



**A Pragmatic Study
of Banter 11
IN
Austen's Pride and Prejudice**

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...Abstract...

Banter is offensive on the surface, but at a deeper level it intends to maintain comity, that is to say, banter refers to employing a literally impolite utterance to convey a truly polite goal. As an important means in human communication, banter is often used to facilitate human relationships, relieve tense atmosphere, reinforce in-group solidarity.

The current study attempts to explore banter from a pragmatic perspective. It discusses the politeness aspect of banter through highlighting the relation between politeness, impoliteness and banter, and the comparison between banter and irony, real impoliteness and virtual impoliteness.

It also deals with the banter effect which may be positive or negative and the response to banter which may include showing an amused expression, responding with another banter utterance. For the sake of the analysis, certain extracts are taken from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

... ملخص البحث

يُسيء المزاح للمخاطب ظاهرياً ولكن يعتزم على مستوى أعمق الحفاظ على المجاملة. وهنا يمكن القول أن المزاح يُشير إلى توظيف الكلام غير المهذب حرفيًا لنقل هدف مهذب فعليًا. بوصفه وسيلة مهمة في التواصل الإنساني، يستخدم المزاح غالباً لتسهيل العلاقات الإنسانية، وتحفيض توتر الأجواء وتعزيز التضامن في المجموعة.

تُحاول الدراسة الحالية استكشاف المزاح من منظور تداولي. يُناقش الجانب التأديي للمزاح من خلال تسليط الضوء على العلاقة بين التأدب وقلة الذوق والمزاح من جهة والمقارنة بين المزاح والسخرية وقلة الذوق الحقيقي والظاهري من جهة أخرى ويتناول أيضاً تأثير المزاح الذي قد يكون ايجابياً أو سلبياً والرد على المزاح الذي قد يشتمل على اظهار تعبير مسل أو الرد بمزاح آخر.

ولغرض التحليل اختيرت بعض النصوص من رواية جين أوستن الكبriاء والتحامل.



1. Banter Principle

The linguistic phenomenon of banter is described by Leech (1983:144). The Banter Principle is manifested in a great deal of causal linguistic conversation, particularly among young people. It is an offensive way of being friendly. In banter utterances ,there are two layers of meaning: the surface layer of impoliteness and the proper layer of politeness. Leech gives the following greetings used among close friends as examples of banter:

1. Here comes trouble!

2. Look what the cat>s brought in!

Banter is supposed to mark emotional closeness or even intimacy. Apparently banter may be the sign of intimacy because intimacy means an extremely small social distance and low power value which, in turn, are associated with no need for formal politeness(ibid.).

Another example of bantering is “*you silly bugger*”, which can be uttered by a host whose guest has arrived late at a party because of a misunderstanding. A ritualized form of banter is the activity of ‹sounding› or ‹playing the dozens› (a ceremonial exchange of insults) practiced in the black community of New York, as studied by William Labov, «Rules for Ritual Insults». This language game depends for its effect on the understanding that the allegations made by each party are recognized as untrue, and therefore on the fact that they cannot be mistaken for real insults (Culpeper, 1996:353).

In order to account for this phenomenon, Leech (1983: 144): postulated the Banter Principle: «*In order to show solidarity with hearer(h), say something which is (i) obviously untrue, and (ii) obviously impolite to h ... What speaker (s) says is impolite to h and it is clearly untrue. Therefore what s really means is polite to h and true».*

According to the statement of banter principle, it is argued that



banter is a second- ordered principle which is rooted in violations of the cooperative and politeness principles. For Leech, *«banter»* gets technically analyzed, as per the sentences above, in terms of Grice's quality maxim and «Be polite!» principle.

2. Banter as a Case of Flouting Grice's Quality Maxim

When speakers appear not to follow the maxims but expect hearers to appreciate the meaning implied, it is said that they are flouting the maxims. when flouting a maxim, speakers assume that hearers know that their words should not be taken at face value and that they can infer the implicit meaning. Banter is one of the main ways of flouting the maxim of quality (Cutting,2002:37).

