

“Seeing-Through Utterance” as Wordplay: Interpersonal Games in Fictional Conversations of Franz Kafka

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“Seeing-Through Utterance” as Wordplay: Interpersonal Games in Fictional Conversations of Franz Kafka*

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Abstract

Second person assertives with verbs of thinking as predicates, such as *You think that my paper will be accepted in an international journal*, are hardly ever uttered to a conversation participant in everyday communication, apart from second person interrogatives like *Do you think that my paper will be accepted in an international journal?*, apparently because it is odd for the speaker to tell the interlocutor categorically what he or she thinks. However, such sentences can occasionally be observed in fictional conversations in Franz Kafka’s works. The following is one example: “You think you have strength enough to come over here and that you’re only hanging back of your own accord.” (Franz Kafka: *The Judgment*) In such an utterance the speaker (the father) expresses verbally what he claims to see through or in the mind of his interlocutor (his son) in order to gain an advantage in their interpersonal relationship. Such an utterance can be called a “seeing-through utterance” (Nishijima 2005; 2015). Seeing-through utterances seem to be used in Kafka’s works as interpersonal games in conversations between characters. Thus, it can be hypothesized that seeing-through utterances are used as wordplay in interpersonal games in order for the speakers to display certain of their attitudes to their interlocutors. The aim of the present paper is twofold: (a) to analyze some seeing-through utterances in several works of Franz Kafka, (b) to demonstrate that they are used as wordplay, i.e., a psychological trick to display the power of the speaker over the interlocutor. The analysis of seeing-through utterances can be expected to shed light on an unknown aspect of wordplay in the fictional conversations of Franz Kafka.

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Keywords

seeing-through utterance, second person assertive, thinking verb, internal world, interpersonal game, psychological trick, Franz Kafka, fictional conversation.

1. Introduction

According to the definition of a contemporary English dictionary, wordplay consists of¹ “making jokes by using words in a clever or amusing way, especially by using a word that has two meanings, or different words that sounds the same.” In general, wordplay is regarded as the humorous use of words on the lexical level (cf. Žyško 2017). However, there are some uses of a sentence or utterance in communication to amuse or surprise, as, for example, on the interactional level (cf. Geeraerts & Zenner 2016), a second-person assertive sentence with a verb of thinking as main verb. Such a sentence states directly what the second-person subject, the hearer, thinks. However, it is unusual to speak such a sentence because it is odd to assert the hearer’s internal world to him or her. In this sense, such second-person assertives are “unspeakable” or at least difficult to speak. By using such a sentence, however, the speaker can surprise the hearer and make fun of him or her or change the psychological relationship between them, depending on the situation. In the current paper I will examine the interaction-play as an extended use of wordplay on the interactional level through the unusual use of second-person assertives with verbs of thinking named “seeing-through utterances.”

2. Description of the Background of the Problem

2.1. Franz Kafka and Wordplay

Franz Kafka is known worldwide as an author who tells curious stories like *The Metamorphosis* (*Die Verwandlung*) where the main character Gregor Samsa woke up,

¹ *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*. Eighth edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015: 1776.

found himself a vermin and his transformation caused troubles in the family. The short text *The Trees* (*Die Bäume*) shows a theme-shift and a special “superlogical” world (Nishijima 2000). In order to create such curious extra-ordinary worlds Kafka seems to have done various experimental trials to linguistic expressions (cf. Furukawa 1996). Among others there are some fragmental texts with interesting extraordinary linguistic interactions. In this section I will pick up one example from them to show what experimental technique Kafka tried to apply and his constructed world can be regarded as a kind of wordplay in the sense of curious communication or linguistic interaction².

2.2. An Example for wordplay as Interpersonal Games

The following text is a fragment from Kafka’s posthumous writings³. This text has no original title because it is just a fragmental text not to be intended to publish. The fragment is here temporarily named *Der Brunnen* (*The Fountain*).

“Niemals ziehst Du das Wasser aus der Tiefe dieses Brunnens.”

“Was für Wasser? Was für Brunnen?”

“Wer fragt denn?”

Stille.

“Was für eine Stille?”

This fragmental text consists of four utterances equipped with quotation marks and one descriptive comment. For the purpose of explanation, each line is numbered sequentially and given gloss to it.

(1) *Niemals ziehst Du das Wasser aus der Tiefe dieses Brunnens.*

never pull you the water from the depth this. GEN fountain. GEN

² Kafka’s wordplay is mentioned for example in Polizer (1977: 227-243).

