

**DEEPER UNDERSTANDING A LITERARY WORK
THROUGH PRAGMATIC APPROACH IN
FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

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ABSTRACT

Human language activity unfolds two dimensions, that is spoken and written words. Spoken form refers to conversation, while written form can be referred to literature. Linguistics and literature are two different disciplines. It is very interesting to understand a literary work through linguistic perspectives. Therefore, this paper provides a review of ideas regarding the role of pragmatics in deeper understanding a literary work in foreign language learning and teaching and to look at the issues that literature can be exploited in the classroom activities. Since pragmatics is the study of language in use, there are several elements which are crucial to interpretation of written text, that is literary pragmatics including aspects of pragmatics, the nature of context, the interpretation of deictic expressions, and the relationship implied between text and reader. By using pragmatic approach in foreign language learning and teaching and a literary work as teaching materials, it is hoped that learners can feel a real sense of achievement at understanding multiple layers of meaning and they can appreciate highly value of literature. Literature also educates learners to develop their attitudes toward the value of a literary work. Teachers might help learners develop their proficiency in English since literature supplies many linguistic opportunities to the language learners and allows teachers to design activities in order to develop their communicative competence.

Keywords: Deeper understanding, Pragmatics, Foreign Language Learning and Teaching, communicative competence

English is as an international language, it means people communicate by using English if they are from a different country. In other words, English is called a lingua franca. A lingua franca is a language widely adopted for communication between two speakers whose native languages are different from each other's and where one or both speakers are using it as a 'second' language (Harmer, 2001:1). While in Indonesia the status of English is as a foreign language. The status of English in Indonesia is as a foreign language. It means English is neither widely used for communication nor used as medium of instruction. EFL is the context of teaching English in which students do not have ready-made context for communication beyond their classroom (see Carter & Nunan, 2001 and Brown, 2007). Since English is as a foreign language, it needs a special attention from teachers who teach English in the classroom. In this case the role of teachers is very important. As stated by Brown (2007: 7) teaching can be defined as showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instructions, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand, while learning is acquiring or getting of knowledge of a subject or a skill by study, experience, or instruction. From those definitions, it can be captured that that learning and teaching are terms that cannot be separated each other. Regarding foreign language (L2) learning and teaching process, teachers should be creative in using teaching materials in order that the learners can dig their ability so they can increase their language competence. Literature can be used as one of the alternative materials. The use of literature in language teaching, as Maley (2001) said, is fundamental part of foreign language teaching where an understanding of the high culture and thought expressed through literature. So literature can be used as medium of language teaching. In understanding literature, ones must comprehend not only the literal meaning but also meaning in context. Therefore, this paper provides the ideas regarding the role of pragmatics in deeper understanding a literary work in foreign language learning and teaching

Pragmatic Approach

Pragmatics is the study of relationship between linguistic forms and the users of those forms (Yule, 1996, 2011:4). He also defines that pragmatics is the study of invisible meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even it isn't actually said or written (2010:128). It indicates that pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). Consequently, it has more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. Cohen (2010:3) adds that the notion of pragmatics has numerous meanings depending on the context and since the term a pragmatic approach is taken to something, it means the implication is that person is being practical. In other words, it can be said that a pragmatic approach involves the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said. It requires a consideration of how speakers organize what they want to say in accordance with who they are talking to, where, when, and under what circumstances. In line with those statements, Cruse (2000:14) and Brown and Yule (1983: 37-38) add that there is general agreement that context is vital importance in arriving at the meaning of an utterance and the role of context can support a range of meaning.

There are four areas of pragmatics (Yule, 1996, 2011:3), they are (1) the study of speaker meaning; (2) the study of contextual meaning; (3) the study of how more gets communicated than is said; and (4) the study of the expression of relative distance. In order to know and understand how they work, Yule suggests that it is important to review the relationship pragmatics and other areas of linguistic analysis. Traditionally, in analyzing language from one area is different from other areas. Pragmatic analysis differs from syntactic analysis and semantic analysis. Syntax is the study of the relationships between

linguistic forms, how they are arranged in sequence, and which sequences are well-formed. Semantics is the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and entities in the world. Pragmatics is the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms. It is clear that pragmatics allows humans into the analysis, that is one can talk about people's intended meanings, their assumptions, their purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions that they are performing when they speak.

Since pragmatics is the study of language in use and concerned with spoken aspects of language and with the study of how words are interpreted in a real conversation, so as its basic assumption is that to understand people's words and we must infer their intentions (Mey, 2001). Hickey (1990, 2014:13) also defines that pragmatics is concerned with language in use, attaching special significance to those aspects of meaning not explained by semantics. In using language, people not only say things but also do things. Cohen (2010:6) adds that the field of pragmatics is broad and encompasses matters of reference, presupposition, discourse structure, and conversational principles involving implicature and hedging and speech acts have an important role to play in L2 communication because they are teachable and learnable.

