effects which text producers try to exert on consumers, in turn, also have something to do with the reader’s spatial & temporal situation and active consumption of the text is just the dialectical facet of literature and hence what literary pragmatics studies.

Second, its study objective, which is very obvious after discussing the studied subject, is to explain what effects the writer has on the reader through this kind of language use. It can be looked into from the direct communication of general shared knowledge and intelligible contexts between the two sides as well as their indirect dialogue which is achieved by the reader’s appreciating the fictional world created by the author.

Third, the involving methods and theories of analysis are easy to be clarified: take as comprehensive linguistic elements and contextual factors into consideration as possible, and take advantage of available theories in, but not only in, literature and pragmatics to achieve a precise understanding of all these aspects so that some meaningful conclusions can be drawn.

Among these various theories and factors, the case study will start from the inside layer of the fictional discourse primarily by applying the theory of pragmatic presupposition, then the outside layer in which the communication between Mrs. Gaskell and today’s readers of her will be discussed.

2.2.1 Pragmatic Presupposition

To begin with, pragmatics conducts studies in various research paradigms, which will help to understand the multifaced and heterogeneous perspective of pragmatic presupposition. According to Anita Fetzer, “Implicit in the philosophy-anchored general-action and linguistic-action-based paradigms is the premise that pragmatics is

conceptualized best as a perspective, which comprises a general pragmatic perspective, a social perspective, a compositional perspective and a relational perspective.” That is to say, pragmatics is an approach of cognitive conceptualization and understanding in communicative action, which is ideally expected to be felicitous, generally or specifically. And Fetzer distinguishes between the general ideal pragmatic situation and particular natural language use situation (Bublitz, Norrick 2011).

Although presupposition has its semantic aspect if discussed in its own right, it is actually one of the most important universals in pragmatics. Presupposition is always discussed under the category of inference in the pragmatic description involving three types, i.e., entailment, presupposition, and implicature. It means that presupposition is inference in nature thus it needs all knowledge related to language use. One of the most influential presupposition scholars is Yan Huang, according to whom “Presupposition is defined as a proposition or inference whose truth is taken for granted in the utterance of a sentence (Bublitz, Norrick 2011).” More situationally speaking, presupposition provides a general understanding or common ground of various kinds for interlocutors to make their communicative action felicitous and enable the conversation to continue. Hence to study presupposition, the overall paradigm should be fundamentally comprehensive and multi-directed. Inherited from pragmatics, pragmatic presupposition has an inherent dialectical supplementary relationship with many other studies, including social science, aesthetics, philosophy, cognitive science, ethnology, geography, history, etc. These intersections will help this study in analyzing the conversational clashes.

What produces presupposition is called presupposition triggers, which are typically lexical items and/or linguistic constructions. Some representative presupposition triggers are as follows (In the following examples, sentences with different presupposition triggers precedes the symbol “>>”, which is followed by those sentences’ presuppositions.):

Definite descriptions (e.g. The leader of this board is/isn’t prudent >> There is a leader of this board), factive predicates (e.g. Mary regrets/doesn’t regret that she ate all apples yesterday >> Mary ate all apples yesterday), change-of-state/aspectual predicates (John has/hasn’t stopped staying up >> John has been staying up), iteratives (e.g. Li Hua returned/didn’t return to Beijing >> Li Hua was in Beijing before), implicative predicates (e.g. Lily managed/didn’t manage to pass the interview >> Lily tried to pass the interview), temporal clauses (e.g. After she graduated from the university, Lucy tried various jobs >> Lucy graduated from university), cleft sentences (e.g. It was/wasn’t Sarah who passed the exam >> Someone passed the exam), and counterfactual conditionals (e.g. If I were a bird, I would/wouldn’t fly in the sky >> I am not a bird).

