

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Contrast in *Pride and Prejudice*

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ABSTRACT : This paper conducts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of contrast in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. It aims to examine how linguistic and narrative contrasts are not merely stylistic choices but are instrumental in constructing, negotiating, and critiquing the social ideologies of society. The present study adopted linguistic analysis by using Fairclough's(2015) antonymy category to reveal contrast between "Pride" and "Prejudice" as a central conflict in the Austen's novel. Finally, the study concludes that: First, Prejudice and Pride stand in sharp contrast as barriers to real connection,. Second, the novel repeatedly illustrates how external appearances may be incredibly deceptive,. Third, Austen's skillful utilization of this contrast forces both characters and readers to let go of their preconceptions rather than from the satisfaction of initial expectations.

KEY WORDS: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Contrast, Pride and Prejudice*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Contrast

Comparing things is a very human activity. People live a life making comparisons between things and acting in ways that fit the categories they create. That is, language contrast occurs in everyday human life and is caused by differences in its components and nature. [1] (Dienhart, 1999)

In common usage, contrast can be defined as the opposition or unlikeness of the items being compared. It emphasizes how different or opposing some aspects are, focusing on their differences rather than their commonalities. It really comes down to highlighting the distinctions. [2] (The Chambers Dictionary, 1998)

Furthermore, contrast is comparison or juxtaposition demonstrating significant differences. Hence, it is comparison or juxtaposition demonstrating significant differences. [3] (The Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary, 1991)

To conclude, contrast is "a term used in linguistics for a difference between units, especially one which serves to distinguish meanings in a language." Hence, a distinction between linguistic units that aids in differentiating meanings within a language is referred to as contrast. [4] (Crystal, 2008, p.112)

II. Review of related literature

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is a method of examining language in use that seeks to examine the connections between linguistic characteristics and social relations, including ideology, inequality, injustice, and abuse of power. [5] (Schiffrin, 1994)

Additionally, is "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text." Because critical discourse analysts adopt a clear stance, they seek to comprehend, reveal, and ultimately oppose social inequalities. [6] (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352)

Besides, Fairclough (1995) states that CDA aims to establish links between the textual characteristics of discourse practice and more general sociocultural practice. Thus, critical discourse analysis entails considering everything that people read, hear, and observe. [7]

According to Locke (2004), CDA is an act, and he identifies it as:

- **Analytical:** because it entails doing a comprehensive analysis to pinpoint one or more guiding principles when looking closely and methodically at a certain thing.
- **Discourse:** orientated in the sense that this analysis has concentrated on the use of language in one sense of the word discourse and the social constructions of meaning that occur in the other sense, such as stories that give the world meaning.

- **Critical:** because a crucial result of the analysis process is the capacity to assess the social implications of the meanings a reader is being asked to subscribe to or position themselves inside while reading, as well as the contestation of these meanings. [8]

To sum up, critical discourse analysis “provides a set of tools for analyzing texts and spoken language.” Hence, scholars working in a variety of academic subjects have demonstrated the great value of these tools. (Machin & Mayr, 2025, p.8) For this, “CDA helps us to reveal what a text is really saying and also, crucially, how it does so.” And doing so aids in accomplishing a crucial task. It enables people to enquire about the nature of the situation that is being presented to us. (Machin & Mayr, 2025, p.10) [9]

III. Methodology

The present research utilized qualitative research method. The primary goal of a qualitative research approach is “to understand how individuals make meaning of their social world.” People's social interactions with their environment shape this social reality. [10] (Biber, 2010, p.p. 455-6). This research investigates the concept of contrast linguistically and critically in *pride and prejudice*. The current study's data collection procedure was based on an original novel. The researcher selected about (10 texts) from (3) chapters in addition to the title, that provided the data for the current research, based on the criteria listed below, The selected data include texts from the novel, in which contrast is investigated. *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen is a timeless literary piece that captivates readers with its intricate plot and compelling characters. This language diversity allows for deep understanding of social dynamics and identity construction.

After that, the following criteria are considered:

First, analyze contrast in texts to convey meaning, shape perceptions, and reflect or critique societal norms in *pride and prejudice*

Second, as a literary classic, *Pride and Prejudice* offers linguistic findings as rich interpretive framework.

Hence, Cook (1990) contends that discourse could include novels, brief conversations, or groans. Thus, it is evident from Cook's opinions that the novels may be analyzed using the Critical Discourse Analysis framework. [11]

Third, Examining *Pride and Prejudice* critically entails delving deeper into the work's literary brilliance and insightful analysis of society.

