

A STUDY OF FACE IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S 'SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION'

Prof. Shivnath Ashok Takte

Research Scholar,

Sangamner College, Sangamner.

eshivprabhat@gmail.com/9595687764

Abstract:

Face is an immensely important entity in the Pragmatic Studies. Each and every part of human society is influenced by the inner motives and considerations. Language is worth studying interpersonal relations and interactions. Vijay Tendulkar's 'Silence!...' is a prototype for procuring the face study with the Pragmatic perspective. This play is evident in the case of studying the consideration of the social value and self image of the interactants. Communication in drama is based upon the interpersonal encounters in polite as well as cooperative manner. A man/woman as a human being cannot set him/her aloof from it. A meaningful interaction is observably the combination of observance and violation of humane principles. These include praise, hatred, consideration, imposing, insulting. The present paper observes the communication in 'Silence...' through the analysis of Positive and Negative face, FTAs and the Politeness Strategies.

Key Words: *Face, positive face, negative face, FTA, play within the play, sociophile and politeness strategies.*

Introduction:

In the wake of Drama Studies in India, Indian Drama in English has become a form of interpersonal observations. Drama has multiple dimensions for exploring meaning at various levels. Politeness is a branch of pragmatics which deals with the different shades of communication in a piece of interaction such as: script of a play. It gives power for studying interpersonal communication in drama. Naik observes the features of Indian Drama in English as “A play, in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience, needs a real theatre and a live audience. It is precisely the lack of these essentials that has hamstrung Indian drama in English all along.” (qtd.in. Dharwadker 2005) Theatre and the active audience are the major criterion behind the communication in drama at a considerable length. They play a vital role in shaping the very destination of meaning in drama which is not told in a direct way. The very thing is absent in the Indian Dramatic Scenario. Face is a very useful perspective on drama for studying the strata of communication in drama. According to a study “[face] is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other’s cooperation) maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face.” (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Face is the self-image which persons claim

for each other. Drama, as a piece of literary conversation, has multiple occasions where the characters or interlocutors keep rapport with each other's. It is the social identity of a person and people tries to maintain/violate each other's face. The directness in a character's statement can be seen as the possible damage to one's face. 'Silence! The Court is in Session' is evident for analyzing the nature of FTAs. This is also helpful in studying the internal communication through the awareness of positive and negative face.

Research Hypotheses:

1. Do the Characters in 'Silence! The Court is in Session' do FTAs?
2. Do they show awareness about each other's negative and positive face?
3. Do they use politeness strategies in order to minimize FTAs?

Research Framework:

According to Watts, "face is a socially attributed aspect of self that is temporarily on loan for the duration of the interaction in accordance with the line or lines our personal construction of the self, although the different faces we are required to towards that construction. If our constructed role remains relatively stable across interactions it will result in a form of institutionalization of the self. However, if face is the 'condition of interaction, not its objectives, it is equally clear that we have an obligation to maintain the faces of the other participants in the interaction'" (Watts, 2003). Each participant has to observe the socially attributed aspects of self. It includes positive face and negative face of each other. The participants have to maintain interpersonal relations in the form of taking care of their different faces.

Negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction- i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition...."(Brown and Levinson, 1987). It is the expectation to be free to do action and to be free from imposition. According to Yule, "A person's negative face is the need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed by others." (Yule 1996) While one's "Positive face" is "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants." (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Each participant expects that his self-image must be considered and appreciated. "A person's positive face is the need to be accepted, even liked, by others, to be treated as a member of the same group, and to know that his/her wants are shared by others. (Yule 1996) He further simplifies negative face as the need to be independent and positive face as the need to be connected.

"Face threatening act (FTA): utterance or action which threatens a person's public self-image." (Yule 1996) Participants utter acts which threatens each other's face. If a character says

something that represents a threat to another individual's self-image. But the threat to one's self-image can be minimized with the help of the following politeness strategies:

Positive politeness

Notice/attend to hearer's wants
 Exaggerate interest/approval
 Intensify interest
 Use in-group identity markers
 Seek agreement
 Avoid disagreement
 Presuppose/assert common ground
 Joke
 Assert knowledge of hearer's wants
 Offer, promise
 Be optimistic
 Include speaker and hearer in the activity
 Give (or ask for) reasons
 Assume/assert reciprocity
 Give gifts to hearer (goods, sympathy, etc.)