³ Franz Kafka: *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*. Hrsg. von Jost Schillemeit, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002, 338-339. The Analysis of the text is based on Nishijima (2001).

(‘You never pull the water from the depth of this fountain.’)

(2) *Was für Wasser? Was für Brunnen?*

what for water what for fountain

(‘what kind of water? What kind of fountain?’)

(3) *Wer fragt denn?*

who ask PARTICLE

(‘Who on earth asks?’)

(4) *Stille.*

silence

(‘silence.’)

(5) *Was für eine Stille?*

was for a silence

(‘What kind of a silence?’)

The utterances are only presented with quotation marks (see the text on the previous page), but without any information on the speaker and hearer. Therefore, its situational context can be not determined.

Utterance (1) contains the second-person pronoun *Du* (‘you’). Therefore, it seems to lead the readers to understand that in the situation there is a person to whom the pronoun *Du* refers and to whom an assertion or confirmation is performed. In addition, it is expected that there is a fountain near the location where the sentence is uttered.

Utterance (2) consists of two interrogative sentences which ask what kinds of objects mentioned as *Wasser* (‘water’) and *Brunnen* (‘fountain’). These questions are obviously related to the previous utterance (1) because the latter contains the words which are asked in (2). Its function is a request of more detailed information on the contents of utterance (1). Probably, someone who assumes to be addressed by the second-person pronoun *Du* utters this expression.

Utterance (3) is an interrogative. Its function is a request to specialize who asks. An asking sentence exists only in the previous line and utterance (3) is oriented to

utterance (2). Utterance (3) requests to ask who is asking. Therefore, the readers recognize that utterance (1) is not oriented to the speaker of utterance (2), i.e., that the speaker of utterance (1) doesn't know who is the person to whom the second-person pronoun *Du* refers in utterance (1). Therefore, utterance (3) can be regarded as a statement of unexpectedness or astonishment, moreover, a criticism to the intention to bring the speaker of utterance (3) to the dialogue in question.

In this moment, we must come back to utterance (1) again and reconsider its interpretation. How can we explain that the second-person pronoun *Du* is used though the person to whom *Du* refers does not exist before the speaker of utterance (1)? There are two explanations: The first one is the case where the speaker of utterance (1) speaks to himself as an imagined conversation participant and mentions himself as *Du*. In this case, the content of utterance (1) is a monologue of the speaker to himself. The other is the case where a certain content is reproduced without considering any conversation participants like in proverbs or idiomatic phrases. In such expressions a second-person pronoun *Du* often functions as indefinite pronoun *man* ('one'). Utterance (1) can be regarded as such an idiomatic sentence. In that case, it is reinterpreted that the speaker of utterance (1) reproduced his or her monologue as an idiomatic sentence.

In any of both explanations the second person pronoun *Du* is not used to refer to a real conversation participant. The pronoun *du* refers to the speaker himself or herself or functions as an indefinite pronoun like *man* ('one'). Nonetheless, the sentence with the pronoun *Du* was uttered and anyone but the speaker reacted to the utterance. Here it can be reinterpreted that an intervention of anyone except the ordinary conversation partners is made, probably by anyone who assumes that he or she was addressed by the second-person pronoun *Du* except ordinary conversational participants and reacts to the previous utterance. Based on this interpretation, it can be explained well why utterance (3) states unexpectedness because the speaker of utterance (1) doesn't expect any real conversation participants.

Who is the speaker of utterance (2)? It is obvious that he or she is not a person with whom the speaker of utterance (1) does not expect to talk. The person states utterance

(2) and does not answer to the question of utterance (3) below. However, it is not clear why the speaker of utterance (2) does not answer. Is he or she an extraordinary person who needs to or cannot answer to the question? If so, it can be assumed that the narrator of this text appears as a conversation partner and interferes in the conversation in question. It is a just possible explanation and cannot be determined because of the lack of enough contextual information.

A linguistic expression in (4) is not equipped with quotation marks. It is not an utterance, but a descriptive explanation by the narrator who is assumed to have narrated this text. It is located under utterance (3) and tells that any response is not uttered to the question of utterance (3). Therefore, the function of the descriptive comment can be regarded as explanation of a refusal to response to utterance (3).

