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# THE PROTAGONIST'S FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION CAUSED BY THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN "*PYGMALION*" BY BERNARD SHAW

Vugar Guliyev

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# Abstract

**Title:** *The Character's Fundamental Transformation Caused by The Use of Language in "Pygmalion" by Bernard Shaw*

**Author:** Vugar Guliyev

**Supervisor:** Marius Hentea

**Abstract:** Shaw's *Pygmalion* is often considered as a play about the superficial change of its protagonist. The purpose of this essay is to reveal the fundamental transformation that Eliza experiences by focusing on the progressive improvement in her use of language. The method of close reading is employed to display the changes in the essence of her character that she undergoes. The findings of this analysis that display the complete transformation of Eliza's character are expected to widen the variety of available perspectives adopted for viewing Shaw's famous theater piece.

**Keywords:** Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, Eliza's language, transformation, drama, Shaw's philosophy, education, mythology

# Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 Secondary Sources, Method and Structure .....	1
2. On Shaw's vision, power of his language and ideas .....	3
3. On the importance of language demonstrated in the play and its didactic use .....	7
4. Discussion .....	9
4.1 The beginning of the transformation (Acts I, II, III) .....	9
4.2 The completion of the transformation (Acts IV and V) .....	14
5. Conclusion .....	21
References .....	23

# 1. Introduction

The influence that mythology has had on literature is quite considerable. Whereas one can think of a variety of ways to consider classical myths as ur-texts for modern literary works, and even genres, the inspiration drawn from Greek and Roman mythological texts is easily discernible by simply reading the titles of works, or by drawing parallels between the progression of modern stories and the events mentioned in the myths. By calling his play “Pygmalion”, Shaw undoubtedly reveals its connection with the classical Greek myth about Pygmalion and Galatea. To be even more accurate, it is the idea of transformation mentioned in the myth that Shaw used as a point of departure to create his famous theater piece.

The principal topic of *Pygmalion*, one of the most famous plays by Bernard Shaw, a well-known Irish playwright, is the transformation its protagonist Eliza Doolittle undergoes as she takes lessons on phonetics from Professor Higgins at his laboratory. However, while the theater piece raises a variety of issues and have been viewed from different prisms, it can certainly be regarded as a multifaceted literary work.

The purpose of this study is to claim that the heroine’s transformation is not only superficial, but also fundamental, by focusing on Eliza’s use of language and changes in her character that she undergoes in Shaw’s distinguished play. Thus, in order to identify concrete steps to carry out the current analysis, it is reasonable to present an overview of the previous research works that shed light on various types of transformation that take place in *Pygmalion*.

## 1.1 *Secondary Sources, Method and Structure*

*Pygmalion* has had many interpretations in the context of the transformations that take place in it. Thus, to present a systematic review of the available pieces of research so far, the secondary sources are divided in two groups that represent the fields of literature and linguistics.

Drawing a parallel between the Ovidian myth and Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, Essaka Joshua considers Shaw’s famous play “as a part of a network of Pygmalion contexts” and analyzes the transformation of Eliza’s character “who gradually metamorphoses into an independent and self-assured young woman” from “an innocent and vulnerable teenager” (1998: 117). To

present Shaw's play as narrative bridge between the centuries, Vicki Kennel considers Shaw's version of the Pygmalion tale as two fundamental revisions of Ovid's story: "the change from supernatural agency to natural explanations and the replacement of physical creation by linguistic transformation" (2005: 73). Thus, adopting the aforementioned perspective, Kennel points out that "The twentieth-century novelist is a Pygmalion creating numerous other Pygmalions, each one unable – or merely unwilling – to cease playing with identity" (80). Another approach to interpret the play in the context of transformation was adopted by Lili Porten in 2006. According to Porten, one can interpret the play agreeing that "education is indeed a quasi-magical force capable of propelling poor but worthy students to prosperity" and/or as the story of a disadvantageous and unfortunate experience that causes identity crisis for Eliza through changing her social status (2006: 72). One more source that suggests possibilities for transformation for women is "A Shavian guide to the intelligent woman" by Barbara Watson. Adopting a feminist perspective, Watson reflects upon Shaw's works, his judgement about politics and economics, and letters to women and looks into Shaw's thoughts and ideas about principal aspects of the woman's life ranging from personal to social and political. The author emphasizes Shaw's insistence on complete equality between men and women to the point that Watson considers Shaw's "assertions of the androgynous nature of personality (1964: 21).

Shaw's *Pygmalion* has been examined in the field of linguistics as well. Using the perspective of Eliza's transformation, Pirnajmuddin and Arani examined the function of education discourse through disciplinary productive power in their research in 2011. Cody J. Matthews, who also adopted a linguistic perspective to research into the play in 2017, followed the progress of Eliza's dominance in spheres of autonomy and awareness through the combination of corpus linguistics and close reading. The linguist refers to Eliza's corpus to analyze the change of her language – speech, grammar and vocabulary – as the text moves forward.

Prior to carrying out any analysis, it is worthwhile to look at the formulation of Shaw's vision and the power of his language, his views and ideas that he put forward, and the didactic use of language. The playwright's ideas and outlook will be the platform to analyze his conception of new speech and equality that language can create. Therefore, this essay will focus on the secondary sources by Reynolds, Alexander, Berst, and Holroyd whose analysis of Shaw's works also include the importance attached by the playwright to language. Thus,

Shaw's own ideas will be the theoretical frame to use the method of close reading of the play aiming:

- to focus on the progressive difference in Eliza's use of language
- to demonstrate and interpret the sharpening contrast that reveals the change in the essence of her character.

## 2. On Shaw's vision, power of his language and ideas

This section focuses on the secondary sources that bring into view the process of shaping Shaw's outlook and ideas.