Literature of Pragmatics

Referring to the definition of pragmatics which is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader), consequently, it has more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. It can be understood that pragmatics is concerned with the spoken aspect of language and how words are interpreted in a real conversation.

By analogy, literary pragmatics considers the processes of writing and reading and literary texts as characterized by a mutual agreement between authors and readers. The characters, the author, and the readers have voices that blend in a dialogue, contributing to the communicative process of the text. The analogy between oral and literary communication enables the activities of writing and reading to be viewed as pragmatic acts (Leonardi, 2010).

Reading is a collaborative activity, taking place between the author and the reader. The work that the author has done in producing the text has to be supplemented and completed by the reader. Reading is a cooperative process of active re-creation. The reader is an active collaborator in literary text. His contribution consists in entering the universe that the author has created and even the reader becomes an actor. By acting the reader changes the play: what the reader reads is, in the final analysis, his or her own coproduction along with the author. The interaction between the reader and the author called dialectic process (Mey, 2003:788). It can be captured that the author depends on the reader as a presupposition for his activity, and the reader is dependent on the author for guidance in the world of fiction.

The pragmatic study of literary activity focuses on the features that characterize the dialectic aspect of literary production: the text as an author-originated and –guided, but at the same time reader-oriented and –activated, process of wording. The reader is constrained by the limitations of the text; but also, the text provides the necessary degrees of freedom in which the reader can collaborate with the author to construct the proper textual universe, one that is consonant with the broader contextual conditions that mark the world and times in which the reader lives.

Literature in Foreign Language (L2) Learning and Teaching

A foreign language is a language which is neither widely used for communication nor used as medium of instruction. In Indonesia English is as a foreign language. Because of its status it makes learners have lack of practice their English both inside and outside classroom as EFL settings and even limited opportunity to use it. Carter and Nunan (2001) and Brown (2007) add EFL is the context of teaching English in which students do not have ready-made context for communication beyond their classroom. Referring to the function of language, as a means of communication, without considering the status of language, it is the heaviest duty of the teachers how to design activities in order to improve the learners' competencies. The success of a teacher always depends on how she/he serves the materials in learning teaching process. Deciding what kinds of materials used in the classroom activities, it should be in line with the objectives of the lesson and English proficiency of the learners.

Learning a language is more than learning the elements of a new linguistic code (Kern, 2000:303). In addition Brown (2007:206) mentions that in communicative language teaching, language techniques are designed to engage learners in pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. As Maley (2001) stated the use of literature in language teaching is as fundamental part of foreign language teaching where an understanding of the high culture and thought expressed through literature. Literature is the writing or the study of books which are valued as works of art in the forms of drama, fiction, essays, poetry, and biography. From the forms of literature, Lazar (1993) proposes that literature can be used as a tool for creating opportunities for discussion, controversy, and critical thinking. It can be concluded that literature can be used as medium of language learning teaching process. There are two places where learners can develop their language skill through the teaching and learning of literature, they are the language of the literary texts which contains rich linguistic model and the language of the classroom where teachers and learners use in engaging with literature (see Parkinson and Thomas, 2000:3 and Arsyad,

2013:52). From the middle of 1980s the interest in literature as a teaching resource has renewed and continues until today (Mohammad and Amir Hossein, 2012:32). Literature has been a subject of study in many countries...and since 1980s it has attracted more interest among EFL teachers and even the use of literary texts in foreign language teaching has greatly increased over the last few years (Clandfield, 2005 in www.onestopenglish.com/support/methodology/teaching-materials/teaching-materials-using-literature-in-the-efl/-esl-classroom/146508.article).

The use of literature as a resource in language teaching may appear less academic but is a valid approach, a means for developing a personal response, which calls for sensitivity and understanding, providing many linguistic opportunities and basing many language exercises on interesting material, thus furthering the personal development of language skills (Bottino, p 212). Materials are the texts and other aids the teacher uses to assist in the learning process. Materials include anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of language. They can be linguistic, visual, auditory, or kinesthetic, and they can be presented in print, though live performance or display, or on cassette, CD-ROM, DVD or the internet (see Tomlinson, 2001:66). The materials of the English Language Institute rest upon the view that learning a foreign language consists not in learning about the language but in developing a new set of habits (Bell, 1981:97).

