

## Literary Pragmatics

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### Abstract

The present study aims at presenting a thorough account of the field termed literary pragmatics which emerges in a consequence of applying the different pragmatic approaches to the study and analysis of literary genera. Additionally, it also attempts to explore and shed some light on the relationship between the two domains: pragmatics and literature in order to reveal their commonalities. There exists a strong assumption that these have something in common as they both have to do with language users and how meaning is conveyed. Despite the fact the various pragmatic approaches including speech act theory, conversational implicature, politeness theory and relevance theory are developed mainly in relation to spoken interactions, the study has revealed that they offer invaluable insights to the study of literary texts. Moreover, the process of analyzing literary texts has led to the development and the explanation of the pragmatic approaches themselves.

**Key Words:** context, literature, literary pragmatics, narrator, readers

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## 1. Introduction

Banfield (2003, p. 475) says that the term *literary pragmatics* lacks a common use with a well-defined referent, it represents less a unified theory than an area of research. It has developed in replay to insights provided by pragmatic-theory over the past few decades.

In this regard, Mey (2010, p. 251) asserts that literary pragmatics lacks a pervasive use due to the diverse approaches to pragmatics that have provided its insights and because of the various kinds of relationship between literary analysis and pragmatic theory. Another complication comes from the different understanding or definitions of the term *literary* and the special nature of literary communication.

## 2. Literary Pragmatics

According to Mey (1999, p. 12), literary pragmatics signifies a field of inquiry which investigates those sorts of influences that writers endeavour to exert on their audience in pursuit of establishing a working cooperation by employing the properties of language. Such influences require precise consideration of the conditions of use of these properties when addressed to a specific audience including consumers of literary work.

The pragmatic effects in question demand a thorough exploitation of the whole contextual factors governing the use of the linguistic elements involved (Mey, 1999, p. 12).

More specifically, literary pragmatics concentrates on the user's role in the societal production and consumption of literary texts (Mey, 2006, p. 549).

Similarly, Crystal (2008, p. 379) mentions that this field seeks to apply pragmatic notions to the production and reception of literary texts.

Chapman (2011, p. 141) asserts that the different notions and frameworks for analysis emerged within pragmatics have proven to be useful instruments for analyzing literary texts. This can be attributed to the fact that pragmatics is all about studying language in use and creating and reading literary texts are significant and fascinating instances of language use. The increased interest in language use within linguistics has led to emphasis on the contextual and intertextual properties of literary texts besides their formal ones.

Additionally, MacMahon (2014, p. 90) assumes that it is essential to have a pragmatics of communication and interpretation. Without such a theory, stylistic approaches, which concentrate only on form, unavoidably fall into difficulties to account for why a specific form should have certain influence in a particular context.

It has been suggested that there are two chief concerns of those fascinated by the relation between pragmatics and literature. Firstly, there is the utilization of pragmatic theory in the analysis of the language of individual literary texts, so as to elucidate certain facet of how meaning is expressed, how characters interact or how the author/narrator of a text interacts with the reader. In other words, these frameworks borrow some aspect of pragmatic meaning and use it as their method and certain literary text(s) as their data. Secondly, the resources of some pragmatic theories

have been applied to more general questions regarding the nature of literature itself. That is, pragmatics has been used in the debate of what constitutes a literary text (Chapman, 2011, p. 142).

### 3. Literature

Searle (1979, p. 59) believes that it is not possible to produce a formal account of literature because it signifies a set of attitudes individual readers take towards a stretch of discourse. Hence, what counts as literature is decided by readers and is not open to further analysis.

It has been suggested that throughout history, the term literature has had different senses at different times. These vary from elevated treatment of dignified subjects to merely writing in the most general sense of the word to the sense of creative, highly imaginative literature appropriated under the influence of romantic theories of literature in the last one hundred years. Moreover, it is subject to endless modification and it does not mean the same universally. (Carter, 1997, p. 123)

In relation to this matter, Burton & Carter (2006, p. 267) say that definitions of literature and of literary language are socially and historically diverse. Their history has been established by different readers and writers formulating different replays to inquiries regarding a proper definition. It should be emphasized that definitions of literature have to be viewed as functional. That is, they form certain and variable circumstances in which texts are described as literary, and the purposes that these texts can be used to achieve.