According to Jean Reynolds, the theories of postmodernism reveal Shaw's talent more comprehensively than numerous studies into Shaw's works in the frame of the other literary theories. As the critic further points out in the Preface to her book *Pygmalion's Wordplay*: "...a playwright and social critic grappling with linguistic, psychological, and philosophical issues that still rage today" is the underlying reason to consider Shaw as a postmodern author (1999). Shaw never isolated literature from economics, politics, philosophy, and social problems. The playwright deeply involved himself in the thoughts of Karl Marx, the nineteenth-century political theorist who was keenly interested in language and its impact on human thinking, and anticipated someone like Derrida by presenting a value structure functioning in capitalist economics comparable to Derrida's "dismantling of the Platonic hierarchy that privileges the 'natural' over the 'artificial'" (1999: 52).

It was Shelley, Marx and Wagner, the "prophets of postmodernism" as Reynolds names them, who influenced Shaw's acumen upon which he developed a combination of "art and ideas" (2). Considering, therefore, the long-established juxtapositions of "aesthetics versus advocacy, imagination versus intellect, and seriousness versus play" unworthy, Shaw's comprehensiveness, which is the rejection of the old dichotomies thus became "one important postmodern characteristic of Shavian 'new speech'" (3). The sharpness of Shaw's intellect allowed him to transcend the limitations of existing conventional approaches and write prose that turned out to contain paradox and inconsistency, which in turn, became "alternately

radical and conservative, reverent and blasphemous, humorous and grave” (3). The originality of Shaw’s “new speech”, which implies “Shavian inclusiveness” as a linguistic aspect, lies in his effort to enlighten readers and listeners about ideas suppressed in everyday language, and that is what twentieth-century readers uncovered quite late. Even literary critics were confused about “Shaw’s stylistic extravagance”, and failed to comprehend that the playwright upheld the deep-rooted tradition of such orators as Empedocles, Cicero, Quintilian, Ramus, Vico, Petrarch, and so forth, who highly valued the transformative power of language (1999).

According to Reynolds, Shaw repeatedly illustrate “how language flexes, evolves, complicates, destabilizes mystifies, and doubles back on itself in both frustrating and fascinating ways”, which is very surprising, especially taking into consideration that Shaw could not have read any of Derrida’s works (52). Shaw’s rhetorical method is illustrated through his character of Eliza, whose personality changes as she follows Higgins’s instructions, and as Reynolds expresses it, “feels herself part of a different milieu; the result is ‘new speech’ and a new life” when she lives with Higgins and Pickering (54).

To demonstrate how Shaw masterfully uses language, especially “its tolerance of multiple meanings”, Reynolds refers to one of the scenes in Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, in which, during Eliza’s first visit to the Wimpole street laboratory, Higgins uses the expression “your handkerchief” implying “a general class of items” while Eliza understands him literally and takes the handkerchief:

LIZA. What’s this for?

HIGGINS. To wipe your eyes. To wipe any part of your face that feels moist. Remember: that’s your handkerchief; and that’s your sleeve. Don’t mistake the one for the other if you wish to become a lady in a shop.

[*Liza, utterly bewildered, stares at him.*]

MRS PEARSE. It’s no use talking to her like that, Mr. Higgins; she doesn’t understand you... [*she takes the handkerchief*].

LIZA. [*snatching it*] Here! You give me that handkerchief. He gave it to me, not you.

PICKERING [*laughing*] He did. I think it must be regarded as her property, Mrs Pearse (Quoted in Reynolds 52).

As one can see, Shaw flawlessly illustrates how language might have numerous interpretations, which in turn shows its power. Shaw sincerely believed that social equality, “the belief that the nameless miller is as worthy a human being as any aristocrat”, would not



be achieved until educated citizens demanded it, and that the dissemination of ideas would not be enough to empower them but through “‘new speech’ by developing their speaking, writing, and thinking skills” (Reynolds 50).

In order to emphasize the power of the “new speech” by provoking his readers to find unexpected meaning and relationships in familiar surroundings”, Shaw did not offer his readers “the profound lifestyle change that transformed Eliza Doolittle into ‘a quite different human being’” (74). This standpoint of Shaw’s, presented by Reynolds, reveals the significance of enabling people via “new speech” by honing their thinking, speaking and writing skills, which is clearly apparent in *Pygmalion* (Reynolds 1999).

As Nigel Alexander asserts in *The Play of Ideas*, Shaw considered “phonetics and the proper pronunciation of the English language as a serious instrument of social change”, and points out that the playwright funded research for the “development of a proper phonetic alphabet” (1988: 26). Pursuing this concept, Shaw introduced his thoughts in *Pygmalion* in which one of the significant ideas that emerge is the idea of “the great class barriers” (26). However, taking into consideration the complexity of learning English and the science of phonetics, especially when it is not very clear how a phonetic alphabet can be the solution to the problems of the language, it would be very wrong to agree with Shaw’s views and adopt his perspective at the very beginning in order to understand his play (Alexander 1988). Therefore, to avoid any ambiguity related with understanding of this kind of academic subject both by his readers and audience in a theatre, Shaw presents a brief and simplistic interpretation in his preface to *Pygmalion*:

But if the play makes the public aware that there are such people as phoneticians, and that they are among the most important people in England at present, it will serve its turn (Quoted in Alexander 1988: 26).

As Alexander rightly observes, the significance of phonetics as an aspect in the play is “the most obvious, not the most vital” and, therefore, *Pygmalion* does not seem to contain any concrete and dominant ideas about the study of the English language (26). However, the play raises numerous questions about the relationship between people in English society that are both meaningful and intense.