People communication is mostly based upon truth .This is what the maxim of quality requires, *«it requires that you do not say what you believe to be false and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence»* (Grice ,1975: 45).

One way for the speaker to flout the maxim of quality is to tell something s/he believes to be false or untrue ,this is a usual way to make banter as it is stated above. Banter expresses a negative sentiment and implies a positive one. It sounds like a mild aggression, as in:

3. You are nasty, mean and stingy. How can you only give me one kiss?

But it is intended to be an expression of friendship or intimacy (Cutting,2002:38).

3. Banter as an Exploitation of Politeness Principle

Politeness Principle focuses on how to use communicative strategies to maintain or to promote interpersonal harmony during the course of communication. Banter is ostensibly against politeness principle, but actually it presents polite communicative intention by impolite utterances, aiming to boost interpersonal harmony (Jun-



hua,2010:35). This study demonstrates the politeness essence of banter in terms of the relationship between politeness and impoliteness, and the differences between genuine impoliteness and mock impoliteness.

Since overpoliteness can have the effect of signifying superiority or ironic distance, underpoliteness can have the opposite effect of establishing or maintaining a bond of familiarity. The reason is this; a low value on the scales of authority and social distance correlates with a low position on the scale of politeness; i.e. the more intimate the relationship, the less important it is to be polite. Hence lack of politeness in itself can become a sign of intimacy (Meier,1996:346).

In banter, one can be superficially rude, but patently insincere, leading to politeness by implicature. The insincerity must be indeed patent, for the trick to work, and the strategy does not carry a certain risk that might be taken at one's word.

4. You stupid bitch! (to a close friend who's just done something daft) The implicature here is that the relationship is so solid that politeness is not necessary, and this is, of course a polite implicature. According to Leech(1983: 144), the polite interpretation of banter is communicated as an implicature of the utterance. Conventionally speaking, "stupid bitch" is a type of profanity which is regarded as offensive or rude. Within that context, the speaker uses a taboo phrase "stupid bitch", which seems to violate politeness in a superficial sense. Since "banter must be clearly recognizable as unserious"(ibid), thus, the use of that phrase is not impolite in essence, but is used to achieve an entertaining atmosphere and strengthen the in-group solidarity among the friends. Banter is politeness in the disguise of impoliteness. Hence, the use of banter is considered as a kind of mock-impoliteness (Junhua,2010:36).

The rationale for banter, albeit only ostensibly, is anchored in the concept of 'flouting' politeness or etiquette norms holding for solidarity politeness, to the effect of camaraderie enhancement. Banter is a clear manifestation of mock impoliteness within the model of solidarity, i.e. a particular framework of politeness. Most essentially, the aggressive element is of purely symbolic nature and



is redeemed by the force of the play frame. Accordingly, what should be taken into consideration when interpreting banter in the context of politeness and face-threat are the illocutionary intention of the speaker, social distance, the degree of intimacy between interactionists, the resultant mutual knowledge and common ground or lack thereof(Norrick1993: 75).

Banter may be postulated to convey, using Brown and Levinson's terminology, *positive politeness* at the expense of *negative politeness*. By ostensibly threatening the hearer's negative face, aggressive banter helps maintain the hearer's positive face. In solidarity-based relationships, humour of seemingly aggressive potential, usually associated with impoliteness, is essentially polite, being the manifestation of *mock impoliteness*. It is only the literal reading that resembles impoliteness

inasmuch as it is not intended to cause offence at the level of perlocution (Culpeper,1996:355).Therefore, even the aggressive type of banter, seemingly exploiting politeness norms serves as a strategy of asserting solidarity politeness. As Norrick(1993: 80) aptly observes, banter is "aggression in the message, and solidarity in the metameessage". Direct on-record affronts flout the norms of politeness, but "paradoxically, flying in the face of friendly politeness can build rapport, because it signals a relationship which eschews such superficial conventions"(ibid.: 73).

