

*A Pragmatic Study of Self-deliberation in Twelve Angry Men*

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**Abstract**

This study is concerned with providing a pragmatic analysis to the use of self-deliberation in the novel "Twelve angry Men". Deliberation refers to the process of thoughtfully weighing options, usually prior to voting. It emphasizes the use of logic and reason as opposed to power-struggle, creativity, or dialog. Group decisions are generally made after deliberation through a vote or consensus of those involved. In legal settings a jury famously uses deliberation because it is given specific options, like guilty or not guilty, along with information and arguments to evaluate. In "deliberative democracy", the aim is for both elected officials and the general public to use deliberation rather than power-struggle as the basis for their vote. . In this play , several themes such as Justice, prejudice, doubt, one against many, father/son relationships and anonymity which are the most noticeable ones for it is not found nowadays.

**1. Introduction**

Pragmatics is the study of those context-dependent aspects of meaning which are systematically abstracted away from in the construction of content or logical form.

Work in pragmatic theory has extended from the attempt to rescue syntax and semantics from their own unnecessary complexities to other domains of linguistic inquiry, ranging from historical linguistics to the lexicon, from language acquisition to computational linguistics, from international structure to cognitive science.

Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or a writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It has more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. It necessarily involves the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and the context influences about what is said in order to arrive at an interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning (Yule,1996:3).When examining an utterance in pragmatics, the context and what the speaker is trying to imply from this utterance are also examined.

**1.1. The Problem**

The process of convincing people in an opinion could be really hard and it requires a special set of skills and talents that not all people possess. The mean by which an individual is able to persuade others into taking his side or opinion is language and how well the individual can use it to influence the decision making of others.

It is the specialty of linguists of the field pragmatics to analyze texts and utterances to figure out the meaning behind the use of words depending on the context of speech rather than counting on the literal meaning of the word.

Individuals regularly relay on logic and thoughtfully weighing options to arrive to certain decisions and conclusions this process is called deliberation. Therefore in order to prepare and convince others of taking certain steps and decisions it is imperative to use the act of self-

deliberation. Self-deliberation is most prominently used in courts and Jury halls, when lawyers are trying to provide logical thoughts and opinions to justify or deem certain acts with the ultimate goal of convincing and persuading the judges and juries to rule specific judgments.

The present study tries to answer the question “do the characters in the novel twelve angry men use self-deliberation acts to persuade others?”

### **1.2 The Aims**

The present study aims at:

- 1-Providing a pragmatic analysis of the novel twelve angry men.
- 2-Illustrating the use of Self-deliberation acts in the novel.

### **1.3 The Hypothesis**

It is hypothesized that the use of self-deliberation acts in the novel twelve angry men are used by the characters to persuade the judgment of other jurors.

### **1.4. The Limits**

The present study is limited only to providing a pragmatic analysis of the novel twelve angry men and only for the use of Self- deliberation acts.

### **1.6 The Procedures**

The following steps are followed:

- 1-Surveying the related literature.
- 2-Presenting an analysis of the chosen data.

## **2. Self-deliberation**

Deliberation refers to the process of thoughtfully weighing options, usually prior to voting. Deliberation emphasizes the use of logic and reason as opposed to power-struggle, creativity, or dialog. Group decisions are generally made after deliberation through a vote or consensus of those involved (Yankelovich, 1991:72). It refers to the process using deliberation to intentionally and pedagogically convince others and persuade their judgments.

In legal settings a jury famously uses deliberation because it is given specific options, like guilty or not guilty, along with information and arguments to evaluate. In "deliberative democracy", the aim is for both elected officials and the general public to use deliberation rather than power-struggle as the basis for their vote (ibid).

Language constrains and enables social action, and this Kettering Foundation research report explores the emerging meaning of the term deliberation. This emphasis on the use of words and phrases is not new to the Foundation, which has studied concepts such as “benchmarking” and “civil society” to explore how the use of those terms changes the actions taken by individuals and organizations. There are numerous instances of language influencing even the course of human history, such as when Marx widely disseminated the idea of economic classes and Freud’s popularized the notion of a subconscious mind beyond our immediate control. In both cases, previously existing ideas found clear expression in an influential scholar’s words and, eventually, worked their way into not just the larger academy, but also into professional and public associations and the larger public’s mind. In these examples, one new vocabulary facilitated a reinterpretation of history and a new plan for social change, whereas the other offered a novel explanation for why humans persist in their most destructive—and often self-destructive—behaviors. With the passage of time, these ideas have become commonplace in American language and cultural beliefs (e.g., middle class and subliminal advertising). Though our society has not adopted precisely the meanings the authors intended, these words have changed how we think and act (Frederickson, 2001:41).

It is important to take stock of the words a society uses and the meanings it attributes to those words. Changing vocabularies and definitions doesn't have a direct material consequence, but linguistic changes can alter how a public thinks, what it sees, and what actions it chooses to take (Brown, 1987:129).

