Pragmatic Analysis of the Little Match

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ARTICLE DETAILS

ABSTRACT

Generally, in social science and specifically in Linguistics, the basic purpose of cooperative principles is to describe how people achieve effective communication in social situations. It elaborates how listeners and speakers act effectively and cooperatively, understanding each other in a particular way. Paul Grice introduced it in his pragmatic theory, ‘we make our contribution effective in conversation according to the requirement at the given stage at which it occurs, accepting the purpose and direction of the talk exchange in which we are engaged.’ The short story “The Little Match Girl” is analyzed by applying the four maxims with the objective of better understanding of the text. It also analyzes whether all four maxims can be applied in one type of text and their presence can enhance the understanding of the text as well. The aim of the analysis is to mark the stylistic effect of Grice’s principles that may contribute to the better comprehension of the narrative from pedagogical point of view.

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1. Background

Jerry Pinnkey (1991) says that having no folklore’s influence, Hans Christian Anderson narrated an original tale. He narrated his own mother’s childhood experience in this tale. As a child, she used to send in the streets for begging. Her only motive was to give birth and grew up Anderson(Pinkney and Andersen 1999).
Mimi Atwood (2014) writes that the tale was known as classical story, the most famous tale of its era. It was often decontextualized in film, theatre, and books, with modified ending where besides dying, the little girl was saved from her cold and hunger by charitable people.

Encouraging people to help the poor, the author makes the story universal in its appeal. He attempts a deliberate act to keep the place, the year and protagonist unnamed. The write personifies the cold winter night as desolate and wretched state of the poor girl. Similarly, New Year’s Eve indicates the new beginning of the girl’s life after death (Shet 2021).

2. Historical Background of ‘The Little Match Girl’

The purpose of this modern adaptation of ‘The Little Match Girl’, is to transfer the text in cultural, geographical, historical or temporal terms. Genette describes this as a movement of adjacent (1997 : 304) which fits the source tale into the frame of reference of today’s audience.

The story focuses the factory labour which got rise in the mid-18th century, bleak and desolate fate of the poor girl showcases, the devastated effects of the Industrial Revolution. Though this era got rise in manufacturing which brought many positive changings, most prominently the growth of the middle class. Calculating devastated condition of poor working class the, writer adds uncontrolled pollution and overcrowding of the cities (Shannon 1999).

Many writers faced crises in this era of industry because most of the population was migrating from unspoiled countryside to the filthy urban city. It signified a shift from romantic traditional values to economic growth that was a huge expense of vulnerable workers. This era marked as unsafe labour and general cruelty towards young for societal changes. It was a surprising withdrawal from the grandeur of the previous era which had placed on child’s innocence (Shet 2021).

3. Contextual Background to ‘The Little Match Girl’

Like many other works of Victorian Era ‘The Little Match Girl’ deals with the cruelty and helplessness of child labour. It can be said it is a little practice which leads many children to early grave. Many writers like William Blake, through his works, shows this prevalent condition in British Literature. His work ‘The Chimney Sweeper’ and ‘Songs of Innocence and Experience in 1789 depict the same condition of child labour(Lindquist, Lindquist, and Knox 2019).

Another writer Charles Dickens, a friend and contemporary of Anderson, famous for his work ‘Oliver twist’ and ‘Great Expectations’, captures the real state of working class and the poor in Victorian era. He presents orphan, unfortunate children in his works. Similarly, Grimm’s Fairy Tales in 1812, depict darkness and morbidity for children. Another writer ‘Oscar Wild’ taking influence of Anderson writes ‘The Picture of Dorian Grey’, where he puts the folkloric prop ups of Goethe’s Faust with gothic and philosophical elements (Mayssara A. Abo Hassanin Supervised 2014).

4. Focus of the Study

The study focuses on:
1. What type of maxim used is found in the novel The Little Match Girl?
2. What are the dominant maxims of politeness used in request strategies of the novel?
3. Do the dominant maxims used in the novel ‘The Little Match Girl’ increase the pedagogical effects in the novel?
5. Objectives of the Research

The aim of this paper is to emphasize on pragmatic interpretation of Hans’ short stories based on narrative techniques. In certain terms, the study is organised to:
1. Test the degree of violation of the maxim, quality, quantity, manner and politeness.
2. Provide possible pragmatic analysis of selected text of the short story where Grice’s Cooperative Principles are applied.

6. Limitation of the Study

The researcher limits the study to make it clear. The research will only focus on the implementation of the four maxims and their flouting employed by the characters of the novel.

7. Significant of the Study

1. The study calculates the academic benefits
   a. The findings of this study give description about speech acts theory which contributes to the pragmatic study.
   b. The cooperative principles are described thoroughly in the conclusion that urges the readers for further study.

