

## Conversational Implicatures in Kushwanth Singh's Train to Pakistan

**Dr. Mutyala Suresh,**

Associate Professor, Department of English, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation,  
Vaddeswaram, Guntur-Dt, A.P. India.

[msphd@kluniversity.in](mailto:msphd@kluniversity.in)

### **Abstract:**

Khushwant Singh's chosen novels provide insight into the socio-cultural landscape of India. Therefore, adopting a pragmatic approach becomes essential to effectively explore the language employed by the author. This approach proves invaluable in not only revealing the distressing circumstances faced by marginalized segments of Indian society but also in unraveling the attitudes of the high caste/class individuals through the linguistic behaviors of the characters. The characters created by Singh come to life as they employ local words, phrases, and idioms to express their emotions and perspectives on life. Singh utilizes various techniques to underscore the sociolinguistic and pragmatic realities prevailing in India during the period when the considered novels were written. Pragmatic inferences known as conversational implicatures differ from entailments and presuppositions, as they are not intricately linked to specific words or phrases within an utterance. Instead, they emerge from contextual elements and the recognition that conversational conventions play a crucial role. Paul Herbert Grice is credited with developing the theory of conversational implicatures. He noted that in conversations, the intended meaning frequently surpasses the literal expression, and this extra layer of meaning is deduced and foreseeable. Such conversational implicatures are traceable in Kushwanth Singh novels. Each and every novel of his carries certain predictable meanings which are not intended for using as part of narration. Any study in this regard throws a fresh light on the content and enables readers to pay attention to his works.

**Key Words:** Sociolinguistics, pragmatics, realism, emotions, implicatures, entailments

**Introduction:**

Khushwant Singh stands out as one of the most renowned Indian writers in history, distinguished for his excellence as a historian, novelist, astute observer, and social critic. His insightful comparisons of the social and behavioral nuances between individuals from India and the West are characterized by exceptional wit. Recognized as both a realist and a humanist, this portrayal is vividly reflected in his body of work. Singh's language is grounded, realistic, and often a direct reflection of the Hindi or Punjabi dialect, constituting a living and dynamic entity termed as Indian-English or Indianism. His English can be distinctly categorized as postcolonial and postmodern, offering glimpses into his deliberate craftsmanship, which aims at linguistic decentralization and hybridization. Noteworthy linguistic features in his text include the infusion of Hindi and Urdu words into English, frequent word-for-word translations from Hindi, utilization of colloquial speech, keen observation, vivid descriptions, occasional dramatic flair, and the skillful use of various figurative expressions, notably irony at its finest. The present paper delves into Khushwant Singh's selected novels, exploring the traumatic experiences and pressing issues during and after the time of independence. Om P. Juneja, in his work "Post Colonial Novel," distinguishes between a novelist and a historian, stating, "While the novelist is interested in how power is sought and exercised by individuals, the interest of the historian lies in studying the operation of power by groups" (1995:58). Both the historian and the novelist examine this operation of power through representative figures, albeit for different reasons.

Even though the freedom struggle had concluded, events in the early post-independence period, such as the Partition, its devastating impact, the integration of princely states into the Indian Union, and conflicts with Pakistan and China, offered fertile ground for writers. Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan' (1956) portrayed the tragic drama of Partition, while other notable authors like Chaman Nahal with 'Azadi' (1975) and Manohar Malgonkar with 'A Bend in the Ganges' (1964) explored the same theme. Manohar Malgonkar emerged as a prominent writer presenting fictional accounts of recent Indian history in novels such as 'Distant Drum' (1960), 'The Princes' (1973), 'A Bend in the Ganges' (1964), and 'The Devil's Wind' (1971). Kamala Markandaya's works like 'Some Inner Fury' (1956) and 'The Golden Honeycomb' (1972) depicted events from pre-independent India, intertwining her characters with actual historical events. Many novelists, like Salman Rushdie, have felt "handcuffed to history" and attempted to grapple with the challenges of reality in portraying a social picture of post-colonial India

simultaneously.

The focus of this paper is on the pragmatic features operative in Khushwant Singh's novels. The researcher aims to analyze pragmatic features through selected novels, emphasizing social, historical, political, and autobiographical aspects based on the utterances and conversational implicatures of the characters.

The author endeavors to apply the subfield of pragmatic principles to interpret and analyze five selected novels by Khushwant Singh. As society undergoes constant social changes, literature naturally reflects these changes through the language used by writers. Thus, the writer employs language to depict the conditions of society, considering literature as a social product and a mirror reflecting the social system.

### **Critical Analysis of Kushwanth Singh's *Train to Pakistan*:**

Conversational implicatures in Khushwant Singh's novels serve as a fascinating lens through which to explore the intricacies of communication and social dynamics within the narratives. Khushwant Singh, a distinguished Indian writer known for his realism and keen social observations, employs conversational implicatures as a literary device to convey meanings beyond the explicit words spoken by his characters. Unlike explicit entailments or presuppositions, implicatures arise from contextual factors, often revealing unspoken nuances and underlying attitudes.