### 3. Data and Analysis

#### 3.1 The Data

Reginald Rose's play, *Twelve Angry Men*, does not draw its concept from any known historical case. The setting takes the reader inside the room where jurors are locked in so that there can be no interference in their deliberation of a verdict. In Rose's play a young male is charged with murder in the first degree. The members of the jury in the trial are all trying to use the act of deliberation to persuade others into taking the same stance as they do. The researcher is going to tackle the parts that he believes to contain acts of self-deliberation.

The writer's work was probably influenced by popular genres and ideas of the time, including the predominant Film Noir genre that focused on crime and detective dramas and demonstrated a certain cynicism about human nature. Because Rose was originally writing for television, he would have been influenced by the historical event of increasing television popularity and access. The literary movement of Late Modernism was influenced by the suffering of World War II, and by changing conceptions of what art ought to strive to accomplish. Many artists were losing interest in producing "art for art's sake" (Modernism) and were becoming involved in political and social issues through the lens of art. As a veteran of the war, Rose would have had as much interest as anyone in responding to the war with his art. His script for *Twelve Angry Men* demonstrates the deep problems with human nature and society, and yet restores faith in the American legal system as an attempt at achieving justice. The main character Juror Eight persuades all the other jurors except Three to vote "not guilty." Three confronts Eight with a knife in a silent power play. The climax is resolved as Three surrenders and votes "not guilty."

In Rose's play a young male is charged with murder in the first degree. Deliberation and self-deliberation are important tools used by humans to persuade others' opinions by presenting logical reasoning and viewpoints to explain certain acts or incidents. The acts of deliberation are firmly linked to pragmatics as they depend heavily on the interpretation of meaning based on the situation to present logical conclusions that can affect the choices of others. The presented analysis of the great novel *Twelve angry men* is a fine example of how deliberation can affect the judgment of others and how each one of the jurors used his own convictions to try to persuade others into taking the same stance as he is. *12 Angry Men* is teachable today because juries remain as inscrutable and essential as they were fifty years ago. And it is hard to imagine a better dramatization of deliberative process as we hope it will work, in which bias and indifference yield to integrity, in which strangers listen to one another, in which difference is strength.

#### 3.2 The Analysis

## *A Pragmatic Study of Self-deliberation in Twelve Angry Men*

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This study analyses the use of self-deliberation acts in the chosen data. The data provide the perfect setting for such analysis because it is placed in a court house in which twelve jurors try to convince each other with their logic and opinions by using acts of self-deliberation where each major and minor character represents a specific dialogized character.

Clearly, No.7, who represents a self-centered and exigent type, has his own self-interests, rather than the life of the defendant as the focus of his attention. Thus, the use of the phrase "this better be fast" pragmatically implies that the man is clearly not interested in the trial or the defendant and his mind is settled on the fact the accused is guilty. Therefore, he deliberately tries to persuade others into presenting the sentence quickly by providing his own style of analysis and logic to convince them.

Another man who is also unfeeling is Juror No. 10; he is an antagonistic type and, like No. 7, he places no value upon the defendant's life, merely lumping the boy into a stereotypical group. At first, he summarily categorizes the defendant as part of "the element" that "lets their kids run wild."

Juror 10's bias against the ghetto dweller-type is a great hindrance to the correct judgment of the young man. During most of the deliberation, the sadistic No. 10 remains antagonistic until finally launching into a vituperation in Act Three that clearly reveals his bias:

....Look, these people are drinking and fighting all the time, and if somebody get killed, so somebody gets killed. They don't care....

Finally, Juror No. 4 orders him to be quiet and the others repudiate him. For some time, then, No. 10 has hindered the group from a unanimous decision, and it appears that they will be a hung jury. However, in the last moments of the play, he finally concurs with the verdict.

The presentation of the antagonistic juror 10 is clearly interpreted in his own logic that the ghetto type is usually like this especially in the lines above. His deliberation is based on the logic that the people who come from those parts of town are like this constantly fighting and hustling.

It is fairly obvious from the start that the two jurors (7 and 10) are biased and trying to use self-deliberation techniques to convince others of the guilt of the accused.

A positive influence, Juror No. 4 is a man of higher social status-well-educated, intelligent, and affluent. He is appalled at the behavior of some others. An articulate businessman, he approaches the evidence rationally, urging the others to consider only the evidence. Because he considers himself above the others, there is some tension with his interaction among the jurors as they have some resentment toward him and feel that he questions their opinions simply because they are lower than him. Nevertheless, he is influential in getting the men to re-examine the facts and be reasonable. In Act One, for instance, after No. 10 becomes angry and No. 7 mentions that the car theft, mugging, and knife-fighting of the young man's past and says sarcastically, "This is a very fine boy," and No. 3 repeats his opinion of "It's these kids...", No. 4 interjects,

"We're missing the point here. This boy--let's say he's a product of a filthy neighborhood and a broken home....but"

And, he then focuses their attention of the evidence of the trial: "This knife is a pretty strong piece of evidence, don't you agree?" This focus, then, becomes extremely important after the reticent Juror No.2 finally speaks up and contributes greatly when he explains about switch knives and the angle of the stab.