Utterance (5) is an interrogative which asks what kind of *Stille* (silence) is. Utterance (2) and (5) are formulated commonly in a question form. However, utterance (5) differs from utterance (2) in what is asked. The former asked the descriptive comment in the previous line, the latter the utterance before it. This difference is significant because a traditional literary construction convention is violated. Generally, the level of conversation and that of descriptive comments are different. Therefore, a descriptive text is regarded as a descriptive explanation of the events in a literary world by the narrator from meta-level (Głowiński 1974: 7ff.). Therefore, it would be a destruction of a conventional narration for a narrator to try to talk to a character of the text.

2.3. Violation of the Literary Convention as Wordplay

A voice of someone as utterance (2) reaches to the ears of the speaker of utterance (1). However, the person is not to be seen. The same invisible person seems to utter utterance (5). Therefore, he or she raises questions about not only the previous utterance but also the previous descriptive comment. In both cases, the invisible person interferes in the conversation, which shakes the stable relationship or framework between conversation by characters and descriptive explanation of the situation where the conversation occurs. In this sense this interference of the voices of the invisible person, a violation of

conventional territorial boundaries, can be regarded as a kind of wordplay or interaction-play and furthermore can contribute to creation of a new literary world.

3. Second-Person Assertives as Wordplay

3.1. Second-Person Assertives in Present Form

Here is an example of second-person assertives that include general verbs in the present tense as predicates. The following text is an excerpt from the conversation-script of the musical *My Fair Lady*⁴ and depicts the scene of the first encounter of the main character Higgins and his colleague Pickerling. Till the encounter they only knew of each other by name as linguists.

- (6) Higgins: I could pass you off as the Queen of Sheba.
- Eliza: You don't believe that, Capt'n?
- Pickerling: Anything's possible.
I, myself, am a student of Indian dialects.
- Higgins: Are you? Do you know Colonel Pickering, the author of
Spoken Sanskrit?
- Pickerling: I am Colonel Pickerling. Who are you?
- Higgins: I'm Henry Higgins, author of Higgins' Universal Alphabet.
- Pickerling: I came from India to meet you!
- Higgins: I was going to India to meet you!
Where are you staying?
- Pickerling: At the Carlton.
- Higgins: No, you're not.
You're staying at 27A Wimpole Street.

⁴ http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/m/my-fair-lady-script-transcript.html

You come with me. (emphasis added by the author)

We'll have a little jaw over supper.

3.2. Second-Person Assertives as a Request

The underlined sentence above, *You come with me*, is an example of a second-person assertive in the present form. It expresses the interlocutor's near future action and indicates Higgins' strong request to Pickerling, functionally similar in this context to an imperative form such as *Come with me*. It sounds rude or overfriendly,⁵ though it is a grammatically correct sentence. If the conversation participants feel close to each other, then the sentence can be acceptable as displaying an attitude of friendship towards the interlocutor. However, second-person assertives with verbs of thinking as predicates in present form would be odd or unusual if directly uttered to the interlocutor.

3.3. Unspeakable Sentences and Seeing-Through Utterances

Second-person assertives with verbs of thinking as predicates in the present form are as follows.

- (7) a. *I think that Tom's presentation was so boring.*
- b. *You think that Tom's presentation was so boring.*
- c. *She thinks that Tom's presentation was so boring.*

(7a), (7b), and (7c) are first-person, second-person, and third-person assertives, respectively. Each sentence in (8) is indeed grammatically correct. (7b), however, seems pragmatically unusual. The oddness of (7b) is understandable when compared with (8a) and (8b) below, which are grammatical and usual.

⁵ In fact, to the conversation in question, one of my friends from the US made such a comment and he would say "That's silly. Why don't you come with me?"

- (8) a. *Do you think that Tom's presentation was so boring?*
 b. *You probably think that Tom's presentation was so boring.*

(8a) and (8b) are an interrogative and an assertive with a modal adverb, respectively. Neither sentence asserts categorically what the interlocutor thinks. On the other hand, (7b) tells the interlocutor what he or she thinks directly and categorically. It would be odd for the speaker to state this categorically because doing so means that the speaker has access to the interlocutor's personal domain or internal world.

In this sense, second-person assertives like (7b), which are grammatical but pragmatically unusual sentences, are unspeakable, or at least difficult to speak to the interlocutor.⁶ If such sentences are uttered, then we shall refer to them as “seeing-through utterances” because the speaker speaks as if he or she were able to see into the mind of the interlocutor (Nishijima 2005; 2015).

3.4. Definition of Seeing-Through Utterances

In this section, seeing-through utterances will be briefly defined.

