# Implicature: A Significant Feature in Liu Mazi's Lines in Lao She's *Cha Guan*\*

Xiaoliang Zhou

Beijing Information Science and Technology University, Beijing, China

*Abstract*—This paper attempts to find out the significance of implicature as a feature in the lines of Liu Mazi, a character in *Cha Guan* (Teahouse). This issue has been discussed by some scholars, but their researches tend to be qualitative-oriented focusing on more than one character in this drama. From these studies, readers may know that implicature has been utilized by Lao She when creating this literary work, but will probably still be unaware of how important it is. To offer an objective perspective on this issue, this paper attempts to narrow the research object to one character Liu Mazi and statistically analyzes the use of this pragmatic means in the corpus of those lines. The conclusion is that implicature is a significant feature in Liu Mazi's lines.

Index Terms-implicature, drama, Cha Guan, Liu Mazi

### I. INTRODUCTION

This paper tackles the significance of the implicature in dramas, an area which has been dealt with by some scholar. For instance, Lai (2003) has done a qualitative research aimed at more than one character and focusing on some examples which involve implicatures, with the conclusion that the implication in conversations in *Cha Guan/Teahouse* (1999, 2006) plays an important role in creating characters (2003, p. 35). Other scholars have pointed out that conversational implicature is an effective device used by playwrights to portray their characters in a play (Yang & Jin, 2006, p.148). Their researches can help other scholars to notice the existence of implicature in dramas, but at the same time have failed to offer an objective analysis as to the extent to which this devic has been utilized in the creation of characters in literary works.

To solve this problem, the present author will carry out a quantitative research exclusively upon the implicatures in the lines of Liu Mazi (Pockface Liu/ Pock-Mark Liu), an important character in *Cha Guan*, aimed to test whether implicature is an important factor in the lines of Liu Mazi. His "vile" character partly leads the author to make such a hypothesis that Liu's stage lines are full of implicatures, an important means for Lao She to depict him in *Cha Guan*.

# II. DECISION ON THE RESEARCH OBJECT

To render the research manageable and operable, the author narrows the scope of the research in this paper to the play *Cha Guan* (Teahouse) by Lao She as a concrete object. One reason to choose *Cha Guan*, among so many modern Chinese plays, as the research object of this paper rests upon its greatness—some critics consider it as the greatest modern Chinese play. Tang (2007, p.20) considers it as a complex and living work of art beyond the borders of social criticism. Another reason lies with the fact that it is a play written in Beijing dialect, not quite influenced by western dramas. This would become more evident when a comparison is made between *Cha Guan* and *Lei Yu*, another famous modern Chinese play by the playwright Cao Yu which, in the eyes of many literature critics, is in fact a copy of western style. Thirdly, it seems difficult to judge whether implicature is also an important means for other playwrights to depict a character in their plays. To prove or disprove that, further research needs to be carried out. Fourthly, various people appear in the drama, making the conversations and their analysis meaningful and revealing.

To be more specific, the research narrows down to one character in this play—Liu Mazi—as the scope of the whole play is still too large to be operable. Liu Mazi is chosen due to his vile character, tending to frequently use implicature in his conversations, which may also make the analysis interesting. He is chosen also because of the number of conversations he conducts with other characters, a number appropriate for the scope of this paper.

# Method

A quantitative research, specifically a corpus study, will be carried out on all the conversations conducted between Liu Mazi and other characters in *Cha Guan*. With this done, a statistical analysis will be made on all the lines in the corpus to find out the percentage of those where an implied meaning is intended. If this figure is so big that it cannot be ignored, then it could be said that implicature is a significant method for Lao She to create Liu Mazi.

As for the method used in the analysis of the conversations between Liu Mazi and other characters in *Cha Guan*, the present author applies two principles—local interpretation and analogy, which are elaborated in detail by Brown and Yule

<sup>\*</sup> This paper was supported by the Social Science Research Program of Beijing Municipal Commission of Education with the Project NO. SM201110772007.