Although one might ask a number of questions about English society portrayed in *Pygmalion* by Shaw, the key query will be about, as Holroyd expressed it, “the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul” (1989: 330). Therefore, bearing in mind

Holroyd's statement, the most logical question will be, "How is it possible, according to Shaw, to bridge the gulf in order to bring the classes together?"

In order to respond to that query, Holroyd, the biographer of Bernard Shaw, begins interpreting *Pygmalion* by viewing Higgins's relationship with Eliza as "a live experiment we are shown on stage, and as with all such laboratory work it is necessary for the Frankenstein doctor to behave as if his creating were insentient". He supports the interpretation with a quote from *Pygmalion*, "She is incapable of understanding anything. [...] Does it occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has some feelings? Oh no, I don't think so. Not any feelings that we need to bother about" (326). Furthermore, Holroyd focuses on Shaw's second social experiment through Eliza's father – Alfred Doolittle, who considers himself both an honest man and a rogue. However, it is Alfred Doolittle's character that Shaw chooses to transform to "a reasonable income-for-all" for his "quick wits" and surface charm of the capitalist entrepreneur simply by a playful reference to Doolittle "as the most original moralist in England in a letter to an American philanthropist", because of which "the underserving dustman is left £3,000 a year" (327).

Thus, having focused on both experiments by Shaw, Holroyd prepares the ground for emphasizing the aspect of language by comparing Shaw's play with the Pygmalion legend. Holroyd concentrates on how Higgins's creation of "a petrified social statue of Eliza", under whose guidance "she becomes a doll of 'remarkable distinction and beauty ... speaking with pedantic correctness of pronunciation and great beauty of tone'" and refers to language as a powerful tool (327). Eliza, compared to Pygmalion's Galatea, is considered as a bought woman and Higgins's creation while living in his house whereas the transformation scene is regarded as Eliza's rebirth and "a severing of umbilical cord" (329). In the middle of that scene, Higgins refuses to marry Eliza, the "flower girl, [...] manufactured into a replica duchess" [...] "then transformed [...] into an independent living woman" and tells her that she is now free and can do whatever she wants to, but by the end of that scene Eliza flees to Higgins's mother's house where she is graciously accepted.

According to Holroyd, whereas "the purpose of Higgins's experiment has been 'filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul'" the class gulf becomes filled at the garden party, unlike the abyss between Eliza and Higgins that remains. Eliza is the one who undergoes the fundamental changes, not Higgins who acknowledges, "I cant

change my nature” and continues to be, as Eliza notes, “a born preacher”, which turns out to be the only role he can sustain (331).

### **3. On the importance of language demonstrated in the play and its didactic use**

Bearing in mind the aim of the essay to reveal Eliza’s fundamental transformation through the progressive use of her language, it is important to look at the significance of language Shaw’s play demonstrates and the didactic purpose it has.

According to Reynolds, the conflicts that occur throughout the play illustrate the complicated connections between words and power. To elaborate on her statement, she considers Eliza “imprisoned in poverty by her inarticulate speech” at the beginning of the theater piece and quotes Higgins’s words as a support, “the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days” (43). Furthermore, Reynolds focuses on Eliza’s instinctive understanding of the linkage between language and power, and refers to the scene in which Eliza, frightened of the notetaker behind the pillar of St. Paul’s church, begins to deny having said anything of importance to him, “so help me, I never spoke to him except to ask him to buy a flower off me...I take my Bible oath I never said a word” (43). Thus, according to Reynolds, Eliza’s “kerbstone English” poses two obstacles for her growth. The first impediment is the lack of the “elegant speech” for working “as a lady’s maid or shop assistant”. The second difficulty is “linguistic deficiencies” that place her at a significant disadvantage when communicating with the upper classes and make her defenseless in her relations with Higgins through much of the play (44). Therefore, to highlight the role, or importance attached to language by Shaw, which causes Eliza’s remarkable transformation, Reynolds looks at three episodes from *Pygmalion*.

The first episode that Reynolds draws attention to is Higgins “addressed her not as a ‘poor girl’” – the expression Eliza used for herself “but as ‘Woman’ – a representative of her sex”. Additionally, to describe the effect of language, Reynolds refers to Shaw’s stage

directions to depict Eliza's surprised response to glorification, when she becomes "quite overwhelmed, looking up at him in mingled wonder and deprecation" (47).

The second scene that Reynolds focuses on stresses Eliza's achievement, which is speaking English that she has always underestimated:

THE NOTE TAKER. A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live. Remember, that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech; that your native language is the language of Shakespear and Milton and the Bible; and dont sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon. (Quoted in Reynolds 1999: 47)

The gist of the third scene, according to Reynolds, is conveyed with "extravagant metaphors" that induce her to consider herself differently and discern a possibility of a new life:

THE NOTE TAKER. Yes, you squashed little cabbage leaf, you disgrace to the noble architecture of these columns, you incarnate insult to the English language: I could pass you off as the Queen of Sheba. (Quoted in Reynolds 1999: 47)

Reynolds expresses doubts about Eliza understanding what Higgins actually means, especially in the early dialogues. However, she asserts that Eliza hears in Higgins's speech "that she has possibilities beyond her imagining", which become the reason "for her to take a taxi to 27A Wimpole Street the next morning, and to persist during Higgins's arduous course of lessons in 'new speech'" (48).

Charles Berst's statement that the significance of language and its use surface "as a cumulative awareness, arising from the action than as a net result of Higgins's and Shaw's comments" falls in line with Reynold's analysis (1988:58). According to Berst, the readers' close attention focuses on complications of Higgins's experiment related to human nature rather than how the experiment is carried out. However, as Berst expresses it, the phonetician and his work continuously attempt to impress their importance on the readers and, finally, succeed to convey the message in the best sense so that the audience becomes convinced of the transformation of Eliza as well as "of language's essential role in revealing and even in forming characters" (58).