Literary works are also mentioned as authentic materials. Authentic material is any spoken or written materials which are not for pedagogical purposes (see Nunan, 1999 in Salwa , 2013:4). Providing authentic materials gives several advantages to the classroom activities; the authentic materials bring learners into direct contact with a reality level of English, the content (of certain materials) is always up-to-date and constantly updated, and

the materials present particular information that can be directly relevant to English learners' need (Heitler, 2005 cited in Cahyono and Megawati, 2013:xi).

Since literature used as materials in language teaching, Sage (1987), Collie and Slater (1990), Carter and Long (1991) point out three main models, they are the cultural model, the language model, and the personal growth model.

- a. The cultural model is a means of transmitting important ideas and feelings. Through this model students learn about a culture and ideology other than their own.
- b. The language model is some favor the teaching of literature for its use in language development. Through this model, it is hoped that students can find their own ways into a text. In this language-based model, the activities are learner-centered. The focus is often on the way language is used, how linguistic forms convey literal meanings, and going beyond the literal interpretation of the lines.
- c. The personal growth model has been termed by some as an engagement with the reading of literary texts. The personal growth model is more student-centered. The aim of personal growth model is to motivate the students to read by selecting themes, to a large extent, which is related to their own personal experiences. Students are also encouraged to evaluate what they read for themselves and distinguish the merits of the works they read.

Application of Pragmatic Approach in Understanding a Literary Work

The following is an example of how pragmatics applied in understanding a literary work in L2 learning and teaching. In this example it has taken into account Austin and Searle's theory of speech acts. Speech acts have an important role in L2 communication and

have a basic meaning as conceived by the speaker (Cohen, 2010). The literary work that is used in this application is Hemingway's short story "The Killers" (see Lestari, 2004).

The conversation (see appendix) is an excerpt from the short story "The Killers" by Ernest Hemingway. The characters who are involved in this conversation are George, Max and Al. George is a waiter of Henry's lunchroom while Max and Al are guests of Henry's lunchroom.

The words which are used in the conversation are very common which is determined by the context. The waiter chooses common words in order to offer the menu to Max and Al since they came in and sat down at the counter of Henry's lunchroom. In the beginning, George asked them "What's yours?". Based on Austin's theory (1962) in Yule, 1996; Downes, 1984; Kreidler, 1998 cited in Lestari, 2004, the action performed by producing an utterance will consist of three related acts, that is locution, illocution, and perlocution. It is also applied Searle's speech acts theory which says that there are five types of general functions of speech acts, they are declarations, representatives, expressive, directives, and commissives (Yule, 1996; Leech, 1983; Levinson' 1983). From George's utterance "what's yours?", it is an interrogative sentence means George asked Max and Al what they want to order (locutionary act - question, the term deals with the act of uttering what is said). If this utterance is looked at closely, actually it means a request to the guests, that is George requests Max and Al to mention what kinds of food they want to eat in Henry's lunchroom (illocutionary act- directive, the term deals with what the addresser intends to communicate to the addressee). Max gives response by uttering "I don't know. What do you want to eat, Al?" From Max' response, it can be meant that he is not ready to choose the kinds of food which he wants to eat and he asked Al to help him choose the kinds of menu (perlocutionary act- postponing, the term deals with the act of producing the effect of uttering).

From the above illustration, it can be described that the utterance which is produced by George “What’s yours?” is not enough to be interpreted by using syntactic description and semantic description since the same sentence will be different utterances when it is pronounced by different speaker or by the same speaker but on different occasions. In other words it can be said that the same linguistic forms may have different meanings when they are used in different context. While by using pragmatics, it can be known the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms. It is clear that pragmatics allows humans into the analysis, that is one can talk about people’s intended meanings, their assumptions, their purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions that they are performing when they speak.

Regarding George’s utterance, it can be understood that addresser (George) has performed his utterance through an interrogative form and has a function as a question. If it is looked at deeply, actually it is directive as a request. By performing this utterance, the addressees (Max and Al) understand that George wants to know what Max and Al want to order but they are not ready to choose the menu, so they postponed their order.

Conclusion

The application of pragmatics to the fictional conversation provides a new perspective to literary works. It is hoped by using pragmatic approach in foreign language learning and teaching and a literary work as teaching materials can make learners feel a real sense of achievement at understanding multiple layers of meaning and they can appreciate highly value of literature. Besides, the advantages of studying language through pragmatic approach, learners can describe the intended meanings of people’s utterances since the

interpretation always influenced by context situation. Literature can also educate learners to develop their attitudes toward the value of a literary work. Teachers might help learners develop their proficiency in English since literature supplies many linguistic opportunities to the language learners and allows teachers to design activities in order to develop their communicative competence.

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