

“There is something very pompous in his style”:
An analysis of Mr Collins’ social missteps in *Pride and Prejudice*

Bachelor’s thesis

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English

May 2019

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä – Author Hanna Partanen	
Työn nimi – Title “There is something very pompous in his style”: An analysis of Mr Collins’ social missteps in <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	
Oppiaine – Subject Englannin kieli	Työn laji – Level Kandidaatin tutkielma
Aika – Month and year Toukokuu 2019	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 15
<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Kandidaatin tutkielmani käsittelee Jane Austenin rakastettua romaania <i>Ylpeyttä ja Ennakkoluuloa (Pride and Prejudice)</i> ja erityisesti siinä esiintyvää sivuhahmoa, Mr Collinsia. Tavoitteeni oli selvittää, miksi sekä lukijat että kirjassa olevat hahmot yleisesti pitävät kyseistä hahmoa samanaikaisesti sietämättömänä sekä huvittavana. Keskityin siis löytämään mahdollisia kohteliaisuusrikkomuksia sekä niiden seurauksia Mr Collinsin ja muiden hahmojen dialogeista. Nämä rikkomukset selittävät hahmon huonon vastaanoton.</p> <p>Analysoin kolmea tärkeää kohtausta, joissa erityisesti korostuivat Mr Collinsin ja muiden hahmojen väliset väärinymmärrykset sekä Mr Collinsin aiheuttamat kiusalliset tilanteet. Näistä kolmesta kohtauksesta etsin toistuvia kohteliaisuusrikkomuksia ja analysoin muiden hahmojen reaktioita niihin liittyen. Analysoin myös erikseen muiden hahmojen sekä kertojan kommentteja Mr Collinsista, jotta saisin paremman kuvan hahmon aiheuttamista reaktioista.</p> <p>Tutkielmani tulokset osoittivat, että Mr Collins erityisesti rikkoi tiettyjä kohteliaisuussääntöjä liittyen esimerkiksi Brown ja Levinsonin kasvojen ylläpito- teoriaan (Face work theory), Gricen keskustelumaksimeihin (conversational maxims), sekä Leechin kohteliaisuusmaksimeihin (politeness maxims). Hän ei kykene lukemaan kanssaihmistensä lähettämiä signaaleja, joten hän usein päätyy olemaan muille raskas keskustelukumppani. Hän myöskin sortuu usein suoraan sekä epäsuoraan kerskailuun sekä muiden vähättelyyn, mikä saa muut näkemään hänet epäsuotuisassa valossa.</p> <p>Tutkielmani tuloksia voisi hyödyntää muiden Austenin yksinkertaisten hahmojen (hahmot, jotka eivät kehity romaanin aikana) analysointiin, jotta heidän tekojensa aiheuttamia reaktioita voisi ymmärtää paremmin.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Pragmatics, Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen, Politeness, Mr Collins, Face Work	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

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1. INTRODUCTION

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is regarded as one of the most well-known books in the English language, one of the reasons being Austen's insightful and brilliant commentary on the society of the regency era (Austen 1813/2010: V-VIII). This society was highly stratified according to status and birth (Teachman 1997: 3), and this is seen in the rigid behavioural norms of the time period, which, of course, are intertwined with the use of language.

The interesting thing about *Pride and Prejudice*, among other novels of Jane Austen, is the fact that most events in the book are transpired through the use of language; the writings and utterances are the events themselves (Nolan-Grant 2009: 863). This highlights the importance of correct conduct as well as polite language in the society of *Pride and Prejudice*. According to Strohmeier (2014: 23), one had to be very careful how to behave in public and always keep in mind social expectations. A reader of Jane Austen's novels will notice the profuse use of polite language and the highly monitored ways in which the members of the gentry and nobility would communicate with each other. From the beginning of 18th century, politeness in language use was recognized as a marker of social class (Watts 1999: 6).

Pride and Prejudice is also known for its memorable and iconic characters such as Mrs Bennet, Mr Darcy and Mr Collins. However, the characters are not all equal; they could be divided into two categories: complex changing characters and simple comic characters (Zimmerman 1968: 70). An obvious example of a complex character is the protagonist Elizabeth Bennet, who goes through a change of heart during the story and is capable of complexity and is relatable to the reader.