Juror No. 3 is also one of the "angriest" of the twelve men and the most myopic. His judgments are completely clouded by his negative personal experience with his own son, and he projects this viewpoint onto all young men.

Juror 8's performance as a surrogate defender is instructive with regard to the interlocking ideals of due process and a jury of one's peers. The defense attorney's work is to show that competing narratives (the defendant's alibi, alternatives to the witness accounts, different representations of the weapon) have persuasive force. In this way, 12 Angry Men openly acknowledges what we all know intuitively to be right: there is no fair trial without effective assistance of counsel. A jury cannot do its job if the lawyers have not done theirs.

The process of considering competing narratives on which Juror 8 insists leads to a recounting of the trial through the jury's deliberations. These begin, as the trial surely did, with the jurors' impressions of the prosecutor: an "expert" with "a lot of drive" who "hammered home his points, one by one, in logical sequence. The case is this "impressive" man has made is reproduced primarily by Juror 3 (an "excitable" man certain of the defendant's guilt for what turn out to be personal reasons as shown above) juror 1' and Juror 4 (a coolly logical man certain of the defendant's guilt for abstract sociological reasons) through what they call "the facts." The case entails two eyewitnesses, a murder weapon, and motive, backed up, we are led to suspect, by assumptions based on the defendant's class and ethnicity.

Even without bias, however, as the prosecution's case is laid out, Juror 3's insistence that "you can't refute facts" seems correct. But Juror 3 has confused facts for proof Juror 8's lawyerly method gradually induces the others to interpret the meaning of the prosecutor's "facts" for themselves. The momentum of the deliberations begins to change when Juror 8 questions the motive offered by the prosecution (being hit by his father) when "violence is practically a normal state of affairs for" the defendant. He goes on to produce a knife identical to the murder weapon, undermining the prosecution's association of a particular weapon with the defendant, and to reenact the elderly witness's testimony, showing the witness could not have seen the defendant's face. In the process "certain facts" are revealed as "social facts" shaped by contexts and interpretations.

Juror 8's masterly cross-examination technique only strengthens this point, as he gets jurors to contradict what they have already claimed to be unassailably true over and over again. An early instance is his challenge of Juror 10's reliance on the testimony of a witness when he had previously insisted that everyone of that witness's ethnicity is a liar. When Juror 12 resists the idea that witnesses might be wrong, Juror 8 asks him whether he can know with certainty that they have not made a mistake. With his own imperfect knowledge implicated, Juror 12 is forced to concede that "this isn't an exact science.". Later, Juror 8 baits Juror 3 into threatening to kill him, despite Juror 3's earlier claim that people making such threats always mean it. The jury's certainty, and the pro-conviction majority, begins to erode.

## *A Pragmatic Study of Self-deliberation in Twelve Angry Men*

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In this part of the deliberations, Juror 8 does what the defense attorney failed to do-he tests whether the prosecution's case leaves room for reasonable doubt. But even a more competent defense would not have eliminated the work of the jury. As Juror 8 argues, court-appointed attorneys have little incentive to fight for clients without strong cases, and moreover, "lawyers aren't infallible." Both the district attorney and the defense have, for example, apparently missed the physical characteristics of certain witnesses (a limp in one case, bad eyesight in another) that might have undermined their veracity. Even lawyers doing their jobs as well as they can be realistically expected to do them, the film implies, cannot produce an "open and shut case."

Once Juror 8 has established the possibility of reasonable doubt, the peculiar thing that juries do starts to happen: their individual experience and impressions begin to work together. Juror 11 wonders why the defendant would return to the scene of the crime. "From what was presented at the trial the boy looks guilty," he observes, "on the surface. But maybe if we go deeper.... ." Juror 2 wonders about the angle of the stab wound, a part of the prosecutor's story that has been "bothering me a little." Juror 9, an older man himself, explains why the elderly witness might have exaggerated what he saw to be important. Juror 6 has been painting near an el track and knows the deafening sound of a passing train. Juror 5 grew up in a neighborhood like the defendant's and can demonstrate the proper use of a switchblade knife. In this way, the film reveals the crucial role that the individual experiences and knowledge of jurors plays in what a jury does, as well as the collaborative process through which juries deliberate.