Leech (2008, p. 6) argues that the notion of literature has been identified in accordance with some elusive concept of literariness. In this regards two accounts can be identified, formal and functional.

Formalists accounts identified literariness with the linguistic elements of the literary medium. Their basic assumption was that literary language is deviant language. That is, literariness inheres in the extent to which language use departs from ordinary patterns of language and thus deformalizes the reader. However, their functionalists counterparts defined literariness in terms of function. In this respect, literariness occurs when language attracts attention to its own status as a sign and when there is an emphasis on the message for its own sake. For instance, Jakobson, being a functionalist and formalist as well, introduces a conception of the poetic function (Burton & Carter, 2006, pp. 269-70).

According to Leech (2008, p. 6), both accounts are incorrect, because literature is chiefly a prototype concept. It is demonstrated that the majority of conceptual categories in the human mind and in language are categorized by a core of clear cases with a fuzzy periphery of blurred, borderline cases. By the same token, the concept of literature and literariness are prototypical. Hence, there is no litmus test for literature, but rather an array of coinciding markers of various types such as sociocultural, aesthetic and linguistic criteria.

### 4. Literary Discourse

According to Van Dijk (1980, p. 5), the majority of the previous literary studies, whether traditional or modern, concentrate on the analysis of the literary text rather than on the process of

literary communication. Nevertheless, a pragmatic account of literature assumes that in literary communication the production of a literary text are social actions.

MacMahon (2006, p. 234) mentions that the bulk of contemporary literary pragmatics tries to define literature as having an exceptional functional and communicative status, yet at the same time operating on principles which are similar to those of nonliterary discourses. That is, it endeavours to restore the importance of context in literary linguistics, and the consideration of literary works as communicative acts.

Black (2006, p. 3) proposes that is expected that literary discourse differs from ordinary conversation and other written discourses due to the fact that any published work is subject to a process of careful composition and much revision. In fictional dialogue the slips of the tongue, repetitions, elisions and opaque reference which mark the spoken language are rarely represented, except occasionally for humorous effect.

## 5. Context

Mey (1999, p. 36) believes that in order to comprehend an utterance, one needs to know the circumstances surrounding its being uttered. In isolation, utterances do not make sense or make the wrong one. In its broadest sense, context stands for the cultural, political, and economic conditions of people whose actions and words are attempted to describe or capture within the minutest context of language.

Allott (2010, p. 38) states that the context of an utterance represents a source of information that assists the hearer in finding out what the speaker intended to express. Without taking the context of words and phrases into consideration, it will not be likely to interpret the implicatures of an utterance. Moreover, in numerous cases, it will be impossible to calculate the proposition conveyed or the desired illocutionary force.

According to MacMahon (2006, p. 234), certain pragmatic approaches emphasize the importance of paying attention to context and literary functions as crucial to any explanation of literature. Hence, these approaches attempt to restore the significance of context in literary linguistics, and consider literary works as a sort of communication.

Black (2006, p. 3) suggests that in a written text the outset offers the essential orientation into the discourse because nothing precedes it. However, it is worth mentioning that the title, appearance, author and even publisher of a book or a magazine offer the reader many hints as the type of text they can expect, and so contextualize it to some extent. Additionally, whereas the normal situation of discourse is face-to-face interaction, there is no reason to assume that written texts work differently.

Nevertheless, it is stated that the production and reception of a spoken discourse takes place within a single context of time and space. However, this is not the case with a written one such as a letter. Besides, the addresser and addressee in a discourse situation are not always distinct. As for published texts, there is usually one addresser but a great number of addressees, most of them

the writer has never met. Hence, literature is a type of discourse where the writer can assume fairly little about the receiver of his message or its context (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 206).

### **6. Author and Reader**

Mey (1999, p. 262) says that readers fetch to the text a specific set of preconditions from which to approach the text and which make the text possible. That is, there exactly is no reader's text until there is a reader. The reason behind this is that the text designates a probable world of occurrences which demands a reader to cause those probabilities come into existence. It can be inferred that the text the reader approaches is not the same as the one which he/she leaves behind.

