



# An Analysis of the Linguistic Features of The Minister's Black Veil from the Perspective of Literary Pragmatics

Xin Qiu\*

Foshan University, Foshan, Guangdong, 528231, China

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## ABSTRACT

*The Minister's Black Veil* is one of the most classic short stories written by American romantic writer Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864). From the perspective of literary pragmatics, this paper analyzes the language features of the novel, such as words and sentences, grammar, semantic ambiguity, rhetoric and conversational implicature based on cooperative principle, so as to explore the superb writing style and literary art of the novel, better understand and appreciate this literary work, and provide a new perspective and reference for the study of British and American literature Direction.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Creation Background

Hawthorne is known as the greatest Romantic novelist in America in the 19th century. He was born in an aristocratic family in England, and then suffered the downfall of his family. The misfortune in his childhood and the oppression of his real life cast a dark and lonely color on his heart. Hawthorne was influenced by his family and came into contact with Calvin's Puritanism. He was deeply aware of the serious persecution of Puritanism on ethical humanity and human life, but his cultural tradition formed a deep-rooted impression in his heart. Many of Hawthorne's literary works directly or indirectly attack Calvinism's religious thought. The lan-

guage style of his works presents strong religious color and mysterious atmosphere. Hawthorne was in the American social background at that time, and was in the hot struggle of religious sects and religious freedom movement. The potential moral concepts of these religious activities had a significant impact on Hawthorne's works. In his opinion, the contradictions between people and between people and society all come from the potential "evil" of human nature, which is deeply influenced by the concept of "original sin" in Puritan thought.

### 1.2 Plot

Hawthorne expressed the original sin thought incisively and vividly in *the Minister's Black Veil*, and the theme implied in its aroused people's thinking about good and evil.

\*Corresponding Author:

Xin Qiu,

Foshan University, Foshan, Guangdong, 528231, China;

E-mail: 2562275375@qq.com.

“The minister’s black veil” tells about Mr. Hooper’s life tragedy caused by wearing black veil. Hooper is a gentle, friendly, knowledgeable and respected young minister. However, when he enters the church in a black veil on a Sunday morning, people are only surprised, curious, afraid and uneasy at first, and then all kinds of extreme speculation, estrangement, prejudice and disgust towards him are followed. Even no one in Milford wants to face him Face to face, the men avoid him, the women spit on him, and the children scream and run away from him. Since then, he has been hiding behind the black veil, living an extremely lonely and miserable life, until the last moment of his life, he did not take off the veil. Hooper chose to wear the veil in order to make the world realize that people are born guilty. There are all kinds of hidden crimes behind them. The “veil” in the text is like a bright mirror, which reflects the secret sins of human beings without reservation, and confesses the faults and crimes committed by them to the world and God.

## 2. Research scope of Literary Pragmatics

Literary Pragmatics was first mentioned in the book *linguistics of literary students*. The concept of LP, published in 1991 by literary pragmatics, further expanded the study of pragmatics in literature and broke the “split” situation between linguistics and literature. LP is an interdisciplinary subject of linguistics and literature, which provides a new perspective and theoretical framework for literary research. It regards text, author, reader, context, and society as the dynamic development of the whole, focusing on language, communication and the relationship between people and the environment, which is the inevitable outcome of the development of language research to a certain stage<sup>[1]</sup>. The theory of literary pragmatics was first mentioned by Chinese linguist Hu Zhuanglin in linguistics, until the 1990s when the research results were published one after another.

At the level of theoretical research: firstly, as a branch of pragmatics, LP emphasizes the combination of “bottom-up” and “top-down” research methods<sup>[2]</sup>. “Bottom up” research focuses on the work itself from a micro perspective, leaving aside the social environment and historical and cultural factors behind the work; “top down” is not only to consider the language content and structure of the work, but also to study the impact of specific social and cultural context on literary creation from a macro perspective, so as to understand the dynamic nature of different readers due to cognitive differences complex text interaction. The two research methods have their own characteristics, but if they are combined, they can complement each other and complement each other, and the

text analysis will be more accurate and comprehensive. Secondly,<sup>[2]</sup> on the practical research level, R.J. watts (1991:27) put forward two methods of LP research, namely, the “inner view method” and the “appearance method”, which not only studies the pragmatic phenomena in the works, but also tries to explain the relationship between the social and cultural communication and literary communication between the author and the reader through the text. The application of LP in practice is embodied in the analysis of literary characters, the interpretation of language features and the excavation of thematic meaning; the application of LP in English classroom teaching and the practice of literary translation.

## 3. On the Linguistic Features of the Minister’S Black Veil from the Perspective of Literary Pragmatics

This paper analyzes the linguistic features of the clergyman’s black veil from three aspects: linguistic structure and pragmatic vagueness, rhetorical devices and conversational implicature based on cooperative principle, so as to interpret the author’s writing skills, understand the author’s irony and analyze the theme behind the work.