The analysis shows that each one of the jurors bases his views on some logical means and then tries to use deliberation to his own self interests. The jury in *12 Angry Men* is given no guidance in its procedures. 19 "We have a job to do," the foreman asserts, "Let's do it." But the nature of the job itself is not immediately clear. In the first moments of the deliberations, the jurors talk about a "fair trial" having been conducted as if their own work were not implicated. By his initial not-guilty vote, Juror 8, corrects this misunderstanding-he insists that their task is to "talk about" the evidence offered at trial. Discussing the evidence strikes preconvention jurors as a "waste of time," but as the novel unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that time and talk are the essential tools of a jury to the deliberation process. Without actual deliberation there can be no fair trial.

Another important value that emerges more slowly from the deliberations is integrity. Juror 8 explains his not-guilty vote in terms of integrity-"It's not so easy for me to raise my hand and send a boy off to die without talking about it first" as does Juror 9, when he changes his vote in support of Juror 8 out of "respect" for his "motives." By the time that Juror 7 attempts to change his vote merely to expedite a verdict, the majority of the jury rejects the shift because it lacks conviction. A juror must believe in his vote. As the central importance of integrity is established in the group, its connection to the democratic values of dissent and independence also emerges. Each man has a voice as well as a vote, and the group enforces the mandate that no individual should be silenced. (The one exception is the exclusion of Juror 10 during his racist rant-and the group here is rejecting Juror 10's position as not merely ignorant but undemocratic.) This procedure puts the integrity of each juror very much on the line-as the group discovers when it attempts to employ a secret ballot on the second vote, "here are no secrets in a jury room." Each man has to own his position publicly.

It is significant, however, that only those who vote guilty are required to justify their position. Just as the defendant is not required to prove his innocence, no juror with reasonable doubt must defend that doubt. Only guilt must be proved, and in this way the process the jury employs

further reveals the "job" the jury must do-to reach a verdict when it is not possible to know with certainty.

The collaborative process of interpreting the evidence that begins once Juror 8 has successfully questioned the prosecution's narrative has two effects. One is to generate a sense of community among the group of strangers. In the breaks in the deliberation, moments of interpersonal intimacy-the acceptance of an offered cough drop, the sharing of a personal anecdote-replace previously defensive and hostile asides. By the time Juror 10 launches into his bigoted tirade, the jury moves in unison physically to isolate and reject him. And by the end of the novel the formal process of voting has been woven informally into the conversation, indicating just how much the conversation has changed by the self- deliberation of the jurors.

The second effect of the group's collaborative interpretation of the evidence-exploring alternative narratives-provokes pro-conviction jurors to accuse Juror 8 and others of inventing "fables" and "stories" and "fairy tales," of manipulating the "facts." Juror 6 articulates the danger starkly when he asks Juror 8, "Supposing you talk us all outa this, and the kid really did knife his father?" But as Juror 6 himself comes to recognize, ignoring these alternative narratives leads to the dogmatic certainty that ultimately reveals itself as destructive to personhood. Both Juror 10, whose bigotry breaks down into insecurity, and Juror 3, whose anger dissolves into heartbreak, embody the human cost of blind certainty.

Blind certainty-whether it derives from sociological generalization or personal experience-is as much on trial in 12 Angry Men as the young man accused of killing his father. Gradually, the members of the jury jettison their prejudices and assumptions as they confront the complexity and ambiguity of lived experience. In the process, the meek are empowered and the powerful are brought low. The disrespected old man backs Juror 8's gamble, setting the deliberations in motion; the confident stockbroker discovers that logic has blinded him to experience; the timid bank clerk stands up to the knowing business owner; the immigrant schools the all-American salesman in citizenship.

#### 4. Conclusions

Deliberation and self-deliberation are important tools used by humans to persuade others' opinions by presenting logical reasoning and viewpoints to explain certain acts or incidents. The acts of deliberation are firmly linked to pragmatics as they depend heavily on the interpretation of meaning based on the situation to present logical conclusions that can affect the choices of others. The presented analysis of the great novel Twelve angry men is a fine example of how deliberation can affect the judgment of others and how each one of the jurors used his own convictions to try to persuade others into taking the same stance as he is. 12 Angry Men is teachable today because juries remain as inscrutable and essential as they were fifty years ago. And it is hard to imagine a better dramatization of deliberative process as we hope it will work, in which bias and indifference yield to integrity, in which strangers listen to one another, in which difference is strength.

12 Angry Men reminds us that the jury is necessary for the many cases in which there is not a definitive piece of evidence, in which the truth cannot be known for sure. That the jury may make mistakes, or may express through its verdict community sentiments that are at best-extra-

## *A Pragmatic Study of Self-deliberation in Twelve Angry Men*

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legal, is part of the system, part of the price we pay to vest the community with absolute power to protect the accused from the state. In this play , several themes such as Justice, prejudice, doubt, one against many, father/son relationships and anonymity which are the most noticeable ones for it is not found nowadays.

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