On the other hand, the simple comic characters such as Lydia, Mrs Bennet and Mr Collins represent foolishness and superficiality, which in turn entertains and annoys the reader. According to Zimmerman (1968: 67), the role of these static simple characters is also to provide a background for the actions of the protagonists, Mr Darcy and Ms Elizabeth. The interesting thing about the static characters is that the comic aspect of them derives from the violation of certain conversational maxims and politeness rules. By focusing on these static characters, one

can see the ways in which Austen used them to create comic relief. Furthermore, they highlight the foolish and snobbish behavioural aspects of the gentry during this period.

The character that I am going to focus on in this thesis is Mr Collins. He is the epitome of foolishness and his lack of knowledge and awareness of politeness rules and behavioural norms lead him to be regarded poorly by the people around him. However, as he is the heir to the Bennet's estate, he has power over the family, thus he is treated with respect. This paper focuses on Mr Collins's transgressions of politeness rules and conversational maxims, and why he is perceived in a negative way by the reader and by the other characters in the novel.

2. BACKGROUND

In the following sections, I will introduce the main theories behind my thesis and how they are linked to Mr Collins' speech and behaviour in the novel. The bulk of my background theory research deals with face work theory and conversational theories such as Grice's maxims, which explain the character's shortcomings when it comes to interactions with other people in the novel. I will also present Geoffrey Leech's politeness maxims (2014: 35) and how Mr Collins' actions and speech are linked to these politeness principles.

The preface of the 2010 edition of *Pride and Prejudice* (HarperCollins) states:

It is fair to say that societal rules reached their zenith of priggishness during Austen's lifetime. It was all about defining oneself in terms of class and wealth, so that there were very clear guidelines about what one should and should not do and how one should behave.

Because of this, I will also elaborate on the customs and politeness rules of the regency period as they become relevant in the thesis.

2.1 Face Work and Face Threatening Acts

Leech (2014: 3) claims that politeness is to behave and speak in a way (or appear to at least) as to give value and benefit to the other person, and not to yourself. One of the themes in *Pride and Prejudice* is the ways that societal rules and customs are intertwined with politeness rules.

It could be said that Mr Collins does not have a good sense of situations that he is in, and therefore, makes misjudgements in terms of politeness and social status, either being over polite and too solemn, or assuming things he has no right to assume. This leads to him being poorly judged by the people he interacts with. His lacking esteem in the society of *Pride and Prejudice* has to do with pragmatics of politeness. I have chosen certain scenes in the book where Mr Collins is being particularly foolish and linked them to face work theory and other pragmatic theories.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) face theory consists of two facets: positive and negative face. Positive face represents people's need to be approved of and appreciated. Every person has the desire to be seen in a positive light and have a good representation of themselves in the face of others. Negative face, on the other hand, represents people's need for autonomy and the need to be free from imposition from others. Facework is the framework in which interactions between people occur; it is important for successful, positive and cooperative communication that these two faces are taken into account.

Face threatening acts (FTAs) are acts which violate either of these two faces. Mr Collins does not try to be rude or to insult anyone, but his poor understanding of positive and negative face makes him commit some unintentional FTAs. For example, when he proposes to Elizabeth, he attacks her negative face by putting her in a difficult position and imposing on her.

Culpeper (2010: 36), on the other hand, brings up the social norm view on politeness according to which each society has a set of social norms consisting of more or less explicit rules on how to behave and interact with people. A positive evaluation rises when behaviour is according to norms, and a negative one when it is not. For example, in one chapter Mr Collins introduces himself to Mr Darcy, his superior. This is not according to societal norms because Mr Collins

should be introduced to Mr Darcy, not the other way around. Even though Mr Collins does not mean to be impolite and rude, he still breaks some societal norms and causes disapproval.

2.2 Leech's politeness Maxims

According to Leech (2014: 35), there are six maxims that govern polite interactions: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy maxim. According to the tact maxim, the speaker has to minimize the cost to the other person, and maximise the benefit to him/her. The generosity maxim states that the person has to maximize the cost to oneself and minimize benefit at the same time. The approbation maxim states that the speaker has to maximize the praise of the other person and minimize dispraise to them. The modesty maxim, on the other hand, states that the person should minimize praise and maximise dispraise to oneself. According to the agreement maxim, speakers should maximise agreement and minimize disagreement between each other. And finally, the sympathy maxim states that the interactants should minimize antipathy and maximize sympathy between each other.

