

**A Syntactico-Pragmatic Analysis of Vocative in the
Language of Shakespeare & its Pedagogical Implications**
دراسة نحوية تداولية للنداء في لغة شكسبير وتداعياتها التربوية



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Abstract

The current paper tries to investigate the role of literature in enhancing students' perception for using one of the social common syntactic phenomenon which is a vocative. The syntax and the pragmatics are adopted in this study for the analysing a vocative case in one of the most popular English writer who is Shakespeare. Shakespeare wrote many plays and in each play, there is of course a different image or a different language. For the purpose of this study, we adopted Hamlet for analysing the language of Shakespeare and focusing on the vocatives.

Therefore, the vocative as a grammatical form is a universal aspect found in all languages of the world. However, little attention was paid to the study of this aspect in terms of its pragmatic faces and the interfaces between the position and function of this aspect. The Shakespearean language is one of the best areas of investigation in this respect because Shakespeare exploits almost all types of vocative constructions in his plays. By doing so his writings achieve certain functions, revealing through the functions the social, intellectual, and attitudinal states of the addresser and the addressee. This study attempts to analyse Hamlet, as one of the best examples of Shakespeare's plays, and to prove that vocatives function differently if syntactic and pragmatic interfaces are to be considered. The study also tries to find out the pedagogical implications of the vocative when taught via literature. As such, this study emphasises the use of literature as a popular technique for teaching to develop the pragmatic competence of non-native English speakers. It is hopes that this study will be of benefit for researchers who are interested to stylistics and interference branches of linguistics.

Keywords: Syntax, Pragmatics, Vocative, Shakespeare, Hamlet.

تلعب الأدبيات دورًا مهمًا في برامج اللغة الإنجليزية في العديد من البلدان غير الناطقة باللغة الإنجليزية، حيث تساعد هذه البرامج الطلبة على اكتساب كفاءة اللغة الإنجليزية مثل أهلها الأصليين، مثل التعبير عن أفكارهم باللغة الإنجليزية، وتعلم ميزات اللغة الإنجليزية الحديثة وتعلم كيفية استخدام النظام اللغوي الإنجليزي للتواصل. إن النداء كشكل نحوي هو جانب عالمي موجود في جميع لغات العالم. ومع ذلك، لم يتم إيلاء الاهتمام الكافي لدراسة هذا الجانب من حيث وجوهه التداولية والواجهات بين موقع ووظيفة هذا الجانب. تعد لغة شكسبير واحدة من أفضل مجالات التحقيق في هذا الصدد لأن شكسبير يستغل جميع أنواع تراكيب النداء تقريبًا في مسرحياته. وبذلك تحقق كتاباته وظائف معينة، وتكشف من خلال الوظائف عن الحالات الاجتماعية والفكرية والسلوكية للمخاطب والمخاطب. تحاول هذه الدراسة تحليل مسرحية هاملت، باعتبارها واحدة من أفضل الأمثلة على مسرحيات شكسبير، وإثبات أن وظائف النداء مختلفة إذا ما أخذنا في الاعتبار الواجهات النحوية التداولية. كما تحاول الدراسة اكتشاف الآثار التربوية للنداء عندما يتم تدريسه من خلال الأدب. وعلى هذا النحو، تؤكد هذه الدراسة على استخدام الأدب كتنقية شائعة للتدريس لتطوير الكفاءة التداولية لدى الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية غير الأصليين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النحو، التداولية، النداء، شكسبير، هاملت.



1. Introduction

The vocative is a universal aspect of languages, but it has received little attention. For example, many people do not know the rules of the vocative in relation to syntax (the types and the position and how the position of the vocative may affect speech. Also, many speakers do not know what the meaning of the vocative in terms of pragmatics, is. For example, they do not know that each utterance has its own function. In addition, many learners cannot distinguish between vocatives and imperatives, which are differentiated in intonation and function. Accordingly, the present study examines the types and shows how vocatives are incorporated within speech acts. The study also shows the points of interference amongst syntax and pragmatics of the vocative as well as their social role in conversation. The present study tries to find answers to research question which says: what are the types of vocatives in Shakespeare's Hamlet? What is the correlation between syntax and pragmatics in the uses of vocatives? Hence, the study shows how Shakespeare used the vocative in his plays, especially in Hamlet, by analysing this play syntactically and pragmatically. As such, this research limits itself to the syntactic and pragmatic aspects of vocative in English. As far as the syntactic examples as concern, Quirk et al. (1985) has been based in the literature review part of the current study.

