How to Study Literature:

Stylistic and Pragmatic Approaches

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Contents

Part one 1
A stylistic Approach to Literature

Chapter 1 3
Introduction

Chapter 2 21
Theoretical Framework

Chapter 3 48
A Stylistic Analysis of DH Lawrence's 'Sons and Lovers'

Chapter 4 79
A Stylistic Analysis of 'A Farewell to Arms' by Ernest Hemingway

Chapter 5 109
A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Poems

Chapter 6 142
A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Short Stories

Chapter 7 180
Conclusion

Part Two 196
A Pragmatic Approach to Literature

Chapter 1 197
Introduction

Chapter 2 201
Theoretical Framework

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Chapter 3 ..... **231**
The Novel and the Five Major Speech Acts

Chapter 4 ..... **253**
The Role of Indirect Speech Acts in the Novel

Chapter 5 ..... **267**
Other Speech Acts in the Selected Novels

Chapter 6 ..... **287**
Conclusion

Bibliography **297**

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Foreword

The study of literature is a multifaceted phenomenon and various approaches to it have emerged emphasizing different strands of the complex activity. Two important aspects of the study of literature are its understanding and enjoyment.

Stylistics has developed during the last forty years as a complement to traditional literary criticism and has close affinity to practical criticism, New criticism and other text-centred approaches. It makes us concentrate on identification and description of formal and structural features of the text and their functions within the universe of discourse. Stylistics is no longer a homogeneous and consistent approach. While conventional stylistics ignores the contribution of factors like intentionality and inter-textuality, attempts have recently been made to incorporate them into stylistic analysis. It must be noted the same stylisticians still confine themselves to what I label 'descriptive stylistics' and refuse to relate description to interpretation. I believe that the true usefulness of stylistics resides in an effort to demonstrate the relevance of 'significant' description to interpretation, which has been meticulously attempted in the current work.

Pragmatics is another branch of study that has developed during the last fifty years or so. It explores the role of the situational context in the formulation of meaning. It studies language not in isolation but in its socio-cultural context. Various principles of language use have been identified and theories have been developed, which help us in analyzing language more efficiently. As one of the valuable methods to the study of literature, a pragmatic approach certainly adds to the understanding and enjoyment of literary works by encouraging the reader to explore the hidden agenda and various layers of meaning suggested on the basis of both linguistic evidences and contextual data in the concerned works.

The present book views the stylistic method to literature and the pragmatic method to literature as two separate approaches, presenting them in two separate sections. It offers a competent theoretical discussion of the issues involved in the two approaches. A very useful aspect of the book is the abundant analysis of literary texts(fiction and poetry),which is insightful and rewarding. I am convinced that the book is very useful to those interested in the study of literature in the light of the stylistic and pragmatic approaches.

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