The general strategy of politeness states that the speaker attaches a favourable value to the other person or associates unfavourable value to oneself (Leech 2014: 90). However, Mr Collins appears to break or somehow distort these politeness norms. The society during this era was highly concerned with conduct and politeness (Austen 1813/2010: VI-VII), however, when Mr Collins interacts with the other characters, he slips in violations of the politeness maxims, such as self-praise, bragging, and sometimes even explicit rude remarks that he still tries to conceal with polite strategies. These are some of the reasons why he is considered insufferable.

2.3 Grice's Conversational Maxims

Many of Mr Collins' quirky ways of speaking violate the ways in which normal conversations are conducted. This paper will also discuss the conversational maxims presented by Grice, specifically the sub principles of the cooperative principle: "Make your conversational

contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice 1975: 45–46).

According to McCabe (2011: 21-22), the sub principles of the cooperative principle are:

- Quantity (make your contribution as informative as is required and do not make your contribution more informative than is required),
- Relation (be relevant),
- Quality (try to make your contribution one that is true)
- Manner (avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief and be orderly).

These principles are obviously things that people do not always follow, but they are the guidelines that people try to adhere to and expect others to follow when trying to have a straightforward conversation (McCabe 2011: 22).

Usually, when people do not follow these maxims, they are trying to create a conversational implicature or use the violations as a means to cause a humorous effect. However, as I will show below, the violations that Mr Collins makes in regards to these maxims are unintentional. He violates these maxims simply because he does not know how to read situations, or people for that matter.

3. THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1. The aim and the research questions

The aim of my thesis is to analyse how Mr Collins violates politeness rules and conversational maxims. His violations in terms of these rules clearly indicate why he is considered ridiculous and pompous by the reader and the other characters in the book. My research will focus on the following questions:

1. What kind of politeness rules are visible in the dialogues between the characters?
2. What rules does Mr Collins violate during the dialogues?
3. What kind of consequences do these violations of rules cause?

3.2 Data collection and methods of analysis

My data collection focuses on the chapters, dialogues and individual comments in *Pride and Prejudice* that are especially fruitful in terms of analysing Mr Collins' peculiar behaviour and way of speech. Also, I have tried to look for passages where Mr Collins either breaks or distorts the politeness maxims, commits FTAs or violates Grice's conversational maxims.

The first passages I am going to look at are the comments which other characters and the narrator make of Mr Collins throughout the book. Mr Collins is first introduced to the reader through a letter that he sends to Mr Bennet and his family, and right after reading the letter, the whole family notices his pompous and ridiculous style and the reader has a poor image of him from the beginning. Even the omnipotent narrator comments on Mr Collins' lacking character at the beginning of chapter 15. I will also look at people's reactions to him in general throughout the novel and what might be the cause of these reactions.

One of the most important scenes in the book is in chapter 19 where Mr Collins proposes to Ms Elizabeth. I will analyse the whole chapter because it is essentially a dialogue between the two characters. The chapter is basically about Mr Collins trying to propose to Elizabeth, already thinking in his mind that she is going to accept him. When Elizabeth tries to refuse his request, he interprets it as her trying to play coy and continues on with his endless soliloquy. This puts Elizabeth in a very uncomfortable and awkward position and highlights Mr Collins' poor conversational skills and understanding of other people's point of view.

The second scene that I will analyse is when Mr Collins introduces himself to Mr Darcy, even though it is not the custom that a person of lower rank would impose himself on a person of higher birth. Darcy indeed is considered to be in the higher part of the social spectrum, as it is mentioned in many passages in the book. Ms Elizabeth also tries to dissuade Mr Collins from

talking to Mr Darcy, saying that he would take it as an imposition. However, Mr Collins ignores her and continues to bother Mr Darcy in a very public manner. Even though Mr Darcy shows very obvious signs of annoyance, Mr Collins is completely unaware and sees the conversation as a success. This passage further highlights Mr Collins' inability to read people, situations and the social norms around him.

I will analyse the passages I have chosen by using the methods of discourse analysis presented by Gee (2014). However, according to Gee, no theory of discourse analysis is universally applicable; the tools are there to be applied according to the needs of one's own study (Gee 2014: 1). Therefore I will apply some of the tools presented by Gee, such as the fill in tool and the making strange tool (Gee 2014: 18-19), but I will modify them to meet my own research questions and the aims of my study.