(1983, pp. 58-67). The first principle requires the interpreter of the conversation to assume that a change is minimal, if there is one, and the second principle requires the analyzer to compare the present situation in which things are happening with what used to be in the past. Thus, the two principles will eliminate far-fetched explanation. Here, "change" means a change of the context in which speakers are carrying out their conversation. Context is emphasized by the two authors of the book from where the two principles above have been cited. In this paper also, context is given enough stress when the lines of Liu Mazi are interpreted.

# **Data Collection**

All the conversations of Liu with different characters in *Cha Guan* will be compiled into a corpus, and then each line by him spoken to them will be analyzed from the perspective of implicature. The maxim(s) flouted in each turn of the conversation and their numbers will be listed in the form of a table.

# III. IMPLICATURE THEORY

CP was first discussed by Henry Paul Grice in his William James Lectures at Harvard University in 1967 with the topic "Logic and Conversation", whose handouts were later printed and circulated in 1975 (Liu, 2003, pp. 7-8). In 1989, these handouts were compiled into a book Studies in the Way of Words. In Part I of this book (1967/1989, pp. 26-27), Grice advances four categories/ supermaxims of CP, namely, Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, and their respective maxims.

These categories and maxims include:

Category of Quantity:

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Category of Quality:

Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.

2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Category of Relation:

Be relevant.

Category of Manner:

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.

2. Avoid ambiguity.

3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

4. Be orderly. (Grice, 1967/1989, pp. 26-27)

When any one of the maxims is violated, according to Grice's theory, there will be conversational implicature in the utterance. This theory is about conversations, thus quite helpful in analyzing drama, abundant with dialogues.

However, implicature in this paper mainly refers to conversational implicatures rather than conventional implicatures. But confusion and misunderstanding will arise if no distinction is made between these two types of implicature.

Before the distinction between conventional and conversational implicatures is made, it may be helpful to look at the meaning of implicature first, which is "an implication or suggestion deduced from the form of an utterance" (Crystal, 1992, p. 183). However, the term 'implicature' is distinguished from 'implication' a logical relationship between two propositions (Mey, 2001, p. 45). Actually, implication and implicature have the same root "implicate" meaning "to imply" and thus implication could be well used to define implicature. Grice (as cited in Chew, 2007) said, "We interpret what we hear if it conforms to these maxims. When a maxim is flouted, it becomes an implicature."

Each and every implicature in a certain and specific context in Liu Mazi's lines will be analyzed, which in one way or another demonstrates his character. Thus, the implicature discussed in the thesis refers to what Grice calls "conversational implicature" with no further distinction.

# IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The following introduction is based on the "Dramatis Person" in *Cha Guan* and its plot. The time of events in Act II is over ten years after that of Act I and the ages of the characters introduced in this section are their ages in Act I.

#### Analysis of Liu Mazi Based on Implicatures in His Lines

The unit of analysis in the following eight conversations is topic instead of sentence in each of Liu Mazi's lines. And the number of implicature in one turn is decided within this topic. When the topic is changed, i.e., when another thing is referred to, the new topic would be taken as a unit within which to see whether there is implicature. Where similar implied meaning is contained in neighboring topics, the number of implicature is counted within one topic, for sometimes in these topics different maxims are flouted and the implicature may be conveyed in different manners.

**Conversation I** 

	TABLE 1.
	CONVERSATION ANALYSIS OF LIU MAZI WITH SONG ERVE AND CHANG SIVE
Implicature Turns	Maxim(s) Flouted

	CONVERSALIO	IN ANALISIS OF LIU	MAZI WITH SONG ER	TE AND CHANG SITE	5		
Implicature Turns	Maxim(s) Flou	Maxim(s) Flouted					
	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner	No.		
1		-	$\checkmark$	-	1		
3	-	$\sqrt{\sqrt{1}}$	-	-	2		
6	-	$\checkmark$	-	-	1		
8	$\checkmark$		-	-	2		
10	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	-	1		
14	$\sqrt{\sqrt{2}}$	-	$\sqrt{}$	-	3		
16	$\checkmark$	-	-	-	1		
18	$\checkmark$	-	-	-	1		
20	-	-	-	$\checkmark$	1		
9/11	8	4	4	1	13		

Note. From Table 4.1 to Table 4.8, one tick means that the maxim in its file is flouted once. The figures in the last line of the tables in the eight conversation analyses are the sums of the numbers above in each line. However, the first figure from the left is an exception where the numerator is the sum of the implicature turns while the denominator is the sum of the turns Liu Mazi takes in each conversation.