4. Mock-Impoliteness VS. Actual Impoliteness

Mock-impolite utterances are parasitic on impolite ones and so contain linguistic or paralinguistic features of a characteristically impolite utterance. That is, the locutionary content of an impolite utterance and a mock-impolite utterance contain similar elements. Impolite and mock-impolite illocutions arise from an identical locution. The difference arises at the level of the illocution. It is proposed that, in addition to impolite illocutions, there exist also mock-impolite illocutions. A mock-impolite illocution is one in which the socially conventionalized impolite illocutionary force has been negated. Thus



the difference between an impolite illocution and a mock-impolite illocution is not in the lexical content or the locution, but in the intended illocutionary force, the desired uptake and perlocutionary effect. Where impolite illocutions are intended to scorn, belittle or otherwise use further impoliteness strategies, mock-impoliteness illocutions carry no such intention and can function as affiliative and promoting social solidarity(Furman, 2010: 7).

A similar distinction between mock-impolite and impolite illocutions is examined in Bernal (2008:787), who finds that, despite certain utterances having the illocutionary content (insults and taboo language) of an impolite utterance, these utterances do not always have the perlocutionary force of an impolite utterance. For this reason she distinguishes between **authentic** and **non-authentic impoliteness**.

In this respect, Bernal (ibid:788) defines authentic impoliteness as: «communicative activity that aims at damaging the face of others, according to social codes supposedly shared by speakers». It is considered a damage to the interlocuter in every context. The effect of this activity is interpersonally negative, so it is deduced that an interpretation of such an activity as being impolite has been produced. This definition covers the two features that the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking and the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally . It also includes the shared knowledge that makes it possible for the hearer to interpret the meaning intended by the speaker.

Bernal's non-authentic impoliteness (2008:792), a similar description to Culpeper (1996:352) 's mock impoliteness or banter, is a form of impoliteness that remains on the surface so that there is no intention of offence. Kienpointner (1997: 261) offers a typology of rudeness where mock-impoliteness is conceived of as a form of cooperative and simulated rudeness. Terkourafi (2008: 68) defines mock-impoliteness as 'unmarked rudeness'; she suggests that 'unmarked rudeness' occurs when an utterance is used in a convention-alized setting and the participants have 'homologous habitus'.

Authentically impolite utterances have perlocutionary effects



such as causing anger, protestation, confrontation, raised voices, and escalation of tension. In contrast to this, inauthentically impolite utterances, which do not have the illocutionary force of an impolite utterance, typically have perlocutionary effects such as exclamations accompanied by laughter, friendly responses, and the establishment or continuation of a relaxed atmosphere(Furman, 2010: 7).

5. Banter and Humour

Dynel (2008 :244) broadens the scope of the Banter Principle to cover also teasing, which is essentially what Leech purports to mean. However, the epithet 'offensive' may be questionable, since banter need not appear to be insulting even at first blush as it need not rely on mock abuse whatsoever, but on witty repartees on neutral subject or jointly constructed puns, with no aggressive potential, save the aspect of mental challenge the speakers offer to one another. Furthermore, even an aggressive banter, i.e. that which is realized via pretended mocking or sarcasm, is interpreted within a playful frame established through mutual responses.

Notably, if both parties are willing to engage in a humorous frame, a one-turn tease can further develop into a longer exchange of repartees, dubbed banter(Dynel,2009:1293). Similarly, Norrick(1993: 29) states, «This rapid exchange of humorous lines oriented toward a common theme, though aimed primarily at mutual entertainment rather than topical talk, typifies what is generally called 'banter'». A crucial quality of banter is that consecutive retorts are added very rapidly . This coherent sequence of contributions is phased out from the ongoing conversational situation when one of the interlocutors has run out of ideas to outdo the other party.

5.

A: Today I ate a lot. I ate a plateful of noodles with sauce, a packet of onion crisps, cornflakes with a liter of chocolate milk and four sandwiches: with egg, Nutella, sausage and ham.

B: The order was good! Ham doesn't go well with Nutella and it might have made you throw up.



A: Err... That wasn't in order. Now I know why I vomited.

B: And now I know why you like colourful clothes so much.

6.

A: I can hardly speak because I've been eating a pineapple. I have a sore tongue.

B: In the future, try to peel a pineapple first.

A: I did peel it... from the can!

