

Gossiping in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)

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Abstract

This study deals with gossiping as a complex speech act carried out through multiple participants. It can include many speech acts and can fit into various speech act categories. Thus, this study aims at (1) investigating the most common speech acts used – in order to issue gossiping, (2) figuring out the most common types of presupposition of gossiping, and (3) identifying the functions of gossiping. To achieve these aims, it is hypothesized that: (1) stating and telling are the most common speech acts used in issuing gossiping, (2) factive presupposition is the most common type used in issuing gossiping, and (3) information, intimacy, and entertainment are the functions of gossiping. Then, to achieve the aims of the study and test its hypotheses, the following procedures are adopted: (1) presenting a theoretical background of gossiping, and (2) analyzing the data of the study according to a model developed by the study. The findings of such analysis come up with employing different kinds of speech acts in triggering the gossip, on the part of the gossiper, such as: telling (0.4%), stating (0.4%), and criticizing (0.2%). As for presupposition, it is the only strategy that is employed by the gossipers to trigger gossip in all of the ten excerpts. Depending on the analysis of the data of the study, the following conclusions are introduced: (1) Gossiping is an activity that is concerned with the affairs of a third party. (2) The speech acts of telling, stating, and criticizing are employed to trigger gossip. (3) Telling and stating, as pragmatic strategies, are connected with serving the function of conveying information.

Key words: Gossip, speech acts, presupposition, pragmatic strategies, The Scarlet Letter

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