Regarding the analysis, the researcher adopted Fairclough's (2015) Antonymy as a category to analyze contrast in *pride and prejudice*. Antonymy “is meaning incompatibility- the meaning of one word is incompatible with the meaning of another (e.g. the meaning of woman and man)” hence it is an ideologically significant meaning relation. [12]

IV. Data Analysis

4.1. The title *Pride and Prejudice*

The title “**Pride and Prejudice**” is perhaps the most fundamental example of how antonymy is used to create contrast in Jane Austen's novel. It captures the central character and thematic conflicts that drive the whole story.

- “Pride”: refers to a feeling of superiority, excessive self-esteem, and arrogance that is frequently connected to intelligence, wealth, or social standing.
- “Prejudice”: refers to bias against others caused by preconceived notions, frequently unfavorable, that are established without adequate justification or real-world experience.

The title immediately establishes the disparate flaws of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, the two primary characters. At first, Darcy's aristocratic “pride”—his contempt for people beneath his social status and his conceit—defines him. Elizabeth, on the other hand, is distinguished by her “prejudice”—her rash, ill-informed assessment of Darcy, which was stoked by Wickham's lies and Darcy's first-impression of haughtiness. Their initial, opposing, yet equally crippling, character faults that hinder them from knowing each other are highlighted by the title's antonymy.

4.2. Chapter One

1- “Mr Bennet was, in fact, one of the first people to call on Mr Bingley after his arrival at Netherfield Hall. He had always intended to visit him, though he continued to tell his wife that he would not,”

Analysis

He had always intended to visit him,” the opening line, expresses Mr. Bennet's sincere, inner goal or plan. “Though he continued to tell his wife that he would not,” the second sentence, reveals his verbal denial of his purpose. The indicated action “visit him” is immediately contradicted by his statement that he “would not.”

In conclusion, there is a reason why Mr. Bennet's declaration and his intention are antonymous. Austen's use of precise language through contrast, contrasts character attributes well, and quietly develops a central theme of deceit vs. truth that runs throughout the entire story.

2- *"The ladies all quickly decided he was much more handsome than Mr Bingley and looked at him with great admiration for half the evening until they also decided that he was a very proud-looking man, that nothing could please him and that he did not seem to be enjoying the dance. Not all his money and good looks could then save him from being unpleasant in their eyes, or from being very much less attractive than his friend."*

Analysis

The fundamental contrast is the sudden and significant change in the ladies' overall assessment of Darcy. They go from early awe based on affluence and physical appearance to quick rejection based on perceived arrogance and distance. This quick shift in viewpoint is exemplified by the antonymous pairs (such as "handsome" versus "unpleasant" or "admiration" versus the implied "disgust" or "dislike" from "nothing could please him").

Austen exposes the shallowness of social judgment in her society by utilizing this stark contrast. The women's erratic views, which fluctuate from strong admiration to strong distaste depending on a fleeting encounter, demonstrate how rapidly reputations are built and how easily a single perceived social infraction (pride) can override good qualities. This results in a humorous yet insightful critique of the shallowness of social relationships.

In order to demonstrate the quick and frequently unjust assessments that result in "prejudice," the text essentially uses a potent chain of antonymous ideas that contrasts initial high regard with later strong aversion. These ideas shift from initially positive physical traits to perceived negative character traits. "

3- *"Bingley relied on Darcy's powerful intelligence and on his firm and fair judgement of things, even though he was often shy and seemed stiff, proud and rather bad mannered with other people. This was where Bingley had the advantage: everyone immediately liked him, but Darcy very frequently offended people."*

Analysis

An instant and noticeable internal difference is produced in Darcy by the first group of antonyms ("powerful intelligence" / "firm and fair judgement" vs. "shy," "stiff, proud, bad-mannered"). It creates a paradox: a man with great intrinsic value and admirable traits (sound judgment, intellectual prowess) is also afflicted by social awkwardness and offensive behavior. The key to comprehending his "pride" and the reasons behind his frequent misinterpretations is the contrast between his inherent worth and his external appearance. His social weakness and inner power are shown to be direct opposites of one another.

In conclusion, Austen skillfully uses antonymy to highlight the psychological complexity that makes Darcy both praiseworthy and initially unlikeable, as well as to characterize and fundamentally define the different natures of Darcy and Bingley. The main tensions and thematic explorations of *Pride and Prejudice* are established in large part by this linguistic disparity.