As far as literary texts are concerned, the language user is the reader who obtains the product of someone else's literary activity and by consuming them fulfills a personal need. Such relationship is not merely one of buying and selling a normal product. These two have more in common than regular sellers and buyers. It is this commonality accompanied by the resulting cooperation between them that renders the world of literary production and consuming diverse from a typical marketplace (Mey, 2001, p. 788).

Additionally, Mey (2006, p. 551) mentions that the success of a story can be determined to a great extent by the reader in addition to the author. Hence, books are bought and sold not because they are indispensable for one material existence, but because they represent a personal communication from an author to a potential readership. That is, the author produces books due to the fact that he/she has a message for the reader as a person rather than a sort of making a living.

Leech & Short (2007, p. 207) state that in spite of the fact that the author of a literary work such as a novel is not acquainted with his readers, he is capable of assuming that he shares with his readers a mutual knowledge and experience. Such background knowledge comprises not only shared inferences, but also knowledge regarding famous historical events and literary works.

Additionally, a writer will also resort to matters which is sensible to suppose the cultivated readers of his time to be aware of, but which a later reader have to make himself alert to. Due to the fact that the author can suppose knowledge which any specific reader might not essentially have, it can be concluded that the addressee in literary communication is an implied reader. This refers to a hypothetical personage who shares with the author a set of presuppositions, sympathies and criteria of what is pleasant and unpleasant, good and bad, right and wrong. (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 207).

Mey (1999, p. 266) proposes that there exists a creative cooperation between authors and readers even across time and distance. This cooperative process is taken to refer to the ability to take up diverse positions grounded on the type of reading one is engaged in. In other words, it is the capacity of collaborating with various authors in various ways in order to realize different possible worlds. Hence, the reader is a main player in the literary game and his/her influence requires entering the universe that the author has created. Via doing so the reader becomes an actor, rather than a mere spectator.

It has been said that the pragmatic study of literature concentrates on the features that categorize the dialectic facet of literary production above. That is, the text as an author originated and guided but at the same time reader oriented and activated process of wording. The reader is limited by the boundaries of the text but the text offers the required extent of liberty in which the reader can cooperate with the author to create the proper textual universe (Mey, 2001, p. 788).

## 7. Author and Narrator

Since narration is about storytelling, the story has to be told by someone referred to as the narrator. In every story, the author creates a world of fiction, the narrative, in which the narrator assumes a prominent role, even though not usually evident on the surface (Mey, 2014, p. 513).

Similarly, and according to Mey (2001, p. 789), the author creates the narrator regardless of whether the latter overtly reveals himself/herself on the narrative scene. In both cases, the narrator is a character in the story who cannot be held accountable for the actions and opinions of the other characters. It is crucial for the readers to realize that the author cannot be identified with the narrator not even the story is told in the first person singular.

Leech & Short (2007, p. 210) point out that authors and readers are not the only figures involved in the fictional discourse. In this respect, it has been distinguished between the author and the narrator. Additionally, the narrator may be addressing someone other than the reader. This is very evident in an I-narration novels such as Emily Bronte's **Wuthering Heights** which assumes the form of a diary which Mr. Lockwood writes to himself:

*"I have just returned from a visit to my landlord- the solitary neighbour that I shall be troubled with. This is certainly a beautiful country!"*

The same narration includes long passages reporting Nellie Dean's narration of the events of the story to Mr. Lockwood:

*"About twelve o'clock, that night, was born the Catherine you saw at Wuthering Heights: a puny, seven months' child; and two hours after the mother died, having never recovered sufficient consciousness to miss Heathcliff, or know Edgar."*[Chapter 16]

Leech & Short (2007, p. 211) propose a structure of the fictional discourse in which the writer and the reader lie outside the direct communicative flow established in the text. Within the text, the narrator tells the story. The narrative may contain dialogue among characters. Hence, there exists an embedded discourse in which a real author addresses readers through the implied author within whose discourse there is characters' dialogue.

According to Black (2006, p. 61), third-person narrator signifies a disembodied voice, identified by ubiquity and the capacity to enter into the minds of characters in the fiction. The flexibility of this kind of narratorial voice allows a blend of the voices of the characters and narrators which present some of the most fascinating and intricate features of fictional discourse.