A summary could be made out of the observations listed in Table 1:

(i) In the conversation of Liu Mazi with Chang and Song, the percentage of the turns with implicature is 81.8% (9/11), quite high indeed, which falsifies the assumption of the present author that Liu Mazi would talk with many implicatures only to those people with a lower social status than he such as Kang Liu.

It may be suspected that the number of Liu Mazi's turn here is too small and thus the percentage is not effective in explaining anything. However, there are only those turns when Liu talks with these characters, and it could be presumed that due to the personality of Liu his talks would maintain their own features and therefore the percentage would not change drastically if more turns are carried on. Even less turns, such as one and two, exist of Liu Mazi in his conversations with other characters where the percentage would not be valid any more.

The present author thought at the beginning that Liu Mazi would not dare to use a lot of implicatures with a person having a higher position than him. However, this is no question of "dare" or not, and Liu could talk with many implicatures to a person having an equal or higher position under the precondition that his interlocutor does not feel offended.

(ii) The average number of implicatures in each turn is 1.2 (13/11), meaning that Liu would use more than one implicature whenever he talks to Song and Chang;

(iii) Among all the four maxims, the Maxim of Quantity is the one most frequently flouted with a high percentage of 47.1% (8/17) while those of the Maxims of Quality, Relation, and Manner are 23.5% (4/17), 23.5% (4/17), and 5.9% (1/17) respectively; the reason is possibly that: to sell his snuff or little watch, Liu would spare no words at all, thus breaking the Maxim of Quantity from time to time; and

(iv) Sometimes there is more than one implicature in one turn—three in Turn (14)—which further illustrates the frequent use of implicatures on the part of Liu Mazi in his talks with Song and Chang.

# Conversation II

			TABLE 2.		
	Co	ONVERSATION ANALY	'SIS OF LIU MAZI WITH	H KANG LIU	
Implicature	Maxim(s) Flou	ted			Implicature
Turns	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner	No.
1		-	$\checkmark$	-	1
3	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	-	1
7	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	-	1
9	$\sqrt{}$	-	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	2
11	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	-	1
13	$\checkmark$	-	-	-	1
15	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	1
17	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	1
19	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	-	1
9/13	10	0	8	3	10

A summary could be made based upon the observations in Table 2:

(i) In the conversation of Liu Mazi with Kang Liu, the percentage of the turns with implicature is 69.2% (9/13);

(ii) The average number of implicatures in each turn is 0.8 (10/13), that is, Liu speaks with nearly one implicature in each turn of his talk with Kang;

(iii) The Maxim of Quantity is most frequently flouted with a percentage of 47.6% (10/21) while the Maxims of Quality, Relation, and Manner take a percentage of 0% (0/21), 38.1% (8/21), and 14.3% (3/21) respectively; and

(iv) There is only one turn with more than one implicature, Turn (9).

Conversation III

		-			
	CONVI	ERSATION ANALYSIS	OF LIU MAZI WITH PA	NG TAIJIAN	
Implicature Turns	Maxim(s) Floute	Implicature			
	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner	No.
1		-	$\checkmark$	-	1
3	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	1
2/2	2	0	2	1	2

TABLE 3

The limited number of turns in this conversation makes it difficult to make a quantitative analysis here. However, it could still be seen from Table 4.3 that Liu tends to speak with not a small number of implicatures in his turns, one in each, with Pang Taijian and that the Maxims of Quantity and Relation seem to be the maxims mainly flouted when Liu tries to convey implied meaning.