B: You should have used a tin opener, not your tongue then... even if it's sharp! (ibid.)

Essentially, banter coincides with jointly constructed humorous sequences and can be equated with what Holmes (2006:38) terms conjoint humour. It can take various forms such as a humorous fantasy sequence which is a jointly produced humorous discourse on a given topic (Hay,1995:33). This is what Kotthoff (2007:269) refers to as joint fantasizing, composed of short conversational contributions made by participants to form a coherent scene, based on the augmentation of unreality. The phenomenon observable here is that the preceding absurd proposition can always be topped, i.e. wittily outdone.

Brown and Levinson (1987:74) point out that “the reciprocal giving and receiving of positive face is symptomatic of social closeness”. Conversational participants who share a close social distance may also, however, perform “mock” positive face threatening acts(FTAs) – that is, pretend to attack listeners’ positive faces – in a spirit of playfulness. Culpeper (2001:246) remarks that “a speaker might use mock impoliteness (banter), perhaps to reinforce social solidarity”. Banter, then, can be seen to be a strategy in which FTAs are performed with humorous (rather than harmful) intent in order to decrease social distance/increase social proximity. It is an invitation to a conversational game, and can therefore complement the listener’s positive face by suggesting the perception that the listener’s company in play is desirable.

It should be observed, however, that not all manifestations of

banter ought to be thought of as adversarial humour and that harm cannot be an effect of banter. Many cases of banter are nonhumorous clichés, as in the following(Ferrar,2001:232):

7. No rest for the wicked! (Said to someone who obviously gets little opportunity to relax.)

8. What a mean cowardly trick! (Said to someone who has performed a particularly clever gambit).

9.Outside Pastels a different bum sits in the street [...]

"That dude needs a facial real bad," I say.

"Hey McDermott," Price cackles. "Throw him your tie."

"Oh shit. What's that gonna get him?" I ask, staring at the bum.

"Appetizers at Jams." Van Patten laughs. He gives me high-five.

"Dude," McDermott says, inspecting his tie, clearly offended.

(Ellis, 1991: 49)

6. Banter and Irony

Banter may be connected with irony. Such a combination is possible because one of the aspects of irony is its inherent impoliteness(Leech, 1983: 145). According to Kotthoff (2003: 1390), “irony is not always a form of negative evaluation: rather, it is a way of communicating an evaluation gap.” She says that a positive evaluation may be expressed by stating it negatively – a form of irony popular among close friends in particular. This feature is called banter by Leech(1983: 144) who affirms that “while irony is an apparently friendly way of being offensive (mock-politeness), banter is an offensive way of being friendly (mock-impoliteness)”.

Irony maintains politeness on the surface, but at a deeper level is intended to offend. Banter is offensive on the surface, but at a deeper level is intended to maintain comity. Examples of irony and banter are shown respectively in 10 and 11(Ferrar,2001:233) :

10. (A has got up very late)



B. (A's father): (You got up so early! It's still dark outside.)

11. (A shows off her new shoes)

B. (A's close friend) with a smile: (Stinky beauty! [=Showy!])

With irony, the ‘reversal’ of interpretation occurs because the apparently polite remark is made in a situation where it is clear that the remark is not intended to be serious. e.g. That’s right—have a good rest is a polite thing to say where H has worked hard and is exhausted. But in a situation where S and H are supposed to be working hard, and H is taking it easy, this could not possibly be the intended meaning. To avoid any misunderstanding, of course, irony is often associated with a special unfriendly demeanour or tone of voice, whereas banter is associated with a friendly demeanour, laughter, etc. With banter, again, the ‘reversal’ of interpretation occurs because the ‘impolite’ remark cannot be treated as serious. Banter is a way of reinforcing in-group solidarity: it is a way of saying «We do not need to be polite to one another: I can insult you, and you will think it a joke. This proves what good friends we are»(ibid.)

Banter can offend against either speaker-oriented or hearer-oriented politeness. The following example (as an answer to a compliment praising S’s skirt) is a mock-boast, offending against speaker-oriented politeness – boastfulness being a form of immodesty:(Of course it is! You know what taste I always have!)On the other hand, example 11 above is a mock-criticism offending against hearer-oriented politeness – since polite criticisms of H are likely muted or indirect(ibid.)