I will analyse the scenes through the violations which occur in them; the scenes will not be analysed individually, but rather through the reoccurring violations of politeness rules that I have observed. The analysis will therefore be sectioned according to the politeness and conversational rules and I will discuss fragments of the scenes as they become relevant.

4 ANALYSIS

4.1 Perceptions of Mr Collins

I will start my analysis by going through thoughts and remarks that arise from Mr Collins' behaviour. It becomes obvious to the reader from the beginning that Mr Collins is universally perceived to be solemn, pompous and unpleasant; in chapter 13, when he first appears, he is already judged by Mr Bennet and Ms Elizabeth from a letter that he sends to the Bennet family. In chapter 13, Elizabeth makes a remark on his strange style of writing and says that he is an oddity. When she asks her father for an opinion by asking whether Mr Collins is a sensible man, Ms Bennet replies "No, my dear; I have hopes of finding him quite the reverse. There is a

mixture of servility and self-importance in his letter, which promises well. I am impatient to see him.” (Austen 1813/2010: 61).

Mr Bennet’s expectations prove to be correct later; Mr Collins explains how he likes to flatter and compliment Lady Catherine de Bourgh:

They arise from what is passing at the time, and though I sometimes amuse myself with suggesting and arranging such little elegant compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions, I always wish to give them as unstudied air as possible. (Austen 1813/2010: 65)

This passage establishes Mr Collins as ridiculous and he maintains this impression throughout the novel. Even the omnipotent narrator says that Mr Collins is not sensible and that his “-deficiency of nature had been but little assisted by education or society-” (Austen 2010 edition: 67). The omnipotent narrator also describes Mr Collins’ character and his apparent obsession with Lady Catherine as such:

The subjection in which his father had brought him up had given him originally great humility of manner, but it was now a good deal counteracted by the self-conceit of a weak head, living in retirement, and the consequential feelings of early and unexpected prosperity. A fortunate chance had recommended him to Lady Catherine de Bourgh when the living of Hunsford was vacant; and the respect which he felt for her high rank and his veneration for her as patroness, mingling with a very good opinion of himself, of his authority as clergyman, and his rights as a rector, made him altogether a mixture of pride and obsequiousness, self-importance and humility (Austen 1813/2010: 67)

These qualities that the narrator mentions are clearly seen in Mr Collins’ interactions with other characters, as will be shown in the following sections. His speech is full of violations of either the conversational or politeness maxims, as well as FTA’s against the negative and positive face.

Mr Collins also makes people, especially Ms Elizabeth, feel uncomfortable around him. In chapter 17, while the whole Bennet family is attending a ball, Mr Collins asks Ms Elizabeth to dance with him. Ms Elizabeth feels that he has stolen her a chance to dance with Mr Wickham the whole evening, but decides to oblige him. When their dance takes place, Mr Collins makes

Ms Elizabeth feel extremely uncomfortable by being “awkward” and “solemn”, “apologizing instead of attending” throughout the dance (Austen 1813/2010: 87). After the dance is over the omnipotent narrator comments on Elizabeth’s thoughts: “The moment of release from him was ecstasy” (Austen 1813/2010: 87).

It is also worth noting that Mr Collins’ presence is considered as a burden. Elizabeth’s friend, Miss Lucas, is considered to be a great relief because she listens to Mr Collin’s when no one else has the patience to stand his company. When Miss Elizabeth is forced to spend time with Mr Collins, Miss Lucas comes in and engages in conversation with him. The omnipotent narrator comments on Elizabeth’s thoughts: “She owed her greatest relief to her friend Miss Lucas...” (Austen 1813/2010: 98). Miss Lucas as the “saviour” appears in other parts of the book as well, for example at the beginning of chapter 21, after Elizabeth rejects Mr Collins’ proposal, she and her family are saved from his “stiffness of manner and resentful silence” by Miss Lucas whose “civility in listening to him, was a seasonable relief to them all, and especially to her friend”. It appears that she is appreciated for being able to tolerate him and thus giving the people around him space to breathe.

4.2 Violations in terms of Leech’s politeness maxims

Mr Collins breaks quite a few of the politeness maxims. However, he is not doing it consciously; a lot of his violations derive from his apparent lack of understanding of social situations. Mr Collins also tends to violate maxims while still using overly polite language. This is because people during the regency period tried their best to be polite towards others and avoided rudeness, as it would have been frowned upon in society (Strohmeier: 2014: 28). This is why Mr Collins masks his rudeness in apparent politeness.