Besides revealing the significance of language demonstrated in *Pygmalion*, it is reasonable to look at the didactic use of it. In his essay *The Play of Ideas* Alexander affirms that *Pygmalion*, as a didactic play, deals with a significant social question. In an attempt to analyze what the play teaches, he uses Shaw's quote "Social questions are produced by the

conflict of human institutions with human feeling” from *The Problem Play – a Symposium*, and interprets the “human institutions” as the class structure of the society, the distinguishing mark of which in the England of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was speech and accent (Alexander 20). Thus, Shaw claimed that this situation, which he considered as a social evil, could be remedied by relatively simple means. Scorning the irrational “assumption that the ‘upper classes’ were superior by virtue of their birth”, Shaw, as an experienced and competent man, argued that “the difference between the flower girl and the duchess was a matter of education and accent and not, as the romantics held, one of the birth and breeding” (20).

Thus, while considering a possibility for a flower girl to be made into a duchess within six months, one can assert that what distinguishes her from a duchess are “inherited social prestige and money, neither of which she has earned” (Alexander 59). As an example, viewing Clara’s character as “scarcely a lady”, Alexander notes that what is limiting her is not as much a lack of money as a lack of intelligence. On the other hand, he stresses that not any flower girl can become a lady except for the one with suitable drive and talents. Thereupon, according to Alexander, the major didactic achievement of *Pygmalion* is “its pointed objectification of the hollowness of the social distinctions, and its assertion of the importance of the individual personality which such distinctions obscure”. In other words, Alexander considers the barriers between classes are vulnerable to the incursion of hard work, commonsense, and ability whereas “True gentility ultimately rests upon properly channeled personal genius” (59).

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 *The beginning of the transformation (Acts I, II, III)*

In order to analyze the gradual development of Eliza’s use of language that leads to the essential change of her character, it is worthwhile to start focusing on the manner of her speech and the lack of self-possession that she displays in Act I. Her poor command of the English language, which is revealed by Shaw’s juxtaposing Eliza with that of the other characters introduced in the act, can be regarded as point for departure her transformation.

Upon introduction of the different patois of various characters who seek shelter from heavy summer rain under the portico of St Paul’s church, Shaw contrasts Eliza’s dialect to the others by representing it “without a phonetic alphabet” – the attempt which the playwright abandons

very soon “as unintelligible outside London” (1953: 203). The flower girl is introduced when she collides with a young man whom she accidentally and correctly calls by name while “hurrying in for shelter”: “Nah then Freddy: look wh’ y’ gowin, deah [...] Theres manners f’yer! Tə-oo banches ovoylets trod into the mad” (202). Whereas it is possible to justify Eliza’s reaction to a certain degree, one still can discern some discourtesy in it that negatively presents her.

In addition to the contrast between the dialects, the difference between Eliza and the other characters at the beginning of Act I is highlighted by Freddy’s mother’s condescending attitude towards Eliza: “How do you know that my son’s name is Freddy, pray? [...] I heard you call him by it. Dont try to deceive me” (203). Although Eliza denies that she had any intention to deceive her, Eliza’s poor command of language overshadows her sincerity: “Ow, eez yə-ooa san, is e? Wal, few’d dan’y də-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel’s flahrzn than ran awy athaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f’them?” and protests that she was not trying to deceive her (203). Besides intensification of the gap between the classes, the mother’s arrogant treatment of Eliza and her concern about any possible relationship between Eliza and Freddy undeniably sharpens the contrast in which Eliza has already been presented.

Another angle of viewing Eliza differently is introduced when she regards Higgins as a police officer, who is initially referred to, or introduced, by the playwright as “the note taker”. Fearing him Eliza takes her “Bible oath” that she never said a word, except for trying to sell a flower to “the gentleman” and becomes baffled when “the note taker opens his book and holds it steadily under her nose to which she responds: “Whats that? That ain’t proper writing. I cant read that” (205). By demonstrating Eliza’s fearful reaction to Higgins, one can state that the other aspect of Eliza’s character that Shaw displays is the lack of proper education and intelligence. Moreover, the following episode shows Higgins’s snobbish attitude towards Eliza for her inability to understand clearly what he does, regardless of Higgins’s adequate explanation about his profession for Pickering in her presence:

THE FLOWER GIRL. Poor girl! Hard enough for her to live without being worried and chivied. [...] Ought to be ashamed of himself, unmanly coward! [...] Let him mind his own business and leave a poor girl –

THE NOTE TAKER [explosively] Woman: cease this detestable boohooing instantly; or else seek shelter of some other place of worship. [...] A woman who

utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live. [...] and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon.

THE FLOWER GIRL [*quite overwhelmed, looking up at him in mingled wonder and deprecation without daring to raise her head*] Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-ow-oo! (1953: 209)

Thus, as one may discern, the note-taker's domineering attitude towards Eliza might be ascribed to her inappropriate manner of speech, lack of decent education and inability to comprehend the others adequately. Therefore, it is possible to view Eliza as both morally and socially inferior to remaining characters, which is in a way the main purpose of Act I, as preparation of the ground for Eliza's fundamental transformation.

The next step towards Eliza's transformation is introduced in Act II when she comes to Higgins's laboratory to persuade him to give her lessons in exchange for a payment so that she can become "a lady in a flower shop" (217). The first thing that one might clearly see in the following quotation is Eliza's different perspective about gaining the upper class's respect when she is first met by Higgins's refusal:

THE FLOWER GIRL. Dont be so saucy. You aint heard what I come for yet. [*To Mrs. Pearce, who is waiting at the door for instructions*] Did you tell him I come in a taxi?

