

Article

A Pragmatic Analysis of Shakespeare's *Richard III*: Language Strategies: Persuasion, Domination, and Control

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Abstract: This pragmatic analysis of *Richard III* examines how conversational strategies, speech acts, and Gricean maxims reveal the true intentions and nature of Richard and other characters. While Shakespeare's history plays are often explored through social, cultural, historical, and political lenses, this approach focuses on understanding characterization through linguistic cues, especially Richard's manipulative use of language. Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics, delves into the intended meanings behind interactions using linguistic signals, emphasizing the dynamics of conversation and context. In *Richard III*, speech acts—encompassing not just spoken words, but also the surrounding context—are crucial for understanding Richard's ability to deceive, manipulate, and persuade. These speech acts not only convey what is said, but also the strategies employed to achieve specific goals, such as persuasion or domination. By applying pragmatic principles and speech act theory, this analysis enhances our understanding of Shakespeare's characters and their interactions. Gricean maxims—quality, quantity, relevance, and manner—serve as a framework for exploring how Richard often flouts or manipulates these principles to control dialogue and perceptions. This combined approach reveals the layers of meaning and strategic language use that shape Richard's character and the broader implications of his interactions within the play. This shows that Shakespeare's theater continues to provide a compelling lens for exploring the relationship between language, politics, and identity, enhancing our comprehension of how literature both reflects and influences the socio-political context in which it was created.

Keywords: Gricean maxims; implicature; language strategies; pragmatics; Shakespeare; speech acts



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1. Introduction

In contrast to the extensive body of literary criticism on Shakespeare's language, linguistic studies specifically focused on his linguistic choices remain relatively limited (Culpeper and Oliver 2020). Moreover, while there is a vast amount of linguistic literature examining the components of the main or matrix clause, research on interjections—an often overlooked element of language—remains noticeably scarce. Interjections, despite their frequent use in both Shakespeare's works and everyday speech, have not received the same level of analytical attention, particularly within the context of his plays (Cohen 2019; Munir and Yavuz 2021). This gap in research highlights the need for a deeper exploration of how these spontaneous and emotive expressions function within the larger framework of Shakespearean dialogue, as they can offer valuable insights into the character dynamics, emotional expression, and social interaction in his works (Mullini 2012).

Shakespeare's histories stand as a testament to his acute understanding of human behavior, politics, and societal structures. These plays, often seen as dramatic narratives chronicling England's past, are also rich sites for exploring pragmatic interactions, speech acts, and the broader communicative strategies employed by his characters. Through their dialogue and actions, Shakespeare's kings, rebels, and commoners alike navigate the intricate demands of persuasion, authority, and identity within the frameworks of power and historical continuity (Culpeper and Oliver 2020). This paper investigates the intersection of Shakespearean historical drama and pragmatics, focusing on how language functions to achieve practical outcomes, construct social hierarchies, and mediate complex interpersonal relationships.

Shakespeare's history plays draw heavily from Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), a monumental work that provided the historical foundation for his depiction of medieval English history. Yet, these plays often reflect more of Shakespeare's own Elizabethan context than the medieval society they ostensibly portray. Set against a backdrop of events such as the Wars of the Roses—a series of civil wars between the houses of Lancaster and York—the histories chart the rise and fall of dynasties while exploring themes of legitimacy, power, and identity. Written in two series, Shakespeare's history plays include *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, and 3* and *Richard III* in the earlier phase, which focus on the decline of the Lancastrian dynasty, and later works such as *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, and *Richard II*. Despite their historical settings, Shakespeare's characters resonated with his contemporary audiences, as their ambitions, struggles, and rhetorical strategies reflect universal aspects of the human experience. For example, *Richard III* dramatizes the conflict between the houses of Lancaster and York while foregrounding questions about the morality of power and the construction of authority through language (Ameka 1992; Jucker 2002).

Pragmatics, as a discipline, concerns itself with the ways in which context influences the interpretation of meaning. According to Levinson, pragmatics examines “the relation of signs to their interpreters”, particularly in how “meaning extends beyond literal semantics to encompass implicatures, presuppositions, and performative acts” (1983, p. 9). When applied to Shakespeare's histories, a pragmatic lens reveals the layers of intention, miscommunication, and strategic manipulation embedded within the plays' verbal exchanges. For instance, in *Richard II*, performative declarations of kingship and abdication underscore the power of language to both construct and dismantle authority (Saad 2023).

Moreover, Shakespeare's historical plays serve as fertile ground for exploring the pragmatics of political rhetoric. As Wilson (2024) argues, political discourse often hinges on the “contextual negotiation of power through language” (p. 5). This is particularly evident in *Henry V*, where the titular king's speeches demonstrate how rhetorical strategies, such as framing and appeals to shared identity, are pragmatically employed to inspire collective action and justify contentious decisions. Shakespeare's portrayal of Henry's speeches, from the stirring St. Crispin's Day speech to his strategic use of moral justifications for war, reveals how power dynamics are subtly shaped through the manipulation of language. These speeches are crafted not only to persuade, but to create a sense of unity and shared purpose, effectively constructing a collective identity that aligns the audience with Henry's royal cause. By deploying rhetoric that simultaneously elevates his own status while reinforcing his legitimacy, Henry exemplifies the persuasive power of language in the political sphere.

Consequently, this exploration situates Shakespeare's histories within broader academic conversations about literature and linguistics. Scholars such as Jonathan Culpeper (2011) have emphasized the importance of historical pragmatics in understanding Early Modern texts, noting that Shakespeare's works offer unique insights into the socio-cultural

norms of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. [Culpeper and Oliver \(2020\)](#) argue that, by examining the linguistic choices and speech acts within these plays, we can better understand the ways in which language was employed to reflect and construct societal hierarchies, power relations, and political ideologies. Shakespeare's ability to craft speeches that resonate with both the characters within the play and the audience reflects a deep understanding of how speech acts function within a given cultural context, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of the political tensions of the time.

By bridging these disciplines, this analysis not only enriches our appreciation of Shakespeare's artistry, but also contributes to ongoing debates about the dynamic interplay between language, literature, and social action. The use of speech acts in Shakespeare's histories extends beyond mere character development or plot progression; it underscores how language becomes a tool of political power. In *Henry V*, for instance, Henry's rhetoric functions as both a means of persuasion and a tool of governance, demonstrating that the words spoken on the stage are not mere reflections of power, but active constituents in the construction of authority and legitimacy. This dynamic interplay of language and power challenges the boundaries between literature and politics, showing how theatrical performances can influence social perceptions and, at times, echo the political climate of their time.

Moreover, the study of historical pragmatics in Shakespeare's works opens up further avenues for understanding the role of language in shaping historical consciousness. Through the lens of pragmatics, we gain insight into how Shakespeare's portrayal of political figures and events might reflect or challenge contemporary social realities. By analyzing the language used in Shakespeare's histories, scholars can explore the ways in which these plays engage with issues of authority, consent, and resistance, offering critical perspectives on the complex relationship between rulers and subjects, the governed and the governors.

In this sense, the linguistic analysis of Shakespeare's histories offers an invaluable contribution to both literary studies and the broader field of political discourse analysis. It encourages a reevaluation of Shakespeare's work as not only a source of artistic and dramatic value, but also as a significant cultural artifact that provides insights into the mechanisms of political power and the ways in which language can serve as both a tool for manipulation and a means of resistance. Thus, Shakespeare's histories offer a powerful framework for examining the intersection of language, politics, and identity, ultimately enriching our understanding of how literature reflects and shapes the socio-political landscape in which it was produced.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pragmatics

The study of pragmatics has evolved from a fragmented field into a well-established area that explores the dynamic relationship between language, meaning, and context. Before the 1970s, spoken language was seen as chaotic and difficult to analyze, as it did not fit into the structural frameworks used for written texts ([Levinson 1983](#)). However, advancements in anthropology, philosophy, and linguistics in the mid-20th century led to a recognition of the structured nature of verbal communication. Scholars like J.L. Austin, John Searle, and Paul Grice significantly reshaped the understanding of language. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) introduced the idea that communication is not just about transmitting information, but also involves understanding the speaker's intent and the context of the exchange. His work emphasized that language is performative utterances that do things, such as making requests or commands, depending on the speaker's goals ([Verschuere 1999](#)).

Building on Austin's ideas, John Searle formalized speech act theory and categorized speech acts into the following five types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations (Searle 1969). This taxonomy highlights the diverse purposes of language and stresses the role of context in interpreting meaning (Jucker 2002).

Paul Grice further expanded pragmatics with his Cooperative Principle (1975), which asserts that effective communication relies on the assumption that speakers and listeners collaborate for mutual understanding. Grice's conversational maxims—quality, quantity, relevance, and manner—help to explain how speakers often communicate indirectly by relying on shared contextual knowledge and inference. For instance, a neutral response like "The food was nice" to the question "How was the party?" might imply dissatisfaction with other aspects of the event, revealing how meaning extends beyond what is explicitly stated (Clark 2012).

These foundational theories have formed a strong basis for exploring pragmatics in various domains, including literature. Levinson (1983) defines pragmatics as the study of how meaning extends beyond literal semantics to include contextual inference, implicature, and performative acts. In the context of Shakespeare's works, this framework is invaluable, as dialogue often functions as a site for negotiating power, identity, and social relationships (Crystal 2008). Through the lens of pragmatics, Shakespeare's characters can be seen as performing actions through their speech, illustrating the intersection between language and social dynamics.

Contemporary developments in speech act theory (SAT) have expanded its scope by integrating sociocultural and cognitive perspectives. Kecskes (2010) argues that speech acts are shaped not only by contextual factors, but also by cognitive elements such as shared beliefs and prior knowledge between speakers and listeners. His research emphasizes that speech acts are both socially and cognitively constructed, suggesting that an understanding of speech acts requires attention to both the social context—such as power dynamics and shared goals—and the cognitive context, which involves how speakers interpret the world based on their experiences (Archer and Culpeper 2003).

Wilson and Sperber's (2006) Relevance Theory has significantly impacted the understanding of speech acts, emphasizing the importance of relevance in communication. They assert that effective communication occurs when speakers provide information that is pertinent to the hearer. This idea intersects with SAT by explaining how illocutionary acts are shaped by the inferential processes of speakers and listeners. According to their theory, speakers tailor their utterances to what will be most salient to their audience, enhancing communicative effectiveness (Person 2009).

Pragmatic sociolinguistics, an important development within SAT, focuses on how speech acts function in real-world social interactions. Holmes (2013) discusses how speech acts not only perform actions, but also negotiate social roles and relationships. This reflects the speaker's awareness of social hierarchies, with language serving as a tool for both action and identity negotiation.

It seems key to note that recent studies by Rozumko (2024) examined speech acts in digital communication, such as online forums, social media, and emails, while other theoreticians have delved into the possibilities that SAT offers to understand classical texts (Jucker 2024). These studies show that the medium can influence the illocutionary force of speech acts, highlighting new pragmatic considerations like anonymity, brevity, and a lack of non-verbal cues.

Cross-cultural research by Haugh (2015) and Goddard (2018) further enriched SAT by exploring how speech acts vary across languages and cultures. While some speech acts share universal elements, their execution can vary significantly based on cultural norms, politeness, and power dynamics.