Negative politeness

Be conventionally indirect
 Question, hedge
 Be pessimistic
 Minimize imposition
 Give deference
 Apologize
 Impersonalize
 State the imposition as a general rule
 Nominalize
 Go on record as incurring a debt

(Grundy 2000)

The plot of the play '*Silence! The Court is in Session*' (1967) is strong enough to tell about the power of its issue. A group of actors plan to stage a play (mock-trial) in a village. When a cast-member does not show up, a local person, totally naïve to theatre, Mr Samant is asked to replace him. An improvised, free-flowing 'rehearsal' is arranged and a mock trial is staged to make Samant know the Court conventions and procedures. A (mock) charge of infanticide is put against Miss Benare, another cast-member. The other cast-members assure her by saying this as a mock-trial, an untrue in nature. But all of a sudden, the untrue play turns into a dangerous game of troubling Miss Benare utterly. This becomes an accusatory game when it emerges from the trial that Miss Benare is carrying an out-of-wedlock child from her illicit contact with Professor Damle, the missing cast-member for the very show. This short plot-line is content enough to learn the incidents happen on an uneven amount. Benare is indeed a scapegoat of the self-termed 'social reformers'. 'Silence...' reminiscences the 'Piradelesque effect' by presenting things on stage with power and violence at mental level. The line between reality and illusion becomes faint. Illusion becomes reality and vice-versa within a fraction of second in 'Silence...' as it happens in Pirandello's plays.

The character of Benare is with self-awareness and reflects the 'new-woman' in the frame of social restrictions. She affirms her role and importance as an individual the society in her own words, words, "...my life is my own-I haven't sold it to anyone for a job! My will is my own. My wishes are my own." (*Silence! Act one*). A man or a woman is born with individual freedom. So he/she does not want others to impose any kind of burden on them. There is a

conventional blame and hatred for a woman if does any inhuman action. Therefore Miss Benare here staunchly asks for her will. Otherwise no one will point at a man for doing an immoral activity. A man is, by social conventions, always safe than a woman.

Analysis of Face in 'Silence...':

Sample no. 01

PONKSHE. (*weightily, his thick-framed spectacles*). Oh, Gosh! Where is it?... (He goes muttering into the inner room, to hunt for the lavatory.)

SUKHATME. (*inhaling deeply, and blowing out smoke*). There is a little lassie, deep in my heart. Miss Benare, whatever happens, you don't want to grow up, do you? Eh?

BENARE. Why, in the classroom, I'm the soul of seriousness! But I don't see why one should go around all the time with a long face. Or a square face! Like that Ponkshe! We should laugh, we should play, we should sing! If we can and if they'll let us, we should dance too. Shouldn't have any false modesty or dignity. Or care for anyone! I mean it. When your life is over, do you think anyone will give you a bit of theirs? What do you say, Samant? Do you think they will?

SAMANT. You are quite right. The great sage Tukaram said...at least I think it was him-

BENARE. Forget about the sage Tukaram. I say it- I, LeelaBenare, a living woman, I say it from my own experience. Life is not meant for anyone else. It is your own life. It must be. It's a very, very important thing. Every moment, every bit of it is precious--

SUKHATME [*clapping*]. Hear! Hear! (Silence, act I: 62)

Analysis:

In the present sample, Ponkshe does not do face threatening act (FTA). On the other hand, he shows that he is in search of lavatory facility. Sukhatme complains mildly about Benare for her ill-behaviour of hiding behind the door and threat Ponkshe by making noise. He uses positive politeness strategy by making joke on Benare. She also gives company to Sukhatme in cracking jokes and then gives justification. She further presupposes the common ground of Sukhatme and other characters. Samant uses positive politeness strategy of avoiding disagreement with Benare's view. But Miss Benare doesn't care for Samant's face want. She posits threat to Samant's face by disagreeing with his views. She personalizes her view on life.