4- *"Mr Darcy had not at first thought her to be very pretty, and to his friends had called her only tolerable', but he soon began to see what a beautiful expression there was in her fine dark eyes, and how unusually intelligent they were. He also began to notice how light and pleasing her figure was and he was caught by the easy playfulness of her manner."*

Analysis

An important difference in Darcy's perception of beauty is brought to light by the antonymy: he shifts from a purely aesthetic, possibly conventional, evaluation of "prettiness" and "tolerableness" to an appreciation of more dynamic, intellectual, and spirited qualities; the "beautiful expression" and "intelligence" are positioned as a higher form of beauty, directly opposing a lack of "prettiness." This suggests that for Darcy, a vibrant mind and an active spirit eventually negate or even surpass the absence of conventional beauty.

Austen essentially illustrates Darcy's internal transformation from shallow contempt to profound admiration through a series of antonymous adjectives. This linguistic difference serves as a potent weapon to emphasize the novel's main topic of prejudice being overcome by genuine understanding and the acknowledgement of inner worth over appearance, and it goes beyond simply altering opinions.

4.3.Chapter Two

1- *"It was impossible for Jane to have use of the carriage to take her to Netherfield, and anyway Mrs Bennet wanted her to go on horseback. She thought it was likely to rain and she hoped that Jane would then have to stay at Nether-field for the night, and so would have a chance of being with Mr Bingley the following morning."*

Analysis

The main contrast is between Mrs. Bennet's underlying, purposefully positive intention and the externally awkward or unfavorable situation. Because Mrs. Bennet expects a very desirable, almost luxury, outcome (an overnight stay, extended time with Mr. Bingley), she purposefully selects (or wishes) the less comfortable and more exposed choice (rain, riding).

In conclusion, the part uses conceptual antonymy by contrasting the highly sought, desirable social objectives (overnight stay, time with Mr. Bingley) with seemingly unpleasant or uncomfortable means (rain, horseback). This deft use of contrast adds a subtly humorous element to the story while exposing Mrs. Bennet's cunning and manipulative tendencies in the marriage plot.

2-*"The two ladies at Netherfield were amazed that she had walked three miles alone so early in the day, and in such bad weather, but Mr Darcy, though he said very little to her, thought how fine she looked after the fresh air of the walk. "*

Analysis

Contrast of Social Judgment vs. Individual Appreciation: The main difference between Darcy's unusual, laudatory opinion and the traditional, condemning assessment of "the two ladies" is this. Darcy views what the ladies consider to be an impropriety—walking by herself in inclement weather, which results in an expected "bad" appearance—as an improvement that makes her appear "fine." This demonstrates the obvious contrast between strict social norms and a person's developing, more authentic understanding of personality and energy.

In summary, the text uses a potent antonymy between Darcy's personal admiration and conventional societal censure, turning what he perceives to be a "bad" scenario into a "fine" outcome for Elizabeth. This language difference challenges Darcy's own preconceptions by highlighting his growing admiration and clearly illuminating the characters' disparate values.

3-*"Elizabeth was perfectly happy to leave Netherfield, and the two sisters' arrival back at Longbourn on the Sunday morning was a surprise to their family. Their mother, of course, was not happy that her plan to keep Jane and Mr Bingley together as long as possible had not worked, and she did not welcome them at all heartily. "*

Analysis

Emotional Disparity and Character Juxtaposition: The antonymy between Mrs. Bennet's "not happy" response and Elizabeth's "perfectly happy" state is the most obvious contrast. This demonstrates their essentially divergent objectives and reactions to the circumstance right away. While Mrs. Bennet's discontent originates from the failure of her social maneuvering, Elizabeth's delight is derived from her independence and freedom from social contrivances.

In conclusion, Austen emphasizes the novel's themes of social maneuvering and individual autonomy by vividly illustrating the divergent emotional landscapes and motivations of Elizabeth and Mrs. Bennet through the use of direct antonyms (happy/not happy) and conceptual antonyms (plan worked/plan not worked, hearty welcome/not hearty welcome).

4.4.Chapter Three

1-*"The news of the ball put all other ideas out of their heads for the next few days. They were all looking forward to it greatly. Even Mr Collins felt he would be able to accept Mr Bingley's invitation and that it would be suitable for a clergyman to appear at an event of that kind. "*

Analysis

This is when Mr. Collins's character is most exposed by the contrast. Since a priest is typically linked to sobriety and spiritual responsibilities, a wild dance party could look "unsuitable." Mr. Collins's claim that his presence would actually be "suitable for a clergyman" draws a clear distinction between his inflated, self-serving view of his own duty and dignity and conventional propriety and society norms. In essence, he is arguing against what many people might think. This demonstrates his arrogance, lack of social awareness, and propensity to justify his needs by putting up a front of self-importance.