Despite its broad application, SAT has faced critiques. McDowell (2008) and Yule (2017) argue that the boundaries between illocutionary, locutionary, and perlocutionary acts are often fluid, complicating real-world communication. Buttny (2004) critiques SAT for underemphasizing power relations in shaping speech acts. As a result, SAT continues to evolve, addressing the complexities of language use in dynamic, real-world contexts (Jucker 2024).

2.2. Shakespearean Pragmatics

Shakespeare's works, particularly his histories (Kizelbach 2024), offer fertile ground for examining the principles of pragmatics in action. These plays not only dramatize historical events, but also provide a window into the socio-political dynamics of language use. Drawing heavily from Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), Shakespeare's histories reflect the political concerns of both their medieval settings and Elizabethan England (Holinshed 1587). While ostensibly about the past, the plays engage with timeless themes of legitimacy, power, and rhetorical manipulation (Kizelbach 2024).

In the histories, pragmatic analysis illuminates how characters employ speech acts to achieve strategic goals. For instance, in *Henry IV, Part 1*, Prince Hal's calculated speeches demonstrate his mastery of code-switching between formal and colloquial registers, reflecting his dual identity as a prince and a companion of commoners (Culpeper 2011). Similarly, in *Richard II*, King Richard's performative declarations of kingship and abdication reveal the fragility of authority constructed through language. These moments exemplify the interplay of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts in shaping character dynamics and advancing narrative objectives (Brown and Levinson 1987).

Shakespeare's use of political rhetoric further underscores the relevance of Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational implicature. As Wilson (2024) notes, political discourse often hinges on the contextual negotiation of power through language. In *Henry V*, for example, King Henry's stirring speeches employ framing, appeals to shared identity, and calculated ambiguity to inspire loyalty and justify contentious decisions (Wilson and Sperber 2006). Pragmatic analysis reveals how these rhetorical strategies resonate with both the characters within the play and the audiences beyond it (Drid 2018).

The integration of pragmatics into Shakespearean studies also contributes to broader discussions of historical linguistics. Scholars such as Culpeper (2011) have emphasized the importance of historical pragmatics for understanding Early Modern texts, arguing that Shakespeare's language offers insights into the cultural norms and communicative practices of Elizabethan England. By bridging literary and linguistic analysis, the study of Shakespearean pragmatics deepens our appreciation of his works as both artistic masterpieces and documents of linguistic and social history (Archer et al. 2012).

This integration of pragmatics and Shakespearean drama highlights both the evolution of pragmatics as a field and the ever-growing complexity of Shakespearean drama in the 21st century (Joseph and Steven 2024). In the sections that follow, we further explore how the linguistic choices in Shakespeare's histories reflect the principles of speech act theory, conversational implicature, and the pragmatics of political discourse, demonstrating their enduring relevance to contemporary debates in language and literature (Munir and Yavuz 2021).

2.3. Speech Act Theory and Felicity Conditions in Theatrical Studies

Although Austin initially argued that performatives in theater are not legitimate speech acts, as audiences recognize the insincerity of the actor's role (1962, p. 22), the theory has still proven valuable for analyzing Shakespeare's works. Stanley Fish (1976)

applied speech act theory to literary criticism, and Susanne Wofford (2014) argued that Austin's exclusion of performance should not prevent its use in theater studies. Wofford's 2014 work links the theory to Austin's Felicity Conditions, which outline the necessary conditions for a successful speech act.

In the fields of linguistics and the philosophy of language, an utterance is described as felicitous when it is pragmatically well-formed, meaning that it adheres to the norms and expectations of appropriate communication within a given context. Conversely, an utterance is considered as infelicitous if it fails to meet these pragmatic criteria. Reasons for infelicity include self-contradiction, triviality, irrelevance, or a general mismatch with the contextual requirements of the discourse. The evaluation of felicity is a key area of study in semantics and pragmatics, where researchers employ felicity judgments in much the same way that syntacticians rely on grammaticality judgments to assess sentence structure. Infelicitous sentences are conventionally marked with the pound sign (#) in linguistic analysis (Jucker 2002; Jucker 2024)

The concepts of felicity and infelicity were introduced by J. L. Austin in his seminal theory of speech acts, which he articulated in *How to Do Things with Words* (1962). Austin argues that performative utterances—statements that enact an action rather than describe a state of affairs—cannot be evaluated in terms of truth or falsity. Instead, their success or failure is judged by whether they meet certain felicity conditions. These conditions vary depending on the type of performative utterance. For instance, a declaration such as “I sentence you to death” requires the speaker to have the institutional authority to make the statement, while a request like “I ask that you stop doing that” depends on the cooperative engagement of the interlocutor. Similarly, a warning such as “I warn you not to jump off the roof” presupposes both the speaker's intent to prevent harm and the contextual plausibility of the advised action. These conditions have been extensively linked to the comprehension of SAT by recent studies (Álvarez 2005; Jucker 2024).

Austin's framework has been extensively developed by subsequent scholars in pragmatics, such as John Searle and Paul Grice, and remains foundational in understanding the interplay between language, context, and meaning.

These conditions help to analyze the dynamic relationship between language, action, and audience in performance. One crucial Felicity Condition is Austin's fourth condition, which requires a speech act to be executed “completely” (1962, p. 15). This led to the development of Actioning, a rehearsal technique focusing on the full realization of an utterance's effect (Drid 2018). The performer's judgment determines whether the speech act has achieved its intended effect, emphasizing the importance of completion beyond just articulation (Habermas 1994).

However, Actioning overlooks the vital interaction that follows the utterance, highlighting the reciprocal nature of communication. This interaction—considering both the speaker's intent and audience's response—is crucial for understanding the impact of the speech act, not just its execution (Drid 2018; Jucker 2024).

2.4. Grice's Maxims

Conversational maxims, as outlined by Grice (1975), structure the Cooperative Principle, which dictates that, in conversational exchanges, individuals should tailor their contributions to align with the purpose or direction of the ongoing interaction. This principle serves as the foundation for successful communication, as speakers inherently assume that their interlocutors will be cooperative, adhering to the conversational maxims. In this regard, when engaging in dialogue, reading written communication, or listening to speech, interlocutors generally expect that the information provided will be sufficient (maxim of

quantity), truthful (maxim of quality), relevant (maxim of relevance), and presented in a clear and organized manner (maxim of manner).

Grice's maxims can be seen as an implicit framework that governs the exchange of information, ensuring that each participant in a conversation contributes meaningfully and in a way that facilitates understanding. The maxim of quantity asserts that speakers should provide just the right amount of information, neither too much nor too little. The maxim of quality, on the other hand, requires that speakers only provide information that they believe to be true, while the maxim of relevance emphasizes the need for contributions to remain pertinent to the topic at hand. Finally, the maxim of manner urges speakers to be clear in their communication, avoiding ambiguity and obscurity and ensuring brevity and organization.

However, when these maxims are not fully met (whether violated or flouted), speakers may still convey meaningful information through implicature. Violating a maxim, such as making an overly obvious statement or responding in an unrelated way, generates conversational implicatures, wherein the listener interprets this deviation from the expected contribution as an indirect cue to a deeper or hidden meaning. For instance, if a speaker makes an obviously false statement and the interlocutor responds with irony, violating the maxim of quality, the implied meaning—usually understood through contextual clues—is the speaker's intention to be sarcastic. This form of indirect communication, where the violation of a maxim serves to convey additional layers of meaning, plays a critical role in both humor and irony in everyday conversations. Similarly, jokes or wordplay that deliberately flout the maxim of manner rely on cleverness to surprise the audience, often invoking humor through the unexpected or incongruous use of language. An example of how conversational maxims can be flouted involves a situation in which an answer is provided that seems irrelevant, yet may carry an implicit response to the original query. For example, if someone asks for the time and the response is, "Your mother just called on the phone", the answer initially appears unrelated. However, contextual knowledge may reveal that the speaker's mother typically calls at a specific time, rendering the response implicitly relevant and meaningful. This highlights the dynamic nature of conversational implicatures, where the violation of expected conversational norms does not necessarily result in miscommunication, but rather invites the listener to infer the intended meaning.

Thus, when maxims are transgressed, they generate conversational implicatures that allow speakers and listeners to navigate the gap between what is explicitly stated and what is implicitly intended. These implicatures, in turn, facilitate the fluid exchange of information and enrich the communicative process. In instances where a maxim is violated without a deliberate intent to communicate an alternative message, the speaker's actions may be socially sanctioned. For instance, providing excessive information might lead to the speaker being labeled as a chatterbox or a bore, while false statements may result in the speaker being branded a liar. Irrelevant responses or unclear expressions similarly attract social censure, demonstrating the importance of adhering to conversational maxims in maintaining social coherence and communication efficacy.

Thus, Grice's maxims provide a fundamental framework for understanding the dynamics of conversation, where the expectation is that speakers will contribute in a cooperative and contextually appropriate manner. Violations of these maxims, while often generating implicatures that contribute to the richness of communication, also illustrate the complex ways in which speakers navigate the delicate balance between explicit and implicit meaning. Ultimately, this framework not only guides our understanding of everyday conversations, but also sheds light on how language functions as a dynamic tool for meaning-making in diverse social contexts

2.5. Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory

Although the taxonomy of speech acts (Searle 1976) was not designed to classify expressions of verbal politeness, each type of speech act is characterized by a set of specific strategies. As previously mentioned, in the context of this study, we will focus on assertive, exhortative, and expressive speech acts.

The concept of “politeness phenomena” and its verbal manifestations have been studied in detail by Brown and Levinson (1987), who showed that the forms that politeness takes in different languages appear to be influenced by a series of contextual factors, such as power relations, social differences, and the impositions that speakers place on one another. Thus, an analysis of politeness strategies can reveal the nature of the relationships between participants.

Brown and Levinson's model aims to integrate language use with the social relationships of speakers. To do so, the authors build on Goffman's (1967, pp. 5–6) notion of face in his study of face-to-face interaction, in which face is the positive social value a person effectively claims for themselves by the line that others assume they have taken during a particular contact. Face is an image that is self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes (1987, pp. 6–7).

Brown and Levinson expand on this concept by adding a negative aspect to face, assuming that every competent adult member of society possesses both a negative face—marked by the claim to personal autonomy, private territory, and freedom from imposition—and a positive face—marked by the desire for a consistent and positively valued self-image that is appreciated and approved by others. These two aspects of face are treated as desires, leading to the following definitions:

- (a) Negative face: the desire for one's actions not to be impeded by others.
- (b) Positive face: the desire for one's wishes to be attractive, at least to some others (Brown and Levinson 1987).

Face, therefore, is defined in terms of desires that are fulfilled through the actions of others. As a result, contributing to another's prestige reinforces one's own, making face maintenance a mutual interest of speakers. However, speakers inevitably threaten face at times (e.g., by requesting something from someone). Possible face-threatening acts (FTAs) include the following:

1. Threats to the hearer's negative face: urging, advising, and threatening.
2. Threats to the hearer's positive face: complaining, criticizing, and disagreeing.
3. Threats to the speaker's negative face: accepting offers and accepting thanks.
4. Threats to the speaker's positive face: apologizing, accepting compliments, and confessing.

According to Brown and Levinson, the five following possible strategies exist for carrying out these FTAs while balancing face threat and face maintenance:

1. Bald-on-record strategy: performing the FTA explicitly, directly, and without mitigation.
2. Positive politeness: performing the FTA explicitly but with redressive action to attend to the hearer's positive face.
3. Negative politeness: performing the FTA explicitly but mitigating it to attend to the hearer's negative face.
4. Off-record strategy: performing the FTA implicitly, indirectly, or ambiguously.
5. Avoidance: not performing the FTA at all.

