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THE STUDY OF COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE IN THE FIRST ACT OF *THE CARETAKER*

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Abstract:

*The present paper is related with language and literature. Literature and language are the two sides of the same coin. Literature is keenly understood through language. There is minor difference between literary language and common language but both are interrelated to each other and helpful to improve communication and beneficial for upliftment of society. Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Pragmatics is the subfield of linguistics which studies the contextual use of language. It is an effective weapon to study language, extended, non intentional and connotative meaning of the select discourses. The cooperative principle is the important pragmatics term which is useful in discourse analysis and in dramatic speech. It is useful to study the contextual meaning from the select dramatic discourses. The present study is related to the analysis of select discourses with the help of Cooperative Principle in the first act of Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. The pragmatics study is considered as the scientific way of discourse analysis, particularly the speech acts that occur in a play. In depth analysis of pragmatics aspects is a kind of exploration of the overall context of the play. The socio-cultural background is important while constructing the utterances.*

Keywords: *Pragmatics, Linguistics, Cooperative Principle, Contextual Study, Absurd Theatre, Discourse Analysis, etc.*

The present research paper shows the absurd elements in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*, particularly in its first act, with the help of cooperative principle. It is related with society's language, pragmatics and literature. Language is God's special gift which empowers human being. It is the language which helps human beings to communicate their ideas, thoughts, emotions and views. So for successful communication in day to day life, it is necessary to study language and its tools. Linguistic is the science which studies the origin, organization, nature and development of language. Pragmatics is called as contextual study of discourses, is a subfield of linguistic which explains the ways in which context contributes to meaning. According to Levinson "Pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammartized or encoded in the structure of language" (Levinson 09). It shows that the meaning and analysis of any discourse is not only depending on the linguistic knowledge of the speaker and listener, but also it deals with social, political, economical etc contexts of the conversation, knowledge about the status of speaker and hearer, intensions of speaker and hearer and so on. Thus, it helps to know the proper communication from the discourses of the plays. It studies the practical use of language and its relation with context. Thus, in any conversation, a variety of factors are responsible for proper meaning like age, sex, social, economical status, reference etc.



Literature and language are the two sides of the society and no one can deny the fact. Language is the base or foundation of literature and it is one of the most frequent uses of language. The experts of language and linguistics can also be used to access literature from the society's perspective. Literature can be expressed beautifully through language; hence it is called as the friend of the language. According to some critics there is difference between common language and literary language, but It is clear that literary language and ordinary language are correlated to each other; they help us to understand literature and help to improve the society and its communication.

Linguistics is the scientific study of the structure and evolution of human language. Pragmatics is the subfield of linguistics. Pragmatics studies the practical use of language. It is effective weapon to study language and literature. There is a sustainable relationship between literature, language and pragmatics, as literature is concerned with context whereas the pragmatics studies the language in context. Pragmatics clearly studies the extended, non intentional and connotative meaning of the select discourses. In other words, the relationship between literature, language and pragmatics is perpetually interrelated to each other.

The cooperative principle is the important pragmatics term which is useful in conversational analysis and in the study of dramatic dialogues. It is useful to study the contextual meaning from the select dramatic discourses. It is helpful for the effective communication in our day to day conversation. For the overall enjoyment of a literary text and to improve our communication, it is essential to study and comprehend the contextual meaning of the speech acts. Therefore, pragmatics analysis is an indispensable part of the literature.

The present study is related to pragmatics analysis - especially the analysis of select discourses with the help of Cooperative Principle in the first act of Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*. The pragmatics study is considered as the scientific way of discourse analysis, particularly the speech acts that occur in a play. In depth analysis of pragmatics aspects is a kind of exploration of the overall context of the play. The socio-cultural background is important while constructing the utterances which embedded into the structural design of the play. There are various factors like speech situation, speech event and the addressee-addresser etc. govern the production of these utterances. Exploration of these and many other contextual factors is an interesting as well as highly revealing exercise. Moreover, this exercise helps the reader to put the social, cultural events, themes and other issues related to the play in a proper perspective. A play can be best understood if the utterances embedded in its structural design are properly interpreted. The speech acts of the play can be correctly interpreted only if they are treated in pragmatics terms like cooperative principle.

