

Expanded Summary

Humorous and flirtatious: an *One Piece* live-action semantics and pragmatics analysis

Engraçado e paquerador: uma análise semântica e pragmática de *One Piece* live-action

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ABSTRACT

Language is a diverse and complex system which allows multiple possibilities of analysis and interpretations while in use to construe meaning in particular discourses. To explore some of these possibilities of analysis within fictional scenarios, we aim to highlight the presence of ambiguity and politeness, from the semantics and pragmatics fields, in a scene from the Netflix TV series *One Piece*. By analyzing the transcription of a particular scene from *One Piece*, we were able to uncover different ambiguity and politeness manifestations. We expect our findings can provide support and content for future teachers of the English language and researchers' further investigation to make the teaching process more meaningful and interesting at school.

Keywords: Semantics and pragmatics; *One Piece* analysis; Learning through entertainment

RESUMO

A linguagem é um sistema diversificado e complexo que permite múltiplas possibilidades de análise e interpretações durante seu uso para construir significados em discursos específicos. Para explorar algumas dessas possibilidades de análise em cenários ficcionais, nosso objetivo é evidenciar a presença de ambiguidade e polidez, a partir dos campos da semântica e da pragmática, em uma cena da série de TV *One Piece* da Netflix. Ao analisar a transcrição de uma cena específica de *One Piece*, conseguimos descobrir diferentes manifestações de ambiguidade e polidez. Esperamos que nossas descobertas possam fornecer apoio e conteúdo para que futuros professores de inglês e pesquisadores continuem investigando para tornar o processo de ensinar mais significativo e interessante na escola.

Palavras-chave: Semântica e pragmática; Análise de *One Piece*; Aprendizagem através do entretenimento

1 INTRODUCTION

Facing the diversity of the discourse community, the complexities of language and fascinating discourses that are poured into the everyday outline and, consequently, in entertainment around the world, studies and debates surrounding linguistics' semantics and pragmatics are important to better understand the intentions and meanings behind words. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the presence of ambiguity, based on semantics, and politeness, from the pragmatic field, in a scene from the TV series One Piece.

In this work, we will consider the concepts of Ambiguity and Logic. Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007), in their book "Semantics: A Course Book", affirm that "logic deals with meaning in a language system" (p. 150). Under this view, ambiguity occurs when a word or sentence carries more than one meaning. This concept can be split into other subdivisions. Here, the analysis is going to be made in terms of literal meaning, metaphor, metonymy, polysemy, and homonymy. Cowie (2009), in his book "Semantics", defines metaphor and metonymy as figures of speech, respectively: a) the description of one thing in terms of another unrelated thing, b) the naming of one thing for the name of something else within which it is associated. To the author, polysemy and homonymy happen when a word has multiple meanings. Both concepts differ in the origin and connection of the meanings. Polysemy happens whenever they are related on some level, and homonymy happens when the relation is so distant there are no evident traces of sense connection.

Likewise, we will consider the content of Politeness and Interaction, discussed by George Yule (1996) in his book "Pragmatics", where Politeness is discussed as social language behavior, in which the speaker respectfully refers to the listener, showcasing a sense of hierarchy. It occurs in the middle of an interaction and can have different intentions.

Moreover, people generally behave as if their expectations concerning their public self-image, or their face wants, will be respected. If a speaker says something that threatens another individual's self-image, it's a face-threatening act, as when

someone is using irony, for example. On the other hand, people often try to reduce threats, resulting in a face-saving act, as when the speaker looks for strategies to help them preserve their good self-image.

The possibilities are many, such as the positive politeness strategy that leads the requester to appeal to a common goal and even friendship, the negative politeness strategy that emphasizes avoidance of imposition on the hearer, and the possibility of making a pre-announcement before announcing something to provide an opportunity for the other to halt the potential risky act.

As for the organization of this text, first, in the methodology section, we describe our research universe, as well as our *corpus* and the procedures we use to analyze it. Then, the results section is divided into two sections, exploring the figures of speech and after we discuss politeness strategies found in the scene. Finally, in the concluding section, we sum up what we have identified in our analysis and discuss the implications for English Language Teaching (ELT).

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Context/universe of investigation

One Piece is a Japanese manga written and illustrated by Eiichiro Oda. The story has also a famous anime adaptation, which has over 1,100 episodes as of today. In August 2023, Netflix released a live-action TV series adaptation, which was highly successful and managed to captivate both audiences of fans and those who had never watched the anime or read the manga. According to Netflix (2023), the series is “Certified Fresh with a 96% Audience Score on Rotten Tomatoes from 10,000+ ratings, it is among Netflix’s highest audiences scores ever”, with its second season confirmed shortly after, which is currently in production.