# **Conversation IV**

	CONVERSATION	ANALYSIS OF L	TABLE 4. IU MAZI WITH LI SAN	I AND WANG LIFA	
Implicature Turns	Maxim(s) Flouted				Implicature
	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner	No.
2		-			1
4		-		-	1
10	$\checkmark$	-	-		1
14	-	$\checkmark$	-		1
4/6	3	1	2	3	4

A data analysis could be carried out upon the observations in Table 4 as follows:

(i) The conversation of Liu Mazi with Li San and Wang Lifa has a percentage of 66.7% (4/6) implicature turns; (ii) The average number of implicatures in each turn is 0.7 (4/6);

(iii) The Maxims of Quantity and Manner are most frequently flouted with the same percentage of 33.3% (3/9) while the Maxims of Quality and Relation take a percentage of 11.1% (1/9) and 22.2% (2/9) respectively; and (iv) Each of the implicature turns has one implicature.

#### **Conversation V**

		TAB	le 5.		
	CONVERSATION A	NALYSIS OF LIU MA	ZI WITH SONG ENZI A	ND WU XIANGZI	
Implicature Turns	Maxim(s) Flouted				Implicature
	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner	No.
5		-		$\checkmark$	1
7	-	-	-	$\checkmark$	1
9	-	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	1
3/5	1	1	1	3	3

With the above work done and out of the observations in Table 5, a summary could be made as follows:

(i) The conversation of Liu Mazi with Song Enzi and Wu Xiangzi has a percentage of 60.0% (3/5) with the implicature turns;

(ii) The average number of implicatures in each turn is 0.6 (3/5);

(iii) The Maxim of Manner is most frequently flouted with the percentage of 50.0% (3/6) while the Maxims of Quantity, Quality and Relation take the same percentage of 16.7% (1/6); and

(iv) Each of the implicature turns has one implicature.

**Conversation VI** 

	CONVE	TA REATION ANALYSIS (	ABLE 6. De Liu Mazi with K	ang Shunzi	
Implicature Turns	Maxim(s) Flou	Implicature			
	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner	No.
2	-		-	-	1
5	$\checkmark$	-	-	$\checkmark$	2
2/2	1	1	0	1	3

Due to the fact that there are only two turns for Liu Mazi in Conversation VI, a qualitative, instead of quantitative, analysis is made here. Through the information in Table 6, it may be safe to deduce that implicature is an important device in for Liu to convey his meaning in his conversation with Kang Shunzi, since there are implicatures in both of the two turns of Liu Mazi here, even two in Turn (5).

**Conversation VII** 

766		

	CONVERSA	TION ANALYSIS OF L	LIU MAZI WITH LAO L	IN AND LAO CHEN	
Implicature Turns	Maxim(s) Flou	ted			Implicature
	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner	No.
11		-	-	$\checkmark$	1
14	-		-	-	1
16	-		-	-	1
26	$\checkmark$	-	-	$\checkmark$	1
28	$\checkmark$	-	-	$\checkmark$	1
34	$\checkmark$	-	$\checkmark$	-	1
6/13	4	2	1	3	6

TABLE 7. Inversation Analysis of Liu Mazi with Lao Lin and Lao Chen

A further analysis based upon the information listed in Table 7 could be made as follows:

(i) The conversation of Liu Mazi with Lao Lin and Lao Chen has a percentage of 46.2% (6/13) with the implicature turns;

(ii) The average number of implicatures in each turn is 0.5 (6/13);

(iii) The Maxim of Quantity is most frequently flouted with the percentage of 40.0% (4/10) while the Maxims of Quality, Relation and Manner take the percentages of 20.0% (2/10), 10.0%(1/10), and 30.0%(3/10) respectively; and (iv) Each of the six implicature turns has one implicature.

Conversation VIII

	Col	CONVERSATION ANALYSIS OF LIU MAZI WITH JUNGUAN					
Implicature Turns	Maxim(s) Flou	Implicature					
	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner	No.		
2	-	-	-	$\checkmark$	1		
1/1	0	0	0	1	1		

The limited number of turns in Conversation VIII makes the present author have to carry out a qualitative analysis here. However, Table 8 could also show that implicature is nothing to be neglected in the analysis of Liu Mazi as it is used by Liu in the sole turn of his conversation with Junguan.