In conclusion, the text uses antonymy to contrast the mundane "other ideas" with the overwhelming excitement for the ball. More importantly, by having Mr. Collins declare something "suitable" that others could subtly deem "unsuitable" for his clerical position, it employs a conceptual antonymy to comically reveal his unique brand of pride and social awkwardness.

2-*"Then, suddenly, she found Mr Darcy standing in front of her, requesting the pleasure of her hand for the next dance. she was so surprised that she accepted him without thinking, and they took their place on the dance-floor. Conversation between them, as they danced, was difficult and uncomfortable and they both felt quite dissatisfied at the end of their dance, when they went their separate ways in silence. "*

Analysis

This contrast is particularly noticeable when comparing the formal social invitation for "pleasure" with the lived experience of "difficult and uncomfortable conversation" and deep "dissatisfaction." Their incapacity to communicate effectively directly undermines the dance's natural social purpose, which is to promote friendly interaction, resulting in an emotion that is the opposite of pleasure. This demonstrates the gap between authentic interpersonal connection and external social ritual.

Austen essentially depicts the first, startling lack of harmony between Elizabeth and Darcy by employing a potent chain of antonyms, from the promise of "pleasure" to the actuality of "discomfort" and "dissatisfaction," creating a crucial point of disconnection that must eventually be resolved.

3-*"He would not, at first, take in the idea that she really was refusing his offer to her. He thought this might be a game that young woman played when they secretly wanted to accept such an offer from a gentleman. "*

Analysis

The fundamental antonymy is between Elizabeth's honest, direct act of "refusing" and Mr. Collins's view of it as a dishonest "game" in which "refusal" is only a covert way of "wanting to accept." His basic ignorance of true human emotion and communication is revealed by this difference right away, as he perceives artifice where sincerity exists.

Finally, the text uses a strong antonymy between Mr. Collins's imagined acceptance and Elizabeth's real rejection. This juxtaposition quietly challenges the patriarchal presumptions that underlie his worldview while also effectively illustrating his inflated sense of self-importance and his incapacity to understand reality.

V. Results and Discussion

The analysis shows how Austen carefully designs these contrasts as a core "linguistic and conceptual approach" that drives narrative, illuminates character, and challenges the ideological foundations of Regency society, rather than just for artistic effect. That is:

- **Pride vs. Prejudice:** The title "*Pride and Prejudice*" perfectly captures the fundamental difference that establishes the main ideas, character development, and social critique of the novel. It identifies two different, but frequently related types of human shortcoming that must be conquered in order to achieve full understanding:

Pride: In the novel, "pride" mostly refers to an overabundance of self-importance that frequently results from riches, social status, or intellectual superiority. Arrogance, contempt for others who are considered inferior, and a reluctance to own up to mistakes or conform to social norms are some of its manifestations. Mr. Darcy is an outstanding instance of aristocratic pride; he rejects Elizabeth's appearance and familial ties, and acts in a stiff and distant manner.

Prejudice: In the novel, "prejudice" refers to biases or preconceived notions that were created without enough information and frequently result in harsh judgment and misunderstanding. Strong feelings of outrage or wrath, a rapid condemnation, and a tendency to accept data that deviates from first perceptions are some of its manifestations.

- **Appearance vs. Reality:** Several contrasts show that genuine character (truth) is revealed via greater comprehension, and that first impressions (appearances) are frequently misleading. Darcy's first impression of Elizabeth and the ladies' appraisal of Darcy both demonstrate this.
- **Expectation vs. Reality:** The distinction between what is expected or externally displayed and the underlying reality or actual result is a significant type of contrast. The fact that Mr. Bennet intends to visit Mr. Bingley immediately goes against his statement that "he would not," establishing a private reality in contrast to a public (domestic) pretense.

VI. Conclusion

1- Prejudice and pride stand in sharp contrast as barriers to real connection. While Elizabeth's prejudice keeps her from seeing past Darcy's arrogant appearance to his innate decency and honesty, Darcy's pride keeps him from seeing past Elizabeth's lower social rank and her family's vulgarity.

2- The novel repeatedly illustrates how external appearances may be incredibly deceptive. While Mr. Wickham's lovely demeanor hides a dissolute and treacherous heart, Mr. Darcy's allegedly arrogant and pompous exterior hides a very honorable and generous personality.

3- Austen's skillful utilization of this contrast forces both characters and readers to let go of their preconceptions, embrace discernment, and eventually realize that real happiness and understanding frequently come from accepting and navigating a more complex and frequently unexpected reality rather than from the satisfaction of initial expectations. Mr. Collins's assumption that Elizabeth's rejection is only a "game" is a perfect illustration of a character who is living in a fantasy that is disconnected from reality.

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