### 3.1 Morphology, Syntax and Grammatical Features

In terms of lexical features, firstly, the novel is good at exaggerating the mysterious and horrible atmosphere, creating a sense of depression, highlighting the powerful magic of the black veil and the negative symbolic meaning of “evil”, such as “magic, mysterious, dreamful, deathlike, horrible, saddening, gloomy shade, shudder (the corpse), rustling the shroud”, the author uses special words to highlight strong religious color, such as “the dream being, omniscience, the world, the judgment, creator, superstitious”. In addition, Hawthorne flexibly uses noun and adjective compound words to express emotions or describe the characteristics of things. Meeting house, white hair, arm chair, looking glass, pale faced, pen up, heart dissolving; in addition, a large number of derivation methods are used to enrich vocabulary, such as “noiseless, sensible, unwonted, impatience, untasted, unaccountable, irreproachable, impertinent, indifferent, painful” etc. The author chooses the words carefully and carefully, and the plot design is ups and downs, so as to capture the readers’ interest in reading and satisfy their curiosity seeking psychology. The effect of his words reflects Hawthorne’s superb writing skills and vivid character thoughts and image depiction.

In terms of syntactic features, the sentence structure of

the novel is arranged in appropriate length and difficulty. The characteristics of sentence structure can directly reflect the language characteristics of the novel. The text is organized by the parallel sentence patterns of simple sentence, parallel sentence and complex sentence. It is because of the alternate use of different sentence patterns that readers will have a strong experience and resonance with the works. First, the author uses simple sentence patterns to describe the characteristics and discourse of ordinary characters, such as: (1) “why do you look back?” said one in the process to his partner. (2) “of course, it is good Mr. Hooper,” reply the sexton. (3) sprint bachelors looked sidelong the street. The above three sentences are set off by ordinary people in the church to express their inner activities in a conversational way, i.e. disbelief and surprise. (4) still veiled, they said him in his coffin, and a vented corpus they bore him to the grave. The use of juxtaposed compound sentences makes the language of the text more abundant, which makes readers feel the complicated and contradictory heart of the characters and the full image of the characters through the words. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysterious which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fan conceptual from our own consciousness, even striving that the omniscient can detect them. (5) “if I hide my face for sorry, there is cause enough, “he merrily replied;” and if I cover it for secret sin, what modern might not do the same? “These two paragraphs reveal the theme of” original sin “in the text and praise the people represented by” Hooper “.

In terms of grammatical features, it involves tense, voice, modality and mood<sup>[3]</sup>. The text mainly uses the past tense and the present tense. On the one hand, it states the facts that have happened. For example, it describes the noble and upright image of Pope Hooper in people’s minds in the past. On the other hand, it narrates the objective phenomena and facts, such as the language evaluation, behavior change and psychological hypothesis of the villagers after the priest wears the veil; in the aspect of voice expression, most of them use the active voice to describe the dialogue, psychology and image of the characters delicately and vividly; the modality and mood use conjecture, affirmation and will to express people’s various opinions about the priest wearing the black veil Speculation, disgust and estrangement.

### 3.2 Semantic Fuzziness

Cognitive linguistics points out that the concept classification and distinction of human beings to the objective material world is fuzzy and unclear, which determines the fuzziness of human cognition.<sup>[4]</sup> it enhances the implicit

and euphemistic effect of language expression. Fuzziness refers to the unclear boundary and generic relationship of things. Semantic fuzziness in literary works is the author’s intention to leave blank, so as to give readers more imagination space to enhance the aesthetic function of the works, reflecting the author’s superb writing strategy and language art.

The text includes “maybe” words, other words and humorous sentences, which reflect the semantic ambiguity phenomenon.<sup>[5]</sup> “maybe” words refer to “like, seem, possible, as if, maybe”, etc. the words in the text include see, almost, probably, perhaps, might, as if, like, and their meanings contain guess and uncertainty. For example: (1) on a closer view it appeared to consider of two folds of crash, which essentially considered his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight. After the priest put on the black veil, the readers can smell a trace of mystery from the curiosity, doubt and speculation of the people in the town about his behavior. Black originally has a kind of intriguing mysterious color. In addition, it is uncertain how many layers of the veil are, which further arouse people’s mysterious association behind the black veil, and its expression also makes sense Fuzzy. (2) Father Hooper’s breath heaved; it rattled in his throat; but with a height effort, grassing forward with his hands. He caught hold of life and held it back till he should speak. Mighty means “powerful”. This sentence is the action description of Pope Hooper after he was insulted by Lord Westbury because he refused to take off his veil. In the face of such bad words and the difference in people’s attitude towards him before, we are not sure how much courage and will the Pope have to rely on to persist This leads to vague understanding.

### 3.3 Rhetorical Features: Symbol, Metaphor, Irony, Etc

The use of rhetorical devices can make the expression of language content more vivid, enhance the appeal of the article, and arouse readers’ deep thinking. Hawthorne interprets the theme of the text mainly by means of symbolism in the black veil of the priest. Among them, “black veil” is just a common veil, but in the text, it symbolizes the secret evil in people’s hearts. It is mentioned in the article that “it’s a sign of mourning” symbolizes death and fear, mystery and darkness, sin and indifference. Metaphor, also known as metaphor and metaphor, is to use one thing to metaphor another. There is an obvious metaphor in this paper, such as: (1) thus, from beneath the black vein, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, which developed the poor minister, so that love and Symphony could never reach him. Irony, also known as irony, is a kind of satirical writ-

ing skill in speaking or writing. It usually needs to understand its intention from the context and context. That mystery was never once withdraw. Emblem It means “badge and symbol”. According to the context, the word “emblem” here actually refers to the black veil. The author intentionally replaces the black veil symbolizing “evil” with words with good meaning, forming a strong contrast in meaning and satirizing the darkness and terror of evil that people intend to cover up.