The result of this work has great value for scholars in linguistics and pedagogy. In syntax, the learners or the readers through this research discover the different types of vocatives that can occur with any type of clause in different positions of the sentence. In pragmatics, the learner or reader recognizes that each utterance has a potential function. In pedagogy, the teacher has a great opportunity to show that literature is one of the best means to teach vocatives. The reader of the Shakespearean plays can benefit by knowing how Shakespeare manipulates vocatives in Hamlet to reflect the social status or the attitude of the addresser. See among others, (Metwab and Hazem, 2020, for A Syntactico-Pragmatic relation).

2. The Syntax of Vocative

Levinson (1983:71 cited in Schaden, 2010:176) called the vocative "an interesting grammatical category, yet underexplored". Interest in vocatives has revived in recent years which still stay inadequately



understood class. Several efforts and studies have been done in order to evaluate vocatives with other classes such as noun phrases, etc., (syntactically and pragmatically to observe the semantics of such structures claiming that the semantics has play a crucial role in the interpretation of a vocative. A vocative can be defined as “a nominal element added to a sentence or a clause optionally denoting one or more people to whom it is addressed and signalling the fact that it is addressed to them” (Quirk and Greenbaum,1973:182). Regarding the construction of nominals in Arabic and its counterpart in English, Meteab and Hazem’s study (2019) illustrate the construction of nominals in greater detail.

Quirk and Greenbaum also state that the major role of a vocative in English is to search for the devotion of the person addressed, and particularly to sole him out from others who may be within hearing. A next purpose of a vocative is to convey the manner of the speaker for the addressee (ibid,183). Vocatives are commonly used as a clear indication of manner, to indicate either polite distance or understanding (contrasting from gentle friendliness to relationship)

Stand-alone vocatives have certain purposes including to:

Summon

Reproach: Do not be appalling!

Question (whether the addressee is present or not)

Let one of remember a request: Dan, you should come by 8 a.m.

Complain: Doctor, my head is aching (Quirk et al., 1985: 851).

3. Semantic of Vocatives

The meaning of vocatives is very important in the utterances of the speaker. See among others Portner (2004:6) who stated that the meaning of vocatives may be created as emotional substance. Furthermore, Vocatives “present propositional content that is separate from the central at issue content expressed by the sentence” (ibid).

1- Rami, your lunch is prepared.

2- “I hereby request John's attention”.

3- “I hereby reiterate that my Lord is my addressee”

According to Predelli (2008) Vocatives have infrequently been discussed in the linguistic literature, concentrating mainly on their syntactic, intonational, and sociolinguistic assets (Predelli, 2008).



4. The Vocative in the Language of Shakespeare

Existing research on the use of vocatives in ordinary use, and in Shakespeare's plays in particular, suggest that appellation may be viewed as a form of speech that designates the next speaker (Quirk et al. 1985: 776). Vocatives in Shakespeare may simply be considered when they are associated to the Elizabethan social arrangement. Consequently, vocatives emphasis mostly on the usage of titles, for example, My Lord, Lady, ... etc. (Breuer, 1983; Stoll 1989).

Further remarkably, titles look like easy to detect along with to describe for the reason that shapes such as “my Lord, Your Majesty, or Madam seem to be logical indications of the highly stratified society of early modern England” (Breuer 1983, Stoll 1989). It is obvious from studies that the use of a specific phenomenon in any literary text will be of meaning and coherent and gives the admiration to the reader of a text (see for example, Khuder at al., 2022).

5. The Analysis

In this section, a syntactic (following Quirk et al. (1985:68)), and a pragmatic (following Haliday's (2013)) analysis is conducted to search for interference between these two levels of linguistics in relation to the vocative. In each example below, one category is presented and clarified, and then the extract is introduced followed by the syntactic and the pragmatic analysis.

The vocative terms are classified and analysed below according to a variety of categories mentioned by Biber et al. (1999:1108-1109). These categories are: epithets, family terms, conventional terms, emotions and personal names. Four of these types are surveyed in Hamlet as an example of the vocative.

5.1 The Generic Term Friend

The addresser to show intimacy to the addressee uses Friend as a generic term. It means that there is a friendly relationship between equals.

“My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern?”

“Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?” (Ham, 2. 2. 224)

The vocative in this utterance is “my excellent good friend”. It occurs in initial position and precedes the wh-interrogative clause.

Addresser: Hamlet



Addressee: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (Hamlet's school chums)
“Sir, my good friend, I'll change that name with you” (Hamlet.1. 2. 163).

In this extract, the vocative in this utterance is my good friend. It takes the initial position and precedes the imperative clause.

Addressor: Hamlet

Addressee: Horatio (Hamlet's friend).

In the previous speech, Hamlet uses the initial location for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Here in order to testify the emotions of the current situation which is joyful, Hamlet uses the vocatives, sir and my friend respectively.

Syntactically speaking, the vocative “my sinews” occurs in medial position and precedes an imperative clause.