# A Summary of the Eight Analyses

In the analyses of the eight conversations, two methods have been applied—quantitative and qualitative, according to the number of turns in each conversation. The former has been used in conversation analysis of Liu Mazi's talk with Chang Siye & Song Erye, Kang Liu, Li San & Wang Lifa, Song Enzi & Wu Xiangzi, and Lao Lin & Lao Chen while the latter in that of his conversation with Pang Taijian, Kang Shunzi, and Junguan.

The eight conversations are thus divided into two groups according to what methods have been applied in their analyses.

Table 9 sums up the observations of the first group-the five conversations with quantitative method applied.

	TABLE 9.   A Summary of the Quantitative Analyses					
Interlocutors	Perc. of Impl. Average Impl. No. Perc. of Flouted Maxim					
	Turns		Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner
Chang, Song	81.8%	1.2	47.1%	23.5%	23.5%	5.9%
Kang Liu	69.2%	0.8	47.6%	0%	38.1%	14.3%
Li, Wang	66.7%	0.7	33.3%	11.1%	22.2%	33.3%
Song, Wu	60.0%	0.6	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%	50.0%
Lin, Chen	46.2%	0.5	40.0%	20.0%	10.0%	30.0%
		Note, Perc, = percenta	age: Impl. = im	plicature		

Only the first names of the interlocutors are listed in the table except Kang Liu to avoid confusion with Kang Shunzi.

A summary can be drawn out of the figures in Table 9 as follows:

(i) The percentages of the implicature turns in all of the five conversations, except the one with Lin and Chen which is nearly 50.0%, are higher than 50.0%, meaning that more than half of the turns Liu takes in these five conversations contain implicatures; the importance of implicatures in Liu's talk could also be seen from the average number of implicatures in each turn he takes which is or higher than 0.5, even 1.2 in his conversation with Chang and Song meaning that he would use more than one implicature whenever he speaks;

(ii) Among all the five conversations, the percentage, also the average number of implicatures in each turn, of the one with Chang and Song is the highest, probably because Liu Mazi is trying to sell his stuff here—the snuff and little watch—and he needs to use a lot of implicatures to urge Song to buy them; on the contrary, when Liu talks with Lin and Chen, he uses the smallest percentage, also the average number in each turn, of implicature, the reason possibly being that Liu is pressing them to tell the figure of the silver dollars they have and therefore does not have the time to use many implicatures;

(iii) The Maxim of Quantity is most frequently broken, with the conversation of Liu Mazi with Song and Wu as an exception where it is the Maxim of Manner that is favored by Liu when an implicature is to be conveyed; compared with other maxims of CP, the Maxim of Quantity is the most convenient one to use—the speaker just needs to supply extra

information; concerning the exception of Liu's conversation with Song and Wu, the Maxim of Manner is broken most frequently, perhaps because Liu is so eager to argue for his poor condition that he could not, under pressure, make a brief statement;

There is risk in lying or saying something without evidence, since it may be not so easy to judge whether others would be able to discern the lie; it might not be so difficult to make a statement relevant to the present conversation, even when it is more than necessary; the strategy to say something obscure, ambiguous, redundant, or unorganized could only be made use of in certain contexts; and

(iv) The Maxim of Quality is not deviated from in the conversation of Liu Mazi with Kang Liu, probably because Liu feels it embarrassing to admit the low price he offers and would like instead to give his own reasons of such a low price, thus making the Maxim of Quantity most frequently deviated from in this conversation.

Table 10 sums up the observations of the second group-the three conversations with qualitative method applied.