Harold Pinter is one of the very famous absurd dramatists who focuses on and explores the absurd situation of human beings, their struggle of power, struggle of conformity in the society they live, the lack of communication and the incongruity in their personal relationships. His characters are withdrawn in their private lives being affected by the terror of World War II; they are away from communication and they are lost in their own world. What make their situation absurd are their inability to communicate and the inability to express them in such a contemporary world. Their aim is to explain their readers how desperate the human beings are in the real world and to do so, Harold Pinter creates his own style and adds a different atmosphere to the 'Theatre of The Absurd'.

The language and the characters used in his plays are the reflections of daily language and its context. Therefore, this study concentrates on different point of views to understand Pinter's *The Caretaker* with the help of pragmatics analysis especially cooperative principle. Thus, language, literature and pragmatics are closely interrelated to each other and the present research deals with literary language from pragmatics perspectives to understand the socio-cultural context and authentic interpretation of the select play. All the present branches of language became unsuccessful to point out the problems related to the proper interpretation of sentences used in ordinary language. The speaker



has many hidden aims while communicating, in some conversation there is lot of unsaid than what is said and even the implied meaning also. So, it is necessary to study all these implied, intentional and contextual meanings of given texts, it led to the emergence of pragmatics and the pragmatics terms like cooperative principle helps readers to understand the scientific and authentic explanation of the select text.

The Cooperative Principle:

For the fruitful communication, it is compulsory for everyone to maintain certain rules to make that situation easy and simple for everyone. Just think that what happened if there were no rules to follow during the conversation. There is total failure of communication in any conversation if everyone speaks according to his/her own interest. Thus, it is clear that in normal conversation one does not speak according to his/her interest but generally people follow certain guidelines which are acceptable to everyone. The success of the communication depends on the various approaches of speaker and listener, means both people in the speech acts must mutually cooperate with each other. The way they speak and try to make smooth their conversation work is called as cooperativeness.

Herbert Paul Grice (1975) was a British philosopher of the language who coined the term 'Cooperative Principles' while describing his theory of implicatures which is very popular in conversational analysis of the dramatic dialogues. According to the principle, in the conversation people acknowledge a kind of implicit agreement to cooperate conversationally with each other, this agreement he calls as the cooperative principle. According to Grice these are general rules behind the proper use of cooperative language which jointly suggest a general cooperative principle which he calls conversational maxims.

According to Grice, "the cooperative principle is the norm that regulates all communicative interactions between individuals. The cooperative principle is to make the interlocutors as contributive as possible based in the context it occurs" (Grice, 45). According to the principle, everyone must contribute the desired information in a acceptable quantity and in the right manner in the conversation. Thus, for the successful communication, it is important for both the speaker and the listener to follow these cooperative principles in their communication, so that it is possible for them to communicate their message properly and in right manner to each other. In reality, in our day to day communication people unconsciously follow the cooperative principle without much thinking about it, so in maximum situations people communicate properly, but on various occasions they fail to convey the information properly due to flouting of these maxims.

In the conversation exchange, each participant becomes cooperative due to common intentions or objectives, or at least a mutually acceptable direction. According to cooperative principle, the effect can be established by observing four conversational rules or maxims. It also help us to say things in brief in their conversation, even it helps to avoid some discomfort in saying unpleasant things. These maxims help in smooth communication without hurting; even give a chance to express our anger and dissatisfaction towards other participants. These cooperative maxims quantity, quality, relation and manner help to improve our communication skill. Grice explained the four cooperative maxims which are as follows:

1. Maxim of Quantity:

It means that the speaker contributes as informative as it is required and necessary for the conversation. It should be neither too little nor too much.