The story takes place in a fictional world where the age of pirates begins thanks to the last words of the man known as the Pirate King Gol D. Roger. Pirate King challenges

anyone to find his treasure, the *One Piece*. The protagonist, Luffy of the Straw Hat, decides to start his adventure and search for the *One Piece* and becomes the king of the pirates. On his journey, he also meets the Mugiwaras - his companions, who join the crew for different reasons.

2.2 Corpus

We analyzed a particular scene from episode 5, "Eat At Baratie" (located between 12m and 13m15s of the episode), of the first season of the *One Piece* Netflix TV series. In this scene, the crew of the Mugiwaras arrive at the Baratie, a floating restaurant, and are now waiting to order. Captain Luffy, swordsman Zoro, sniper Usopp and navigator Nami are already part of the crew. It's their first contact with the cook and waiter Sanji. He is the one who comes to take their order and who happens to be a big flirt. Within this context, the iconic scene takes place (Chart 1).

It's relevant to point out that, as mentioned in section 2.1, the story takes place in a fictional world, therefore, the universe of the discourse allows specific actions that would be unviable or unrealistic in the real world to be possible (Hurford et al., 2007, p. 62-63). One instance can be seen in the first line of Chart 1 where Sanji says, "Welcome to our shitty restaurant where the only thing worse than the ambiance is the food". In the real world, it would be damaging to the establishment's reputation to state that their food and atmosphere lack quality, but in this specific universe, it is not something that would make the clients go away.

That does not mean that the intention behind his words is careless, contrariwise, two situations that happened previously to the scene, both available in the attachment session, explain and potentially justify his behavior. In the scenes (Chart 2 and Chart 3), he argues with his boss Zeff and, right before getting to the crew's table, also gets into a fight over the establishment rules regarding food waste and inappropriate conduct.

Chart 1

Line	Time	Transcript
1	12:00	Sanji: Hi. Welcome to our shitty restaurant where the only thing worse than the ambiance is the food. My name is Sanji. What can I get for you?
2	12:06	Luffy: One of everything, please.
3	12:08	Sanji: Any drinks? One of our signature cocktails to help you choke down your meal?
4	12:11	Nami: Giving us the hard sell, huh?
5	12:15	Sanji: Apologies, madam, I didn't see you there. Would you care for the apéritif to start? We have several rare Micqueot vintages in stock. Or perhaps you'd like a glass of a Umeshu? You know, something sweet for someone sweet. [Winking]
6	12:26	Nami: Something wrong with your eye?
7	12:27	Sanji: Just blinded by your beauty.
8	12:29	Zoro: [clears throat] Waiter, can I get a beer and something for my friends?
9	12:32	Usopp: Two beers. I usually have three, but--
10	12:34	Luffy: And a milk.
11	12:35	Sanji: Three beers and a milk. And, uh, for madam?
12	12:39	Nami: Water.
13	12:40	Sanji: Still, sparkling, mineral? With ice or without? Cubed or crushed?
14	12:42	Nami: Regular water in a regular glass. Thanks.
15	12:46	Sanji: Right away.
16	12:48	Usopp: Ah!
17	12:52	Nami: What?
18	12:53	Zoro: Nothing... Madam. Forgive my rude behavior, madam. Would madam prefer her water in a crystal glass, or would a golden bowl be more madam's style?
19	13:02	Usopp: Nami's got a boyfriend.
20	13:05	[all chuckling]
21	13:10	Nami: You guys are the worst.

Source: One Piece TV series

2.3 Procedures and category of analysis

We believe in the interestingness of the *One Piece* series, as it is an adventure of friendship, loyalty and overcoming major challenges. Because of that, friends naturally interact uniquely with each other, providing multiple moments of emotive feelings, such as irony, sarcasm, and more. We selected a specific scene for analysis and transcribed it to consider written registers. Then, we analyzed the transcript in search for the uses

of metaphor, metonymy, polysemy, and homonymy (Cowie, 2009) to evidence how these figures of speech help construe their interactions in this fictional world. We also investigated politeness instance uses, such as face-threatening, and face-saving acts (Yule, 1996). The politeness occurrences were also analyzed in order to evidence the degree of intimacy established among the characters.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Building meaning with figures of speech

In relation to the occurrences of figures of speech throughout the *corpus*, we have identified examples of metaphors, metonyms, polysemy and homonymy.

In terms of metaphor, we identified three occurrences. Firstly, Sanji declares “Welcome to our **shitty** restaurant where the only thing worse than the ambiance is the food” (L. 1). He uses the word “shitty” metaphorically, taking the meanings of the word — stinky, dirty, bad — to speak about the establishment in a depreciative way. He then emphasizes this negative portrait by stating that the food is even worse than the ambiance.