Additionally, presupposition features two distinctive properties: constancy under negation and defeasibility or cancellability. Constancy-under-negation test can distinguish presupposition from all other provisional inferences drawn from an utterance, as in the examples of the last paragraph. Defeasibility is a more complex issue and is often associated with the projection problem. To delimit the theoretical frame of the study in this study, Gazdar’s cancellation analysis will be the model adopted by this study to tackle the projection problem, in which a presupposition is assumed as cancellable. According to this analysis, every presupposition trigger can generate a potentially acceptable presupposition, which will either be accepted and become a real presupposition or be defeated by various linguistic or non-linguistic elements.

3. APPLICATION EXPLORATION

In this chapter, the exploration of theory’s application will be conducted. To begin with, the two layers of the fictional discourse structure in *North and South* will be clarified, and they are the discourse inside of the novel’s fictional world, involving characters like Margaret, Thornton, etc., and the discourse outside of the whole artificial world, concerning the author Mrs. Gaskell and the reader in today’s society. Accordingly, clashes exist in these two kinds of discourse. And there will be detailed literary pragmatic analyses of some instantiated dialogues between characters in *North and South* as well as the categorizing discussion in terms of the novel’s outside author-reader communication.

3.1 Conversational Clashes in *North and South*

3.1.1 Inside Conversational Clashes

Growing up in an idyllic traditional town in the south of Victorian British, Margaret, the heroin of *North and South*, moved to a northern town together with her family. In the north, her way of accepting and adapting to the northern

world is also the path along which she finally changed a lot and fell in love with Mr. Thornton, a self-possessed capitalist and self-made factory master. On these two changing lines, one explicit and the other implicit, Margaret clashed with many people in various situations. This study will mainly focus on her conversational clashes with John Thornton, the man she finally chose to love, and with Henry Lennox, whose admiration towards Margaret was rejected by the heroine.

To understand why the main characters in the novel sometimes clash with each other in their communication, it is necessary to first look into the overall setting of the novel before going into the obvious distinctions of gender awareness, characteristics, personalities, values, general understanding of the society, and so on between them since the latter one is hugely affected and associated with the former. Telling a love story embedded in the grand and glorious Victorian times, the novel is romantic in nature and also possesses a profound insight into society and era. *North and South*, first published in 1855, demonstrates a fictional world that can be safely regarded as a panorama for that era of capitalism, industrialization, modernization, turmoil, upheaval, transformation, etc. The Victorian Times is universally regarded by scholars as the most splendid period in British Empire development history, and by the 1850s, the British Empire had become “the factory of the world”. With the rapid industrialization and accumulation of its wealth and power in a very short time, the British Empire also witnessed the largest gap between the rich and the poor, the most intense conflicts between different classes and parties, and the most social evils which were so unprecedented and unexpected that they could not be eradicated in a short period. The capitalism and bourgeoisie ferociously and greedily burgeoning, the proletariat becoming conscious of their abject suffering and poverty, severely repressed and infringed rights and nevertheless constantly growing strength, the conflicts between the labor and masters became tenser and tenser, hence there were endless labor movements, like strikes, legislation campaigns, etc., one after another. The traditional values and religious beliefs were accordingly greatly threatened by the transforming society. Since the northern part was more industrialized than the other parts of the empire, this novel thus also echoes that society and depicts a contrast between the north and the south.

In this novel, Henry Lennox represents the most traditional part of the society, Margaret Hale actively or passively changes and adapts to the transformation of the age and society, and John Thornton speaks for the bourgeoisie and capitalist (but he is a very ideally perfect man, possessing all merits of the burgeoning group but different from many other brutal masters because he respects human rights and tries to do something against the social evils). Their belonging to different social groups determines that they can not understand each other well all the time and they clash with each other occasionally in their dialogue.