MRS PEARCE. Nonsense, girl! What do you think a gentleman like Mr. Higgins cares what you came in?

THE FOWER GIRL. Oh, we are proud! He aint above giving lessons, not him: I heard him say so. Well, I aint come here to ask for any complement; and if my money's not good enough I can go elsewhere (216).

Thus, the misunderstanding between Higgins and Eliza related to the difference in their education and outlook displayed in Act I is further developed in Act II in quite a humorous way. Whereas the purpose of Act II might be formulated as expressing Eliza's interest in Higgins's lessons, one essential feature in the act that is worth being pointed out is Eliza remaining in the dark about what she could achieve after having received his lessons. Her fervent wish "to be a lady in a flower shop stead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road" originates from her limited outlook, which makes her blind to the other possibilities that Higgins mentioned in the previous act (217). However, it is not only Eliza who repeatedly fails to understand Higgins. Treating Eliza differently is quite challenging for Higgins as well until his housekeeper's intervention: "[...] you cant take a girl up like that as

if you were picking up a pebble on the beach” adding that he does not know anything about her and that he “mustnt talk like that to her” (221). It is the housekeeper’s intervention that forces Higgins to reconsider his way of treating Eliza:

HIGGINS. [...] At the end of six months you shall go to Buckingham Palace in a carriage, beautifully dressed. If the King finds out that you’re not a lady, you will be taken by the police to the Tower of London [...] If you refuse this offer you will be a most ungrateful wicked girl; and angels will weep for you. [...] [*To Mrs. Pearce*]  
Can I put it more plainly and fairly, Mrs. Pearce? (221)

Eliza’s comprehension of Higgins’s intention to pass her off as a duchess is displayed when the housekeeper takes Eliza upstairs to show her “a spare bedroom” immediately after their conversation with Higgins: “O-h, I couldnt sleep here, misus. [...] I should be afraid of touching anything. I aint a duchess yet” (226). Therefore, one may interpret this episode as a glimpse of understanding, or the initiation of communication, between Eliza and Higgins. However, according to Cody Matthews, Higgins’s effect on Eliza’s speech already begins in Act II even though not a single formal lesson has been given to her yet (2017). As Matthews further stresses, “at approximately the halfway point of Act II, Eliza dramatically reduces the amount of shouts and unintelligible utterances: ‘ah,’ ‘ow,’ ‘oh,’ ‘oo’” additionally pointing at Eliza’s new environment, which “is already beginning to shape her linguistic features and her thought” ((2017:44).

Thus, Act II illustrates two contradictory aspects: the exposition of the lack of common ground between Eliza and Higgins on the one hand, and the effect that the new surroundings at Wimpole Street exert on Eliza on the other. In other words, the primary purpose of the act is to emphasize the favorable, but rather unnoticeable impact of Higgins’s presence upon Eliza by presenting humorous misunderstanding between the two in the background, which in turn can be considered as the beginning of the actual transformation of Eliza’s character.

Whereas the inarticulacy of Eliza’s speech is displayed in Act I, and Act II emphasizes both the absence of common ground between Eliza and Higgins, and their predisposition to mutual understanding, Act III brings to light the preliminary result of Higgins’s work on Eliza’s transformation. Accordingly, to look at how successful Eliza’s transformation has been so far, it is sensible to take into consideration three features pointed out in Act III: a) the obtained self-possession and improved pronunciation that Eliza demonstrates; b) her expanded vocabulary; c) her flair for improvisation.



To check over how presentable Eliza has become, Higgins invites her to his mother's house on her "at-home day". Shaw's stage directions implicitly display the result of the established common ground between Higgins and Eliza, which at this point reveals itself not only in how Eliza is dressed, but also in her impeccable behavior: "*Eliza, who is exquisitely dressed, produces an impression of such remarkable distinction and beauty as she enters that they all rise, quite fluttered. Guided by Higgins's signals, she comes to Mrs. Higgins with studied grace*" (249). Additionally, to magnify Eliza's effect on the guests, Shaw presents the change in Eliza's speech and utterance with the preparatory stage directions: "LIZA. [*speaking with pedantic correctness of pronunciation and great beauty of tone*] How do you do, Mrs Higgins? [*She gasps slightly in making sure of the H in Higgins, but is quite successful*]. Mr Higgins told me I might come" (250). Eliza's effect on the guests is singular; none of the guests lead to the others' rising.

The richness of Eliza's vocabulary is displayed when she speaks on the topic of weather: "The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation" (250). As Matthews points out, one can see how Eliza is transitioning to a state of higher consciousness as she expresses an awareness of the casual sequence of weather that the old Eliza did not know or think through (2017). Additionally, Eliza's expanded vocabulary is displayed when she talks about the death of her imaginary aunt:

LIZA. Y-e-e-e-es, Lord love you! Why should she die of influenza? She come through diphtheria right enough the year before. I saw her with my own eyes. Fairly blue with it, she was. They all thought she was dead; but my father he kept ladling gin down her throat till she came to so sudden that she bit the bowl off the spoon. [...] [*piling up the indictment*] What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza? What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is, them as pinched it done her in (1953:251).

As it is possible to note, the flow of Eliza's speech is smoother and her thoughts are more understandable than in the previous acts. One can also state that they even conceal the artificiality of her speech manner. Bearing in mind Eliza's narrow outlook and ill-temperedness in the previous acts it is possible to note the difference in her composure and ability to improvise when she reacts to Freddy's cheerful attitude about her speech: "What is

wrong with that, young man? I bet I got it right [...] If I was doing it proper, what was you laughing at? [*To Higgins*] Have I said anything I oughtn't? (252). Whereas one might assert that Eliza's behavior, pronunciation and developed vocabulary can be ascribed to Higgins's teaching, it would probably be inaccurate to state that Higgins predicted various reactions to Eliza's manners and speech, and accordingly worked on Eliza's response to them. In other words, to assert that every single reaction of Eliza to how she is accepted in the society has been carefully thought through by Higgins would be incorrect since Higgins did not know who Mrs. Higgins's guests would be, and among all the people in the house it is his mother's opinion that Higgins cares most about.