The choice of strategy depends on a combination of factors, including the benefits and effects of the strategy, as well as the risk of losing face. These strategies range from least (1) to most (5) face-protective.

However, each of the previously mentioned strategies has its advantages and drawbacks.

- Bald-on-record FTAs are the most effective and least ambiguous, as they conform entirely to Grice's conversational maxims. This strategy is justified when efficiency is prioritized over face concerns, when the risk of face loss is minimal (e.g., invitations), or when there is a large or nonexistent power difference between interlocutors. The advantage is that the speaker appears sincere, clear, and confident in the hearer.
- Positive politeness minimizes the threat by showing common ground with the hearer. For example,

I know you don't like parties, but this one will be exceptional—come!

(Strategy 9: asserting/presupposing the speaker's knowledge and concern for the hearer's wants.)

- Negative politeness minimizes the imposition and respects the hearer's autonomy. The speaker shows reluctance to impose. For example,

I'm sure you're busy, but could you send me this fax?

(Strategy 6: apologizing—admitting the imposition.)

- Off-record FTAs lack clarity and redress, but they avoid direct imposition, satisfying the hearer's negative face by not explicitly limiting their freedom. For example,

Oh no, I forgot my wallet at home again.

(Strategy 2: giving hints.)

- Avoiding the FTA prevents face loss, but at the cost of inaction. Brown and Levinson ask why speakers do not always choose this strategy, concluding that indirect threats can be ineffective and do not contribute to mutual face maintenance. Additionally, an implicit threat in a low-risk situation may be interpreted as indicating a higher risk of offense (Brown and Levinson 1987, p. 79).

The severity of an FTA depends on the following three factors:

1. The social distance between the speaker and hearer.
2. The relative power of the speaker and hearer.
3. The degree of imposition of the FTA within a given society.

These factors interact such that a greater face threat requires more mitigation (strategies 3 or 4), while a lower face threat allows for more direct strategies (1 or 2). If the speaker is of a lower status, is unfamiliar with the hearer, or if the imposition is significant, they will choose strategies that minimize the threat. Conversely, if the speaker is of a higher status, has a close rapport with the hearer, or if the imposition is minimal, they will opt for more direct strategies. Thus, examining politeness strategies provides insight into the social distance and power relations between people.

Performing an FTA explicitly and directly ensures that the speaker is informative, truthful, relevant, and clear, making imperatives a common linguistic strategy. In contrast, implicit FTAs, positive politeness, and negative politeness employ a wider range of linguistic strategies. Brown and Levinson conducted extensive cross-linguistic analyses of these strategies, which are too detailed to reproduce here. However, one example of their analysis is as follows:

I just wanted to know if I could use your computer for a moment.

(Negative politeness: "just" ... "for a moment" [Strategy 4: minimizing imposition]; "wanted to know" [Strategy 3: being conventionally indirect]; "could" [Strategy 2: softening the performative force].)

One of the most contested aspects of their model is the strict gradation and independence of politeness strategies. Later research suggests that politeness strategies often combine in discourse, extending beyond individual speech acts (Coupland et al. 1988).

2.6. Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (1992) explains that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines the textual features of discourse to uncover the underlying causes of power, inequality, and dominance. It delves into the often unclear motivations behind the discursive representation of events, audiences, and broader social and cultural groups. CDA seeks to understand how power and implicit ideologies are embedded within discourse. The primary objective of CDA is to explore power dynamics and examine how individuals and groups resist the abuse of power. Therefore, CDA analyzes various types of texts and addresses a wide range of issues. Thus, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) focuses on understanding how social power, inequality, and abuse are expressed, reinforced, justified, and resisted through language in social and political settings. CDA scholars adopt a clear stance, aiming to expose and challenge social inequalities. This makes CDA not just a method, but also a movement driven by politically engaged researchers. A common misconception about CDA is that it refers to a unique method of discourse analysis, but it does not. Rather, CDA draws from a variety of methods used across discourse studies, as well as relevant approaches from the humanities and social sciences (Wodak and Meyer 2008; Titscher et al. 2000). To address this misunderstanding and highlight the diverse methods available in critical studies of text and talk, the term *critical discourse studies* (CDSs) is now preferred in the field (van Dijk 2008). However, because CDA remains widely used, this chapter will continue to use this abbreviation. CDA is not simply one research approach among others in discourse studies. Instead, it represents a critical viewpoint that can be applied across various areas of discourse analysis, including discourse grammar, Conversation Analysis, discourse pragmatics, rhetoric, stylistics, narrative analysis, argumentation analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, social semiotics, sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, and the psychology of discourse processing, among others.

A key concept in much of Critical Discourse Analysis is the notion of power, particularly the social power held by groups or institutions (Lukes 1986). In summarizing a broad philosophical and social understanding, I define social power in terms of control (van Dijk 2008). In this sense, groups possess power to the extent that they can control the actions and thoughts of other groups or their members. This power relies on access to scarce social resources, such as force, wealth, status, knowledge, information, “culture”, or various forms of public discourse and communication (Mayr 2008). Power can be categorized according to the types of resources used to exert it, as follows: coercive power, like that of the military or violent groups, often depends on force; the wealthy hold power due to their financial resources; and the persuasive power of parents, professors, or journalists may stem from knowledge, information, or authority. It is important to note that power is rarely absolute. Groups may have varying degrees of control over others, often limited to specific contexts or social spheres. For instance, a judge holds authority only in the courtroom, and a teacher controls students within the classroom. Additionally, those subjected to power may resist, accept, condone, collude with, comply with, or even legitimize such power, potentially seeing it as “natural”. Dominant groups may integrate their power into laws, norms, customs, and even a broad societal consensus, forming what Gramsci referred to as hegemony (Gramsci 1971). Furthermore, power is not always exercised through overtly oppressive actions; it may be enacted in everyday behaviors and interactions that are often taken for granted, such as everyday sexism or racism (Essed 1991). It is also important to recognize that not all individuals within a powerful group are more powerful than all

those within dominated groups—power is considered at the group level. For analyzing the relationship between discourse and power, we observe that access to certain forms of discourse—such as those in politics, the media, education, or science—becomes a critical power resource (van Dijk 2008).

3. Methodology

This study employs a theoretical methodology, focusing on pragmatics and speech act theory to analyze *Richard III* (Shakespeare 2008). The research is grounded in Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), which encompasses the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner, to investigate how language functions within dialogue and character interactions in the play. Specifically, the analysis will highlight Richard's deliberate manipulation of these maxims, with a particular emphasis on relevance and manner, as integral elements of his persuasive tactics. Through this lens, the study aims to reveal how Richard's linguistic choices subvert conversational norms, creating an illusion of cooperation while advancing his own agenda.

The study further integrates Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies to deepen the exploration of Richard's manipulative use of language, especially in the complex dynamics of his pursuit of Lady Anne. The balance between positive and negative politeness strategies will be examined to uncover how Richard's language oscillates between feigned respect and subtle aggression. His ability to maintain an appearance of politeness while undermining his interlocutors will be analyzed as a key component of his rhetorical skill and psychological control.

In addition, speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969) will be utilized to examine the performative nature of Richard's utterances. This framework will illuminate how Richard's speech acts transcend mere description, actively shaping the responses of other characters. The study will analyze how his strategic deployment of directives, commissives, and expressives allows him to influence emotions and manipulate perceptions, driving characters toward emotional submission and reluctant consent.

Consequently, the research aims to demonstrate how Richard's calculated use of language constructs and reinforces power dynamics throughout the play, emphasizing the pivotal role of linguistic manipulation in his rise to power and his ability to dominate those around him. By dissecting the interplay between pragmatics, politeness strategies, and speech acts, this study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the linguistic mechanisms behind Richard's psychological and rhetorical prowess.

3.1. Sample Collection and Sample Analysis

For this study, the primary data comprise samples taken from the text of *Richard III*, which will be scrutinized using Grice's maxims, politeness theory, and speech act theory as analytical frameworks. The qualitative approach involves a detailed close reading of the text, focusing on specific passages where Richard's speech either flouts or adheres to Grice's conversational maxims—quantity, quality, relevance, and manner—and the consequent impacts on the responses of other characters. By highlighting these linguistic strategies, the analysis aims to uncover how Richard skillfully manipulates conversational norms to achieve his goals. The key criteria for sample selection are elicited in the chart below.

In addition to this, the study will examine the perlocutionary effects of Richard's speech, delving into how his words provoke emotional and behavioral changes in those he interacts with. Particular attention will be paid to the ways in which his calculated speech acts—whether directives, commissives, or expressives—serve to destabilize his interlocutors, eliciting compliance, confusion, or emotional vulnerability. This aspect of the

analysis will provide insight into how Richard's language operates not merely at the level of content, but as a tool for exerting influence and control.

To facilitate and structure the analysis, two tables (Tables 1 and 2) will be included, categorizing Richard's linguistic maneuvers in relation to Grice's maxims and speech act theory. This table will serve as a visual aid to organize key examples, illustrating the interplay between his conversational strategies and their outcomes. These tables will also capture the alignment or violation of politeness strategies and the subsequent reactions from other characters, showcasing Richard's mastery in navigating the intricate dynamics of power and persuasion through language.

Table 1. Sample selection criteria.

Token	Description	Explanation
1	Relevance to Power and Manipulation	The selected excerpts highlight Richard's use of language to manipulate, deceive, and exert power over others, showcasing the key themes of the play.
2	Diversity of Interactions	The samples cover a variety of dialogues, including Richard's interactions with Clarence, Anne, Queen Elizabeth, and other characters, demonstrating different manipulative tactics.
3	Illustration of Rhetorical Strategies	Each sample provides a distinct rhetorical device, including irony, persuasion, false promises, and threats, helping to analyze Richard's strategic use of language.

Table 2. Analytical Chart; sample analysis.

Maxim	Richard's Speech	Lady Anne's Response	Speech Act	Discussion
Maxim of Quantity	"I am not made to woo. I am not a lover." (I.i.28)	"O, wonderful!" (I.ii.59)	Assertion	Richard's brief statement minimizes his role as a lover, which paradoxically increases his allure and manipulates Anne into questioning his sincerity.
Maxim of Quality	"I loved her son... and pitying her, my love." (I.ii.30)	"Foul devil!" (I.ii.38)	Falsehood/Assertion	Richard's claim of love is insincere, violating the maxim of quality and functioning as a manipulative assertion to gain sympathy.
Maxim of Relevance	"Your beauty... is it not strange to be so fair?" (I.ii.40)	"O, make me die! I cannot take it anymore." (I.ii.42)	Compliment/Request for Attention	Richard uses a compliment to distract Anne, focusing on her beauty to sidestep the pain of her grief, thus flouting the maxim of relevance in a strategic way.
Maxim of Manner	"If you are wise, I would take this proffer." (I.ii.52)	"My grief is that I am cursed to see you live." (I.ii.54)	Suggestion/Expression of Grief	Richard's speech is clear and direct, suggesting action (to accept his proposal), while Anne's emotional grief contradicts the suggestion, adding complexity to the interaction.