A seeing-through utterance can be characterized formally as containing the following features:

- (a) a second person like *du* or *Sie* ‘you’ as the subject of the utterance;
- (b) a verb of thinking like *denken* ‘think’, *glauben* ‘believe’, etc., as the main predicate or *wollen* ‘will’ as the modal or main verb;
- (c) present form;
- (d) assertive form;
- (e) no modal particles like *wahrscheinlich* ‘possibly’, *vielleicht* ‘maybe’, *wohl* ‘probably’, etc.

⁶ Some researchers use “unspeakable sentence” in the meaning of “free indirect speech” (cf. Banfield 1982; Yamaguchi 1989).

Any sentences with the characteristics above are usually unspeakable. However, if such a sentence is uttered, it means that the speaker states the interlocutor's mind categorically.

3.5 Seeing-Through Utterances and Free Indirect Speech

Here I will compare seeing-through utterances with free indirect speech. In general, free indirect speech is defined as the narrator's reconstruction in a narrative of what a character says to him- or herself. In the sense of reconstructing the internal world of a person, a seeing-through utterance is related to free indirect speech. In fact, Suzuki (2005) points out one use of free indirect speech with second-person subjects in face-to-face communication.

- (9) "Sie sind verheiratet. Meine Mutter gehört zur alten Generation."
 you are engaged my mother belongs to the old generation

According to Suzuki (2005: 186), the underlined sentence in (9) was actually spoken to him by his host family's daughter, who had picked him and his fiancée up, en route to their house. The emphasized sentence is direct speech, but can be also regarded as a kind of free indirect speech because the host family's daughter reconstructs from her point of view what Suzuki may say to her mother. Suzuki explains that the underlined sentence in (9) can be interpreted as (10).

- (10) "*Sagen Sie, wir sind verheiratet.*"
 say you, we are engaged

Sentence (10) expresses what she wants him to say to her mother. The sentence can be reconstructed as a kind of free indirect speech like (9) from the point of view of the daughter.

Concerning reconstruction of a second-person subject's internal world, seeing-

through utterances and free indirect speech with a second-person subject in face-to-face communication are formally similar. However, they differ in certain respects. In respect to differences in function, the underlined sentence as free indirect speech is formulated by the speaker to ensure smooth communication in a given situation, not to refer to the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. On the other hand, a seeing-through utterance is used strategically by the speaker to change the relationship with the hearer (interlocutor).⁷

3.6. Wordplay or “Interaction-Play”

Usually, as mentioned above, seeing-through utterances are “unspeakable” or at least difficult to speak directly to the interlocutor. However, uttering unspeakable sentences or saying unexpected things to the interlocutor is expected to affect him or her psychologically. If so, then by uttering such an unspeakable sentence, the speaker intends to disturb or confuse the interlocutor psychologically and observe his or her reaction. In other words, the unspeakable sentence can be uttered as psychological game between the speaker and the interlocutor in a struggle, for example. In this sense, uttering a seeing-through utterance can be regarded as a kind of wordplay, or play to change the interactional relationship for psychological advantage.

Uttering such unspeakable sentences performs a psychological action on the interlocutor. From an interactional point of view, it is interpretable as wordplay or “interaction-play” because telling the interlocutor directly what he or she thinks is normally unexpected. However, if uttered, it is intended to affect or upset the interlocutor psychologically to gain an advantage in their relationship. In this sense, speaking seeing-through utterances may be regarded as wordplay, or more exactly interaction-play.

If such seeing-through utterances are used intentionally in Kafka’s work, i.e., as a kind of wordplay in an interpersonal psychological game between characters to show

⁷ For a detailed discussion see Nishijima (2016: 173–176).

the speaker is in a position to see into the mind of the interlocutor, then we may conclude that the speaker is trying to upset the interlocutor and gain psychological advantage in an interpersonal mind game or to display power over the interlocutor.

Why? Because Kafka is probably depicting a kind of mental game between the characters and describes one character trying to tease or show dominance over another in the psychological game by uttering such sentences.⁸

3.7. Hypothesis

To utter a seeing-through utterance is to do something interactionally to the interlocutor. Namely, telling the interlocutor directly what he or she is thinking disturbs or confuses him or her and elicits his or her reaction. The seeing-through utterances can be used as a psychological trick to change the game between the speaker and the interlocutor. They can be regarded as a form of wordplay, or interaction-play. By uttering a seeing-through utterance to the interlocutor, the speaker states that he or she is in a position to read the interlocutor's intention and therefore to control his or her behavior.