It has been pointed out that it is more typical for a novelist to utilize an impersonal style of narration where reference by the narrator to himself is avoided. The passage below from George Eliot's (1871) **Middlemarch** is an example:

Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters

It can be inferred that the first advantage of this kind of narration is that the lack of an *I* asks the reader to suppose that there is no evident *you*. Hence, the narration is introduced to the reader directly. Additionally, the absence of an *I* also calls the reader to collapse the addresser side of the novel discourse structure so the implied author and narrator become mingled. It is due to this reason that most third-person narrators are omniscient since they stand in the place of the implied author they take on his absolute knowledge (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 213).

### 8. The Voices of the Text

It is believed that in a narration each portion of text has a definite voice. That is, a way of speaking that can be ascribed to one or the other of the agents involved in the narrative process. Normally, each agent speaks with a single voice, his or her own (Mey, 1999, p. 112).

According to Mey (2014, p. 513), narrativity concentrates on the techniques and devices that a narrator has at his/her disposal when telling a story. The concept of **character** and the complementary **voice** are among the most essential devices. In a story, the characters come to life via their voices. The characters are kept separately with their voices parted by means of simple typographic means or in other ways; the purpose of these techniques is to allow the reader to locate and shift the focus of his/her attention.

It has been pointed out that vocalization is a powerful way of forming and sustaining the fictional space with the agreeable help and indispensable assistance from the readership and of organizing the dialectics of creativity between author and reader. From a literary pragmatics perspective, vocalization means giving a voice to a character in the story. More specifically, it refers to the phenomenon of making the character speak (Mey, 2006, p. 553).

Consider the extract below:

“He [Jack Kemp] joined the Buffalo Bills after an injury.

‘ I hit a helmet with my passing hand and dislocated a finger to severely that I had to literally decide what shape I wanted it in. So, I put my hand on a football and they put a cast over it.’ In those days football was pretty Darwinian. ‘We ‘d do anything to survive’ I glanced at the finger. Yep.”

(From an interview with the late Republican U.S. Congressman Jack Kemp).

In the extract above, a panorama of voices is encountered. First occurs the voice of the narrator, the journalist who is reporting the story of the interview he has with Jack Kemp providing both a historical frame and a running commentary. Second, there is Kemp's own voice telling how he “ hit a helmet with his passing hand and dislocated a finger.” Then, a character's voice is heard

therefore the focus of the narration has altered. Finally, “Yep” represents the voice of the narrator who rapidly makes his attendance in the interview overt (Mey, 2014, p. 517).

Mey (2006, p. 553) proposes that this phenomenon is intricate in the sense that it not just offers voice to a character but also provides information regarding the latter’s perspective or point of view from which the latter sees the other characters and indeed the world. Accordingly, voices range over the total fictional space they create.

It has been suggested that readers’ determination of the narrative development is maintained through a bunch of devices some of which can be attributed to the realm of reader pragmatics. Among these, there exists the phenomenon of focalization. Such contextual device is very significance to the analysis understanding of text (Mey, 2001, p. 794).

According to Mey (1999, p. 147, 2006, p. 553), vocalization usually entails focalization which indicates a focusing on the characters’ assignment in the literary universe. The process by means of which the author’s perception of the events is associated with the reader’s situation in time and place is called focalization. It has to do with the fact that every presentation is made in accordance with the point of view of the presenter and his/her focus of the world. Moreover, so long as the process of positioning the narrative voices in their appropriate contexts eventually has to be based on some spatial and temporal universe, the focalization of the text presumes the localization of its character.

## 9. Pragmatic Approaches to Literature

In spite of the fact that the pragmatic theories to be discussed below are developed mainly in relation to spoken interactions, Black (2006, p. 17) argues that such theories can be applied to the interpretation of written texts.

In this regard, Chapman (2011, p. 142) says that the principal frameworks of classical pragmatics, speech act theory and conversational implicature are immediately preserved as potentially invaluable to the study of literary texts. Besides, politeness theory and relevance theory have lately come up with priceless insights into the different facets of the texts scrutinized. Additionally, the process of analyzing literary texts has in turn fed back into the development and the exposition of the pragmatic theories themselves.

### 9. 1 Speech Act Theory

In the sets of lectures that were posthumously published as *How to do Things with Words*, Austin revolts against the view of language that placed the truth-conditions as central to language understanding (Levinson, 1983, p. 228).