Furtherly, Sanji attempts to flirt with Nami, saying “You know, something sweet for **someone sweet**” (L. 5). Here, the first mention of the word sweet carries the literal meaning, since Umeshu is a sweet-tasting drink. However, in the second occurrence, he means it metaphorically that Nami is a sweet person, not as literal candy but with the characteristics of one, in an attempt of flirting with her. However, it is possible to see that Nami does not flirt back. Therefore, he makes a second attempt by using another metaphor: “Just **blinded** by your beauty” (L. 7). Beauty would never be able to literary blind someone, and he did not lose vision. However, it means that her beauty is so outstanding that it grabs attention - like a bright beam capable of blinding - which he would not dare blink to miss. The last metaphor identified in the analysis appears when Usopp says: “Nami’s got a **boyfriend**” (L. 19), jokingly pointing out Sanji’s treatment towards her as similar to one of a boyfriend.

We also identified the use of three metonymies (L. 8-12). They build metonymies using the words “beer” (L. 8-10), “milk” (L.10-11), and “water” (L.12). Although they are different, all of them omit the recipient holder for their respective substances, only making explicit the liquid that comes along with them. So, when Zoro says “Waiter, can I get a beer [...]?” or when Usopp says “Two beers”, the word beer is turned into a metonymy as it represents the request of a glass of beer. In the same way, when Luffy asks for “milk”, he uses the word “milk” metonymically to request a glass of milk, and, finally, when Nami says “water”, she also means she wants to drink a glass of water. The explicit use of the word “glass” seems redundant in these cases as they are in a restaurant and the waiter is offering them something to drink. It is typically part of the social practice of going to restaurants ordering drinks by glasses and not buckets, for instance.

In terms of polysemy and homonymy, we basically considered that words are categorized as polysemy when they have similar meanings, and homonymy, distant meanings. There are three notable occurrences: “still”, “sparkling”, and “mineral” (L.13). Both “sparkling” and “mineral” seem polysemic, as according to the Oxford Learner Dictionary, *sparkling* possesses meanings, among others, of “shine”, “brilliant”, “effervescent” which highlight the luminosity or brightness of something or someone and *mineral*, having related meanings of “a solid inorganic substance” or “a chemical substance”. In Sanji’s speech, the use of “sparkling” and “mineral” points, respectively, to “effervescent drink” and “natural water”. That is visible when looking at the context, in which Sanji is desiring to know which type of water Nami wants.

The third occurrence to be analyzed is “still”, which may be classified as a polysemy but at the same time can be considered a homonym. In the first case, it may mean “not moving or making a sound”, “an ordinary static photography”, meanings which are closely associated. In the second case, nonetheless, as an adverb, it can also express “even now (or then) as formerly”, “nevertheless” and “even” (Oxford Learner Dictionary, n.d.), which can be considered a very distant meaning from the ones previously mentioned, therefore, a homonym relation. The meaning which seems to be intended in the interactions analyzed is “non-effervescent drink”.

3.2 Building meaning with Politeness

In professional spaces, in our culture, politeness strategies (Yule, 1996) are used by employees to properly attend to customers. We can see that Sanji assumes a more informal attitude while addressing his customers ("Hi. Welcome" - L1). In the same extract, he adds: "What can I get for you?" (L.1), which is an example of negative politeness strategy. By using "can" instead of "could", he is purposefully direct, assuming closeness to the customers and implying that he is willing to attend their requests. This use of negative politeness can also be seen in "Waiter, can I get a beer and something for my friends?" (L.8), however, Zoro uses it from a customer point of view.

Afterward, Luffy replies: "One of everything, please." (L.2), maintaining politeness with the use of please, which now is a case of positive politeness, as it demonstrates consideration towards the waiter by acknowledging their autonomy and making their request more polite and respectful. So, not only the waiter shows politeness, but also the crew.

Moreover, "Any drinks? One of our signature cocktails to help you choke down your meal?" (L.3) is also a positive politeness strategy since he puts himself in a place of empathy for them which then Nami calls out with: "Giving us the hard sell, huh?" (L.4).

Sanji's posture was stable until he noticed her, and then assumes a flirtier attitude. However, even in flirting, he continues to employ politeness strategies. For example, there is politeness every time he calls her Madam, like in: "Apologies, madam" (L.5). In this instance, "madam" expresses acknowledgement and respect, but in a playful way, to positively strike her by pointing out her charm and elegance, which has the same purpose when used in line 11. On the other hand, in line 18, Zoro uses it with ironic intention, therefore, it is a negative politeness strategy, as it presents discontentment.

Moreover, in "I didn't see you there" (L.5) he protects his face, as she could commit a face-threatening act due to him missing out on her presence. The face-threatening act here involves Nami potentially calling out Sanji's oversight in a way that could be embarrassing, which would lead to his face-loss in front of the others.