3.1.2 Outside Conversational Clashes

There is no denying that, from the stance of today’s Chinese readers, the author Mrs. Gaskell has become an abstracted personage whose originally and consciously intended addressees are readers at that time. However, the indisputable fact is that today’s readers are inherently among the potential readership of this novel (like any other recordable civilized creation the novel definitely can go beyond the history and keep being passed along) and thus the potential addressee of Mrs. Gaskell, although she might never think about it. Meanwhile, it is because of this time span that the creative cooperation between the readership and the authorship can produce a totally different text (analysis) from that generated by the former collaboration, drawing implications for many disciplines and thus becomes more interesting and insightful. And this is the very power of the outside discourse. However, it is also because of this temporal gap that results in the disparity of common ground of perception and understanding that when current readers try to communicate with Mrs. Gaskell clashes may come into being.

Several points are very appropriate here. First, Mrs. Gaskell represented many common and variable decoration and building styles in Victorian Times to depict that social background or portray characters. Assuming that a common current reader knows little about all those trendy things at that time (actually, it is safe to say that this situation is the most likely one), he/she can hardly get what Mrs. Gaskell wanted to address, hence in this cooperative communication clashes happen. And the corresponding solution is, of course, the reader becomes more active in learning from those once fashionable things. Second, there are many quotes from a large number of other literary texts and implicit allusions to the Bible or other classical western works in *North and South*, and again these set obstacles in terms of the linguistic factors for the reader to smoothly construct a dialogue with the author. Last but not least, for Chinese readers, the unintelligibility of the language is also an unignorable problem. Although there are some translations (such as the edition translated by Zhu Wan in 1992), if associated with the knowledge in translation’s terms such as its intrinsic incapacity of all-the-time form and meaning’s perfect equivalence between the source and target texts, precise message transmission is hard to achieve.

3.2 Analysis of Clashes in Terms of Pragmatic Presupposition

3.2.1 Clashes in Characters' Dialogues

Dialogue 1: between Margaret and John

The first dialogue, excerpted from Chapter fifteen, shows Margaret and Mr. Thornton's argument about the conflict between factory masters and men as well as about whether factory masters infringe on men's independence. On this day, Margaret visited the Thorntons with her father, and in the evening, Mr. Thornton came to the Hales to send them a letter with Dr. Donaldson's address and apologized for not being able to visit them on time once before. When Mr. Hale and Mr. Thornton began to talk about the strike, Margaret joined the discussion. Margaret's view on the strike was clearly different from Mr. Thornton's --Margaret apparently did not understand why the factory masters were so arbitrary and even ruthless in running the factory, and she sympathized with the men. So, from the very beginning, Margaret and Thornton were basically opposites. When Margaret suggested that someone "spoke as if the masters would like their hands to be merely tall, large children – living in the present moment – with a blind unreasoning kind of obedience", their argument on the men's independence was sparked. At the end of the argument, Mr. Hale showed his approval of Mr. Thornton by saying "that you might pioneer a little at home. They are a rough, heathenish set of fellows, these Milton men of yours". And Margaret also claimed that she would try to accept Mr. Thornton's respect towards the men. Hence generally speaking, despite many clashes with Margaret that once happened, John's basically succeeded in the argument.

*"I would rather not repeat it," said she; "it related to a feeling which I do not think you would share."¹
"Won't you try me?" pleaded he; his thoughts suddenly bent upon learning what she had said. She was displeased with his pertinacity, but did not choose to affix too much importance to her words.*

...
"I don't know – I suppose because, on the very face of it, I see two classes dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own;² I never lived in a place before where there were two sets of people always running each other down."

"Who have you heard running the masters down? I don't ask who you have heard abusing the men; for I see you persist in misunderstanding what I said the other day. But who have you heard abusing the masters?"

...
"But he – that is, my informant – spoke as if the masters would like their hands to be merely tall, large children – living in the present moment – with a blind unreasoning kind of obedience."

"In short, Miss Hale, it is very evident that your informant found a pretty ready listener to all the slander he chose to utter against the masters,³" said Mr. Thornton, in an offended tone.