In his own search for ways of coping with language as a sort of action, Austin first made a distinction between constative and performative utterances. In this dichotomy, constatives, such as *We went down to Como*, are utterances in which something is said which can be evaluated a long a dimension of truth. Performatives, on the other hand, are utterances, such as *I promise to go to Como*, in which something is done which can be evaluated a long a dimension of felicity (Verschueren, 1999, p. 22).

According to Levinson (1983, p. 236), Austin isolates three basic senses in which in saying something one is doing something. Therefore, three kinds of acts are simultaneously performed.

So, whenever we produce an utterance, we are engaged in three acts. A locutionary act is the production of a well-formed utterance in any language one is speaking. The illocutionary act is the meaning we intend to convey. The perlocutionary act is the effects of our words. For instance, when saying, please open the door, and the listener does so, the speaker has achieved his perlocutionary aim (Black, 2006, p. 17).

According to Miller (2005, p. 12), speech act theory can be considered as a tool for analyzing prose fiction. Metaphorically speaking, a literary work does not represent a machine that can be dismantled with this or that way, rather its working exposed. When reading literature, the tool turns into the machine and vice versa. That is, both speech act theory and fiction are composed of language.

From a speech act perspective, three forms can be identified in connection with literature. These are (i) the author's act of writing is a doing that assumes the form of putting things in this way or that, (ii) the narrators and characters in a work of fiction may produce speech acts that are a form of doing things with words such as promises, excuses, denials (iii) the reader in acts of teaching, criticism, or informal comments may do things by putting a reading into words. Doing that could have an influence on students, readers, or acquaintance (Miller, 2005, p. 12).

MacMahon (2006, p. 232) states that the main concern of different accounts of literature is to define literature as what seems to be a particular type of speech acts. Fiction appears to make assertions, but clearly without truth conditions. In this regard, Austin himself claims that his theory cannot be applied to non-serious uses of language such as poetry. Nevertheless, some propose that that speech act theory can be developed in relation to literary interaction.

For instance, Fish (1980, p. 233) demonstrates that definitions of literary speech acts assume a demarcation between two kinds of discourse: nonliterary discourse that in different ways hooks up with the real world, and literary discourse that functions with diminished responsibility to that world. The former is stereotypically privileged by speech act theorists and is portrayed as basic and prior, while the latter is depicted as derivative and dependent.

Consequently, and according to Ohmann (1971), cited in (Burton & Carter, 2006, p. 270) literary speech acts require a suspension of the typical pragmatic functions that words could have in order for the reader to consider them as somehow signifying or exhibiting the actions they would ordinarily perform. In this regard, a literary speech act brings a world into being for its readers or listeners, but beyond that does nothing.

Nevertheless, Van Dijk (1980, p. 10) believes that literature can be explained in terms of the notion of an indirect speech act. An indirect speech act is one which is achieved by means of another speech act. For instance, an assertion such as *I'm hungry* may function as a request for food or *That's a stupid book* as advice not to buy or read. By the same token, literature may have predominant practical functions, such as warning, criticism, defense or piece of advice with regard

to certain attitude or action of the author or the reader via asserting the conditions for such an illocutionary function. Hence, a novel may depict the atrocities of the Vietnam War, and thereby indirectly functions as a severe criticism of American imperialism which may even be the main function.

Black (2006, p. 20) suggests that various types of speech acts including representative, expressive, directives, commissives and declarations occur in literary texts.

## 9. 2 Implicature

According to Chapman (2011, p. 142), one of the first attempts to apply pragmatics to literary texts require Gricean analysis. In this respect, linguists start to consider the question regarding the utility of applying Grice's account of interaction in conversation to interaction between writers and readers of literary texts.

Grice (1989, p. 26) states that people's conversations are not random strings of separate remarks, but rather they are somehow cooperative efforts, where each party identifies in them a shared purpose or set of purposes, or a reciprocally acknowledged direction. Therefore, it is possible to propose a general principle that interactants are supposed to notice:

“Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.”

To this Grice (1989, pp. 26-28) proposes four maxims, which elucidate how the co-operative principle functions. The maxims strengthening the cooperative principle include the maxim of **quality**, the maxim of **quantity**, the maxim of **relevance**, and the maxim of **manner**.