Leech(1983:145) feels the need to introduce the category of banter because he wants some means of distinguishing between those utterances which are only one step removed from the literal utterance(ironical utterance), and those which are two steps removed (banter). An example of Leech’s will illustrate.

12. You’re a fine friend.

The utterance in (12) can have at least three possible interpretations, depending on whether the speaker intends his/her utterance



to be taken literally, ironically, or as a case of verbal banter. It can mean:

1. You are a fine friend (literal interpretation);
2. You are not a fine friend (ironical interpretation, derived from the literal interpretation);
3. But, of course, you are my friend, which is why I can talk to you like this, i.e. insult you (banter, derived from ironical interpretation).

In short, banter is an utterance whose ironical meaning is not to be taken at face value, while irony is an utterance whose literal meaning is not to be taken at face value. Being able to make a formal distinction between utterances on different levels of interpretation, the category of banter enables Leech to distinguish between unserious utterances which promote familiarity and intimacy and which are considered polite (banter), and unserious utterances which signify superiority and emotional distance and are therefore impolite (irony).

7. Banter and Relevance Theory

This section deals with the options and tools that relevance theory can offer as far as banter is concerned.

The first option is to treat banter as a frame. It would then constitute a part of our specific culturally - determined knowledge. Banter would have to be learnt. This option is supported by the fact that banter has its ritualized forms (the so called phenomenon of «sounding» or playing dozens). In such a case banter would not be communicated unless it were intentionally misused; otherwise it would go unnoticed. The example of misuse would be using banter intentionally when interlocutors are not familiar enough to do so, for example, because the speaker wants to diminish the actual speaker-hearer distance. The misuse of banter would be an example of the politeness behaviour surfacing in the form of an implicature, whereas banter used «according to the rules» would count as politic be-



haviour, probably surfacing in the higher – level explication (Nowik, 2005: 165).

The other option is the possibility of banter being the strategic use of language. Banter could be treated as an exploitation of Jary's terms(the speaker intentionally provides the hearer with the evidence that he holds the hearer in lower esteem than the hearer had assumed but there is no intention to offend). In this case banter would always be communicated in the form of implicature. Since banter is impolite on the surface, and impoliteness is incompatible with the hearer's expectations, the impolite interpretation would be rejected according to the principle of relevance and the polite interpretation would be arrived at. The «polite» interpretation would be the cognitive effect rewarding the additional processing effort. If banter is treated as a strategic use of language, it will always belong to politeness behaviour (ibid.). .

8. Analysis

Pride and Prejudice is one of Jane Austen's most popular novels. It tells the story of Elizabeth Bennet and her journey to find her true love. Elizabeth and her lover, Darcy, are the two main characters in this novel. The two words, pride and prejudice, both bring the good as well as the bad to a personality. With pride comes a sense of exemplary worth, a sense of great accomplishment with oneself. With prejudice, preconceived ideas and intolerance towards the party in which the prejudice is upon(Zimmerman,2007:67). The interactions between Darcy and Elizabeth primarily take the forms of banter and argument so this novel is a fruitful ground for the analysis.

Language proves of central importance to relationships in Pride and Prejudice. Elizabeth's words provide Darcy access to a deeper aspect of her character, one that appeals to him and allows him to begin to move past his initial prejudice. Dialogue is more than just words. Some of the important moments in **82 prideand prejudice** are the continual banter between Elizabeth and Darcy. Austen uses the conversations between these two characters to help shape the



reader's opinion of each, and at times, throw some red herrings into the mix. It is this back-and-forth between them that shows you early on that these two characters have a spark between them: unfortunately, it is at first misguided, but that is what makes the journey so much fun(Morini,2009:86).