...
"They are that," replied Mr. Thornton. "Rosewater surgery won't do for them. Cromwell would have made a capital mill-owner, Miss Hale. I wish we had him to put down this strike for us."⁴

"Cromwell is no hero of mine," said she, coldly. "But I am trying to reconcile your admiration of despotism with your respect for other men's independence of character." (Gaskell, p137-145)

Utterance 1:

Its presupposition trigger is the "cleft sentence", and its presupposition is "(I have) a feeling which I do not think you would share".

While saying this sentence, Margaret presupposed that her addressee, John, would not share a same feeling towards independence with her. At this time, Margaret still knew little about the northern society and she did not understand the industrialization process and the development or management model of factories. Therefore, after viewing the miserable lives of the men versus masters' decent and remarkable ones, she naturally thought of the men as the oppressed and inferior group, and other factory masters, including John, the cruel exploiting class. Margaret had much prejudiced feelings towards John. In Chapter 11, she once made it clear that she didn't like him. Margaret was somewhat resistant to communicating with John, thinking that John might not understand her.

However, John was actually very "vexed at the state of feeling between himself and her" and was eager to gain Margaret's approval. And of course, John would not have the same presupposition as Margaret, which means that Margaret's presupposition was defeated here by John, and John began to defend himself.

Utterance 2:

Its presupposition trigger is the “factive predicate”, and its presupposition is “there are two classes dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own”.

In this sentence, Margaret very clearly stated what she saw and thus thought of, she believed that the factory masters and men were incompatible and hostile to each other’s interests. John, as a factory master with much his own understanding, disagreed with Margaret’s opinion, and Margaret’s presupposition is once again not valid for John. The dialogue between them was still conflicting.

Utterance 3:

Its presupposition trigger is the “definite description”, and its presupposition is “your (Margaret’s) informant found a pretty ready listener to all the slander he chose to utter against the masters”.

By presupposing this, John expressed his opinion of Margaret’s statement, that he believed that the informant’s words were slanders against the factory masters. In the early days, it was undeniable that bourgeoisie did accumulate much wealth primarily through the cruel exploitation of the men, seemingly cooperating with the men to fight against the feudalism, but in fact in the end it betrayed the men for the sake of maximizing its own interests. But the fictional world constructed in this novel is much better – there is an ideal capitalist Mr. Thornton. As a self-made factory master, John always keeps self-disciplined and works hard. Possessing excellent management wisdom, he is enterprising, ambitious, and has a clear understanding towards the overall situation and trend of the age and the society, but at the same time he is very daring to take some measures that are different from other capitalists, such as installing machines for factories to reduce flying fluff, modifying factory chimneys, and so on. Hence from John’s point of view, such a presupposition is acceptable, because as a factory master, he has actually done his part. Against a social background like that, a character like John can never be regarded as an evil capitalist who does all things to exploit and oppress the men. Margaret did not know much about it yet.

Utterance 4:

Its presupposition trigger is the word “wish” which cannot be categorized into any one type of those listed before, and its presupposition is “he (Cromwell) has the ability to put down this strike for us”.

John believed that even though workers had independence during non-working hours, they needed to obey the absolute leadership of the factory masters when working. There is no denying that John was a very strict master (and he was strict with himself as well). In terms of the workers’ strike, John did not think that it could be stopped through negotiating with the men, and he believed that there was no need to tell the men, who were under his absolute leadership, his strategy and statics involved in the factory’s trade and function. Hence John chose to let the labor go on strike, believing that when the men suffered from it, they would voluntarily stop their foolish strikes. This presupposition shows John’s stance that Cromwell, a hard-line dictator, would undoubtedly be able to quell the strike quickly and solve these problems very well. Margaret said that “Cromwell is no hero of mine”, indicating that she did not feel that Cromwell had the perfect ability to resolve the strike problem. Their dialogue still showed clashes.