According to Grice (1975, p. 49) it is assumed, unless otherwise manifested, that every language user will follow these maxims and expect his partner to do so. However, if an interlocutor can and in a position to follow a specific maxim, but intentionally and bluntly infringes it, a *conversational implicature* can be generated. Here, the maxim in question is exploited by the speaker to imply more than what he states openly.

Pratt (1977) as cited in Chapman (2011, p. 142) proposes that it is possible to elucidate literature along other types of discourse without resorting to a separate set of maxims. In literary texts, the cooperative principle is chiefly secured between author and readers, therefore it can be liberally and cheerily jeopardized. This indicates that flouting and the resulting conversational implicatures are features of literary texts, although they are properties shared with all communicative uses of language.

As an example of the cooperative principle functioning in the discourse between author and reader, Pratt employs the opening sentence of Jane's Austin's *Pride and Prejudice* (1972):

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a fortune must be in want of a wife.

In the example above, the reader believes neither the truth nor the claim that is universally acknowledged. Additionally, he/she also believes that the author of the novel is conscious of this. Hence, it can be presumed that Austin is intentionally flouting the maxim of quality. That is, she is saying something that is manifestly false for communicative purpose, rather than attempting to seduce the reader into believing what she says. The resulting implicature of flouting the quality maxim is that the opposite of what is said is actually the case (Chapman, 2011, p. 143).

According to Black (2006, p. 27), the Gricean maxims could be expected to have some relevance for the processing of literary discourse, particularly on the innermost level of character-to-character interactions. Additionally, it may be applicable to the processing of the whole text, in the interaction between narrators and readers, and the relation between narrator and characters.

Grice's maxims propose interpretive procedures which are familiar from daily communication. On the character-to-character level, the maxim of quality functions in a similar way to real-life interactions. Characters will lie, exaggerate, or conceal. The only difference is that the reader may know more than the characters and be in a better position to arrive at probable implicatures not available to them. More fascinating are those instances where the narrator plays fast and loose with the maxims. It should be said the general violation of the maxims is an indication of unreliable narrators (Black, 2006, p. 27).

Below is an example of character-to-character implicatures. It is an extract from Hemingway's *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* (1964)

'That was a pretty thing to do,' he said in a toneless voice. 'He would have left you too.'  
 'Stop it,' she said  
 'There's a hell of a lot to be done,' he said . . . 'Why didn't you poison him? That's what they do in England.'  
 'Stop it. Stop it. Stop it,' the woman cried.  
 'Oh, please stop it', she said. 'Please, please stop it.' 'That's better,' Wilson said. 'Please is much better. Now I'll stop.'

It can be seen that the speaker, Wilson, violates the maxim of quality as he did not noticed what took place. The maxim of manner is also involved. This is the most inappropriate way of addressing a widow. The implicature is that she murdered him. Since Wilson lacks evidence for this the quality maxim is violated also (Black, 2006, p.29)

### 9. 3 Politeness

Chapman (2011, p. 146) states that the diverse accounts of the way politeness functions as a modeling power in the interactions between language users have been utilized in the analysis of literary texts.

It has been claimed that the most prominent work in politeness theory is that of Brown & Levinson (1987). It provides a framework to describe and explain diverse linguistic resources that can be utilized to signify politeness in face-to-face interactions. Central to their theory is the notion of face (LoCastro, 2012, p. 137).

Brown & Levinson (1987, pp. 68-71) suggest a set of five possibilities for the speaker to accomplish this ranging from the best case (strategy type 5) to the worse (strategy type 1).

As for politeness, Chapman (2011, p. 146) asserts that two kinds of interaction are obtainable for the analysis: generally, the interactions between the characters within the text, and the interaction that readers themselves enter into more normally in reading the texts. It can be said that perhaps because it is an area of pragmatics particularly directed at elucidating spoken discourse, the sorts of literary texts most recurrently examined in relation to politeness are scripts from plays and films.

In this regard, Simpson (1989, pp. 169-83) investigates the linguistic strategies of politeness employed by the characters in Ionesco's play *The Lesson*. The main event is a private lesson comprising an elderly professor and an eighteen-year-old pupil. At the beginning of the play, the professor is worried and hesitant, while the pupil is energetic and dynamic. Nevertheless, the professor increasingly loses his shyness, becoming gradually domineering and antagonistic, whereas the pupil becomes more and more passive. The transition in the interactive roles of the two characters in question is reflected via subtle variation in the linguistic strategies employed by the characters. To account for this, Simpson examines three extracts taken from key stages in the play development.

