ABSTRACT

Studying literature in its various aspects and perspectives is an important dimension of aesthetic appreciation, literary criticism and research. In order to understand, analyze, interpret and evaluate diverse aspects of literary texts, literary critics and researchers often apply various approaches and methods such as sociological, biographical, psychological, formalistic, linguistic/rhetoric approaches as well as structural, theoretical and interpretative methods. Traditionally, most of the studies that have been undertaken on the interpretation of literary works are devoted to an impressionistic evaluation.

Eminent scholars and researchers believe that linguistics inevitably has the advantage of being scientifically accurate, systematic and objective. Pragmatics, being a branch of socio linguistic, has the dual character of being objective as well as subjective. Hence, a pragmatic analysis of any literary work will bring out the advantages of both. The present research study is, therefore, a combination of subjectivism and objectivism. The study brings out the different kinds of verbal exchanges between the dramatic characters of varied personalities. It is very much similar to daily conversation between real-life people. Application of pragmatic principles to the selected plays of Girish Karnad and Mahesh Elkunchwar shows that plays do not stop with their performances as such but go beyond and explicitly reveal what the dramatists intend to tell the readers. This is done through the linguistic strategies used by the playwrights to achieve their desired intentions. The study has been designed in such a way as to open new vistas regarding the relationships between pragmatics and drama. The study, with the help of pragmatic principles, has further benefitted to interpret the styles, themes, and motifs of plays under consideration.

Drama is the one of the major genres of literature, and due to its nature of being a performative art, it has certain advantages over other forms. It is overwhelmingly popular among the audiences of all kinds and times. However, it has been found that linguistic principles of Pragmatics are less applied to dramatic texts. Literary critics and researchers today chiefly focus on thematic concerns, art of characterization, nature of conflict, plot construction, and other approaches such as feminist, existentialist, Marxist, et. al. It is interesting to observe that different dramaturgies
have studied linguistic styles in drama’s long history and dramatic speech styles. It included- poetic diction, formal prose, colloquial prose, plain and ornate speech, syntactically or semantically complex as well as simple speech, fluency and hesitancy and the like in dramatic dialogues. The present study invites a reconsideration of the notion of ‘the verbal’ in drama. It is traditionally associated with restrictions to patterns of syntax, imagery, meter or thematics in the terms of dramatic dialogue.

Drama is impersonal. The dramatist does tell a story but not like the storyteller or a novelist. The story teller or the narrator tells a story directly just as the lyric poet who expresses his feelings and ideas. The dramatist creates men and women who speak to each other and from their communication we gather the story of their lives. When we read or see the performance of a drama we interpret the behaviour of the persons in terms of their motives - stated or concealed. What they say, what they do and the way they interact with others give us a clue to understand them. Dialogue should, therefore, be seen more in the nature of a ‘device’ rather than as a ‘reflector’ in drama, with a word creating, not a world mirroring function Honzl (1940: 118-26). Drama is, no doubt, more than dialogue, and where dialogue is employed as a dramatic resource, its mechanics have a fundamental role to play. And this is precisely the focus of the present research study.

In drama, all that we have is what the characters say to each other. What the character speaks not only reveals his/her nature, it also gives us information about his/her relations with the person spoken to. Everything that characters speak contributes to forward the action of the drama. When the drama is being performed, it is actually dialogue that holds a mirror up to what the dramatist attempts to express. In the ultimate analysis, drama is nothing but the speech of the men and women created by the dramatist. The present research study focuses on the study of dialogue as an interaction. Dialogues/utterances are relevant to areas of ‘language-in-use’.

For the past twenty-five years or so, there has been an intense discussion between literary critics and linguists on the question of whether it is appropriate to apply linguistic methods - that is to say, methods derived from research in linguistics- to the study of literature. Interestingly, the conventions of behaviour, action and speech in ordinary contexts of living are made operative in the creation, assessment and
understanding of behaviour in the fictional world of the play. It is, therefore, now increasingly felt by researchers and readers that the research activity of applying the principles of linguistics to dramatic texts is entirely justified – nay, fruitful and rewarding also. The importance of pragmatics in analyzing literary texts is now universally acknowledged.

Pragmatics, which is a sub-field of both linguistics (the scientific study of a language) and semiotics (the general study of signs, both linguistic and non-linguistic), is interested only in analyzing the dialogues or ‘language-in-use’ in real life. Speech act theory, politeness principle and cooperative principles, take ‘utterance’ as the basic unit for their analysis. Among various genres of literature, only drama allows the characters to present themselves in their role as speakers. These characters’ speech as well as their dialogical speech creates the verbal matrix used in dramatic text.