2. The practical benefits are given below:
   a. The researchers can enhance their knowledge by understanding pragmatic aspects especially speech acts.
   b. The reader can use this study as an additional reference in understanding the use of the cooperative principles in daily speech acts.

8. Literature Review

This section deals with the origin and source of pragmatics and its elements which are employed to guide the procedure of the research. It throws light on different fragments of language use. It provides a brief introduction to style and stylistics. Further, it gives the idea of language as a medium in literary works. As literature is a revelation of facts and ideas experienced by the people, and most exciting attentiveness by the authors or poets. It depicts the picture of language as the beauty of expressions, illustrated by the writers in their texts. It also elaborates peer observation of language which facilitates meanings having hidden and surface, denotative and connotative, social and historical facets, providing sense and sensibility to literature. Furthermore, this chapter presents different scholars’ theories on lexical and grammatical structures’ analysis in pragmatics. Finally, the researcher goes towards a theoretical framework of the research.

9. The Concept of Style and the Origin of the Study of Style

9.1 Style

Style is depicted as an outfit of thought and the way of writing text. Style is a literary element that describes an author’s choice of words, grammar, diction, syntax, figurative language, etc. It is a style of choosing words that create meanings, moods, and effects in the text. This aspect of language accords identity to the writers. Style can be applied to ages, periods, or genres to mark them discrete and identical for generations. One can identify the specific style of renaissance and can differentiate it from Anglo-Saxon (Yeibo 2012).

According to Chapman (1973:11), style can be a means of exhibiting variety for both writer and reader. It sharpens the literary meanings of the text while setting up a tone that makes the writing more convincing. It is the language habits of one person. Similarly, Lehman (1996: 303) suggests that
the locution of style can appeal to individuals, eras, languages, or centuries (Hill 2017).

Bloomfield says that a selection of non-distinctive language elements is called its style (Bloomfield, 1984). According to Leech, style is a controversial element in between form and meaning, it is more like choices of manner rather than matter of expression and content. It gets its origin from Aristotle’s theory, ‘mode of expression’ (Leech and Short, 1981).

Renaissance (16th Century) claims that style is a ‘dress of thought’. It is the aesthetic text image that makes the idea and meaning more embellished. Khader gives his views that words on the page can be arranged differently but their substance cannot be different. Every individual delivers the message in his/her unique perspective. This is called style (Khader, 2015).

In the 1960s, another different approach of style came into consideration. Different writers took this term as ‘poetic idiolect’ which means that different text would reveal different patterns of prominent features while analyzing them (Allen 2012).

A single message can be dressed in several different styles:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Original</td>
<td>He’s buying green vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>He’s buying greens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>He buys vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Journalistic</td>
<td>He’s gone to meet his market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Archaic</td>
<td>He picks the bucket.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The epitome of the above-mentioned scholarly definitions is that style is concerned with the particular writer or the particular piece of the text. It indicates writers’ choice of diction and their way of assembling individual thinking or perspectives to create longer unit of speech.

9.2 Stylistics

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (2014) says that stylistics is the study of the style of different literary works. This study makes Chaucer different from Shakespeare and poetry from prose. This is the part of linguistics that deals with the use of elements of figurative language in the text. Literature can be said, an art that employs language which can be appropriately examined through the reference of its context (Stylistics dictionary definition | stylistics defined, Mifflin 2014).

De Saussure (1926) established some Linguistic patterns, to describe and analyze the system of an utterance, and stylistics is one of them. Hence stylistics is a set of Linguistic patterns that studies how language is used to convey meanings. He suggests stylistics as the significant study of practical, functional, and aesthetic use of language. (Province 2015).

Then, Simpson (2004:3) suggests that the basic function that stylistics performs is to explore language and more specifically to inquire about creativity in the language and its construction to design meanings in the text. Stylistics defines the rules of the language by exploring texts where those grammatical rules are bent disbursed and lied down to the breaking point. Hence, stylistic analysis makes the people profound thinkers and enriches their understanding of literary texts.

Routledge says, ‘Stylistics origins in Aristotle’s ‘Poetics”. It aims to study and analyze a literary text. He further says that stylistics explores the aesthetic functions of language use by classifying
different categories of a literary text. Marc Alexander and Agnes Marszalek add their views that schema, frame, and script theory create the possibility to analyze the text stylistically (The Routledge, 2014. Handbook of Stylistics).

David Crystal defines stylistics as a part of Linguistic academic discipline, as Linguistics examines language scientifically. Therefore, being part of Linguistics, Stylistics explores language variations (Crystal and Davy, 2016). G.N Leech takes Stylistics as Linguistic literary approach, to deal with the questions of ‘why’ and ‘how’ more than ‘what’ (Leech and Short, 2007. Style in Fiction).

