

LEARNING CULTURE THROUGH TEXT ANALYSIS: SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC FOUNDATIONS FOR WORKING WITH TEXTS

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Abstract:

This study deals with a pragmatic model of meaning as applicable in stylistic analysis and some other concepts traditionally dealt with in pragmatics. The analysed text is viewed as discourse between the writer and the reader which allows for interpretation of implicit messages encoded between the lines. These are often culture specific implicatures which cannot be correctly interpreted without adequate background knowledge. The paper opens with an analysis of the stylistic means of the short story pointing out the phenomenon known as foregrounding and the quality of openness in text. Openness in (literary) text may cause difficulties to some readers but at the same time it encourages a well-equipped and enthusiastic reader to work out the author's intended meaning. A stylistic analysis with an effective pragmatic dimension develops into a (critical) discourse analysis where the cooperation and interaction between the author and the reader are observed. Here the reader's need to acquire at least certain level of cultural sensitivity appears to be crucial. A sample analysis of Doris Lessing's short story In Defence of the Underground is also introduced in order to illustrate the presented theoretical approach.

Keywords: Text; Discourse; Culture; Stylistic vs. discourse analysis; Pragmatic dimension; Openness; Foregrounding.