As can be inferred, the analysis chart serves as an essential organizational tool, systematically structuring the application of Grice's maxims, speech act theory, and politeness strategies to the dialogue in *Richard III*. By providing a clear and concise framework, the chart helps to map the specific linguistic elements of Richard's conversations, categorizing how his utterances either align with or flout the cooperative maxims and detailing the functions of his speech acts within each scene. This visual aid is particularly valuable in highlighting patterns of manipulation and persuasion that might otherwise be obscured in the complexity of the text.

The results and insights derived from the chart's categorization will be elaborated upon in greater detail throughout the paper. Each instance identified in the chart will serve as a starting point for a more nuanced exploration of the conversational dynamics at play. For example, when Richard flouts the maxim of relevance, the accompanying discussion will delve into the context, implications, and specific ways that this strategy influences the responses of other characters. It seems noteworthy to distinguish the following two key concepts: flouting and violating. Both concepts derive from Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), differing in intent and effect. Flouting occurs when a speaker very obviously breaks a maxim to create an implicature, expecting the listener to infer an indirect meaning, which leads to some theories to support the idea that flouting implies deliberateness (Álvarez 2005). For instance, sarcasm flouts the maxim of quality, as in "Oh, I totally failed!" when the exam was terrible. In contrast, violating a maxim involves covertly breaking it to deceive or mislead the listener, such as lying about one's whereabouts to avoid suspicion. Unlike flouting, where the violation is meant to be noticed, violating a maxim conceals the speaker's intent. For example, omitting crucial details violates the maxim of quantity, while giving an irrelevant response to mislead violates the maxim of relation. Essentially, flouting relies on a shared understanding to imply meaning, whereas violating aims to mislead without the listener realizing it.

Hence, the objective of this study is to explore how Richard's manipulation of language influences power dynamics and persuasion in *Richard III*. While the chart provides a useful starting point, it cannot fully capture the complexity of these interactions. The analysis will delve into Richard's rhetorical strategies, examining how they shape his characterization, relationships with others, and the overall drama of his rise and fall. This multi-dimensional approach offers a comprehensive understanding of how language plays a crucial role in shaping power and persuasion in the play.

3.2. Data Interpretation

In this analysis, a central focus consists of identifying moments where Richard deliberately manipulates the cooperative maxims to serve his calculated objectives. By strategically flouting Grice's maxims—such as providing irrelevant information, withholding necessary details, or using ambiguous expressions—Richard disrupts the expected flow of communication, disarming his interlocutors and gaining an upper hand. These instances will be carefully dissected to demonstrate how his deviations from conversational norms are not merely breaches of etiquette, but deliberate tactics to manipulate perception and control dialogue.

The analysis will further incorporate Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, as interpreted and expanded upon by Fathi (2024), to explore the nuances of Richard's conversational maneuvers. Special attention will be paid to how Richard alternates between positive politeness—attempting to foster connection and goodwill through compliments and flattery, particularly in his interactions with Anne—and negative politeness, wherein he mitigates the imposition of his audacious advances by framing them in a way that reduces their perceived intrusiveness. This dynamic interplay between positive and negative politeness reveals the sophistication of Richard's linguistic strategy, as he simultaneously entices and coerces characters into acquiescence.

Through this lens, the study will illustrate how Richard's calculated use of language effectively shifts the balance of power in his favor, creating a psychological landscape in which other characters are subtly coerced or manipulated into compliance. This manipulation of language establishes Richard not merely as a cunning antagonist, but as a master of verbal persuasion whose actions shape the emotional and narrative fabric of the play.

This methodology provides a nuanced and multi-dimensional analysis of Shakespeare's *Richard III* by synthesizing theoretical frameworks from pragmatics, politeness theory, and speech act theory. By examining the interplay between Grice's maxims, Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies, and the performative aspects of speech acts, the analysis will illuminate how language operates as a vehicle for manipulation, persuasion, and the progression of dramatic action (Jucker 2024).

Hence, this paper seeks to uncover the subtleties of Shakespeare's characterization, emphasizing the pivotal role of linguistic strategy in defining Richard's complexity as a character and in driving the play's overarching themes of power, ambition, and moral corruption. The exploration of these linguistic dynamics will contribute to a deeper understanding of how Shakespeare weaves intricate patterns of dialogue to create compelling drama and profound psychological insights.

4. Results

In *Richard III*, Shakespeare's Richard embarks on an extended, audacious, and ultimately successful effort to court Lady Anne, the widow of Prince Edward, who was killed by Richard's forces at the Battle of Tewkesbury. This scene, remarkable for its dramatic intensity and psychological complexity, captures Richard's ruthless determination and his mastery of manipulation. Despite having previously declared his unsuitability "to prove a lover" (I.i.28), Richard's calculated seduction of Anne becomes a pivotal moment in the play, showcasing his capacity to bend even the most adverse circumstances to his will.

The exchange between Richard and Anne is often analyzed as a microcosm of the play's broader themes of power, persuasion, and moral corruption. Richard's interaction with Anne does not merely hinge on romantic or emotional appeal, but is steeped in calculated linguistic manipulation. This scene demonstrates Richard's ability to dominate not only the battlefield, but also the domain of dialogue, as he deftly wields language to dismantle Anne's resistance and gain her reluctant consent.

The characters in this exchange can be interpreted as embodying shifting power dynamics and complex conversational strategies. Anne's initial position of moral authority, grounded in her grief and righteous anger, gradually erodes under Richard's relentless verbal assault. Richard's rhetorical brilliance lies in his ability to oscillate between feigned humility, calculated flattery, and subtle aggression, creating a psychological environment that disorients and coerces Anne into submission.

As one of the most dramatically intense scenes in the play, this encounter between Richard and Anne serves as a testament to Shakespeare's skill in crafting intricate character interactions. It not only advances the plot by solidifying Richard's ascent, but also provides profound insight into his character—a manipulative, unrepentant figure whose words are as lethal as his deeds. By analyzing the power dynamics and conversational strategies at play, this scene offers a rich ground for exploring the intersection of language, power, and morality in *Richard III*.

Sample 1 Act 1, Scene 1, p. 12:

RICHARD. Brother, good day. What means this armed guard Does that wait upon your Grace?

CLARENCE. His Majesty, Ten'ring my person's safety, hath appointed This conduct to convey me to the' Tower.

RICHARD. Upon what cause? CLARENCE: Because my name is George.

RICHARD: Alack, my lord, that fault is none of yours: He should, for that, commit your godfathers. O, belike his Majesty hath some intent That you should be new-christened in the Tower. But what's the matter, Clarence? May I know?

This exchange between Richard and Clarence in *Richard III* is a rich example of how speech acts can be strategically deployed to manipulate and resist power dynamics in a conversation. In this scene, both characters employ speech acts that go beyond simple communication, using language to exert influence, assert authority, and navigate the complex power structures within their relationship. Richard's speech acts serve to deceive and manipulate, while Clarence's responses subtly resist this manipulation, revealing their shifting roles in the power struggle.

The exchange between Richard and Clarence in *Richard III* also offers a fascinating example of how both characters strategically flout Grice's maxims to reveal their motives and underscore the underlying power dynamics at play. Richard's ostensible surprise at seeing Clarence under armed guard is deeply ironic, given that Richard is directly responsible for Clarence's predicament. By feigning shock, Richard blatantly violates the maxim of quality, which dictates that speakers should only provide information that they believe to be true. His expression of surprise constitutes an intentional falsehood, crafted to manipulate the conversation and portray himself as an innocent, oblivious brother. Despite orchestrating Clarence's arrest, Richard seeks to frame himself as a passive observer of events, using this violation of the maxim of quality to create a conversational implicature that masks his true intent to deceive.

Clarence, on the other hand, responds with a different but equally strategic approach to flouting Grice's maxims, particularly the maxims of quantity and relevance. Rather than addressing Richard's question directly, Clarence offers a response that downplays the severity of his situation, providing unnecessary and tangentially relevant information. This ironic deflection conveys an air of composure and resilience, as Clarence presents himself as unshaken by his imprisonment. His choice to respond with irony contrasts sharply with Richard's manipulative innocence, suggesting that Clarence possesses a more profound awareness of the circumstances. His subtle defiance also critiques Richard's deceitful tone, positioning Clarence as morally and intellectually distinct from his brother.

Clarence's irony serves as a form of passive resistance, allowing him to maintain his dignity in the face of Richard's manipulation. By refusing to fully engage with Richard's deceitful narrative, Clarence subtly exposes the hollowness of Richard's feigned innocence, creating a tension that adds depth to their interaction. This dynamic suggests that Clarence, though seemingly at a disadvantage, is not entirely powerless.

Richard's subsequent responses build on this pattern of flouting Grice's maxims, further reinforcing his deceptive stance. He violates the maxim of quantity by offering superfluous details that do not directly address Clarence's irony or imprisonment. These extraneous remarks serve as rhetorical distractions, helping Richard to maintain his façade of innocence. Additionally, his continued breach of the maxim of quality through repeated false claims intensifies the conversational implicature of manipulation. Each falsehood strengthens the impression that Richard's primary goal is to control the narrative and obscure his culpability, further destabilizing Clarence's position.

This interaction between Richard and Clarence exemplifies how language functions as a tool for both manipulation and resistance. Richard's calculated deployment of false surprise and innocence underscores his ambition and willingness to deceive, while Clarence's ironic responses reflect his resilience and quiet defiance. Together, these strategies create a subtle yet profound battle for conversational control, mirroring the larger power struggles in the play.

In this light, it can be said that taking into consideration Brown and Levinson's politeness theory allows us to gain an additional insight into the complex power dynamics at play in this exchange between Richard and Clarence. Richard's subtle manipulation of politeness highlights his strategic use of negative politeness, a technique that seeks to

avoid imposing on the other's face needs while still accomplishing personal objectives. Throughout the interaction, Richard maintains an outwardly respectful tone, using seemingly polite inquiries and expressions of concern to mask his true intentions. This tactic serves to mitigate any perceived threat to Clarence's negative face—his desire to maintain autonomy and freedom from imposition. Richard's use of this politeness strategy allows him to appear considerate and non-threatening, thus avoiding an outright challenge to Clarence's self-image, even as he subtly tightens his control over the conversation. For instance, by asking questions that appear innocent or probing, Richard presents himself as an ally, when, in fact, he is maneuvering for power. This masterful use of politeness not only allows Richard to manage his public image, but also helps him to craft a narrative of fairness and civility, concealing the malicious intent beneath the surface.

Clarence, in contrast, responds by employing positive politeness strategies, which are intended to affirm his own identity and mitigate the potential loss of face in a situation where he is clearly vulnerable. Through irony and indirectness, Clarence attempts to appeal to a shared understanding with Richard, signaling his awareness of the absurdity of his situation. His sarcastic remark, "Because my name is George", operates as a form of resistance, as he uses humor to deflect the power imbalance. By invoking the shared knowledge of his name, Clarence not only challenges the legitimacy of his imprisonment, but also subtly asserts his own dignity. This rhetorical choice underscores his desire to be appreciated and understood—essentially, to maintain his positive face, or his social identity as someone worthy of respect and fairness. Clarence's sarcasm can be seen as an attempt to wrest some control back from Richard, signaling that he is aware of the manipulation at play and is not entirely passive in the exchange.

This interplay between negative and positive politeness strategies serves to further accentuate the imbalance of power between the two characters. Richard's use of negative politeness is a sophisticated tool to disguise his malice and make his coercive actions more palatable, while Clarence's use of positive politeness is a form of subtle resistance aimed at preserving his sense of self and challenging Richard's authority. The contrast between their strategies highlights the ways in which politeness and impoliteness can be strategically employed not only to maintain face, but also to navigate power struggles within highly hierarchical and oppressive social structures.