Dialogue 2: between Margaret and Henry

This instantiated dialogue is extracted from chapter one of *North and South* and displays the two young people’s different characters. The novel’s first chapter is about a busy night before Edith’s wedding. It seemed like, Henry had already taken a liking to Margaret and took the initiative to get close to Margaret and talked with her. Henry wanted to know more about Margaret and her hometown Helstone, but when Margaret replied his questions and described that beautiful place, he could not understand Margaret’s passion towards the southern countryside and freedom very well, and therefore there was a lot of friction in their dialogue. Henry is a “prudent” and “worldly” lawyer, self-restrained and gentle, and he belongs to the upper aristocracy which represents the country’s traditional values and norms with which this lawyer clearly sticks in saying phrases like “a regular London girl” and “proper employment”. In addition, probably because of his work, Henry tends to comment on people’s personalities and traits. But Margaret is clearly a new woman against that age, independent and chasing-after-freedom. Meanwhile, she often does things following her feelings and thoughts from the bottom of

the heart, believing in the rights and power that humans are born with. Margaret speaks and acts decisively and firmly, audaciously but carefully, and hardly thinks about what is regular or what is feminine. Therefore, it is easy to understand why Margaret has no romantic feelings towards Henry. Later, when Henry confessed to Margaret, Margaret firmly refused this “pleasantest friend”.

“No, I don’t think you are. The idea of stately simplicity accords well with your character.”

Margaret did not quite like this speech; she winced away from it more...

She cut his speech rather short...

“Tell me about Helstone...”

“Oh, only a hamlet; I don’t think I could call it a village at all. There is the church and a few houses near it on the green – cottages, rather – with roses growing all over them.”

“And flowering all the year round, especially at Christmas – make your picture complete,” said he.

“No,” replied Margaret, somewhat annoyed, “I am not making a picture. I am trying to describe Helstone as it really is. You should not have said that.”

...

“Well, then” – pausing for a moment – “tell me what you do there. Here you read, or have lessons, or otherwise improve your mind, till the middle of the day; take a walk before lunch, go a drive with your aunt after, and have some kind of engagement in the evening. There, now fill up your day at Helstone. Shall you ride, drive, or walk?”

“Walk, decidedly...”

“Shall you garden much? That, I believe, is a proper employment for young ladies in the country.”

“I don’t know. I am afraid I shan’t like such hard work.” (Gaskell, p9-10)

Utterance 1: Its presupposition trigger is the “factive predicate”, and its presupposition is “there is (something of your character (that I know well))”.

Henry’s presupposition repelled Margaret. Margaret was such an independently-thinking girl that she would not like to be judged by others on her personality which in itself Margaret would not regard as definable or reviewable. Henry would like to attract Margaret and took the initiative to talk with her, but he did not really understand Margaret, and his presupposition was unacceptable to her and thus was defeated from her stance.

Utterance 2: Its presupposition trigger is the “factive predicate”, and its presupposition is “there is (something of your picture (that I have heard))”.

In Margaret’s eyes, her hometown in the countryside was definitely beautiful and attractive, and what she said before about it were all real things in real life that she had personally experienced. Thus, Henry’s presupposition once again made her annoyed, because this resulted in Margaret’s negative perception that Henry did not believe her description and thought that she was beautifying the small village into a picture.

Utterance 3: Its presupposition trigger is the “definite description”, and its presupposition is “there is a proper employment for young ladies in the country”.

Henry, a traditional gentleman, was very obedient to some proper norms and values in the traditional and aristocratic sense. On the contrary, although Margaret lived in London for many years, she was not confined to the upper aristocratic life, and she yearned for a free life after returning Helstone – walking in the woods, reading and having a rest on the grass, etc. If Henry’s perceptions do not change, his communication with Margaret will continue to be full of clashes.