10. Grice’s Theories of Implicatures

In the theory of conversational implicature, Grice gives his opinion that cooperative principles, present between speaker and hearer, are responsible to control and guide what they speak. There are four maxims in cooperative principles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Quantity</th>
<th>“To cut a long story short”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Quality</td>
<td>“As far as I know”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Relevancy</td>
<td>“I know this is off topic but...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Manner</td>
<td>“I hate to keep harping on this, but I want to be sure everyone understands...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are unstated assumptions to recognize cooperative principles in any conversation. We suppose what people speak, is normally going to provide sufficient amount of information and tell the truth. They are relevant and try to be as clear as they can. These are the basic rules, normally people take while they speak with each other (Igwedibia, 2017). Conversational maxims are often flouted or violated. This situation is basically responsible to generate some speech acts (Suryana, 2013).

11. Methodology

This section deals with the mechanism to attain the objectives of the research. It unfolds the data, its source, and methodology to be analyzed. Here, the researcher discusses the type and implements inductive and deductive reasoning to reach generalizations. This is the text-based study of stylistic analysis where events and conditions have already taken place. The objects in this study are three paragraphs of Hans Christian Andersen’s short story—The Little Match Girl. Those samples are taken through constant reading and analysis. This study is employed by the researcher as the instrument to find suitable data for analysis. Three steps that have been used in this research are:

(1) The provision of data
(2) Data classification
(3) Data analysis in which the writer uses Gricean theory. It is a theory about conversational implicature generated by four maxims.

One maxim gives birth to another maxim when it flouts. The plain sentences cannot convey the meaning of an implicature, it is the speaker who implies it. Grice (1975) suggested that the implicature can be taken from the text by understanding three things:

- The linguistic meaning of what is said
- The pragmatic meaning
- The struggle that the writer is obeying the cooperative speaker
In any piece of text when one maxim is broken, the writing becomes more interesting and informative key to action. Those are maxims of:

- Quantity
- Quality
- Relation
- Manner

12. Analysis

12.1 Text

“Shivering with cold and hunger, she crept along, a picture of misery, poor little girl! The snowflakes fell on her long fair hair, which hung in pretty curls over her neck. In all the windows lights were shining, and there was a wonderful smell of roast goose, for it was New Year’s eve. Yes, she thought of that!”

Explanation

To evaluate the condition of the girl and her physical appearance, the writer gives explicit evaluation, by using the words, ‘a portrait of the poor girl!’, thereby implying the maxim of the quantity he gives the required information to the readers to understand the whole setting of the story. The words, ‘a wonderful smell of roast goose’, indicate what event is being celebrated on that night. The writer uses maxim of quantity in order to avoid violation of the second maxim of quality. So the study reveals that the writer uses the maxim of quantity and quality at the same time. As we can see the clarity of expression in the text. The whole information is pure from prolixity, carrying out important details related to the appearance of the little girl.

12.2 Text

"Now someone is dying," thought the little girl, for her old grandmother, the only person who had loved her, and who was now dead, had told her that when a star fell down a soul went up to God.”

Explanation

This passage is following the cooperative principle by the maxim of relevancy. When the little girl is thinking about her only friend, her grandmother who loved her, but now she was dead. He gives the idea of a classical myth of falling of the star. He does not give any information more than the required one. Besides using maxim of relevance, the researcher finds out the violation of maxim of quality when a false idea is given that a falling star is an indication of a person who dies on Earth and his/her soul goes to the God. Although maxim of quantity can be observed when we read the specific information about the little girl’s relationship with her grandmother.

12.3 Text

“But in the corner, leaning against the wall, sat the little girl with red cheeks and smiling mouth, frozen to death on the last evening of the old year. The New Year’s sun rose upon a little pathetic figure. The child sat there, stiff and cold, holding the matches, of which one bundle was almost burned.”

Explanation

This passage is following the politeness principle by the maxim of quantity. Hans Christian depicts the true picture of the cruel society by providing an evidence. He does not say anything which is based on his self-satisfaction. He is relevant, obvious, clear, and perspicacious about all he presents. Along with maxim of quality, maxim of quantity is also being observed by the researcher as the whole
idea is free from obscurity. There is no unsupported claims and ambiguity. Although, maxim of quality seems to be violated here in the presence of ironical statements like ‘The new year sun rose upon a little pathetic figure’.

13. Conclusion

This part of the research draws conclusion. The study aims to reduce the misunderstandings prevailed among readers and literary critics. The analysis through maxims of conversational implicatures helps to identify various truths and subtleties in any piece of writing that would be otherwise not is recognized by other analytical approach. The reasons for the maxims used in Hans Christian’s short story The Little Match Girl are to make it easy to understand the writer’s style of depicting the insights of the society in the short story. The study of conversational principles in short story may prove helpful in the understanding of a text. This study reveals the pragmatic meanings of the text. It also shows that there are several systems working in a piece of narrative. Finally, the study draws the conclusion that conversational principles are extremely helpful in comprehending the text, particularly, from a teaching and learning point of view.

References

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