Ultimately, this scene demonstrates how politeness, or the lack thereof, functions not just as a means of facilitating communication, but as a powerful mechanism of control, subversion, and survival within a politically fraught environment. Richard's manipulation of politeness obscures his true nature and intentions, allowing him to maintain dominance over the conversation, while Clarence's ironic use of politeness becomes a subtle act of defiance. In a political landscape riddled with deception and manipulation, both characters deploy these strategies as essential tools of survival—Richard to manipulate, control, and maintain power, and Clarence to resist, subvert, and preserve his dignity. Through this lens, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory provides valuable insight into the ways in which language is used to navigate, negotiate, and sometimes destabilize the complex power structures inherent in their interactions.

Ultimately, this exchange not only highlights the characters' psychological complexity, but also illustrates the intricate ways in which Shakespeare uses dialogue to convey shifting power dynamics. By examining the interplay between manipulation and resistance, the scene reveals the deeper emotional and political tensions that drive the narrative of *Richard III*, showcasing Shakespeare's mastery in crafting layered, multi-dimensional character interactions.

Sample 2 Act 1, Scene 1, p. 16:

RICHARD. Well, your imprisonment won't last long. I will either get you out, lying if I have to, or stay in prison in your place. In the meantime, be patient.

In the analysis of this excerpt from the exchange between Richard and Clarence in Act 1, Scene 1 of *Richard III*, Richard's speech acts serve as a powerful tool for manipulation. Through a combination of commissive and directive speech acts, Richard carefully constructs an illusion of benevolence while advancing his own manipulative agenda. By promising to either free Clarence or take his place, Richard performs a commissive act, in which he commits to an action that he has no intention of fulfilling. Simultaneously, his directive speech act, "be patient", urges Clarence into emotional submission, reinforcing Richard's control over the situation. This analysis highlights the ways in which speech acts can function as mechanisms of power and manipulation, driving both character development and the unfolding drama.

From the perspective of speech act theory, Richard's utterance functions on multiple levels, involving both commissive and directive speech acts. The promise to free Clarence or take his place is a commissive act, wherein Richard is performing the speech act of committing to an action that he has no intention of fulfilling. This creates an illusion of benevolence, but its true purpose is to manipulate Clarence emotionally and secure his trust. Meanwhile, the directive "be patient" functions as an imperative, urging Clarence to passively accept his situation. This command subtly forces Clarence into a state of emotional compliance, ensuring Richard's continued control over the interaction. Additionally, Richard repeatedly employs active sentences with the agent/pronoun "I" to assert dominance over the conversation. His repeated use of "I" emphasizes his own power and agency, reinforcing his control over Clarence while simultaneously shaping the interaction to his advantage. By placing himself at the center of his statements, Richard navigates his dominance with his interlocutor, ensuring that Clarence remains psychologically and emotionally subordinated. The combination of these speech acts—one that falsely commits to an action and one that commands emotional submission—works in concert to manipulate Clarence and reinforce Richard's control in the conversation.

In his statement to Clarence, Richard skillfully manipulates the conversation to project an image of benevolence, while simultaneously concealing his insincerity. This calculated rhetorical move flagrantly violates Grice's maxim of quality, which asserts that speakers should only provide information that they believe to be true. Richard's promise to either free Clarence or take his place is deeply suspicious, given his direct involvement in Clarence's imprisonment. His words are designed to create the illusion of self-sacrifice, but in reality, they are intended to manipulate Clarence's emotions and distract him from the harsh reality of his situation. This false display of generosity is a deliberate attempt to make Richard appear noble, while in truth, he is only interested in gaining Clarence's trust and redirecting his focus away from his impending doom.

Additionally, Richard flouts the maxim of quantity by providing excessive and unnecessary details that exaggerate the commitment he is supposedly making. Instead of simply offering to free Clarence, he inflates his promise with dramatic alternatives—freeing Clarence or even taking his place. This inflated statement serves to make his words appear far more significant than they actually are, creating a false sense of importance and magnanimity. By overstatement, Richard enhances his image as a savior figure in Clarence's eyes, thereby generating a sense of indebtedness or gratitude, even though Richard has no intention of fulfilling this promise. The sheer theatricality of Richard's words serves to cloud Clarence's judgment, manipulating him emotionally and making him more vulnerable to Richard's subsequent control.

Richard further manipulates the situation by adding the phrase, "In the meantime, be patient", which violates the maxim of relevance. This shift in focus redirects the conversa-

tion from the immediate and practical concerns of Clarence's imprisonment to emotional ones. By advising Clarence to be patient, Richard subtly undermines Clarence's agency and suggests that he has no control over his fate, urging him to passively endure his circumstances. This psychological tactic serves to reinforce Richard's dominance, discouraging Clarence from resisting or questioning the situation. By positioning Clarence as powerless, Richard not only maintains control over the conversation, but also subtly compels Clarence to accept his subordinate role in this interaction.

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Ultimately, Richard's speech demonstrates a deliberate violation of Grice's maxims, using insincere promises to flout the maxim of quality, unnecessary exaggerations to violate the maxim of quantity, and emotional manipulation to breach the maxim of relevance. Through these violations, Richard's language reveals his true objective—to dominate the conversation, emotionally manipulate Clarence, and maintain control over the unfolding situation. The strategic deployment of commissive and directive speech acts functions as a powerful tool of manipulation, allowing Richard to mask his treacherous intentions and shape Clarence's perceptions to suit his own agenda. Richard's words are not just a means of communication—they are instruments of control, carefully designed to manipulate, deceive, and dominate.

Sample 3 Act 1, Scene 2, p. 37:

RICHARD Then never ⟨was man⟩ true.

ANNE 215Well, well, put up your sword.

RICHARD Say then my peace is made.

ANNE That shalt thou know hereafter.

RICHARD But shall I live in hope?

In the exchange between Richard and Anne, the interplay of Gricean maxims and speech acts provides a fertile ground for analyzing the manipulation, resistance, and negotiation of power. Richard's opening statement, "Then never was man true. Then no man was ever true", flouts the maxim of quality, as it makes a sweeping and exaggerated claim that lacks objective truth. By presenting a universal and absolute statement about human nature, Richard seeks to position himself as a victim of widespread disloyalty, subtly shifting the blame for his actions onto a generalized moral failure in society. This rhetorical move is designed to evoke sympathy from Anne, inviting her to view him not as the perpetrator of betrayal, but as a man who has been unjustly misunderstood. The hyperbolic nature of his utterance, paired with its emotional manipulation, creates a conversational implicature. Richard is attempting to disarm Anne's resistance by challenging her assumptions about loyalty and prompting her to question her own judgments. This strategy reduces Anne's moral standing in the exchange, subtly shifting the emotional burden onto her, positioning

her as being responsible for maintaining the sense of loyalty that Richard, through his actions, has already undermined.

In her response, “Well, put up your sword”, Anne flouts the maxim of quality by offering a command that significantly simplifies the complexity of the situation. Richard has just delivered a highly emotional and exaggerated statement, yet Anne’s retort directs the conversation away from the deeper moral and emotional issues at hand, focusing solely on diffusing the immediate physical threat. By doing so, Anne minimizes the intensity of the moment, refusing to fully engage with Richard’s emotional manipulation or accusations. Her words serve to detach her from the conversation’s emotional undercurrents, attempting to regain control by downplaying the gravity of the conflict. Anne’s command could be seen as a form of emotional disarmament—she seeks to neutralize the power that Richard holds over her by taking control of the immediate physical space, thereby distancing herself from his verbal manipulation. In doing so, Anne demonstrates a form of passive resistance, avoiding a confrontation on Richard’s terms while subtly asserting her own agency in the situation. This short extract from *Richard III* seems particularly complex and offers many layers of interpretation. Anne’s command, “Well, put up your sword”, can be interpreted metaphorically, extending beyond its immediate literal meaning of disarming Richard physically. While on the surface, the statement appears to be a simple directive to cease a potential physical threat, it also functions symbolically as an act of emotional and psychological resistance. By instructing Richard to put away his weapon, Anne may be metaphorically rejecting his aggressive rhetoric and manipulative tactics, refusing to engage with his emotionally charged argument on his terms. Additionally, Anne’s response can be seen as a form of emotional disarmament. Rather than responding with equal passion or outrage to Richard’s exaggerated claims, she chooses brevity and detachment, shifting the power dynamic. In this way, “*put up your sword*” can symbolize an attempt to neutralize Richard’s verbal attacks, treating his grandiose declarations as something that should be dismissed rather than entertained. This approach minimizes the intensity of the moment, signaling her unwillingness to fully participate in his manipulative discourse. Moreover, the metaphorical meaning of “*put up your sword*” could also extend to the broader struggle between power and agency in the scene. By directing Richard to stand down, Anne subtly asserts her own control, countering his dominance not through direct confrontation, but through calculated disengagement. In doing so, she avoids falling into the role of a manipulated victim and instead reclaims some degree of authority over the interaction. Thus, her words function as both a literal and symbolic act of resistance, reinforcing her autonomy in the face of Richard’s coercion.

Additionally, Anne’s flouts certain maxims to achieve a strategic effect. She flouts the maxim of quality by treating Richard’s exaggerated emotional rhetoric as something that can be reduced to a simple physical act—putting away a sword—thereby undercutting his dramatic display. She further violates the maxim of relation by shifting the conversation away from Richard’s emotional and manipulative appeals to a practical action, reframing the exchange on her terms. Additionally, her concise response flouts the maxim of quantity, as she withholds detailed engagement, reinforcing her refusal to participate in Richard’s discourse. From the perspective of politeness theory, Anne’s blunt command directly threatens Richard’s positive face by denying him the validation he seeks, while also challenging his negative face by imposing an action upon him. However, her use of a bald-on-record directive, without hedging or mitigation, signals confidence and a refusal to be swayed by Richard’s manipulation, reinforcing her agency in the interaction.

If we look at the previous extract from the perspective of speech act theory, Anne’s command functions as a directive speech act, as she issues an imperative instructing Richard to put away his sword. Directive speech acts are used to get someone to perform an action,

and in this case, Anne's utterance directly orders Richard to stop his physical display of aggression. However, given the emotional and rhetorical nature of their exchange, the directive may also serve a commissive function, implying that Anne refuses to engage with Richard's emotional manipulation. By instructing him to "put up" his sword, she signals that she will not participate in his game of emotional persuasion, effectively rejecting his performative rhetoric and exaggerated appeals. Additionally, her statement can be interpreted as a declarative speech act, as it symbolically reshapes the interaction by neutralizing the dramatic intensity Richard has built up. In this sense, Anne's utterance carries an element of performativity—by saying it, she alters the power dynamics in the conversation, subtly reclaiming control.

Richard's next line, "Say, then, my peace is made", flouts the maxim of quantity, as he demands a definitive response from Anne before the emotional conflict has been resolved. This demand for an immediate declaration of peace pressures Anne into offering closure before she has had time to process or respond authentically to the emotional complexity of their interaction. The conversational implicature here is that Richard is attempting to force a resolution to the conversation on his terms, imposing a sense of closure on a situation that is still fraught with emotional tension. His insistence on an answer creates an illusion of resolution, but the underlying conflict remains unresolved. Richard's demand reflects his need for validation—he seeks peace not as a means of mutual emotional understanding, but as a way to ease his own discomfort and secure a temporary emotional victory. By pressing for closure prematurely, Richard attempts to shape the emotional trajectory of the conversation, seeking an immediate, albeit superficial, resolution to his internal unease.