### **3.4 Linguistic Features of Conversational Implicature Based on Cooperative Principle**

Grice, an American linguist, puts forward the cooperative principle in pragmatic theory, which includes quantity criterion, quality criterion, relation criterion and manner criterion. The quantity, quality and relationship criteria are related to the content of speech, while the mode criterion is related to the way of speaking. The quantity criterion requires that the information in the conversation should not exceed the information contained in the conversation; the quality criterion is the key, which requires the speech content to be authentic and reliable; the relevance criterion is the requirement for the relevance and fit of the discourse content; the mode criterion requires that both sides of the communication should make their statements clear and concise, and no ambiguous language should appear. However, in the actual communication of daily life, the cooperative principle is not mandatory, and people do not have to abide by the principle. On the contrary, they will deliberately violate the cooperative principle according to the specific communication context, express the implied meaning and achieve the purpose of communication. The black veil of the priest also violates the cooperative principle and the four principles.

#### **3.4.1 Violation of Quantity Criterion**

“Are you sure it is our parson?” inquired Goodman gray of the sexton “of course it is good Mr. Hooper,” replied sexton. He was to have exchanged with Parson of Westbury; but Parson Shute sent to excuse himself yesterday being to preach a funeral sermon.”

The steward answered Goodman Gray’s question head-on, and the conversation between them proved that this was Reverend Hooper. It is worth noting that the Secretary’s words exceed the amount of information needed for communication. He added that the pastor did not exchange the message of praying with Westbury, which violated the principle of quantity in the principle of cooperation. However, he had implicit meaning and out of chord voice. The purpose of the secretary was to use the fact that pas-

tor Hooper did not do the missing prayer to indicate to the other party that he was speaking today Now this gentleman is me, in order to arouse the curiosity of each other.

#### **3.4.2 Violation of Quality Standards**

“But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?” urged Elizabeth. “Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away this scandal!”

This is a conversation between the priest and his girlfriend Elizabeth. Elizabeth wants to persuade the priest to take off the veil, but Hooper thinks that wearing the veil is a way to admit his guilt like the world. He wants to inspire the world to reveal his inner secret to the outside world with his own actions. Elizabeth said that his face was covered by slander for his unspeakable crime. Her words were groundless and violated the quality principle of the principle of cooperation. The implication was to stimulate the priest and suggest that he could only prove his innocence by taking off his veil.

#### **3.4.3 Violation of Association Criteria**

“But what has been good parson Hooper got upon his face?” The steward shouts out in surprise.”Are you sure it is our parson?” inquired Goodman gray of the sexton Goodman gray asks the superintendent.)

The above conversation violates the principle of relevance. Both sides of the conversation always hope that what the other side said is relevant and cohesive with what he said. However, the conversation between Goodman gray and the steward is not the same. Goodman did not answer the Secretary’s questions according to his questions and ignored the other party’s questions. Instead, he preempted the other party’s questions and asked questions that had nothing to do with the Secretary’s words. Although the principle of relevance is violated here, we can infer from the context that when Reverend Hooper suddenly walked into the church wearing a black veil, everyone’s reaction started with amazement, a look of doubt, and then they couldn’t believe their eyes. Everyone’s heart is full of doubts and puzzles, because they are eager to know the truth and forget other people’s words. This kind of communicative effect creates a mysterious atmosphere, arouses readers to assume why people have such strong reactions, thus generating reading interest and exploring writing intention.

#### **3.4.4 Violation of the Code of Conduct**

“Why do you tremble at me alone?” cried he, turning his

veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. “Tremble at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? What, but the mystery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, or the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me on every visage a Black Veil!”

In this passage, Reverend Hooper answered the reason why the Reverend Clark was unwilling to take off his veil on his deathbed, and explained the information he wanted to know. However, the content of his speech was too long and not concise enough, which violated the principle of cooperation. In fact, he was venting his anger and grief, looking for reasons for his accumulated grievances for many years. Hooper was not understood and accepted by the world because of his black veil, and suffered a lot in his heart. But even so, he still insisted on the religious concept of “original sin” to prove the guilt of life in this way, and further express the author’s theme.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Literary pragmatics provides a new direction in the appreciation and understanding of the works. After analyzing the language features of the priest’s black veil from the

aspects of words and sentences, grammar, semantic ambiguity, rhetoric and conversational implicature, the author is convinced by Hawthorne’s writing characteristics and superb writing level. At the same time, he is one of the novelists who writes psychoanalysis and is good at grasping the inner conflicts of the characters. He is also good at digging out the deep meaning behind things. In this paper, “black veil” is the symbol of human crimes.

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