Mr Collins also has a habit of name dropping while trying to appear humble. He mentions his patroness Mrs Catherine de Bourgh often, being obviously smitten by her influence, power and wealth. His desire to be connected to the higher end of society was, according to Strohmeier (2014: 18) and the author of *The Habits of Good Society* (1872/2012: 30), considered as “vulgarity” during this era; when one is putting on a show or pretence of some kind. It is even stated in *The Habits of Good Society*: “Nothing therefore will more irretrievably stamp you as

vulgar in really good society, than the repeated introduction of the names of nobility [...] in reference to yourself.”(1872/2012: 33)

This violation of the modesty maxim also appears in chapter 19 (Austen 1813/2010: 104), in the middle of the proposal scene, after he is stunned that Ms Elizabeth would not accept his marriage proposal. He says, “It does not appear to me that my hand is unworthy of your acceptance, or that the establishment I can offer would be any other than highly desirable.” Then he goes on listing his favourable qualities, which include his “connexions with the family of de Bourgh”.

Mr Collins also violates the approbation maxim during the proposal scene in chapter 19. After he is dumbfounded that she would not accept his marriage request, he suggests that Elizabeth might never receive another marriage proposal in her life. He also adds that she is so poor that it will likely “undo the effects” of her loveliness. This scene highlights Mr Collins’ peculiar way of insulting and complimenting at the same time.

Mr Collins does not overtly violate the agreement maxim, but during the proposal scene he makes it hard for him and Elizabeth to stay on the same page. He constantly unknowingly tests the limits of politeness and civility of the conversation and even manages to crack Elizabeth’s composure enough to make her angry; he refuses to believe that Elizabeth is actually rejecting him, thus causing her to get frustrated. Even though he is not himself overtly breaking the agreement maxim, but he is forcing Elizabeth to disagree with him stronger than what is necessary; her refusal results in a much ruder response than what would be expected in a normal situation.

4.3 Violations in terms of FTAs and Facework

One of the most noticeable features of Mr Collins’ violations are the FTAs that he commits against the negative face. He is constantly imposing on people and he seems to be oblivious to the fact that his actions or presence is often unwanted. The negative face is also linked to one of the politeness maxims of Leech, the maxim of tact, which is why I will discuss them together in this section.

Mr Collins does commit some FTAs against the positive face, but they are much less frequent and he does seem to be a bit more thoughtful when it comes to the positive face; he compliments people excessively, even to the point of ridiculousness. However, there is a brief scene at the end of chapter 13 where Mr Collins makes the mistake of asking Mrs Bennet which of the girls prepared the excellent meal they were eating, thus implying that the Bennets are not wealthy enough to keep a cook. Mrs Bennet takes some offense, and Mr Collins immediately apologises, unsurprisingly a bit longer than necessary (Austen 1813/2010: 62). This again reinforces that he does not mean to be overtly impolite, but his poor social skills cause him to make missteps during conversations.

He does, however, and perhaps more intentionally, commit FTAs against Ms Elizabeth on few occasions; during the proposal scene, when he brings up her unfortunate financial situation, but also when Elizabeth tries to give him advice when he tries to form an acquaintance with Mr Darcy when he says to her, “I have the highest opinion in the world for your excellent judgement in all matters within the scope of your understanding-” (Austen 1813/2010: 94). This again shows his strange way of insulting and complimenting at the same time, highlighting his odd self-conceit and pride.

In contrast, when it comes to the negative face, the element of imposition is very strong in the proposal scene; Ms Elizabeth is imposed upon by both her mother and Mr Collins to stay with him privately while the family leaves. She is uncomfortable right from the beginning till the end of the conversation. He immediately starts a long speech, rambling on and on without giving Elizabeth her turn to speak or even answer. When she finally has the chance to refuse him, she initially does so in a polite enough manner, giving Mr Collins a chance to back off without any unnecessary fuss.

However, Mr Collins surprisingly does not accept the refusal. On page 103 he explains his understanding that it is common for ladies to reject a man several times, due to the need to appear “hard-to-get” or elegant. This in turn causes Elizabeth stress because she already turned him down once, giving him obvious signals that she is being imposed upon. His obliviousness to her unwillingness forces her to give him an impolite answer in chapter 19: “You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make *you* so.”