Addressor: Hamlet

Addressee: Horatio (Hamlet's friend).

5.3 Conventional Terms as Vocatives "title of respect"

5.3.1 Lady

The term ‘lady’ is used to express deference, and loving meanings. However, in Ham., this term is sometimes used for other purposes, such as, being flippant, ironic, and ingratiating (as a social climber, oily), for example:

“How is it with you, lady” (Hamlet,3.4.115)

Syntactically speaking, the phenomenon of this utterance is lady. It is a term of family relationship. It occurs in final position and follows a question clause.

Addressor: Hamlet (prince of Denmark)

Addressee: Gertrude (his mother)

Normally a son addresses his mother with family terms like 'mother', 'mom', etc. However, Hamlet addresses his mother with 'lady' as if he is talking to a stranger. That is to say, the conversation between Hamlet and Gertrude shows a change of tone: while Hamlet is in an inferior position.

“Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song” (Hamlet,4.5.27)

The vocative "sweet lady" takes the initial position and precedes the wh- interrogative question.

Addressor: Gertrude (Hamlet's mother)



Addressee: Ophelia (Hamlet's mistress)

They belong to the same social rank (woman to woman); however, Ophelia uses 'lady' to show more formality, respect, and regard. In addition, he uses 'sweet' to modify the vocative 'lady'. It has a potential function here; it reinforces the relationship between them.

5.3.2 Majesty

“Where is the beauteous Majesty of Denmark” (Hamlet,4.5.21)

The vocative in this utterance is 'Majesty'. It occurs in final position and follows the wh-interrogative clause.

Addressor: Ophelia (Hamlet's mistress)

Addressee: Queen (Hamlet's mother)

5.3.3 Madam

Conventionally, Madam is a term of respect used to show that the addressor is showing respect to the addressee who is normally a female.

“Madam, I wish it may” (Ham.3.1.41).

The vocative in this utterance is 'Madam' as a term of respect. It occurs in initial position and precedes the imperative clause.

Addressor: Ophelia

Addressee: Gertrude.

5.3.4 Lord

“What do you read, my Lord” (Hamlet, 2.2.191)

The vocative in this speech is 'my lord'. It occurs in final position and is followed by a wh- interrogative question clause.

Addressor: Pollonius

Addressee: Hamlet (the prince of Denmark)

'Lord' is a name of honorifics used to show ranks of politeness and regard to high rank. In this utterance, the addressee shows respect and regard to a superior by using 'lord'.

“Thanks, dear my lord” (Hamlet,3.3.35).

The vocative "dear my lord" occurs in final position.

Addressor: Claudius

Addressee: Pollonius

Lord is a term of honorifics used to show reference and regard to the superior. It is also used once a higher desire to pay specific sense to a subordinate. The vocative, which Claudius used for Pollonius may



carry a cowardly tone, especially when Claudius is conscious of Hamlet's capability for retaliation and he may by now think that Pollonius is in risk while observing on Hamlet's speech to his mother. In addition, he uses the epithet 'dear' to modify the vocative.

5.3.5 Personal Pronoun and Personal Names

“Alas, how is it with you?” (Ham.3.4.115).

The vocative 'you' as a personal pronoun occurs in final position and follows the question clause and this adds an element of sincerity.

Addressor: Queen: Gertrude (Hamlet's mother)

Addressee: Hamlet.

In this utterance, the vocative is the pronoun 'you'. The emphasis here is on the utterance of the clear free verse, as well as its emphasis on the last syllable, with Gertrude accepting Hamlet's increase and exercising her powers as mother and queen to speak to Hamlet. The use of the pronoun 'you' indicates that the situation is serious. Most of the time, Gertrude uses the 'you' form when addressing her Hamlet. This means that the purpose of the use of 'you' is to show seriousness.

“This is I, Hamlet, the Dane” (Hamlet,5.1.257)

Syntactically speaking, the vocative in this utterance is 'Hamlet' which takes place in medial position and follows an imperative clause.

Addressor: Hamlet

Addressee: Leartes

Here, Hamlet uses the vocative personal name 'Hamlet' when he addresses Leartes. This means that Hamlet gives the impression to be conscious of himself along with the fact that, as a actual Dane, he is in charge of the revenge of his father. This vocative construes that Hamlet is self-confident about his own value and abilities.

“Nay, but Ophelia” (Ham.let,4.5.34)

Syntactically speaking, the vocative in this utterance is 'Ophelia' as a direct name (personal name). It takes the final position.

Pragmatically speaking:

Addressor: Queen (Gertrude)

Addressee: Ophelia (Hamlet's mistress)

6. The Pedagogical Implications

A text in literature work plays a crucial role and a source of textbooks for a foreign language classes since it determines a broad



range of using a language in origin circumstances (Al-Azzawi, 2010: 77). Abbas (2012: 333) considers TEFL “as a communicative act that can be approached via literature that is an act of communication”.