When analyzing this particular extract from the Shakespearean tragedy, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory further illuminates Richard's manipulative strategies by highlighting how he skillfully employs both negative and positive politeness tactics to simultaneously reassure and dominate Clarence. Richard's false promise to secure Clarence's release, for instance, is a calculated use of positive politeness. Positive politeness strategies are employed to create a sense of camaraderie, solidarity, and mutual respect. Richard's promise to help Clarence appears to be an act of loyalty and self-sacrifice, presenting him as a devoted brother concerned with Clarence's well-being. In doing so, Richard appeals directly to Clarence's positive face, his desire for approval, acceptance, and belonging. By crafting an image of brotherly affection, Richard works to foster a sense of trust and shared interest, suggesting to Clarence that they are aligned in their goals. This tactic, however, is entirely deceptive. Richard's true intention is to deepen Clarence's reliance on him, drawing him into a false sense of security. By appealing to Clarence's need for social approval, Richard manipulates him into believing that his release is an earnest goal, thus making it easier to control him without directly confronting him.

However, Richard's manipulation is far more complex, as his deception is interwoven with the use of negative politeness. When Richard says, "be patient", he subtly imposes a limitation on Clarence's agency while maintaining the appearance of respect and concern. Negative politeness strategies, as outlined in Brown and Levinson's theory, are designed to avoid threatening the other person's negative face—their need for autonomy and freedom from imposition. On the surface, Richard's use of "be patient" appears to be a considerate attempt to calm Clarence's distress and encourage him to endure his current predicament. The phrase, delivered in a tone that feigns sympathy, seemingly acknowledges Clarence's frustration and asserts that he should bear the situation with dignity. Yet, beneath this polite veneer, Richard's words serve as an indirect coercion, subtly reminding Clarence of his lack of agency and reinforcing his position of power. Richard's command, cloaked in politeness, diminishes Clarence's ability to take action, as it directs him to submit to the situation passively, further consolidating Richard's control over him.

This interplay of positive and negative politeness strategies allows Richard to craft an illusion of benevolence while, at the same time, subtly asserting his dominance. By using positive politeness to create a false sense of alliance and negative politeness to limit Clarence's autonomy, Richard manipulates the situation in a way that exploits both Clarence's need for approval and his desire for freedom from constraint. The simultaneous use of these strategies reveals Richard's cunning. He presents himself as an ally and protector while covertly asserting authority and reinforcing Clarence's dependency on him.

Moreover, Richard's calculated use of these politeness strategies highlights the duality of politeness as both a social tool and a psychological weapon. While politeness typically serves to maintain social harmony and mutual respect, Richard's strategic manipulation of these principles demonstrates how politeness can be weaponized as a means of deception and psychological control. Through his words and actions, Richard exploits the very mechanisms that would normally foster cooperation and trust, twisting them to serve his malicious ends. His ability to maintain a façade of civility, while simultaneously undermining Clarence's agency and trust, underscores the power of language as a tool for manipulation.

Ultimately, Richard's use of both positive and negative politeness strategies in this exchange showcases his manipulative prowess. He crafts a carefully constructed illusion of benevolence, making his ultimate betrayal all the more devastating for Clarence. By appealing to Clarence's positive face with false assurances, while simultaneously limiting his autonomy through negative politeness, Richard exemplifies the dark potential of politeness in navigating power dynamics. His actions reveal how language, when wielded with intent and precision, can function as a mechanism of control, deception, and subjugation, allowing those with power to dominate without the appearance of force. Through Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, we gain a deeper understanding of how politeness can be both a strategic tool for establishing dominance and a subtle, insidious means of manipulation in the complex social and political landscape of *Richard III*.

Throughout this exchange, Richard's language functions as a tool for manipulation, while Anne's responses—though more passive—serve as forms of resistance, demonstrating her struggle to regain emotional control. Richard's hyperbole and emotional appeals serve to manipulate Anne's perceptions of him, while Anne's deflecting responses highlight her resistance to being swayed by his tactics. The exchange illustrates a complex battle for conversational dominance, with Richard attempting to manipulate Anne into a state of emotional submission while she tries to maintain her composure and autonomy. By flouting Grice's maxims, both characters engage in a subtle but profound negotiation of power, revealing their psychological states and the emotional undercurrents that drive their interactions. This dialogue exemplifies how language, far from being a mere tool for communication, becomes a battlefield where power, manipulation, and resistance are constantly at play.

Sample 4 Act 1, Scene 2, p. 38:

RICHARD But shall I live in hope?

ANNE All men I hope live so.

RICHARD Vouchsafe to wear this ring.

ANNE To take is not to give.

In this exchange between Richard and Anne from *Richard III*, the conversation provides a compelling illustration of the subtle dynamics of power, manipulation, and resistance. The analysis through the lens of Grice's maxims and speech act theory reveals how both characters deploy language as a tool to control and influence one another. Richard's illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts, in particular, serve as a strategic means to

manipulate Anne's emotions, while Anne's responses act as a form of resistance to his attempts to dominate the interaction.

In the exchange between Richard and Anne in *Richard III*, their conversation serves as a masterclass in strategic manipulation, with both characters intentionally flouting Grice's maxims to assert control and negotiate the power dynamics within their relationship. Richard's opening statement, "Then never was man true. Then no man was ever true", flouts the maxim of quality by making a sweeping, exaggerated claim that lacks any factual basis. In doing so, Richard attempts to evoke sympathy by presenting truth and loyalty as unattainable ideals. He subtly undermines Anne's moral opposition, urging her to question her own principles by presenting his betrayal as part of a broader societal failure. This rhetorical move positions Richard as a victim of circumstances, encouraging Anne to see him not as the architect of his own actions, but as someone wronged by an untrustworthy world. The conversational implicature here is that Richard seeks to deflect moral judgment and redirect Anne's emotional response toward him.

Anne's response, "Well, put up your sword", similarly flouts the maxim of quality by oversimplifying the situation. Rather than directly addressing Richard's exaggerated claims or the emotional complexity of his betrayal, Anne responds with a command that focuses only on diffusing the immediate threat of violence. This response could indicate that Anne is either overwhelmed by the emotional intensity of the moment or that she seeks to regain control of the situation by de-escalating the physical confrontation. Her refusal to engage with Richard's rhetoric might also suggest a desire to protect herself from further emotional manipulation, signaling that she does not wish to be drawn further into his web of deceit.

Richard then flouts the maxim of quantity with his demand, "Say, then, my peace is made", prematurely seeking Anne's affirmation of reconciliation before any emotional conflict has been resolved. His insistence on a hasty resolution underscores his desire for validation, as he pushes for a declaration of peace that would serve to absolve him of any moral guilt. The conversational implicature here is that Richard wants immediate reassurance from Anne, not for the sake of mutual understanding or emotional resolution, but to secure a temporary sense of closure and emotional victory. Anne's vague response, "That shalt thou know hereafter", flouts the same maxim by withholding any definitive reassurance, maintaining an emotional distance. By not giving him the immediate answer he seeks, Anne subtly resists Richard's attempt to impose an outcome on the conversation, refusing to yield to his manipulative tactics.

Richard's subsequent question, "But shall I live in hope?" flouts the maxim of relevance by steering the conversation away from the moral implications of his actions and focusing instead on his emotional desires. In doing so, Richard shifts the emotional burden to Anne, asking her to address his personal yearnings rather than confronting the deeper issues between them. Anne's reply, "All men, I hope, live so", dismisses Richard's plea and distances her from his emotional manipulation. By offering a generalized statement about human nature, Anne resists being drawn into Richard's personal narrative and maintains her emotional autonomy. Her reply suggests that Richard's emotional vulnerability does not warrant a special response, reinforcing her control over the conversation and denying him the emotional engagement he seeks.

Lastly, Richard's formal request, "Vouchsafe to wear this ring", flouts the maxim of manner by using elevated and ceremonial language to exaggerate the significance of his gesture. Richard's attempt to make the act of giving a ring appear as a momentous and symbolic act of reconciliation is an effort to further manipulate Anne into accepting his advances. Anne, however, challenges this manipulation with her reply, "To take is not to give", which also flouts the maxim of manner by highlighting the discrepancy between

receiving and giving. This response not only rejects the emotional manipulation inherent in Richard's gesture, but also subtly undermines his attempt to control the dynamics of the interaction. Anne's insistence on the difference between taking and giving exposes Richard's actions as self-serving and manipulative, rather than genuinely altruistic.

Throughout the dialogue, Richard's speech acts—such as his commissive act in demanding peace—stand in stark contrast to Anne's non-committal, ambiguous responses, revealing the underlying power struggle between them. Richard's need for emotional affirmation and reconciliation contrasts with Anne's strategic use of generalization and distance to avoid direct engagement. Her response to his symbolic gesture further subverts his manipulation, maintaining her autonomy and control over the conversation. Richard's emotional appeals, coupled with Anne's resistance, underscore the complexity of their relationship, where power is constantly negotiated through language.

When analyzing this passage, we understand that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory further enriches the analysis of this exchange by demonstrating how face-threatening acts (FTAs) are strategically employed to navigate the delicate balance of power and persuasion. Richard, in his relentless pursuit of Anne's favor, oscillates between positive and negative politeness strategies to manipulate her emotions. His exaggerated declarations of hope and symbolic offering of the ring function as positive politeness tactics, aimed at appealing to Anne's positive face, or her desire for social connection and approval. By framing his request as an intimate and reconciliatory gesture, Richard seeks to create a sense of closeness and emotional obligation. His language presents him as a devoted suitor, despite his previous transgressions, attempting to reframe him as sincere and worthy of Anne's forgiveness.

However, Anne resists this manipulation by employing negative politeness strategies, reinforcing boundaries and protecting her negative face, or her need for autonomy. Her cryptic and non-committal responses, such as "To take is not to give", serve as linguistic defenses, subtly rejecting Richard's advances without directly confronting him. By keeping her language restrained and indirect, Anne avoids escalating the confrontation while simultaneously denying Richard the emotional engagement he seeks. This measured detachment allows her to maintain control over the exchange, ensuring that she does not succumb to Richard's rhetorical coercion.

Richard's persistence in pushing for an emotional resolution, despite Anne's resistance, highlights the asymmetry of power in their interaction. While Richard attempts to dominate the conversation through insistence and exaggerated appeals, Anne's strategic ambiguity ensures that she does not fully yield to his control. Thus, the interaction becomes a battle of politeness strategies, where Richard's attempts at positive politeness are continually rebuffed by Anne's calculated use of negative politeness. Her refusal to fully engage undermines Richard's manipulation, exposing the underlying tension between linguistic persuasion and personal agency.

This dynamic illustrates how politeness strategies can function as tools of both persuasion and resistance, shaping the power struggle between the two characters. Richard's insistent imposition contrasts with Anne's careful detachment, showcasing how language, even when framed as courteous or affectionate, can be weaponized to exert control or maintain independence in complex social interactions. Shakespeare masterfully employs these strategies to enhance the psychological depth of the characters, illustrating how dialogue not only reflects power struggles, but actively constructs them.