Regardless of Higgins's work on the subject of his experiment for "some months" and the effect that Eliza produces with her elegance and flamboyant speech on everybody, Mrs. Higgins answers: "[...] of course she's not presentable. She's a triumph of your art and of her dressmaker's; but if you suppose for a moment that she doesn't give herself away in every sentence she utters, you must be perfectly cracked about her" (254). Provided that Higgins taught Eliza to speak only about "two subjects: the weather and everybody's health", which certainly does not allow her to pass for a duchess, Mrs. Higgins's response may be considered correct (246). Furthermore, Matthews's statement also underlines the linguistic disparity between Eliza and the other characters. According to Matthews, Shaw's humorous display of linguistic difference between Eliza and the other characters by saying 'shocking' and 'sensational' "Walk! Not bloody likely" at the end of her dialogue, reinforces the gap "which still exists between the Eynsford Hills, Mrs. Higgins, Higgins, and Pickering, on one side, and Eliza on the other" (2017:46). Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to disregard completely the effect of Higgins's preliminary steps to transform Eliza. In spite of the gap concerning the language that is revealed in Act III, one cannot neglect such elements as Eliza's display of unblemished behavior, exemplary pronunciation, expanded vocabulary and ability to improvise. One should regard them as the result of the established communication between Higgins and Eliza and as the prerequisites for the expected changes in the following acts.

#### 4.2 *The completion of the transformation (Acts IV and V)*

Taking into consideration that Eliza's self-possession, improved speech manner and enriched vocabulary demonstrated in Act III are regarded as preconditions for her further development and foreshadow superficial changes in her character, Act IV displays her personal growth

after Higgins, Pickering and Eliza's return from the garden party. In Act IV, one can distinguish three main elements that constitute Eliza's fundamental change: a) Eliza's clear expression of her uncertainty about the future due to the change of her moral and social values, b) Eliza and Higgins's split, and c) Eliza's forming a union with Freddy who treats her accordingly.

At the beginning of the act, Higgins and Pickering, when discussing the garden party, pointedly ignore Eliza who is present in the very room at Wimpole Street where the conversation is taking place. Her first attempt to get Higgins's attention by finding his slippers remains unnoticed as well as the second attempt after Higgins's "fervent" exclamation: "Thank God it's over!" when "*Eliza flinches violently; but they take no notice of her; and she recovers herself and sits stonily as before*" (265). However, the cry of her soul, as the stage directions point out, is heard when, "*Finally she gives way and flings herself furiously on the floor, raging*" (266). Nevertheless, the dialogue between Higgins and Eliza reveals Higgins's disrespectful attitude towards Eliza, in spite of Eliza's repeated concern about her future:

LIZA. [...] You thank God it's all over, and that now you can throw me back again, do you? [*She crimps her fingers frantically*]. [...] Whats to become of me? Whats to become of me?

HIGGINS. How the devil do I know what's to become of you? What does it matter what becomes of you?

LIZA. You dont care. I know you dont care. You wouldnt care if I was dead. I'm nothing to you [...]. Oh God! I wish I was dead!

HIGGINS [*staring after her in sincere surprise*] Why? In heaven's name, why? [*Reasonably going to her*] Listen to me, Eliza. All this irritations is purely subjective. [...] You go to bed like a good girl and sleep it off. Have a little cry and say your prayers: that will make you comfortable.

LIZA. I heard your prayers. "Thank God it's all over!"

HIGGINS [*impatiently*] Well, don't you thank God it's all over? Now you are free and can do what you like.

LIZA [*pulling herself together in desperation*] What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? What's to become of me? (1953:266 - 268)

Higgins refuses to accept Eliza regardless of her apparently and obviously enhanced thinking skills in addition to her self-control and improved manner of speech. He fails even to notice, let alone accept, Eliza's deep thinking and her perception of changed values. Furthermore, Higgins's prejudiced attitude towards Eliza's status of the flower girl prevents him even from admitting a thought about any fundamental change in her. What is worth taking into consideration at this point is Eliza's forward thinking, in other words, her self-awareness. The question that she repeatedly puts to Higgins, "what's to become of me?" signifies her enlightenment – a perception of the incompatibility between the new Eliza and the previous ways of her existence. This conclusion falls in line with Matthews's statement that she has made based on Eliza's frequency of terms used in Act IV. According to the linguist, instead of sounds and non-standard terms, one can see words that reflect the agitation of understanding of self: "I'm", "want", "become", "fit", "know", "belongs", "what's", and, furthermore, we can see "Eliza realizing the separation between herself and Higgins and the difference between her new identity and the past" (2017:47).

Having failed to attract his attention to her uncertainty about her future, Eliza regains her self-control and, bearing in mind Higgins's values, begins to ask him questions that would in a way disgrace him. When Eliza wants to know about what exactly she may take with her without being accused of stealing, Higgins becomes "[*deeply wounded*]: Stealing! You shouldn't have said that, Eliza. [...] [*very sulkily*] You may take the whole damned houseful if you like" (270). Knowing Higgins's indifference towards material things and his obsession with his profession that makes him a high-income earner, Eliza, by using the word "stealing", in fact, emphasizes Higgins's non-existing avarice that might cause him regard Eliza as a thief. Furthermore, Eliza decides to challenge Higgins further and continues "[*drinking in his emotion like nectar, and nagging him to provoke a further supply*] [...] [*She takes off her jewels*]. Will you take these to your rooms and keep them safe? I don't want to run the risk of their being missing" to which Higgins reacts "[*furiously*]" and says: "Hand them over. [*She puts them into his hands*] If these belonged to me instead of to the jeweler, I'd ram them down your ungrateful throat" (270).