Sample no. 02

SUKHATME [approaching Ponkshe]. Your name?

PONKSHE. G. N. Ponkshe. Go further on. We can have all the details tonight.

SUKHATME. MrPonkshe, are you acquainted with the accused?

BENARE [suddenly, in Ponshe's manner]. Hmm!

PONKSHE [looking carefully at Benare]. Yes. Very well indeed.

SUKHATME. How would you describe her social status?

PONKSHE. A teacher. In other words, a schoolmarm.

BENARE [sticking her tongue out at him]. But I'm still quite young!

SUKHATME. Mr Ponshe, is the accused married or unmarried?

PONKSHE. Why don't you ask the accused? (Silence, act II: 81)

Analysis:

In the second sample, Sukhatme inquires Ponshe with using polite address. Ponshe also does not care for Sukhatme. They both do FTAs which impose each other's face. While interrogation Miss Benare mimics Ponshe and that creates possible threat to Ponshe's face. Sukhatme and Ponshe use direct speech acts. Therefore their interaction contains multiple FTAs.

Sample no. 03

KASHIKAR. This case has great social significance, Sukhatme. No joking. I must put aside the practice of court, and give evidence. Sukhatme, ask my permission. Ask me. Ask!

SUKHATME. Milord, considering the importance of the case, I humbly submit that tradition should be broken, to allow the judge's worshipful self to enter the witness-box.

KASHIKAR. Permission granted. [He comes and stands in the witness-box.] Examine me. Come on. [He is bursting to speak. His eyes are on Benare.] Not a doubt of it!

SUKHATME [Striking a lawyer's attitude]. Mr Kashikar, your occupation?

KASHIKAR. Social worker.

SUKHATME. Do you know the accused?

KASHIKAR. Only too well! A sinful canker on the body of society-- that's my honest opinion of these grown-up unmarried girls.

SUKHATME [Taking an even more typical lawyer's pose]. Do not give your opinion unless you are asked, Mr Kashikar!

KASHIKAR. An opinion's an opinion. I don't wait for anyone's permission to give it.

PONKSHE. Bravo! (Silence, act III: 112)

Analysis:

The last sample contains the fine pieces of awareness of self-image due to the problem of solidarity. There is an orderly atmosphere in the present scene because of social distance. The interrogation heightens the point of interaction between Sukhatme and Mr. Kashikar. Kashikar comments on Miss Benare's behavior out of his *sociophile* nature. He criticizes Benare in harsh words. Sukhatme does an FTA baldly off the record without using any redressive action. Both the characters are very directed in their opinions.

Communication in Silence! The Court is in Session:

'Silence...' is full of positive and negative face awareness about the characters. They show consideration for each other's face wants to some extent. Moreover they posit threats to each other's face. The quantity of doing FTAs is considerable in this play. This play observes directness in communication. The characters in this play strongly do FTAs. They too show awareness of each other's face on a very few occasions. The degree of imposition is considered prior on the basis of solidarity and social distance among the characters in this play. This play has potent means of communicating the very issues beyond the surface communication.

The researcher has recorded the following interpretations through the observations made above.

1. 'Silence...' is full of FTAs and mechanics of minimizing them.
2. FTA is obligatory when there is closeness in social and familial relations in 'Silence...'
3. The use of politeness strategies is the first stage to keep the communication in 'Silence...'
4. Characters have awareness of each other's self-image in society. But they violate other's face by doing the FTAs. The politeness strategies are used by the characters in 'Silence...' to some extent.
5. 'Silence...' is found a very good example for studying interpersonal self-image. The characters in 'Silence...' use language for communicating their self-value at different levels.

Conclusion:

To conclude with, 'Silence...' is based on personal and interpersonal expressions content with Tendulkar's communication through the characters. Face enables to understand persons, their belongings and their intentions. There is no effective communication merely with the observance of politeness principles without Face Threatening Acts, awareness of each other's face and the use of politeness strategies.

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