3.2.2 Clashes in Reader-Author Conversation

Readers have their own cognition and understanding, and have their own set of general knowledge for consuming and interpreting novels. Apart from these, readers may also voluntarily learn about the abstract authorship of Mrs. Gaskell, including the study of Mrs. Gaskell herself, the overall background of the novel, those previous interpretation and studies upon Mrs. Gaskell by other readers or scholars, and so on and so forth. These are the very source of presuppositions which readers can extract and accept in their dialogues with the authorship. It is actually a variable, situational and dynamic fusion of those learned knowledge and readers’ original creatively cooperating ability, or their fundamental knowledge, sometimes comprising more of the former and sometimes involving more of the latter. In different situations and fusion, differentiated products of conversation will be produced, which result from the creative cooperation from distinct readers.

The authorship of Mrs. Gaskell, involved in the fictional outside dialogue, is especially abstract because of the time span. But it is still provable that Mrs. Gaskell has devised the novel using her overall knowledge, which of course includes effects from readers at that time, to obtain her desired results. And in turn, these desired results also include those Mrs. Gaskell's expecting influence on readers that she could foresee and predict. And bear in mind, this kind of Mrs. Gaskell's original applied knowledge and expectation should be distinguished from the whole background of her era, which comprises various aspects and elements like politics, economy, culture, society, ideology, etc. The reason lies in the inherent limitation of human beings', which are here Mrs. Gaskell's, perception and learning. Additionally, it is also necessary to distinguish it from the previous research and discussion on Mrs. Gaskell and her works, which have taken on many other people's subjectivity. It is therefore distinctively abstract, dynamically evolving, variable, and personalized. Ideally speaking, this is the only source of the usable and acceptable presuppositions for Mrs. Gaskell as the communicating authorship. But in practical circumstances which may involve different readers, it is always to various extents mixed with what has been mentioned to be distinguished from it.

The two sides' abstract discourse will produce different presuppositions thus conversational clashes which can be resolved or not. When readers manage to resolve these clashes, readers change their original accepted common ground to adjust his accessible presuppositions and thus to mesh with the author's presuppositions. Actually, in this process, the ideal ensemble of Mrs. Gaskell's presuppositions does not change. Instead, it is the situationally different part, which is practically achieved by readers in their discourse with Mrs. Gaskell, that has evolved. There is no denying that, the terminal of their cooperative creation is the side of readers. In other cases, however, readers may choose to skip these adjustments, and thus those presuppositions that have been the source of the conversational clashes are refused and cancelled by "each other". The quotation mark is used because the authorship's part of this cancellation work is actually represented and embodied by the readers'.

The significance of these analyses should be discussed under different circumstances. Traditionally and strictly, readers may broaden their learned knowledge associated to their discourse with the authorship, by studying only on Mrs. Gaskell until acquiring the access to the ideal source of Mrs. Gaskell's presuppositions, or more embracing the academic trend by combining with the previous relevant studies which involve discussions on more macro fields like history, politics, social issues, etc. Both ways make sense, but what truly matters is which one makes more sense. Admittedly, the former one is extremely precise and respects Mrs. Gaskell as the author very well, the latter one nevertheless coincides with the needs of times and social development better. Apart from the entertainment and recreation, literary works or any other human civilized creation should reflect on something more profound and practical, especially those related to human developing needs. When reading *North and South*, or communicating with Mrs. Gaskell, scholars can either diachronically research feminism, capitalism, communism, industrialization, labor movement, and so on, or synchronically study that grand Victorian Times. And this study chooses to emphasize literary pragmatics and pragmatic presupposition.

Then, readers may also do little or even give up in enlarging their learned knowledge and ability collection, in spite of their original overall state's few intersections with Mrs. Gaskell's. Products in this kind of collaboration can go into two extremes, one is the novel and innovative interpretation and the other is misunderstanding or even other negative effects.

4. PRACTICAL REFLECTION ON THE PREVIOUS EXPLORATION

After the previous exploration aiming at provide evidence and support for the literary pragmatics it is also significant to reflect on the whole study and try to draw some practical implications from it. After all, the advancement of all disciplines should in turn contributes to the physical and practical development associated with humans.