		T	able 10.			
	1	A SUMMARY OF THI	E QUALITATIVE	ANALYSES		
Interlocutors	Prop. of Impl.	Prop. of Impl. Average Impl. Prop. of Flouted Maxim				
	Turns	No.	Quantity	Quality	Relation	Manner
Pang	2/2	2/2	2/5	0/5	2/5	1/5
Kang Shunzi	2/2	3/2	1/3	1/3	0/3	1/3
Junguan	1/1	1/1	0/1	0/1	0/1	1/1
•	1	Note. Prop. = propo	ortion; Impl. = i	mplicature		

Only the first names of the interlocutors are listed in the table except Kang Shunzi to avoid confusion with Kang Liu. Another exception is Junguan whose first name could not be found in the drama Cha Guan. Owing to the research method applied in the analysis of the second group of conversations, proportions instead of percentages are listed in Table 10 which could also illustrate the phenomena of implicature in these three conversations.

Two points could be made out of the figures in Table 10 as follows:

(i) Although there is only one or two turn by Liu Mazi in each of the three conversations, each of these turns is an implicature turn with at least one implicature, which in some sense shows the importance of implicatures in Liu's lines; and

(ii) There is not much to discuss about the maxims deviated from to convey implicatures, e.g., which one is the one most frequently flouted, owing to the limited number of the turns in the three conversations.

With all the analyses done above in this section, it could well be concluded that all the implicatures in the turns by Liu Mazi in the eight conversations show his character in this or that way. Thus, implicature is an important method for Lao She to create Liu Mazi, a factor not to be neglected when Liu Mazi is taken into consideration.

# V. CONCLUSIONS

This paper is an attempt to solve one of the problems in the studies on implicature in dramas: most of them are qualitative, and in this regard, the present author has conducted a quantitative one. To fulfill this objective, he narrows down the scope of the research to Liu Mazi, an important character in the play *Cha Guan* (Teahouse) by Lao She, so that the model would be operable and feasible at the same time.

To test whether implicature is an important means of creating Liu Mazi for Lao She, a corpus study is carried out, with all the lines of Liu and its interlocutors as the data, including five quantitative analyses and three qualitative ones. The results of all these analyses prove that implicature is an important device for the depiction of Liu Mazi.

The research in this thesis has proved to some extent that specification of a study object and narrowing down of research means can greatly increase the operability and bring unexpected results. This methodology may be of some enlightenment for other similar studies.

The scope of this paper has limited the possibility to extend the results of the research to other characters and dramas as a whole. And the proving of implicature as an effective means for creating Liu Mazi may lead to further research concerning whether this has also been played on in the description of other literary characters. In other words, the contribution of this paper may also be its disadvantages, which depends on the research objective and also on the reasonability of the research design. In a way, it is an open question and further researches need to be carried out to discuss the above issues.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Brown, G., & Yule, G (1983). Discourse analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [2] Chew, P. (2007). The theory of implicature. Unpublished handout.
- [3] Crystal, D. (1992). An encyclopedic dictionary of language and languages. Oxford: Blackwell.
- [4] Grice, H. P. (1989). Studies in the way of words. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- [5] Lai, C. (2003). Daily conversation & great narration—the interpretation of the pragmatics in the Tea House and the narrative style in literature for 17 years. *Journal of University of Science and Technology Beijing (Social Sciences Edition)*, *19*, 32-37.
- [6] Lao, S. (1999). Teahouse (R. Ying, Trans.). Beijing: China Translation & Publishing Corporation.
- [7] Lao, S. (2006). Teahouse (J. H. Gibbon, Trans.). Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.
- [8] Liu, S. (2003). New perspectives of pragmatics. Guangxi Normal University Journal, 1, 1-19.
- [9] Mey, J. L. (2001). Pragmatics: An introduction (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Oxford: Blackwell.

- [10] Tang, Y. (2007, July 5). The dramatic story of drama. Beijing Review, 50, 18-20.
- [11] Yang, L., & Jin, X. (2006). Looking at implicatures in *Cha Guan. Journal of Shaanxi Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 35, 147-150.

Xiaoliang Zhou was born in Weifang, China in 1983. He received his MA degree in translation studies from Beijing Foreign Studies University, China in 2008.

He is currently a lecturer in the School of International Studies, Beijing Information Science and Technology University, Beijing, China. His research interests include discourse analysis and educational evaluation.