In the first extract, the professor uses elaborate negative politeness strategies to his younger more confident interlocutor. These strategies indicate that the professor is really the inferior member of the interaction. In the second extract, the situation is somehow different. The two characters show difference with one another implying a more symmetrical power relation exists between them (Simpson, 1989, p. 183).

However, there appear signals of initial hostility in the professor since he starts to choose strategies from the slightest polite end of the politeness scale. The final extract manifests evidence of an obvious power differential between the characters when the professor issues a sequence of bald, non-redressive face threatening acts to the pupil (Simpson, 1989, p. 183).

#### 9. 4 Relevance Theory

Sperber & Wilson (1995, p. 260) propose relevance theory to account for the interpretation of utterances. Their theory makes two essential claims concerning cognition and communication. The first is that 'human cognition tends to be organized so as to maximize relevance'; and the second is that 'every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance.' These claims indicate that there exists a solitary expectation criterion guiding the interpretation process, both producing and estimating interpretations.

Hence, relevance constitutes a property and is quantifiable: something is relevant to the extent that positive cognitive effects it produces are large and to the extent that cognitive effort needed to achieve these effects is small (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, p. 261).

Sperber & Wilson (1995: 236) define the term *poetic effect* as the peculiar effect of an utterance which achieves most of its relevance through a wide array of weak implicatures. Broadly speaking,

the broader the array of potential implicatures and the greater the hearer's accountability for creating them, the more poetic the effect, the more creative the metaphor. A good creative metaphor is accurately one in which a multiplicity of contextual effects can be retained and understood as weakly implicated by the speaker.

Pilkington (2000, p. 102) applies a relevance-theoretical approach to the analysis of Seamus Heaney's *Digging* with special emphasis on the concluding lines:

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap  
Of soggy peat. The curt cuts of an edge  
Through living roots awaken in my head  
But I've no spade to follow men like them.  
Between my finger and my thumb  
The squat pen rests. I'll dig with it.

It is remarked that such a metaphor is too vague in its desired effects since the reader has no evidence that the writer had anything specific in mind. However, in Heaney's poem the interpretation of the metaphor has been prepared by the rest of the poem. The reader is encouraged to derive a very large number of implicatures from exploring the encyclopaedic entries for the concepts *Dig* and *Poetry* or *Writing*. If these implicatures are accessible in an on-line reading, the metaphor is both rich and successful (Pilkington, 2000, p. 104).

Some of the contexts established earlier in the poem comprise information that digging is the way the poet's forefathers earned their living. That is, it is an activity and occupation with a lengthy convention in the society, that it is tough and honest and essential work which involves intense attentiveness. Numerous of these contextual assumptions might be accessed and the properties of digging in such assumptions transmitted, via inference, to the activity of poetry. The majority of them are weakly implicated or rendered slightly more evident (Pilkington, 2000, pp. 102-3).

## 10. Conclusions

On the bases of the discussion conducted previously, the following conclusions can be made:

1. Literary pragmatics is a recent trend which is interested in the investigation of the contextual influences exerted by authors or writers on their readers by means of their literary products. That is, this field of inquiry focuses on the language user's role in the production and reception of literary texts.
2. As for the question regarding the relationship between pragmatics and literature, it is remarked that this can be answered with reference to the fact that since pragmatics is concerned with language in use and creating and reading literary texts are significant and fascinating examples of language in use, the former has been proven to be a useful instrument for analyzing literary texts.
3. Additionally, it can be inferred that because literary texts cannot be accounted for in terms of their formal properties, pragmatics holds out the probability of being capable of saying something

concerning the distinctive features of literary texts themselves, specifically in relation to the ways in which readers interact with literary texts or the types of discourse involved.

4. The different pragmatic frameworks represented by speech act theory, conversational implicature, politeness theory and relevance theory have been demonstrated to provide invaluable insights to the study of literary texts. Besides, the process of analyzing literary texts has led to the development and the elucidation of the pragmatic theories themselves.

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