4.1 Implications for Current "Socially Inept People"

In recent years, the term "social phobia" has gone viral all around the virtual and real world in China, and many people, especially the young generation who grow up in an age of information and highly-developed science and technology, claim that they are afraid of communication and public situations where they need to talk with many others. According to an online survey released on April 14 last year by "A Research Institute of Young Generations", a WeChat Public Account, more than four-in-five young respondents, over 99% of whom were born after the 1980s, claimed that they had varying degrees of social phobia (to find out more, click the website link in

the bibliography). There is no doubt that, this has become an outstanding social phenomenon, if not so serious and harmful as to be a problem. Indeed, social phobia can have negative effects on people, varying from loneliness and difficult romantic relationship, to failing in job application interview, and to getting misunderstood resulting in unemployment or dropout.

So, what implications can be drawn from this case study, which is closely associated with communication and language? In terms of this, the application of the general and abstracted theory to natural communication is considered. Models discussed in theories are always idealized and generalized from practical cases. If there is no real existence of communication and literature, and then there will not be the pragmatic models aiming at analyzing ideally felicitous situations and the literary pragmatic assumption that real person can actually communicate the authorship in spite of time and place. Thus, all these ideal models inherently possess meaningful significance to instruct the real-world activities and situations. In this specific example, the pragmatic presupposition model also has instructive functions for the socially inept people in its own right.

To find out solutions, causes should be clarified first. Generally, reasons for people to feel afraid of public communications areas are as follows. First, some people think they love solitude, and they do not care so much about putting efforts into socialization. Second, some others are afraid of making the situation embarrassing or even getting interlocutors into silence. Finally, some socially inept people have self-humiliation and they reject communication because of the possibility of disadvantage exposure. Then, the corresponding solution can be listed, taking stock of the pragmatic presupposition. The first reason is not a bad problem that should be eradicated. Then for the second and third reasons, pragmatic presupposition can come to people's rescue. Here are some suggestions.

Above all, keep reading and learning. As in this case study, the more people know, the easier they extract the common ground or presupposition with their interlocutors when communicating, and the more felicitous and more comfortable socialization people can achieve. Knowledge and wisdom are always the most powerful weapon that people can manage to arm themselves with. Communications are no exceptions. Just learn more about the society, different disciplines, weather, costume, fashion, etc. Then, develop courage and confidence and give it a try. To be a sociable man, people should be healthy both in mentality and physics, and all negative self-evaluation should be replaced by positive self-suggestion. And here, maybe some psychological knowledge is useful and beneficial. Again, we see the value of vast learning.

4.2 Implications for Understanding English Major

Stepping into the 21st century, China's economic development has entered a new stage, social needs have changed dramatically, and the construction of disciplines in colleges and universities has also sparked extensive and heated discussions. Among them, the English major is one of the most affected subjects. It is undeniable that, English major is faced with a real crisis. In addition to some questioning over the status of the English subject, there are also some gradually conspicuous practical issues. Many graduates of English major cannot find a decent job with handsome salary as students of other disciplines with high marketable value, such as computer, artificial intelligence, automation and so on and so forth.

So how should we understand English major? How can English graduates be more competitive in the labor market?

First of all, English majors train students more than just develop their language skills. The study conducted has involved so vast a coverage of knowledge in humanities and social science that can never be looked down upon as performed by a communicative skill or whatever others. The exploration in this study requires not only the linguistic theories and the knowledge of English literature, but also the understanding of many other disciplinary perspectives, including but not exclusively culture, history, sociology, psychology etc. Thus, to be an adequate English major, student need to do more than just learn the language abilities. More ambitiously speaking, scholars majoring in English can conduct researches in any field, as long as they can manage to learn enough related knowledge of that field.