(Austen 1813/2010: 103). Mr Collins in a way corners her, which forces Elizabeth to act in an impolite manner.

Mr Collins also commits an FTA against Mr Darcy in chapter 18, when he tries to introduce himself (Austen 1813/2010: 94). He heard that Mr Darcy is Lady Catherine's nephew, and because of his admiration of her, he insists upon beginning the acquaintance. When Mr Collins tells about his intentions to Ms Elizabeth, she is horrified and tells him that it is not the custom for a person of lower rank to impose upon a person of higher rank. This scene shows that Mr Collins is not quite aware of the prevailing societal norms. He also seems to be unaffected by the advice people give him, and has huge confidence in himself, which could be a sign of his self-conceit.

Before embarking on his quest, Mr Collins tells Elizabeth that he considers the clergy to be equal in terms of dignity with the highest rank of the kingdom, which is why he feels he can freely approach Mr Darcy. However, as he does so, Mr Darcy receives him with astonishment, giving the reader a clue that this is not indeed in accordance with the custom. The scene plays out through the eyes of Elizabeth, who is observing the interaction from afar. From her point of view Mr Darcy is "eyeing him with unrestrained wonder" and when Mr Collins does not leave after his cold response, Elizabeth observes that his contempt seems to increase massively as the conversation goes on.

What is again shown after the awkward situation is that Mr Collins sees himself to have been successful in the interaction; he is completely oblivious to Mr Darcy's non-verbal signals of contempt and even says to Elizabeth that Darcy seemed pleased of the attention (Austen 1813/2010: 94). He does not realize that he is forcing his presence on people and offending their negative face or the need for freedom of imposition and self-autonomy.

4.4 Violations of conversational maxims

Perhaps one of the most noticeable ways in which Mr Collins' speech appears strange, complex and boring is because he violates at least three of the sub-principles of the cooperative principle:

quantity, manner and relation. It is common in conversations that these rules are not adhered to, but it usually it means that people try to create a specific meaning, implicature, or simply try to appear funny while doing this. However, this is not the case with Mr Collins. As I have mentioned before, he communicates in ways that slightly differ from the norm and he is often unaware of social cues and people's reactions to his actions. Thus he violates the conversational maxims unknowingly, thinking that his way of speaking is perfectly normal, which creates a comedic effect but without the character himself realizing it.

Mr Collins often violates the maxims of manner and quantity, which is to be brief, orderly and say as much as is required and not more. With Mr Collins these two maxims are intertwined because his speeches are often too informative, complex and lacking in order and conciseness. This comes up several times, even in the scene with Mr Darcy. In this scene Mr Collins' speech is not heard, but seen through the eyes of Elizabeth, and it becomes obvious to the reader that he is speaking much longer than what is necessary or wanted. The narrator describes what Elizabeth is seeing: "Mr Collins, however, was not discouraged from speaking again, and Mr Darcy's contempt seemed abundantly increasing with the length of his second speech-" (Austen 1813/2010: 94).

One of the most noticeable and iconic examples of his violations of the maxims of manner and quantity appear in the proposal scene, where he performs an unnecessary soliloquy stating his reasons for marrying. The scene is written in a way that makes it obvious to the reader that the whole speech is done by Mr Collins nearly not taking a breath between sentences. Even when there is a short pause, Elizabeth has no time to say anything before Mr Collins starts speaking again. For example in chapter 19, Elizabeth is so near to laughing that she has no time to stop him from talking (Austen 1813/2010: 101). Usually, proposals tend to be quite short and sweet, but Mr Collins for some reason feels that he needs to have a long speech stating reasons for marriage, explaining other people's opinions for him marrying, bragging and saying other odd and pompous things while attempting to propose. This gives the scene a humorous effect, while, at the same time, the reader feels sympathy for Elizabeth for her uncomfortable predicament.

During the proposal scene, Mr Collins also goes into unnecessary detail when it comes to his reasons of marrying. This makes it hard for the reader, and probably for Ms Elizabeth as well, to find relevant information in his speech. In doing this, he is violating the maxim of relation; he

does not stick to the point, but rather bounces around different topics during his speech, such as Lady Catherine's excellent character. This violation also occurs in the letter that appears in chapter 13; the letter is hard to read, full of irrelevant remarks, such as his relationship with Lady Catherine and his duties as clergyman (Austen 1813/2010: 59-60). The violations of the maxim of relation are not very overt or excessively noticeable, they are not completely unrelated to the subject he is speaking of, rather, they are unnecessary and make his speech difficult to read and comprehend.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The regency period is known for its complicated etiquette customs and rigid behavioural norms. Moreover, the language used in *Pride and Prejudice* is more sophisticated and elaborate than what is normally used in today's society, and this is shown in Mr Collins' speech as well. His social missteps are shown through his complicated and overly polite use of language, which is why it is ironic that his speech is, despite all of this, full of violations of politeness rules.