2. Maxim of Quality:

It means that speaker should speak the truth, he should not explain the things which he thinks false or lacks the evidence he should not explain it.



3. Maxim of Relation:

It means that the speaker's contribution should relate clearly to the purpose of his conversation, it should be relevant to the topic.

4. Maxim of Manner:

It means be concise, avoid obscurity, be orderly and to the point.

Grice's cooperative philosophy is a basic concept in pragmatics. The term cooperation is used to characterize human behavior in speech acts of conversation in a linguistic literature; the term is used to study the character behavior in dialogue analysis. The real meaning of speaker's pronunciation is important than the structural meaning of sentences. Grice is concerned with the difference between saying and meaning, how do listeners understand the speakers use the underlying language and intention. The basic assumption of his principle is that people often cooperate in the communication process to reduce misunderstandings and to convey proper message. So he provides a model of certain types of conjectures from conversations. The collaborative effort is the base of his theory; if people want to cooperate with each other then the purpose of this theory is easily accomplished. Here speaker's role and purpose is very important. The proper inference is necessary in the dramatic dialogue which does not fit to cooperative model of communication. Sometimes the author wants to explain some hidden intentions behind it. There are two types of meaning the traditional and nontraditional, which is based on speaker meaning and sentence meaning. On one hand both the meanings are same but when we see the same meanings from contextual and speaker's point of view we find a different meaning than traditional meaning.

Grice does not maintain that participants in cooperative conversation follow these maxims but rather than in most ordinary kinds of talk, the principles are being violated at some deeper level when talk does not proceed according to what is expected or when hearers assume that contrary to appearances (Grice, 29). During a conversation exchange, the speakers sometimes do not follow, sometimes he is not ready to uphold the principle of cooperation, intentionally or secretly distort the maxim and element of the conversation, to fulfill his/her own hidden purpose or to show anger. There are two ways to make the cooperative principle: to follow the maxims or to flout it. Even in some conversation though the speaker flout the maxims, still he is cooperative in his behavior as the hearer assume it and even he derives the meaning from the speech acts based on the same set of maxims and on the information from the context. Thus, the goal of the maxims are achieved when they are followed or when they are flouted. "Flouting a maxim is a particularly silent way of getting an addressee to draw inferences and hence recover and implicatures" (Grundy, 78). It is possible to flout the maxims of quality, quantity, manner and a relation without lying as sometimes the speaker does not know about other culture, sometimes he speaks too much or too short, not related to his purpose and becomes ambiguous for sometimes. Thus, it is important to achieve the communicative goals through any conversation rather than flouting and observing maxims.

It suggests that characters in the play either violate or maintain the cooperative principle for their own purpose, after analyzing the selected conversation exchanges with the help of cooperative principle. It is easy to understand their hidden intention and real nature due to these maxims. From the opening conversation between Aston and Davies it is clear that Aston follows the cooperative maxims while Davies on various occasions flouts it due to his whimsical and selfish nature. The pragmatics study denotes the differences between the characters of Aston and Davies. Aston who is a polite and kind person brings Davies at his home from cafe and offers him a seat three times. Thus, he shows maximum politeness and cooperativeness by observing civic rules towards him and in this way he follows the cooperative principle. Even after that he looks for a chair, clears his stuff and arranges one



chair for Davies, which suggests his observance of quantity and relation maxims as he contributes the required and necessary information which is relevant to their discussion.

ASTON. Sit down.

DAVIES. Thanks. (*Looking about.*) Uuh...

ASTON. Just a minute.

ASTON looks around for a chair, sees one lying on its side by the rolled carpet at the fireplace and starts to get it out.

DAVIES. Sit down? Huh... I haven't had a good sit down... I haven't had a proper sit down... (Pinter,TC 07).