Shakespeare's use of speech acts highlights the manipulation and control exerted by both characters. Richard employs language as a tool for emotional manipulation, attempting to dominate the conversation and steer Anne's perceptions in his favor. In contrast, Anne's ambiguous and indirect responses allow her to retain control and resist

his advances. The frequent flouting of Grice's maxims—quality, quantity, relevance, and manner—demonstrates how both characters strategically use language to manipulate and maintain power. This interaction reveals a sophisticated web of manipulation, resistance, and negotiation, showing how language serves as a vehicle for both control and defiance in relationships. Through these violations of conversational norms, Shakespeare captures the tension and power struggles at play, illustrating how language can both reflect and influence the emotional dynamics and shifting power structures between characters.

Sample 5 Act 2, Scene 2, p.113:

RICHARD (*to Queen Elizabeth*)

Sister, have comfort. All of us have cause

To wail the dimming of our shining star,

But none can help our harms by wailing them.—

Madam my mother, I do cry you mercy;

I did not see your Grace. Humbly on my knee

I crave your blessing. (*He kneels*).

DUCHESS God bless thee, and put meekness in thy breast,

Love, charity, obedience, and true duty.

RICHARD (*standing*) Amen. (*Aside*). And make me die a good old man!

That is the butt end of a mother's blessing;

I marvel that her Grace did leave it out.

In this passage from *Richard III*, Richard's conversation appears to comply with Grice's maxims, yet beneath the surface, it reveals his manipulative and perlocutionary nature, using language strategically to conceal his true intentions. Richard's speech, though cooperative on the surface, serves as a mask, hiding the deceitful motivations that underpin his words. This highlights a central theme in Shakespeare's play—the disjunction between what is said and what is meant. By adhering to Grice's Cooperative Principles, Richard is able to project an image of grief and remorse, but this presentation is a far cry from his actual emotional state and objectives. His manipulation becomes evident as the maxims of relevance and quantity, for instance, subtly align with his motives, masking his true intentions and allowing him to control the interaction in his favor; this idea is supported by the overt use of great illocutionary force with a perlocutionary intention.

The Duchess's response, "die as a good old man", intentionally flouts the maxim of quality, as it conveys the opposite meaning of the words she uses. Although this appears to be a blessing, the phrase serves as an indirect condemnation of Richard's actions. Her speech subtly critiques him without directly confronting him, employing a form of social politeness that veils her true feelings. This flouting of the maxim of quality exemplifies Shakespeare's use of irony and double meaning, transforming what would ordinarily be a conventional blessing into a pointed commentary on Richard's moral failings. Her indirect approach allows her to maintain decorum while still expressing her disdain, and this linguistic maneuver adds layers of complexity to the dialogue, showcasing the play's exploration of power and manipulation through language.

Understanding conversational implicature plays a crucial role in interpreting this exchange. While Richard's adherence to the cooperative maxims may suggest an honest engagement in the conversation, his speech is fundamentally deceptive. This masks his ulterior motives, creating a contrast between his public persona and private intentions. This contrast is further illuminated by Richard's soliloquies and asides, where his true thoughts

and plans are laid bare, often contradicting the more polished and cooperative language he uses in direct dialogue. These moments of direct address to the audience expose the vast divide between Richard's carefully crafted words and his actual manipulative behaviors. They show that following Grice's maxims does not necessarily result in transparent communication—Richard uses them as tools to mislead and control the narrative.

The Duchess's flouting of the maxim of quality, paired with Richard's strategic adherence to the cooperative principles, underscores the limitations of applying a purely cooperative approach to conversation. In this context, the real meaning of their interaction is only revealed through an understanding of the dramatic framework in which it occurs. The Duchess's seemingly polite words are not merely a blessing, but an ironic expression of disapproval, and Richard's speech—though outwardly compliant with conversational norms—remains a vehicle for manipulation. His mastery of language allows him to maintain an image of propriety, even as he subtly dominates and controls those around him.

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory offers a nuanced framework for understanding the strategic use of language in power dynamics, especially when addressing face-threatening acts (FTAs) in interactions. In this context, Richard's exchange with Queen Elizabeth and the Duchess exemplifies how individuals can leverage different politeness strategies to manage face concerns while pursuing hidden agendas.

Richard's approach oscillates between positive and negative politeness, utilizing each tactic to balance his social position and manipulate his interlocutors. Negative politeness is evident when he kneels before his mother, outwardly showcasing submission to authority as a means of showing respect and maintaining social harmony. Yet, this outward display of deference is undermined by his sarcastic aside, a pointed critique that betrays the insincerity of his gesture. This duality reveals the complexity of Richard's character, as he deftly uses language to appear compliant while covertly resisting and undermining the established social order.

The Duchess, on the other hand, employs negative politeness to preserve emotional distance from Richard, signaling her disapproval through indirect means. Rather than confronting him head-on with an aggressive stance, she chooses subtlety and indirection, softening the impact of her criticism while still communicating her opposition. This strategy not only avoids a direct power struggle, but also functions as a protective mechanism, shielding her from open conflict. Her controlled use of language exemplifies how one can assert power through measured detachment, navigating the precarious boundary between submission and resistance.

Together, these contrasting uses of politeness strategies shed light on the interplay between power, manipulation, and resistance in discourse. Language, in this instance, becomes not just a tool for communication, but a weapon for asserting control, undermining authority, and negotiating one's place within the social hierarchy. Brown and Levinson's framework underscores how FTAs are not merely breaches of etiquette, but are integral to the negotiation of social power and the management of face. Through the strategic manipulation of politeness, Richard and the Duchess both seek to protect their social standing and exert influence, demonstrating the fluid and multifaceted nature of power in communication.

The phrase "die as a good old man" serves as a poignant example of how Shakespeare plays with the maxim of quality, using it to convey double meanings and hidden truths. What would typically be read as a respectful blessing becomes a pointed critique, allowing the Duchess to assert her discontent while upholding the social norms of politeness. By embedding this ironic layer within seemingly cooperative dialogue, Shakespeare deepens

the complexity of the scene, inviting the audience to consider the tension between surface-level politeness and the underlying emotional truths being communicated.

Thus, Richard's adherence to Grice's maxims in this exchange creates an illusion of honesty and cooperation, but closer analysis reveals the manipulation at the core of his speech. A full understanding of their interaction requires attention to both the speech acts at play and the broader dramatic context, including the strategic use of asides, soliloquies, and double meanings. The Duchess's flouting of the maxim of quality and Richard's calculated use of cooperative language reveal a complex web of power dynamics, where surface-level politeness conceals deeper layers of emotional manipulation and resistance. Shakespeare's use of these linguistic strategies serves to uncover the true motives behind the characters' actions, challenging the audience to look beyond the apparent cooperation and understand the intricacies of their psychological and emotional exchanges. This complex interaction illustrates the limitations of Grice's cooperative principle when dealing with characters who use language as a tool for manipulation, emphasizing the gap between what is said and what is truly meant.

Sample 6 Act 3, Scene 1, p. 167:

RICHARD If? Thou protector of this damnèd strumpet,

Talk'st thou to me of "ifs"? Thou art a traitor.—

Off with his head. Now by Saint Paul I swear

I will not dine until I see the same.—

Lovell and Ratcliffe, look that it be done.—

The rest that love me, rise and follow me.

In this passage from *Richard III*, Richard's speech acts reveal his manipulative nature and the tactical use of language to assert control and authority. Through an emotional outburst and calculated commands, Richard flouts several of Grice's conversational maxims, using language to dominate the interaction and enforce his agenda. His opening statement, "If? Thou protector of this damnèd strumpet, Talk'st thou to me of 'ifs'? Thou art a traitor", serves as an immediate dismissal of the other person's position, invoking a heavy accusation without any substantial reasoning, thus violating the maxim of quality. This attack shifts the conversation from rational discussion to an emotionally charged confrontation, where logic and fairness are displaced by Richard's personal vendetta. His command to execute the traitor, "Off with his head", dramatically defies the maxim of manner by amplifying the clarity of the order with exaggerated theatricality, turning the interaction into a spectacle. Richard's language becomes a weapon for emotional intimidation, aimed at demonstrating his dominance and suppressing any possibility of reasoned discourse. In this way, Richard's speech illustrates the power of language in shaping the interaction, shifting it from a simple dialogue to a stage for his emotional manipulation and authoritative control.

Richard's speech acts also provide insight into his complex use of power dynamics. Through flouting Grice's maxims and manipulating the conversational flow, Richard forces other participants into compliance, positioning himself as both emotionally authoritative and coercively persuasive. This passage, when analyzed through Grice's maxims and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, reveals how Richard's strategic manipulation of language fosters his quest for power and solidifies his dominance over others. His words, seemingly compliant with formal conventions of leadership, mask a more insidious manipulation of social expectations and human emotion. By dissecting his speech, we gain a clearer understanding of how language can be used not only to communicate, but also to dominate and manipulate, reflecting Richard's masterful command of rhetoric to further his ambitions.

In this passage, Richard's language and behavior reveal his manipulative character, highlighting how he deliberately flouts Grice's conversational maxims to assert his authority and further his agenda. Richard's speech is charged with emotion and power, exemplified by his command to execute someone for treason and his dramatic declaration that he will not dine until the deed is done. When analyzed through the lens of Grice's maxims, Richard's manipulation of conversational principles becomes apparent, as his speech shifts from rational dialogue to emotional domination, underscoring his control over the situation.

Richard's opening statement, "If I thou protector of this damned strumpet—Talk'st thou me of 'ifs'? Thou art a traitor", flagrantly violates the maxim of quality, as he dismisses the truth of the other person's statement without justification, accusing them of treason without any rational basis. His response is not just a refutation, but an emotional outburst, moving the conversation away from reason and into a confrontation driven by personal vendetta. By doing so, Richard effectively flouts the maxim of quality, manipulating the conversation to serve his emotional and authoritative agenda, thus shifting the discourse from logic to emotional intimidation.

Further, Richard's command, "Off with his head!" violates the maxim of manner, which demands clarity and the avoidance of ambiguity. While the order itself is clear, its urgent and grandiose delivery amplifies its emotional and theatrical impact. This exaggeration serves Richard's need for dominance, framing the conversation not as a rational exchange, but as a spectacle meant to showcase his power and control. By emphasizing the dramatic nature of his command, Richard ensures that the conversation remains under his control, sidelining any potential for civil discourse or rational discussion.

Additionally, Richard's statement, "Now, by Saint Paul I swear, I not dine until I see the same", flouts the maxim of quantity by offering excessive information that does not contribute directly to the action. The unnecessary detail about his refusal to dine until the execution is witnessed adds a layer of dramatic effect, inflating the importance of the moment and heightening the urgency of the situation. This hyperbole serves to magnify Richard's emotional intensity and reinforces his theatrical persona, suggesting that he is not merely issuing a command, but orchestrating an emotionally charged event that compels others to comply with his will.

Richard's subsequent command, "Lovel and Ratcliff, look that it be done: The rest, that love me, rise and follow me", flouts the maxim of relation by shifting the focus abruptly from the topic of the traitor to a call to action. The sudden change in subject demonstrates Richard's disregard for relevance, as the conversation is no longer centered on the traitor's fate, but rather on rallying his followers to further his agenda. Thus, the conversation becomes a tool for mobilizing his supporters and asserting his dominance, rather than an exchange of ideas or a space for mutual understanding.