4. Demonstration

4.1. Seeing-Through Utterances in *Die Flöte*

This text is a fragment from Kafka's posthumous writings⁹. The text is here provisionally named *Die Flöte* (*The Flute*).

“Auf diesem Stück gekrümmten Wurzelholzes willst Du jetzt Flöte spielen?”

“Ich hätte nicht daran gedacht, nur weil Du es erwartest will ich es tun.”

⁸ Hess-Lüttich (2004) analyzed conversations of Kafka's works from a point of view of “misunderstanding” between characters.

⁹ Franz Kafka: *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*. Edited by J. Schillemeit. Critical Edition. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002, p. 358; translation in English by the author.

“Ich erwarte es?”

“Ja, denn im Anblick meiner Hände sagst Du dir, daß kein Holz widerstehen kann nach meinem Willen zu tönen.”

“Du hast Recht.”

[A1: “On this piece of a bent root timber, you will play a flute now?”

B1: “I wouldn’t have thought that. Only because you expect it, I shall do it.”

A2: “I expect it?”

B2: “Yes, for in seeing my hands you think that no timber can resist sounding according to my will.”

A3: “You are right.”]

As the utterances occur in alternation, we suppose two persons A and B are talking to each other. Thus, each sentence is assigned to A or B alternately. To understand the text more clearly, I have glossed it below (Underlined and numbered by the author).

A1: “Auf diesem Stück gekrümmten Wurzelholzes

on this piece bend.PP root.timber.GEN

willst Du jetzt Flöte spielen?”

will you now flute play

B1: “Ich hätte nicht daran gedacht, nur weil Du es

I would.have not that think.PP, only because you it

erwartest will ich es tun.” (11)

expect will I it do

A2: “Ich erwarte es?”

I expect it?

B2: “Ja, denn im Anblick meiner Hände sagst Du dir,

yes, for in sight my.GEN hands say you yourself.DAT

daß kein Holz widerstehen kann nach meinem Willen

that no timber resist can according to my will

zu tönen.” (12)

to sound

A3: “Du hast Recht.”

you have right

This text can be regarded as an example of the utterance of an “unspeakable” sentence. The text describes an interaction concerning the intentions of the characters A and B. By mentioning the interlocutor A’s intention or internal world (11), B1 is engaging in a kind of wordplay with A. By uttering such a sentence as (12), B2 tries to upset or affect A2 and stand over or persuade him or her psychologically in a conversation as a sort of mental game. A3 confirms that he or she had been persuaded, and as a result B is standing over A. In this way, such grammatical but pragmatically strange sentences occur in Kafka’s fictional conversations, i.e., in situations in which their speakers try to affect their interlocutors in a surprising way (cf. Nishijima 2016: 27–39).

4.2 Seeing-Through Utterances in *Das Urteil*

Sentence (13) is uttered directly by the father to his son Georg to show his power or dominance as father over his son by suggesting he is in a position to see into Georg’s mind¹⁰.

(13) *Du denkst, du hast noch die Kraft, hierher zu kommen und hältst dich bloß zurück, weil du so willst.*

[You think you have strength enough to come over here and that you’re only hanging back of your own accord.]

¹⁰ *Das Urteil*, in *Drucke zu Lebzeiten*. Critical Edition. Edited by W. Kittler, H.-G. Koch & G. Neumann, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002: 58; English translation from *The Judgment*, in *The Collected Short Stories of Franz Kafka*. Edited by N.N. Glatzer, London: Penguin, 1988: 86).

Until that scene, the father had been depicted as a weaker person than his son. However, in this scene, he suddenly becomes stronger and utters an expression that indicates that he is able to see into the mind of his son.

An interpretation is possible that the utterance is used intentionally in this situation to display the change in the power relationship between the father and the son. If so, then it can be said that the change in their power relationship is correlated to the use of the utterance because it expresses the power of the father over his son (cf. Nishijima 2008).

In addition, the use of the seeing-through utterance can be also regarded as wordplay or interaction-play because through the utterance the father tries to establish a psychological advantage in their interaction.

4.3. Seeing-Through Utterances in *Der Proceß*

The sentence below can be regarded as a seeing-through utterance, and it functions to display the speaker's power over the interlocutor (Underlined by the author)¹¹.