As the scene progresses, he focuses all his attention on Nami, offering her what seems to be the best treats of the place: “Would you care for the apéritif to start? We have several rare Micqueot vintages in stock. Or perhaps you’d like a glass of a Umeshu?” (L.5). Here, the use of “perhaps” presents caution and deference, a form of politeness to provide her the choice of accepting or rejecting his offer.

Lastly, Sanji continues employing positive politeness strategies with “Still, sparkling, mineral? With ice or without? Cubed or crushed?” (L.13), by offering multiple options, he acknowledges the customer’s preference, in this case, to perhaps impress Nami and win her over.

4 CONCLUSION

After deeply looking into the scene, diverse linguistic aspects were able to be analyzed. We found that speakers always have an intention underlying their actions, especially their words. During the scene, the characters used ambiguity for various reasons. Sanji, for example, used many metaphorical expressions to flirt with Nami and subtly convey his intentions. There were also situations where the use of ambiguity made the sentence shorter and more practical, such as saying “beer” which is shorter than “glass of beer”, or even to cause humor, when Usopp said “Nami’s got a boyfriend” for instance. Likewise, politeness was used to promote a more expressive communication, whether to show respect or to speak in a less or more evasive way. Along with the context of the conversation taking place between friends, it is often common to have unique sayings that display deeper and meaningful senses that only work among them. The linguistic forms and expressions that shaped their discourses were used to achieve multiple effects between themselves.

Furthermore, it could potentially strike the audience with similar or even more diverse effects, as it varied from professional to flirty, respectful to humorous. Even though it is a fictional situation set in a fantasy world, communicative situations are

always present, regardless of language. Some expressions that work in Brazilian Portuguese will not always work in English and vice versa, which is why it is important to go deeper into the subject of analyzing discourses, in case they are real or taken from a fictional world within their cultural background.

4.1 Pedagogical Implications for ELT

The experience of this analysis allowed us, as students, researchers and future teachers, to obtain a highly concise comprehension of the subject matter. By collecting data from a popular series, we applied the theoretical basis to an everyday outline context, bringing semantics and pragmatics closer to everyone's lives. Throughout the research, it was possible to develop and explore the subjects presented in the discipline and discuss with our classmates, collectively through seminar presentations, and, in that way, to further grasp the knowledge. So, we expect that our findings can provide support and content for future teachers of the English language and researchers' further investigation to make the education more meaningful and interesting at school.

Finally, we present some suggestions for possible actions to be used while analyzing movie scenes in the classroom: a) Choose a movie scene that is related to the student's interests; b) Introduce the subject to be analyzed with students; c) Watch the movie scene with and without subtitles and then hand them the transcription. The transcription helps students to follow what is being said, supporting the development of listening comprehension, and understand what is being analyzed; d) Prepare questions that will work as a guide; and e) Discuss the findings, going over and reviewing the subject.

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ATTACHMENTS:

Chart 2

1	10:27	Sanji: Order up!
2	10:29	Zeff: Aye, aye, aye, aye. What the hell is this?
3	10:32	Sanji: I call it a True Bluefin Sauté. It's elephant tuna, seared asparagus, in a sweet soy reduction.
4	10:38	Zeff: [chuckles] Is that so?
5	10:39	Sanji: Yeah.
6	10:40	Zeff: Wel, I call it crap. The day Baratie serves a dish like that, little eggplant, is the day the hell freezes over.
7	10:46	Sanji: If I gotta sling one more prime rib medium-well, I am going to drop dead of boredom, you old shitbag!
8	10:51	Zeff: It's what we serve.
9	10:52	Sanji: It's an insult to the meat.
10	10:53	Zeff: You don't like cooking our menu? Fine. 'Cause I'll be more than delighted to give you other work elsewhere. In fact, you are off the line. Now get out there and wait tables. Move!

Source: One Piece TV series

Chart 3

1	11:08	Man 1: I am saying, this here is my table. Close to the kitchen so I can smell the beef.
2	11:13	Man 2: Maybe you ought to try a table outside. Right now, the only thing I smell is you.
3	11:18	Man 1: [yells]
4	11:20	Sanji: Now, now, gentlemen. You know the rules here. We don't waste food, and there is no fighting at Baratie.
5	11:27	Man 1: No. This ain't gonna be a fight. I'm just going to kill him.
6	11:31	Man 2: Like to see you try.
7	11:32	Sanji: I'd like to pour you each a glass of Ithürzburger Stein. On the house.
8	11:36	Man 1: Okay, I'll have that drink. After he apologizes for his bad manners.
9	11:40	Man 2: Over my dead body. [grunting]
10	11:42	[Fight between Sanji and man 1 and man 2]
11	11:52	Luffy: Good fighter.
12	11:57	No cause for alarm, folks. Please enjoy your meals.

Source: One Piece TV series