From the stance of the English graduates, it is safe to say that the issue of employment absolutely possesses enough significance. People not only need dream, spirits and knowledge, but also require decent life, social status and physical necessities, like money. Just as an online saying goes, "Not everything can be achieved with money, but nothing can be done without money." The English major, like all other majors, should come down to the real life

and consider the secular issues. Fundamentally speaking, human beings should do academia for human needs and development, for the needs of the country and society. Just like Cai Jigang once wrote in an article, "If it cannot meet the new needs of the country and society in the new era, under the high pressure of the market and colleges, this discipline can only shrink, this major can only be suspended, and the practitioners of this major can only be laid off" (Cai Jigang, 2018). From a practical and secular point of view, if people want to achieve development in their career or other realms of the real life, they must spare no effort to meet these macro needs and keep up with those development pace and trends.

So why not be bold and make English major more inclusive? In addition to business, computer language, etc., English major can explore more fields and strive to cultivate and foster graduates who are more in line with the requirements of the times and transformation. As Cai Jigang once asked, "Is it possible to have a combination of English + engineering (+ agriculture and forestry, + petroleum, etc.) and other hard disciplines? (Cai Jigang, 2018)" Apart from the macro consideration at the country or university's level, English majors should also be more conscious of this issue, stop complaining about the high demands of employers, and explore their interdisciplinary research potential within personal interests and capabilities to the possibly largest extent, so as to improve their competitiveness in the job market.

5. CONCLUSION

From the perspective of literary pragmatics, this study conducts analyses on the two-layer fictional discourse structure of *North and South* by employing pragmatic presupposition theory. In this final part, the study's findings and limitations will be reviewed, and also there will be some suggestions for further research.

On one hand, in terms of the novel's inside discourse clashes analyses, through instantiation analysis, it is found that learning about each other will help a lot in two people's communication. At that extremely tumultuous time, there were various kinds of conflicts and changes, and the three characters involved in the study represented different groups against that grand background. The heroin Margaret grew up in the southern part of the country and saw little about new things emerging and developing in the north. The hero John was a self-made factory master with many idealized merits, representing the capitalism's good side, and he also hardly know anything about the idyllic south. During their clashes in all patterns, both of them learned more about each other's world and they finally achieved reconciliation and mutual admiration. While Henry, another male character who also once confessed his love for Margaret, did not go outside of his comfort zone of perception and knowledge, thus this traditional man could not truly get closed to his beloved girl.

On the other hand, when considering the outside exploration, the qualitative classification is used, and it is safe to say, the state of author-reader creative cooperation is actually within a continuum, whose one side is readers conducting cooperation and creation totally on the basis of their own original general knowledge and ability, the other side is readers actively learning more as much previous studies on the author, the overall epochal background and many other relevant aspects as possible. Generally, the latter side is more advocated and should be approach by readers and professional scholars.

Finally, reflecting on the former theoretical analysis, the thesis discusses two practical social issues emerging in current society and times. For those who are socially inept, they should firstly take effective action to learn as much knowledge as possible, muster courage and confidence, give themselves positive psychological hints and then go on to practice in communication. For the advancing of the English discipline construction and structure, it is advocated to be more audacious and ambitious. And for English graduates who want to be more competitive in labor market, courageous possible combination of their original English major and other disciplines is put forward as one direction to march forward.

Despite all the former findings and their contributions to the development of literary pragmatics, the study shows some limitations. First, limitations of statistics and technology in the study's example analysis and qualitative categorization. The more data are collected and analyzed, the more precise the results will be. If all dialogues involving clashes between characters in *North and South* were gathered and classified, all possible elements causing clashes in the outside author-reader dialogues were covered, the study's findings would be more detailed and convincing.

Then, there are limitations of direct associations between the pragmatic presupposition theory and the selected practical issues. When considering the causes and solutions of social phobia and English major's crisis, the

reflection adopts an overall literary pragmatic perspective, or more generally, an interdisciplinary perspective.

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