Jane Austen herself was a humanist and she did not care for the notion that some people were better than others merely based on the accident of birth. Therefore, her novels include social criticism of the absurdities of polite society, revealing people's snobbishness and other more unflattering qualities, but she does it without seeming hostile. Her novels also focus on the gentry and nobility; people whose lives are very comfortable. This focus on the higher end of society, domestic matters, balls and so on, is a ripe opportunity to examine social dynamics and society's behaviour, rather than harsh realities of life (Austen 1813/2010:VI-VII). When it comes to Mr Collins, Austen uses his character to bring out some of the unsavoury qualities of a person seeking the company of nobility, thus revealing his vanity and opportunistic personality.

Mr Collins' violations seem to derive from his lack of understanding of acceptable behavioural norms and social cues. He does, however, try to adhere to some politeness norms such as the modesty maxim, and he also pays attention to people's positive face by showering people in compliments (flattery), but he uses it as a way to make himself appear humble and likeable. Zimmerman (1968: 67) also states that Mr Collins uses moralizing of other people as a way of

making himself seem superior, without him being actually concerned about morality itself. His real personality, nevertheless, is shown through his accidental politeness and conversational violations that he is unaware of himself; he has a habit of name dropping, bragging and assuming that people view him more positively than in reality.

His habit of committing FTAs against the negative face is one of the most common features in the chosen scenes. This is one of the main reasons he is considered to be annoying and overbearing; he does not understand when people want to be left alone. His FTAs result from his own self-image and how he views himself more positively than the other people around him; he assumes his advances and presence is welcomed by default.

Mr Collins' violations of the conversational maxims also contribute to his reputation as a bore. His excessively long speeches and his complicated and overly polite language make him an unwanted partner in conversation. It is clear that he loves the sound of his own voice and does not care too much for other people's opinions or advice, unless that person happens to be his patroness Lady Catherine.

6 CONCLUSION

The reason why I have applied politeness theories to a fictional character is because I consider Jane Austen to be a good judge of character and she seems to have a deep understanding of human psychology. Jane Austen's novels still resonate with people today because the characters still portray traits which people can recognize in themselves and others. People also still gravitate towards societal rules, although not as rigidly as in the 19th century.

Mr Collins as a simple character provides the reader comic relief and a contrast of behaviour to the complex characters. His violations of politeness rules and societal norms are a big part of his prominence as a memorable and iconic character in the novel. Mr Collins illustrates the highly stratified society of the era; he is conceited and regards himself highly, but at the same time he excessively admires the higher echelon of the nobility.

The violations Mr Collins commits are especially related to his lack of awareness of people's thoughts and needs. He seems to live in a bubble inside his head; he imposes on people and brags a lot, yet at the same time he is completely unaware that people have a poor opinion of him because of this. Likewise a big part of the humorous reaction he invokes from the readers comes from his peculiar way of speaking. This partially derives from his unintentional violations of the conversational maxims. Together with his violations on Leech's politeness maxims and FTAs, one can form a picture of his conversational and social missteps that he constantly commits.

My study particularly focuses on the reasons why Mr Collins is perceived negatively and how this is related to politeness rules. However, this question could be approached from many different angles and the social norms of the era could be elaborated on much more. I also only focus on a few limited passages in the book that I perceive to be the most important and fruitful in terms of my study. Therefore, there could be many other aspects of the character that could be analysed by choosing different passages in the book.

The way in which my study is conducted could be applied to other characters in the book, for example to Mrs Bennet who shares a lot of similarities with Mr Collins in terms of politeness and maxim violations. Furthermore, the other simple characters in the book could be analysed in terms of politeness in order to build a clear picture of the reasons why they are viewed in a certain way in the book. The simple characters offer the reader amusement and help to bring the story alive by creating disapproval from their eccentric and unconventional behaviour, which I see as a worthy subject to bring light upon.

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