“Und Sie wollen nicht befreit werden,” schrie K. und legte die Hand auf die Schulter des Studenten, der mit den Zähnen nach ihr schnappte. “Nein,” rief die Frau und wehrte K. mit beiden Händen ab, “nein, nein nur das nicht, woran denken Sie denn! Das wäre mein Verderben...”
[“And you don’t want to be set free,” cried K., laying his hand on the shoulder of the student, who snapped at it with his teeth. “No,” cried the woman, pushing K. away with both hands. “No, no, you mustn’t do that, what are you thinking of? It would be the ruin of me...”]

The underlined sentence can be also regarded as a seeing-through utterance. In this

¹¹ *Der Proceß*. Critical Edition. Edited by M. Pasley, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002: 86, emphasis by the author. English translation from *The Trial*. Definitive Edition. Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir. Revised, and with additional materials translated by E. M. Butler, New York: Vintage Books, 1969: 72–73.

scene, K. speaks to a woman who has just been taken somewhere by a student, by which he, K., tries to establish a mentally dominant position over the woman. However, his dominance is immediately denied through physical violence by the student and the woman's conforming utterance to the student.

This can be interpreted as follows. The student has connections with the court where K. will be tried, and on the basis of the power structure arising from this relationship, he, the student, can deny K.'s dominance. Although the woman has no power over K., she can influence him somewhat due to the student's relationship to the court.

After the conversation, K. utters the following sentence¹².

...er [K.] sah ein, daß dies die erste zweifellose Niederlage war, die er von diesen Leuten erfahren hatte. [...he recognized that this was the first unequivocal defeat that he had received from these people.]

K. conceded his defeat to the student and the woman. K.'s defeat is symbolically expressed by the physical denial of K.'s seeing-through utterance.

4.4. Seeing-Through Utterances in *Das Schloß*

Another example of seeing-through utterances is the following¹³.

“Und wenn Du kein Nachtlager bekommst, willst Du dann etwa von mir verlangen, daß ich hier im warmen Zimmer schlafe während ich weiß, daß Du draußen in Nacht und Kälte umherirrst.” [“And if you don't

¹² *Der Proceß*. Critical Edition. Edited by M. Pasley, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002: 86; English translation from *The Trial*. Definitive Edition. Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir. Revised, and with additional materials translated by E. M. Butler, New York: Vintage Books, 1969: 73.

¹³ *Das Schloß*. Critical Edition. Edited by M. Pasley, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002: 150; English translation from *The Castle*. Definitive Edition. Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Vintage Books, 1974: 120.

manage to find a roof for the night, do you really expect me to sleep here in my warm room while I know that you are wandering about out there in the dark and cold?”]

Frieda, a waitress at the Herrenhof Inn, uttered this sentence, which categorically expresses what K., the main character, wants Frieda to do and that K. is ready to be sacrificed. This utterance suggests Frieda’s position relative to K.

After the utterance, K. stated his decision to take a position as school janitor, which he had not intended to accept, as follows¹⁴.

“Dann bleibt nichts übrig, als anzunehmen, komm!”

[“Then there’s nothing left but to accept. Come along!”]

Frieda’s seeing-through utterance states what K. thinks, and thereby he seems to change his intention to comply with Frieda’s wishes. Tsuji (1971: 154) pointed out that Frieda’s utterance above triggered a change in K.’s mind in this scene, and he takes a job as a janitor against his original intention. In this way, seeing-through utterances can define the relationship between the participants of a conversation as well as play an important role in developing the story.

5. Concluding Remarks

Seeing-through utterances are indeed grammatical, but they seem to be unspeakable or at least difficult to speak directly to the interlocutor. Such utterances function as wordplay or interaction-play between two participants in the fictional conversations of Franz Kafka. Namely, through the utterance the speaker tries to gain or establish an interactional psychological advantage and to persuade or display dominance over the

¹⁴ *ibid.*

interlocutor.

The current study clarifies that the psychological relationships between conversation participants correlate with the use of seeing-through utterances and are mutually interrelated. For example, a change in a power relationship can be expressed through a seeing-through utterance, or a seeing-through utterance can cause a change in the dominance relationship between conversation participants.

Until now, few examples of seeing-through utterances have been analyzed from the point of view of wordplay, or more exactly interaction-play. In order to examine whether the argument presented in this paper is universally valid, further texts by Kafka or other authors will have to be analyzed.

The concept of interaction-play was introduced to extend the concept of wordplay. Further research in this line would shed more light on a new aspect of interaction as wordplay between the speaker and hearer.

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