

Pragmatics and the Teaching of Literature

By

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Abstract

Scholars have been working, for decades, on examining literary discourse via new techniques among which pragmatics. Accordingly, and within a pragmatic appreciation, it can be suggested that literature constitutes a speech act on its own at the global level functioning as a macro-speech act. At the same time, the literature can be seen as a text consisting of several sentences, each of them may be taken as a possible speech act. Such speech acts are called micro-speech acts (van Dijk, 1981: 249). The present study is a call to teach literature, and novel in particular, by following a pragmatic analytical and systematic framework by applying pragmatic aspects including Speech Act Theory, Conversation analysis, and Conversational Implicature. What is proposed here is not an alternative but rather a complementary step towards achieving a better and deeper understanding of literature and towards integrating both literary and linguistic approaches in teaching literary texts especially for the EFL and ESL learners in an attempt to approach the intuition of native speakers. The researchers conclude that the familiarity of such procedures to students of English as a foreign language is not normally a difficulty but it needs the syllabus designers to reconsider teaching English as a foreign language as a communicative act that can be approached via literature which is an act of communication. In other words, using literary texts in class is 'useful for developing pragmatic competence' (Richard, 1996:157), which will enrich the quality of SL/FL teaching if considered part of the teaching plan.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, pragmatic competence, written and spoken discourse, methods of teaching literature.*