The rapport between Darcy and Elizabeth from the beginning to the end is intimate, even racy. Even as he disapproves, Darcy, for example, admires «the brilliancy which Elizabeth's exercise had given to her complexion». Furthermore, their exchanges are marked either by playful invitations to aggression- Elizabeth's semiearnest «despise me if you dare», and Darcy's gallant «I am not afraid of you»- or by mutual accusations, the eventual acrimoniousness leave them more and more exposed to each other, and as a result more and more implicated in each other's trust(Morgan,2010:57).

Text 1

Well, he certainly is very agreeable, and I give you leave to like him. You have liked many a stupider person."

"Dear Lizzy!"

"Oh, you are a great deal too apt, you know, to like people in general. You never see a fault in anybody. All the world are good and agreeable in your eyes. I never heard you speak ill of a human being in my life."

"I would wish not to be hasty in censuring anyone; but I always speak what I think."

"I know you do; and it is that which makes the wonder. With your good sense, to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others! Affectation of candor is common enough; one meets with it everywhere. But to be candid without ostentation or design-to take the good of everybody's character and make it still better, and say nothing of the bad-belongs to you alone. And so you like this man's sisters, too, do you? Their manners are not equal to his.»

(Ch. iv: 11)



This is one of Elizabeth's lively banter and her quick successes in teasing Jane, her sister. Due to the close intimacy between them, Elizabeth thinks that she has the right to speak with her in such a seemingly aggressive way. Starting from the sentence «You have liked many a stupider person» to the end of the conversation, Elizabeth accuses her sister of being so naïve to never see a fault in anybody, to see all the world good and agreeable, and to be so honestly blind to the follies and nonsense of others. It is known that the illocutionary force is the act performed by speaking while the perlocutionary effect is the actual effect caused by the act. The illocutionary forces delivered by Elizabeth in criticizing Jane's personality appears to be mock FTAs (banter) that reflects social proximity, and her perlocutionary effect does not intend to offend Jane and the latter's response «dear lizzy» can be considered a proof for this and here comes the phenomenon of banter which is offensive on the surface, but at its deeper level it has a polite intent.

Text 2

“My style of writing is very different from yours.”

“Oh,” cried Miss Bingley, “Charles writes in the most careless way imaginable. He leaves out half of his words, and blots the rest.”

“My ideas flow so rapidly that I have not time to express them; by which means my letters sometimes convey no ideas at all to my correspondents.”

“Your humility, Mr. Bingley,” said Elizabeth, “must disarm proof.”

“Nothing is more deceitful,” said Darcy, “than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast.”

“And which of the two do you call my little recent piece of modesty?”

“The indirect boast; for you are really proud of your defects in writing, because you consider them as proceeding from a rapidity of thought and carelessness of execution, which, if not estimable, you



think at least highly interesting. The power of doing anything with quickness is always much prized by the possessor, and often without any attention to the imperfection of the performance.(Ch.x.30).

Darcy and Elizabeth here tease each other by referring to their characteristics in a mocking way but their closeness and the implication of not offending mitigate the effect of such a tease to be understood as banter. Darcy says "Nothing is more deceitful than the appearance of humility. It is often only carelessness of opinion, and sometimes an indirect boast." in response to Elizabeth utterance "Your humility, Mr. Bingley must disarm proof." Darcy knows that Elizabeth is a humble person and she is always criticizing him for his proud, hence he uses impolite words as deceitful and carelessness of opinion to describe her humility. Such words violate politeness only on the superficial sense but at the deeper level they intend to keep comity since we know that Darcy loves Elizabeth. Elizabeth responds by another tease saying that «the power of doing anything with quickness is always much prized by the possessor, and often without any attention to the imperfection of the performance». She says that quickness in writing leads to its imperfection and this is a defect and you are proud of your defect. It is a hot argument, but it is such a kind of argument which creates intimacy between Darcy and Elizabeth.

Text 3

"To yield readily-easily-to the persuasion of a friend is no merit with you."

"To yield without conviction is no compliment to the understanding of either."