In Singh's literary realm, characters come alive through their dialogue, engaging in conversations that extend beyond the surface level. The author's pragmatic use of language, peppered with colloquial expressions, idioms, and linguistic deviations, creates a rich tapestry that reflects the complexities of Indian society. Singh's novels, often set against the backdrop of significant historical events like the Partition and post-independence struggles, provide a fertile ground for the exploration of conversational implicatures. The characters navigate through the challenges of a changing socio-political landscape, and their interactions become a nuanced exploration of power dynamics, cultural clashes, and personal relationships.

This exploration of conversational implicatures in Khushwant Singh's novels delves into the subtleties of language and the unspoken aspects of communication. It offers readers an opportunity to decipher the layers of meaning embedded in the characters' dialogue, providing insights into the author's craftsmanship, socio-cultural commentary, and the postcolonial and postmodern dimensions of his storytelling. As we unravel the implicit inferences within the conversations, we gain a deeper understanding of the characters, their motivations, and the

broader socio-historical context that shapes their interactions in Khushwant Singh's literary landscape.

Published in 1956, "Train to Pakistan" stands as a timeless historical novel. This research endeavors to interpret selected speech acts in the novel through a pragmatic approach. In essence, the pragmatic analysis involves scrutinizing specific utterances from "Train to Pakistan" in light of speech act theory and broader pragmatic principles such as deixis, implicature, presupposition, and more. As Jacob Mey (2001) aptly notes, pragmatics delves into the use of language in human communication, shaped by societal conditions.

The success of an utterance, according to Mey's observation, hinges on the complex interplay of factors such as who speaks, what is said, to whom, when, where, and why. An illustrative instance of this complexity is found in the following speech act, where an elderly woman indirectly pleads for her life: "In the name of God, take what we have, all our jewelry, everything" (P.17)

The speaker, an older woman from Lala Ram Lal's family, addresses this plea to a dacoit named Malli and his gang, leveraging her seniority in the family to make such promises. The gravity of the situation imbues the utterance with fear and desperation.

Another compelling example showcases the intricate layers of meaning embedded in indirect speech acts based on immediate context and interpersonal knowledge in "Train to Pakistan": "Wear these bangles, Juggia. Wear these bangles and put henna on your palms" (P.19)

This utterance, directed at Juggut Singh by Malli as he and his gang pass Jugga's house after a robbery and murder, exemplifies the nuanced use of language to convey multiple meanings within the novel.

Furthermore, indirect speech acts are employed to fortify interpersonal relationships and shield the addressee's face. For instance, Hukum Chand poses an indirect question to Haseena: "How long have you been in this profession?" (P.120)

In this instance, the magistrate, Hukum Chand, directly addresses a young girl, Haseena Begum. The situation involves the girl being summoned to satisfy the magistrate's desires, necessitating the use of an indirect question to delicately approach the topic of her involvement in illicit relations.

*Train to Pakistan* narrates the poignant tale of Mano Majra, a predominantly Sikh village straddling the India-Pakistan frontier. The tranquil villagers, renowned for their hospitality and affection for their Muslim counterparts, find themselves entangled in emotional upheaval.

Faced with the challenge of preserving their safety or bidding farewell to years of cherished relationships, Mano Majra becomes a crucible of intense emotions and violence. The arrival of trainloads of deceased refugees at Mano Majra further escalates tensions, with hundreds crossing the Sutlej River.

The surge of deceased Sikhs and Hindus poses a formidable law and order dilemma for the magistrate, Hukum Chand, and the sub-inspector of Mano Majra. Recognizing the imperative to ensure the safety of Mano Majra's Muslim population, both authorities and villagers concur on the necessity of evacuating them to a refugee camp. Subsequently, plans are made to transport the Mano Majra Muslims to Pakistan by train. Amidst this, Iqbal, a visiting party worker, and Juggut Singh, a local troublemaker, face arrest under suspicion. Simultaneously, Malli and his gang also find themselves in custody, although Hukum Chand formulates a distinctive plan.

Opting to release Malli and his gang, Hukum Chand dispatches a message to the Muslim officer of the refugee camp, urging the prompt reception of Mano Majra Muslims to avert potential violence. Juggut and Iqbal are subsequently released, setting the stage for a complex and dramatic resolution.

As the narrative unfolds, militant Sikhs resolve to attack the refugee train bound for Pakistan, intending to harm the Muslims aboard. Juggut, driven by a personal motive to protect his fiancée Nooran, who is on the train, secretly devises a plan to ensure the train's safe passage. Climbing a pillar near the railway line, he successfully severs the rope intended to dislodge refugees seated on the train's rooftops. Despite his success, Juggut becomes a victim of militant gunfire. Ultimately, the train to Pakistan safely crosses the border, marking the culmination of a gripping and emotionally charged saga.