By presenting the argument between Higgins and Eliza, Shaw unexpectedly reveals a completely different aspect of Eliza's fundamental change – her ability to skillfully manipulate Higgins's psychology. As becomes clear, Eliza has been taking more than phonetic lessons. Through the process of improving her use of language, it is possible to state

that Eliza has also observed, learnt and memorized Higgins's mindset. According to Matthews, "the act of conscious disobedience separates Eliza completely from Higgins's control. The art has grown independent of the artist. His [Higgins's] pain is that his art is growing to challenge and question its creator, and reveal the innate contradictions he overlooks" (49). This challenge, or contradiction, can be reasonably regarded as the prelude for Eliza's separation from Higgins – the episode when she [*taking a ring off*] says that, "[...] it's the one you bought me in Brighton. I don't want it now" after which "[*Higgins dashes the ring violently into the fireplace, and turns on her so threateningly that she crouches over the piano with her hands over the face*]" and responds [...] You have wounded me to the heart [...] You have caused me to lose my temper [...]" (270-271). The actual separation takes place as Eliza [*thrilling with hidden joy*] says with relief: "I'm glad. I've got a little of my own back", which can be regarded as the moment that creates a balance in their relationship (271).

The formation of a union with Freddy Eynsford Hill reveals yet another aspect of Eliza's transformation – her ability to think critically. Prior to accepting Freddy's feelings, Eliza, as "*she breaks down and grabs him by the shoulders*" ascertains in what way he treats her by asking him: "Freddy: you dont think I'm a heartless guttersnipe, do you?" (272). Certainly, this question reflects the awakening of Eliza's consciousness. One can clearly see Eliza's intention to avoid carefully any acquaintance that she might regret afterwards. Only upon meeting Freddy's reaction that she expected, or satisfied her, which is: "Oh, no, no, darling: how can you imagine such a thing? [...]" [*she, hungry for comfort*], responds to his "smothering her with kisses" (272).

Taking into consideration that Eliza's inarticulacy of speech becomes gradually replaced with the fundamental change in her thinking between Acts I and IV, the purpose of Act V is to display the establishment of complete communication and understanding between Higgins and Eliza through the expression of Eliza's shrewd and independent judgement. Thus, to look at how this aim is achieved, Act V can be divided in two essential parts – the revelation of Eliza's acute intelligence and presentation of a new level of the relationship between Eliza and Higgins.

Higgins's adoption of a patronizing attitude towards Eliza, when finding her at Mrs. Higgins's house, can be regarded as a preamble to showing Eliza's critical acumen: "Dont you dare try this game on me. I taught it to you; and it doesnt take me in. Get up and come

home; and don't be a fool. [...] I have created this thing out of the squashed cabbage leaves of Covent Garden, and now she pretends to play the fine lady with me" (282). Eliza's following response to Higgins's reaction enables one to discern a completely new level of thinking and different personality from that of "flower girl": "Of course: that is his profession. [...] It was just like learning to dance in the fashionable way: there was nothing more than that in it" (283). Moreover, the depth of her understanding of the situation is shown in the following selected words by Eliza's addressed to Pickering:

[...] it was from you that I learnt really nice manner; and that is what makes one a lady, isn't it? You see it was so very difficult for me with the example of Professor Higgins always before me. I was brought up to be just like him, unable to control myself. [...] But do you know what began my real education? [...] Your calling me Miss Doolittle that day when I first came to Wimpole Street. That was the beginning of self-respect for me. [...] You see, [...] apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will". [...] You told me [...] that when a child is brought to a foreign country, it picks up the language in a few weeks, and forgets its own. Well, I am a child in your country. [...] That's the real break-off with the corner of Tottenham Court Road. (1953: 284)

The above lines from Eliza's conversation with Pickering present Eliza's vision of the reality – her truth. The depth of her thought is visibly different from that of hers displayed in Act I. For example, she uses the phrase "learning to dance in the fashionable way" as a metaphor for learning "the proper way of speaking". Moreover, the parallel that she also draws between a child's "forgetting its own" language while learning a new one in a foreign country and herself who has experienced the "break-off with the corner of Tottenham Corner Road" clearly points to her awakened consciousness and a higher level of her thinking.

Thus, the above display of Eliza's shrewd and independent judgement leads the reader to the episode of the complete communication and understanding between Higgins and Eliza. Eliza's fundamental transformation is revealed in the final dialogue with Professor Higgins. The selected lines from their dialogue that will be further looked at: a) demonstrate how the

established interpersonal communication and mutual understanding between Higgins and Eliza enable them to reconsider their relations, b) shed light on Higgins's outlook that makes him see Eliza in a new light and treat her equally to himself, c) empower Eliza to express her contrasting point of view that is accepted by Higgins.

Upon hearing Eliza's thoughts in her conversation with Pickering, Higgins's intention to start a dialogue, which rarely happens considering his fiery nature, pinpoints a change in how he has been treating Eliza and his aim to sort out misunderstanding between them. To Higgins's words "you've had a bit of your own back [...]. Have you had enough? and are going to be reasonable?", Eliza responds with sarcasm: "You want me back only to pick up your slippers and put up with your tempers and fetch and carry for you" (287). It is that irony in Eliza's answer that shows a different personality Higgins addresses. Unlike the previous Eliza, the new one does not simply respond. She mocks Higgins and urges him to explain the reasons he wants her back, but Higgins denies and answers that "If you [Eliza] come back I shall treat you just as I have always treated you. I can't change my nature" (287). However, instead of using bad language as he always did, Higgins, accustomed by now to Eliza's ability to boldly express her viewpoints, starts justifying the 'irregularities' of his behavior. He presents them as cornerstones of his character: "[*irritated*] The question is not whether I treat you rudely, but whether you ever heard me treat anyone else I better [...] I [Higgins] treat a duchess as if she was a flower girl" to which Eliza shows understanding: "I see. [...] The same to everybody" (288).