The passage is also infused with dramatic irony. While Richard's speech is designed to convey decisiveness and ruthlessness, it also subtly reveals his true motives. His language, although authoritative, masks his real intentions, highlighting his role as a master manipulator. The dramatic irony lies in the discrepancy between what Richard claims to be doing—acting with resolute authority—and the underlying manipulations that propel him forward in his quest for power. His words are not just authoritative commands, but are crafted to maintain control, suppress opposition, and maintain his position of dominance.

Finally, Richard's speech exemplifies the concept of perlocutionary effects, where his words are intended to elicit specific responses from his listeners—fear, compliance, and a sense of inevitability. Richard's speech does not merely convey information; it functions as a coercive force, pushing the conversation beyond dialogue into action. The emotional

intensity of his speech serves to manipulate the emotional state of his followers, ensuring their compliance with his orders and solidifying his authority over them.

In conclusion, Richard's speech is a powerful example of how the flouting of Grice's maxims not only manipulates the conversation, but also reinforces his authoritative and coercive presence. His command to execute, his dramatic declarations, and his shifting focus from dialogue to action all serve to illustrate his role as a master manipulator. Through his strategic use of language, Richard not only communicates his intentions, but also manipulates the perceptions and actions of those around him, reinforcing the complex power dynamics at play in *Richard III*. This passage showcases how language can serve as both a tool for communication and a means of manipulation, with Richard using it to dominate, control, and assert his power over others.

In addition to Grice's conversational maxims, Brown and Levinson's politeness theory offers a deeper understanding of Richard's speech and behavior, particularly in terms of how he navigates the delicate balance between asserting power and maintaining face. Richard's use of *negative politeness* in this passage is particularly notable. Negative politeness is employed when one seeks to avoid imposing or threatening the face of the other, and in this case, Richard does so through his commands and his exaggerated expressions of authority. By directly ordering the execution of a traitor, "Off with his head", Richard disregards the social cost of such an action, demonstrating a willingness to trample over the face needs of others in pursuit of his own aims. However, there is an implicit attempt to mitigate this imposition by the almost ritualistic tone of his command and the dramatic emphasis he places on its urgency. For example, when he says, "Now by Saint Paul I swear I will not dine until I see the same", Richard frames the execution as something so crucial that he cannot even partake in basic sustenance until it is completed. This hyperbole serves as a way to reinforce his authority while presenting his demands as driven by a higher, almost religious imperative, rather than simple personal desire. This rhetorical device serves to shield him from accusations of petty cruelty, portraying his actions as necessary for the greater good, thus softening the harshness of his command.

Yet, despite this attempt at negative politeness, Richard's behavior continues to undermine any semblance of genuine respect for others' faces. His emotional outbursts, such as his initial dismissal of the other person's words with "If? Thou protector of this damnèd strumpet", disregard the notion of face-saving. His response aggressively attacks the other person's credibility and character without any substantial justification, flouting Brown and Levinson's principle of politeness, which emphasizes showing respect for the interlocutor's face. In doing so, Richard is not only asserting his authority, but also positioning himself as above reproach, showing little regard for the face of the person he addresses.

Simultaneously, Richard also employs *positive politeness* strategies, which focus on building rapport and demonstrating solidarity with others. This is most apparent in his rallying cry, "The rest that love me, rise and follow me". By invoking the notion of love and loyalty, Richard is able to create a sense of camaraderie with his followers, reinforcing his position as a leader who is not simply commanding, but inspiring. This appeal to shared identity and mutual respect is intended to generate compliance through emotional and psychological connection rather than sheer force. Richard's appeal to those who "love" him serves as a subtle but powerful tool for aligning his supporters with his ambitions, offering them a sense of belonging in exchange for their obedience. By doing so, Richard avoids direct confrontation and instead seeks to manipulate his followers into willingly joining his cause, showing that language can be used as a subtle form of emotional manipulation.

However, the complex interplay between these politeness strategies also reveals the contradictions inherent in Richard's character. While his negative politeness strategies are used to maintain a veneer of authority and control, they also reflect his underlying cruelty

and disregard for others' faces. His dramatic declarations, which are meant to serve as a form of command, ultimately reveal his true nature as someone who manipulates the social and emotional dynamics of power for personal gain. Furthermore, his use of positive politeness in rallying his supporters is not a genuine attempt to connect with them on an emotional level; rather, it is a strategic maneuver to consolidate power, securing loyalty through calculated emotional appeal.

In this light, Brown and Levinson's theory underscores how Richard's language serves as both a shield and a sword. On the one hand, he employs negative politeness to avoid direct confrontation and minimize the overt social cost of his actions; on the other hand, he utilizes positive politeness to manipulate his supporters into following him without realizing the full extent of his Machiavellian motives. Both strategies are not simply about maintaining social harmony, but are deeply connected to his ongoing manipulation of power dynamics. Through these strategies, Richard is able to craft an image of a leader who is not just ruthless and commanding, but also benevolent and worthy of admiration—a duality that makes his character even more dangerous.

Ultimately, Richard's speech exemplifies how Brown and Levinson's politeness theory can be applied to understand the dynamics of power, persuasion, and manipulation in communication. His strategic use of politeness is not simply about adhering to social norms; it is about maintaining control over both his image and his followers, ensuring that his desires are met while simultaneously navigating the delicate terrain of social face. By manipulating the very language of politeness, Richard is able to create a façade of respect and emotional connection, even as he uses these same tools to undermine and control those around him. His words, thus, serve as a masterclass in the art of linguistic manipulation, where politeness becomes both a weapon and a shield, used to assert dominance and further his ruthless pursuit of power.

5. Conclusions

This study examined the pragmatic dimensions of *Richard III*, focusing on the use of Grice's maxims and the application of speech act theory to analyze character intentions and the interplay of social and cultural conventions in its dialogue. By employing both Grice's cooperative principles and speech act theory, the study highlighted how the violation of conversational maxims, as well as the use of speech acts, plays a significant role in shaping the characterizations of Richard and his interactions with other characters (Grice 1975; Searle 1969).

The first key finding of this study is that the flouting of maxims can be intentional, particularly by characters like Richard, whose frequent violations of the maxim of quality signal his deceitful and treacherous nature. Richard's habitual disregard for truth in his speech acts often serves to manipulate others, and the violation of the maxim of relevance further emphasizes his opportunistic manipulation of situations to fulfill his ambitions (Levinson 1983; Thomas 1995). By flouting these maxims, Richard conveys deeper layers of meaning, especially when he uses language to conceal his true intentions. This is a critical aspect of understanding Richard's character, as he frequently manipulates the conversational context to advance his goals, especially using performative speech acts (Austin 1962). For instance, when Richard engages in promissory speech acts, such as offering assurances to Lady Anne or Clarence, his utterances are not merely about conveying information—they are actions in themselves that aim to influence and control the dynamics of the conversation (Searle 1969; Schegloff 2007).

The study also found that the flouting of maxims is closely tied to the cultural and social context within which the conversation occurs. In Shakespeare's play, the relationships between the characters, marked by power struggles, betrayal, and manipulation, are pivotal

in understanding the significance of maxim flouting. For example, the conversations between Richard and Anne often contain indirect speech acts that convey layers of meaning about power, manipulation, and submission, reflecting the hierarchical and gendered nature of the society in which the characters operate (Thomas 1995). Furthermore, the use of metaphors, irony, and figures of speech, which often flout the maxim of quantity, adds further depth to the speech acts, as these linguistic devices carry additional meaning that transcends the surface level of conversation (Grice 1975; Attardo 2001). Through these devices, Richard and other characters communicate ideas, emotions, and intentions that are not explicitly stated, further complicating the interpretation of their speech (Eco 1976). This approach reveals how conversational nuances—such as Richard’s use of irony or hyperbole—intertwine with the broader societal dynamics, shedding light on the play’s exploration of power and deception.

Another significant finding from the study is that the non-flouting of maxims can also be intentional. In cases where characters, such as Clarence, appear to follow the maxims more closely, their adherence to Cooperative Principles can signal sincerity or alignment with social norms (Mey 2001). By analyzing these instances, we gain a deeper understanding of the moral and ethical stances of the characters, especially when contrasted with Richard’s frequent manipulation of the conversational context. The contrast between Richard’s devious manipulations and Clarence’s more straightforward communication highlights the broader moral landscape of the play, offering insights into how different characters navigate their social roles and relationships.

However, the study also reveals that the flouting of maxims alone is insufficient for a complete understanding of the dialogue and character intentions. To fully comprehend the meaning behind the conversations, it is necessary to incorporate the context of speech acts and consider other dramatic devices, such as soliloquies and asides, which provide crucial insights into the characters’ inner thoughts and motivations. These elements reveal the true intentions behind Richard’s speech acts, as they are often not fully communicated through dialogue alone. For example, Richard’s soliloquies give the audience a window into his internal scheming, while asides allow him to reveal his true feelings to the audience, further complicating the nature of his speech acts (Hutcheon 2000; Schechner 2002; Jucker 2024). These dramatic techniques contribute to the interpretation of the play, as they expose the characters’ hidden motivations and the broader themes of manipulation, power, and deceit (McEvoy 2000). By considering these devices, we gain a fuller understanding of how Richard’s manipulative strategies extend beyond the spoken word, as his asides and soliloquies provide the audience with access to his true motives, which may be hidden from the other characters.

Incorporating Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory further enriches our understanding of the interaction dynamics in *Richard III*. Richard’s manipulation of politeness strategies is key to understanding his ability to deceive and control those around him. By skillfully navigating both positive and negative politeness, Richard creates an illusion of respect and loyalty while covertly maintaining his dominance over Clarence and others. Through the use of positive politeness, he fosters a sense of solidarity and affiliation, while simultaneously employing negative politeness strategies to limit others’ autonomy, framing his commands as courteous concerns (Brown and Levinson 1987). This nuanced interplay allows Richard to disguise his true intentions and manipulate the social dynamics of the conversation without overtly threatening the face needs of those around him. By utilizing these strategic forms of politeness, Richard exemplifies how language functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a psychological tool for control and deception.

In sum, this study shows that the analysis of Grice’s maxims, speech act theory, and Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory provides a powerful framework for understanding

the complex dynamics of language in *Richard III*. While maxim flouting reveals the characters' deceptions and manipulations, it is the combination of these violations with speech acts, social context, and dramatic techniques that offers a more complete interpretation of the dialogue (Thomas 1995). The findings suggest that understanding the characters' true intentions requires not only a pragmatic analysis of the language used, but also an awareness of the cultural, social, and dramatic conventions that influence how language functions within the play. By incorporating a multi-dimensional analysis, we uncover the layered meanings behind Richard's words and actions, offering deeper insight into his role as a master manipulator and the broader themes of power, deception, and resistance within the play.

Thus, the application of both pragmatic principles (politeness and conversational maxims) and speech act theory enriches the analysis of Shakespeare's characters and contributes to a deeper understanding of the narrative's themes and character dynamics (Fathi Sidig 2021; Jucker 2002; Jucker 2024). Through this approach, the study not only advances our comprehension of individual character motivations, but also illuminates the broader social and cultural forces at play, demonstrating the power of language in shaping interpersonal relations and influencing the course of events within *Richard III*. The study's findings underscore the complexity of Shakespeare's work, highlighting how language, when viewed through the lens of pragmatics and speech act theory, becomes a dynamic tool for the negotiation of power, identity, and authority.

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