Salih (1989: 25) in his article illustrates how teaching literature has a very effective role in teaching English as a foreign language because “literature helps students add to or improve what they know about English syntax, morphology, semantics and implicitly, phonology”. Richard (1996:157 as cited in Abbas, 2012:333) adds that the EFL learners’ pragmatic competence can be improved by using literary texts in class as pragmatic skill is straight associated with the awareness of dialogue, speech purposes and their suitable practice in confident circumstances (Abbas, 2012: 335). This is explained in the study of Hazem, (2015); Salman and Hazem (2022), respectively. Literature in general and Shakespearean drama in particular was exploited because it is a fertile field to study the vocative. As far as EFL learners are concerned, Alshargabi et al, (2022) recently introduced a study regarding the realisation of English Double Negation through non-native speakers of English viz, EFL in the university of Al- Hamdaniya.

There are varied kinds of the vocative. It occurs alone or with modifiers; and it will perform different functions. Therefore, the EFL learners require pragmatics in addition to syntax and semantics because they learn the function of vocative indirectly through the language of the literary text. Functions are utilised in different situations, i.e., the function of one type of vocative will be different from the same type if it is used with modifiers in other situations. The functions are also considered as an illocutionary force.

Moreover, vocative has different functions, which are affected syntactically and semantically, i.e. syntactically the mobility of its position in the sentence give different meanings. For example, the position of the vocative at the beginning is to attract attention, whereas it refers to assurance when it is used at the end of the sentence. Through this syntactic and semantic mixture use of vocative, pragmatic understanding will be activated because the effect will be different.

The use of varied kinds of vocative affects the learners’ emotions. Through the communication in any literary text, “the learner starts to think why the characters in one dialogue address each other in one way



and in another dialogue, they change the manner". They will notice that these are every part of the ways of conveying individual feelings through the language.

Through the use of different kinds of grammatical form for different functions in different situations, the learner can get a glimpse of what is in the mind of the writer and the character. Finally, vocatives were regarded as part of the pragmatic component of the grammar, and therefore ignored in linguistic study until very recently (cf. Shormani & Qarabesh, 2018).

Conclusions

The conclusions of the present work are as follows: First, syntactically speaking, all the types of sentences, clauses and phrases, the vocative occurs as a noun phrase. These nouns do not agree with an argument. Regarding the types, there are many types of vocatives that work for a task for recognizing the distinct level of the member in a certain dialogue. Shakespeare used many types of vocatives in many positions in his play (Hamlet). He used these vocatives according to the social position of the speaker and the listener, and each type has its own potential function. Vocative improves the learners' pragmatic competence in any communicative act. The study tried to examine the role of literature in enriching students' awareness in the use of a popular speech during their act in a social situation using one kind that related to syntax which is called vocative. The syntax and the pragmatics adopted in this study for the analysing a vocative case in one of the most popular English writer who is Shakespeare. It has shown that in this study Shakespeare uses different types of writing to refer to vocatives. The majority of these are address of some characters such as Lady, Queen, Sir, etc., the language of Shakespeare in Hamlet was full of vocatives. Consequently, the vocative as a grammatical form is a universal characteristic found in the language of Shakespeare. Moreover, Shakespeare achievements almost all types of vocative constructions in his plays. The findings reveal through the functions the social, intellectual, and attitudinal states of the addresser and the addressee.

There are varied kinds of the vocative. It occurs alone or with modifiers; and it will perform different functions. Therefore, the EFL



learners require pragmatics in addition to syntax and semantics because they learn the function of vocative indirectly through the language of the literary text. Functions are utilised in different situations, i.e., the function of one type of vocative will be different from the same type if it is used with modifiers in other situations. The functions are also considered as an illocutionary force.

Moreover, vocative has different functions, which are affected syntactically and semantically, i.e. syntactically the mobility of its position in the sentence give different meanings. For example, the position of the vocative at the beginning is to attract attention, whereas it refers to assurance when it is used at the end of the sentence. Through this syntactic and semantic mixture use of vocative, pragmatic understanding will be activated because the effect will be different. These various uses of vocatives affects the learners' emotions because of the communication in any literary text, "the learner set out to reflect why the types in one dialogue speak to each other in one way and in another dialogue, they change the manner". They will notice that these are every part of the ways of conveying individual feelings through the language. Furthermore, the learner can get a sight of what is in the mind of the writer and the character. Finally, vocatives were regarded as part of the pragmatic component of the grammar, and therefore ignored in linguistic study. The acquisition of vocatives is recommended for further studies.



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