It is also sensible to pay attention to Shaw's stage directions that are presented further in the dialogue. While describing the nature of his own character, Higgins feels "irritated" and becomes "arrogant", but one can see how differently, "with sudden humility" he starts behaving towards Eliza and even "sits down near her on the ottoman". The sequence of the stage directions reveals the change in Higgins's treatment of Eliza – whereas he first feels "irritated" and afterwards "arrogant", Higgins then starts treating Eliza "with sudden humility" and "sits down near her on the ottoman". What one might deduce from the lines of the above dialogue and stage directions is that Higgins, having discovered a different, profoundly transformed Eliza, changes his mind and decides not to let her go whereas both Pickering and Higgins himself kept continually ignoring her from the beginning of Act IV. So, the most expected question at this point might be about the reason for which Higgins does not want to let Eliza leave him. However, the answer to this question reveals not only the

established interpersonal communication but also sheds light on the attitude to life Higgins adopts, which allows him to treat Eliza equally to himself.

To Eliza's statement that Higgins is "a devil" who does not "care a bit for" anyone, Higgins responds that he cares "for life, for humanity; and you [Eliza] are a part of it that has come my way and been built into my house" (289). Additionally, to Eliza's response "I won't care for anybody that doesn't care for me", Higgins calls her attitude "Commercialism" and afterwards reveals his mindset:

[...] I am expressing my righteous contempt for Commercialism. I dont and wont trade in affection. [...] No use slaving for me and then saying you want to be cared for: who cares for a slave? [...] Making life means making trouble. Theres only one way of escaping trouble; and that's killing things. [...] I waste the treasures of my Miltonic mind by spreading them before you. Once for all, understand that I go my way and do my work without caring twopence what happens to either of us. [...] So you can come back or go to the devil: which you please. (1953: 289-90)

Although it is possible to reliably predict Higgins's further attitude towards Eliza based on his negative outlook on slavery and hatred of Commercialism, to Eliza's question "What am I to come back for", Higgins, [*bouncing up on his knees on the ottoman and leaning over it to her*], responds, "For the fun of it. That's why I took you on" and clarifies that "[...] you [Eliza] may walk out tomorrow if I dont do everything you want me to" (290). The words "if I dont do everything you want me to" emphasize the established equality between them from that moment on.

Finally, Eliza's contrasting point of view is displayed with her refusal to agree with Higgins's reconsidered vision of their relationships. She also ignores Higgins's offers to adopt Eliza "as my [Higgins's] daughter and settle money on you [Eliza] if you like" and "marry Pickering" by saying: "Thats not what I want; and dont you think it. I've always had chaps enough wanting me that way" (291). What Higgins becomes interested in at this point is if Eliza wants him "[...] to be as infatuated about you as Freddy?" to which "much troubled" Liza responds: "I want a little kindness [...] I'm not dirt under your feet" (292). Failing to evoke understanding and kindness in Higgins, Eliza firmly decides to marry Freddy for his love to her that makes him "king enough" for Eliza (293). Moreover, in spite of Eliza's humorous remark about her plan to teach phonetics to make a living that irritates Higgins very much, he accepts and appreciates her independent spirit: "[...]But it's better than sniveling;



better than fetching slippers and finding spectacles, isn't it? [*Rising*] By George, Eliza, I said I'd make a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this. [...] Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now you a tower of strength: a consort battleship" (294).

Thus, aiming to reveal the essential change that Eliza undergoes, this section highlights the stages that Shaw's protagonist goes through. Whereas quite humorous misunderstanding between Higgins and Eliza is exposed at the beginning of the play, the complete communication between the two is achieved at the final act with Eliza's being through such formative stages as obtaining self-possession, enriched vocabulary and demonstrating her flair for improvisation that lead to the independence of her judgement.

## 5. Conclusion

Given the purpose to expose the fundamental change that Shaw's protagonist undergoes in *Pygmalion* through the gradual improvement in her use of language, this study has discussed the fundamentals of Shaw's views, ideas and the power of his language, and has looked at the developmental stages that Eliza goes through.

For a comprehensive analysis of the protagonist's transformation, the acts of the play has been divided in two groups. The examination of the first group of acts, consisting of Acts I, II and III, has shown the initial stages of the transformation, which might be regarded as a preparatory phase. The study of the second group of acts, consisting of Acts IV and V, has displayed the essential changes that Eliza undergoes – the change of her moral and social values, critical thinking and shrewdness of her judgement.

By presenting the stages of the fundamental change in Eliza's character through the radical difference in her use of language, Shaw, one can assert, achieves two aims. One, the playwright empowers his character with new language and thinking skills after which Eliza, as an enlightened citizen, demands and gains her independence. Two, using Holroyd's expression, the playwright "bridges the gulf to bring the classes together", in other words, achieves the social equality not by change of lifestyle, but through education and "new speech" that Shaw sincerely believed in.

Taking into consideration the scope of this study, the transformation of only one of the characters has been brought into light, whereas the character of Mr. Doolittle might also have been the subject of focus. Thus, bearing in mind the secondary sources that focused on the

various aspects of metamorphosis presented in the play, the change of Eliza's character that this essay has looked at can be considered another perspective to view the play from.

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