Pragmatic principles are observed and violated universally in literary works (and in real life communication too) to create artistic and/or linguistic effects and to communicate certain message(s). However, this observance and violation do not display uniformity in terms of linguistic strategies. Different cultures and speech communities observe and/or flout them in their own special ways. This culture specificity is constantly kept in mind while applying these pragmatic principles to the six selected Indian plays in this study. Dramas are selected for the study as the utterances in the form of dialogues and monologues can provide necessary data for the study of the principles discussed above. Besides, considerable work needs to be done in the similar fashion. Plays selected for the study are: Tughlaq, Hayavadana, and Wedding Album by Girish Karnad and Old Stone Mansion, Reflection, and Sonata by Mahesh Elkunchwar.

Technically, this research study has been divided into five chapters. First, the pragmatic theory of speech acts, politeness principle and cooperative principle are discussed in the first chapter along with the brief summary of the selected plays by Girish Karnad and Mahesh Elkunchwar. Exclusive attention is focused on the pragmatic analysis of the plays under study in the succeeding three chapters (II, III, & IV). Following the theory and principles of Pragmatics, these three chapters endeavor to analyze and examine the selected plays in the light of Pragmatics. The final chapter of the dissertation gathers up the various threads and recognizes, by way of
conclusion, the relevance and authenticity of applying linguistic/pragmatic approach to literature in general, and the selected plays, in particular.

The First chapter is entirely devoted to discuss the pragmatic theories of speech acts and politeness principle and cooperative principle by various pragmaticists and their involvement with literature, especially with drama. It also proposes to define the hypothesis and the problem and the objectives, discuss the scope and limitations, highlight the significance of the research study and explain the research methodology that is applied to fulfill the objectives of the study. A brief biographical sketch of both the playwrights as well as short overviews of the thematic concerns in the six selected plays is provided in the last section of this chapter.

The second chapter makes an attempt to analyze the six plays within the framework of Austin and Searle’s speech act theory. The analysis shows that all utterances in the selected plays can be categorized under one of the speech acts. Every character is seen performing some speech act or the other to convey their intentions. They express actual state of affairs, express their feelings and attitudes towards others, try to get other conversationalists to perform some actions, and finally bring about some state of affairs (usually of the institutional sort) by virtue of the utterances itself. Hence, they perform actions with ‘words’. Each speech act, assertive, expressive, directive, commissive, declarative, direct and indirect, contains a wide range of sub-acts. For instance, a speaker can use an assertive speech act to perform other acts as accusing, disagreeing, replying, hypothesizing, concluding, criticizing, advising, complaining etc. This analysis has revealed a lot of facts about speech acts. On the basis of structure, direct and indirect speech acts have been generated. They are separately discussed in this chapter. Speech acts become the tools of the dramatist in conveying his/her intentions to the readers.

The third chapter deals with the methods with which intentions of the speakers are being conveyed to the other character(s) and the readers/audience. The most necessary tool needed for communication is politeness. The strategies of politeness developed by Lakoff, G N Leech and Brown and Levinson are applied to various utterances in the selected plays. In any type of conversation, politeness is a key element in keeping harmonious relations with others. The plays that are selected for study are not devoid of such strategies of politeness, with which characters converse among themselves.
There are certain strategies like positive and negative politeness, one can come across the actions of complementing, congratulating, expressing concern for others, reciprocating, avoiding disagreement, promising, notice hearer’s wants are also the positive politeness strategies reflected in the plays. In the last section of this chapter, the politeness strategies used by the playwrights are highlighted. The extent of the politeness used by the dramatists has an effect on the readers and the reception of the work. This has been revealed by the use of impolite language used by the characters. The politeness strategies used by both playwrights bring out their stylistic features in which they have made their impact on the readers/audience.

The fourth chapter discusses how the intentions of the speaker are being conveyed to the listener, without breaking the flow of communication between them. Cooperative principle stated by Grice (1975) provides the foundation for conveying the intentions across. According to him, speakers should be truthful, informative, and relevant and clear while they provide information to other person. But as it is impossible to always abide to these four rules, this is where the violation of the cooperative principles comes in. The unique feature of this phenomenon is that the speaker will inform the listener about his desires and intentions in a manner which would seem to violate the four maxims, but in actuality, it does not seem to violate any of the maxims. The instances in this chapter are highlighted under the four respective headings: the maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner. The playwrights make use of these techniques to show the various aspects of how the truth is twisted according to situations. The intentions of the playwrights are revealed by following or flouting these maxims by the characters in the selected plays. Turn-taking, cohesion and coherence are also studied to certain extend.

The last chapter i.e. Chapter V of this doctoral dissertation offers findings and conclusion of the study. It discusses how Girish Karnad and Mahesh Elkunchwar mould English language to suit the unique characteristics and claims of Indian culture. It also concentrates on how cultural artifacts have designed the special speech acts, politeness principle and cooperative principle to meet the communicative needs of the communicators. The observations emerging from the research study are emphasized in this chapter. It contains a summary of application of various pragmatic strategies to each play. Moreover, the concluding chapter attempts to demonstrate how these two
playwrights make use of various linguistic expressions in their own way to create characters, motifs and plot. This chapter is designed to present a brief summary of the study- it is aimed to point out how the findings and observations of the study are in harmony and correspondence with the proposed objectives and goals of the research study.

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