The novel is infused with a multitude of heart-wrenching, emotional, and romantic scenes, skillfully intertwined with the Machiavellian scheming of Hukum Chand, the magistrate, and the sub-inspector of Mano Majra. In typical Khushwant Singh fashion, the narrative doesn't shy away from explicit depictions of sex, adding another layer of complexity to the story. Against the backdrop of this tense atmosphere, the clandestine love affair between Juggut Singh and Nooran unfolds, providing a poignant contrast to the surrounding chaos.

As Juggut and Nooran seek solace in each other's arms, concealed in the fields, dacoits seize the opportunity to plunder and commit murder in Mano Majra. Meanwhile, Iqbal, the activist, makes his entrance at the Gurudwara, tasked by his party to enlighten the villagers. The

juxtaposition of Iqbal's city-bred activism against the violent partition scenario serves as a satirical exposure of his ideals. However, in the midst of this turmoil, Juggut, endeavoring to protect his beloved, emerges as a romantic hero willing to make the ultimate sacrifice.

The present paper conducts an analysis of assertive speech acts from this novel, placing emphasis on the speech situations confronting the characters, the illocutionary force inherent in their speech acts, and the perlocutionary effects on their conversational partners. This exploration promises to unravel the intricate dynamics of communication within the novel, shedding light on the characters' motivations and the broader impact of their assertive speech acts in the midst of the tumultuous events portrayed by Khushwant Singh.

In Juggut Singh's absence, the spearman overtly teases him but harbors implicit envy for Juggut's romantic involvement with Nooran, a weaver's daughter. The spearman derides Juggut's possession of bangles, cynically predicting that they would be gifted to his beloved, Nooran. Simultaneously, the addresser subtly describes Nooran's beauty, indirectly hinting at Juggut's infatuation. The illocutionary force covertly conveys the addresser's satisfaction in detailing the physical attributes of the young girl, potentially revealing a latent envy towards Juggut Singh. The spearman's underlying intention is to elicit laughter from his conversational partners, as he playfully comments on the situation. Juggut's fellow robbers join in the banter, expressing their own envy for his relationship with Nooran, transforming the affair into a topic of amusement and gossip within the group. The perlocutionary effect of the spearman's speech act results in a light-hearted discussion about the beauty of the girl and the concealed envy directed at Juggut, with the comment being taken in good humour by the colleagues.

The subsequent scene maintains the same context, with the band of robbers continuing to discuss Juggut Singh's love affair and Nooran's coquettish beauty. This affair has become a source of amusement and gossip for the entire group. The gunman, who speaks the following lines, evidently possesses more information about the clandestine rendezvous between Juggut and Nooran.

She must give Jugga a good time.....During the day, she looks so innocent you would think she had not shed her milk teeth.....But at night, she puts black antimony in her eyes (P. 15)

The gunman, a member of Malli's gang, directs the aforementioned statement to his fellow robbers. During a nocturnal gathering outside Mano Majra, the robbers engage in a discussion about Juggut Singh's romantic involvement with a girl named Nooran, who happens to be the daughter of a weaver. Their initial plan is to present Juggut with bangles, intending to mock

him and imply cowardice. However, the conversation takes a turn, focusing on Jugga's romantic entanglement with the weaver's enchanting young daughter.

### **Conclusion:**

"Train to Pakistan" undeniably contributes to the novel's trajectory towards realism, a terrain artfully and subtly navigated by eminent novelists like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. The novel delves into the exploration of new dimensions of reality, offering a profound and poignant examination of the human world and its intrinsic values. In this regard, Khushwant Singh's work stands as a masterpiece, surpassing even the most erudite and expert discussions on twentieth-century civilization.

This starkly realistic and often disquieting historical novel, portraying the tumultuous events of riots, bloodshed, atrocities, and the horrors of partition, doubles as a compelling character study under extreme circumstances. Juggut, an outlaw, attains a near-noble status through his ultimate act of self-sacrifice. Hukum Chand, a toughened magistrate and an aging libertine with peculiar notions of beauty, is portrayed as a figure almost human in his tender feelings for Haseena, the Muslim pros whom he neither comprehends nor conquers. Throughout the narrative, Khushwant Singh maintains a dispassionate objectivity, serving as an honest chronicler probing deeper into the complexities of communal frenzy. His portrayal holds both Hindus and Muslims equally accountable for the turbulent events, showcasing a commitment to unbiased exploration and understanding. Khushwant Singh's novels are rich in instances of conversational implicatures, making them valuable subjects for exploration as components of pragmatics.

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