"You appear to me, Mr. Darcy, to allow nothing for the influence of friendship and affection. A regard for the requester would often make one readily yield to a request, without waiting for arguments to reason one into it. I am not particularly speaking of such a case as you have supposed about Mr. Bingley. We may as well wait, perhaps, till the circumstance occurs, before we discuss the discretion



of his behavior thereupon. But in general and ordinary cases, between friend and friend, where one of them is desired by the other to change a resolution of no very great moment, should you think ill of that person for complying with the desire without waiting to be argued into it?"(Ch. x :32)

In this banter between Darcy and Elizabeth(which incidentally, is one of the first times he gets a sense of the lively mind that he talks about falling in love with later), one of the several philosophical questions discussed in the novel is observed. Just how much should you listen to your friends? Should you listen or should you demand proof for their opinions?

Elizabeth reprimands Darcy by accusing him that he does not have any consideration for friendship and affection, «To yield readily-easily-to the persuasion of a friend is no merit with you. To yield without conviction is no compliment to the understanding of either .You appear to me, Mr. Darcy, to allow nothing for the influence of friendship and affection». The real friend, she said, should not seek for argument to be convinced by or understand his friend. Due to the rapport between Darcy and Elizabeth, one can say that the illocutionary force of accusing him as such is a mock FTA that indicates the intimate relations between them, one cannot say that the reason behind saying such words is offence. It is this way of speaking with Darcy that reflects their social solidarity. Speaking in a teasing way with a close person, her lover, is banter.

Text 4

"I cannot forget the follies and vices of other so soon as I ought, nor their offenses against myself. My feelings are not puffed about with every attempt to move them. My temper would perhaps be called resentful. My good opinion once lost is lost forever"

"That is a failing, indeed!" cried Elizabeth. "Implacable resentment is a shade in a character" (Ch.xi:37)

In this and the following extract, Miss Bingley tries to involve Darcy in witty banter, Darcy and Elizabeth start in a discussion



about his pride . He states that his only fault is resentment—"my good opinion once lost is lost forever". He is pompously proud of his own deficiencies. Elizabeth teases Darcy by saying " that is a failing, indeed. Implacable resentment is a shade in a character". She snaps Darcy by saying that resentment is a failing and it is a weakness in a personality. It is true that this is a hot argument but here Elizabeth does not intend to offend Darcy.

Text 5

"There is, I believe, in every disposition a tendency to some particular evil, a natural defect, which not even the best education can overcome" .

"And your defect is a propensity to hate everybody." "And yours," he replied, with a smile, "is willfully to misunderstand them."(Ch. xi :37)

Elizabeth argues that Darcy is so proud that he thinks of nobody but himself. She interprets his flaw to be that he likes to hate people; he replies that she deliberately misunderstands people. This exchange of accusation cannot be taken to be true. The illocutionary force of such a criticism seems to be a mock FTA and the perlocutionary effect does not intend to offend. Darcy's response with a smile can be considered as a proof for this. The literal meaning may be offensive to the reader. This is a good example for Leech's Bantering Principle, where solidarity between Darcy and Elizabeth builds on the basis of uttering something that is obviously untrue and impolite. However, the intention is not to offend Darcy by violating the politeness codes, but to count on his correct bridging inference and partaking into the mock impoliteness.

9. Conclusions

Banter is teasing in a playful way, aiming at rapport versus aggression. It conveys real politeness and virtual impoliteness. It possesses such features as unseriousness and incongruity . The main



devices of banter are composed of literal devices which may include impolite address forms, swearing and cursing words, and linguistic taboos.

Banter communication is an ostensive-inferential process, during which the speaker conveys his/her meaning ostensively. The hearer, by inference, seeks relevance and makes a context selection and then arrives at the correct interpretation of the banter utterance. In banter communication, because of such reasons as the speaker's interest or preference and so on, he/she may always produce the utterance which is not maximally relevant to the hearer. Therefore, in processing banter utterance, the hearer needs to spend extra effort which can be offset by additional effects. In verbal banter communication, such extra effect is the banter effect such as reinforcing comity or friendliness, exerting laughter or humorous effect.

After dealing with banter in *Pride and Prejudice*, it is found that the Principle's first part "say something which is obviously untrue" can be changed into "say something which is obviously not serious". This would accommodate all the cases of banter in *Pride and Prejudice* where the offensive words cannot be taken seriously.



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