Davies behaves irrelevantly and speaks unnecessarily in the above conversation exchange, suggests his noncompliance of quantity and relation maxims as he irrelevantly speaks too much about past which has no connection with present conversation. Again Aston shows his good nature by not only observing the manner maxim by offering a seat to Davies first instead of himself. He gives preference to others first by offering a seat to Davies. Thus, in the above utterance Aston has followed the quantity, relation and manner maxims, while Davies at first, using the words like thanks follows maxims of manner and quantity but later he violates the quantity, manner and relation maxims which suggests his nature looks threatening for society from this very first dialogue,. His behavior suggests the pathetic and lonely condition of post war human beings as he says that he had never sit down properly in his life. It also throws light on the socio-cultural conditions of that time. Throughout the play Davies never looks comfortable and behaves like a common man, in fact, he always talks about his doubtful past and behaves like a sick person as in the above dialogue. Thus, the cooperative principle helps to understand the real nature of characters from very common conversation.

The above conversation between Aston and Davies suggests a model of interaction for the rest of the conversations in which the characters flout or maintain the cooperative maxims for their own benefits. In the following conversational exchange, Aston again maintains the quantity, manner and relation maxims, as at first, he offers Davies a cigarette and then gives him his tin of tobacco which suggests that he behaves cooperatively by observing civic rules, without any obscurity, he mannerly gives benefit to Davies by offering tobacco and bed for Davies.

ASTON (*handing him the tin*). Yes. Go on. Take some out of that.

DAVIES. That's kind of you, mister. Just enough to fill my pipe, that's all. ... (Pinter,TC 08).

Davies behaves cooperatively with Aston in this situation, by praising him for his kindness. He follows the approbation maxim in the above conversation. Even he returns the tin to Aston after filling his pipe and uses civic word mister for Aston. Davis follows the quantity and manner maxims as he uses the word mister for Aston, also denotes his cooperative face. Here, Aston's simple nature is revealed as he not only saves Davies from that cafe incident but also brings him home, gives him tobacco, shelter and money. Thus, Aston observes the relation maxim as through his behavior he implies relevant behavior with Davies. It is one of the rare occasions, in which Davies follows cooperative principle. The contextual study denotes that he is a selfish person who behaves cooperatively only for his own benefit. Even this speech act presents a model example in front of society that if we behave cooperatively with each other then everything would be fine for society. Up to this point both become cooperative with each other which look natural then suddenly Davies talks unnecessarily about his past incident and violates the various cooperative maxims which create absurdities in his communication. Even from the following conversation, it is clear that Davies has certain prejudices against the Black people and through his activities and disgusting words he proves



himself as a disease for society The contextual study reveals that for quiet and progressive society everyone must follow cooperative principle.

DAVIES. ... He's not my boss. He is nothing superior to me.

ASTON. What was he, a Greek?

DAVIES. Not him, he was a Scotch. He was a Scotchman. (Pinter, *TC* 10).

In the above speech act at first, Davies speaks about the past cafe incident where the owner of that cafe told him to take away that bucket of rubbish from the way. Davies here flouts cooperativeness by suggesting that that he was not his boss and he was not superior than him denotes his noncompliance with the maxims of quality and manner, as he criticizes on that man in low language and also suggests his rude behavior. He doesn't speak truth that café owner wasn't his boss without any proof denotes violation of quality maxim and his lazy and arrogant nature of Davies that he needs the things but without proper efforts which one can observe throughout the play. It also suggests the physical and mental condition of Davies. Thus here Aston shows affinity towards Davies and follows maxim of quantity, but both violate the maxim of manner between individual and society as they have certain feeling of discrimination in them. In Aston it looks mild but in Davies it looks extreme and it suggests danger for the society. Later Davies in his long speech explains about his own rights and again use unnecessary words against Scotch people suggests his noncompliance of quality, quantity and manner maxims by thinking about himself and criticizing on Scotch people. It denotes the socio-cultural conditions and color discrimination of white people of post war world. Aston by understanding the implied meaning of Davies' utterances is ready to bring his bag from that restaurant suggests his observing maxims of quality and relation as he is ready to bring his bag. Thus it is clear that for a harmonious society everyone has to follow the politeness maxims through their conversation.

Even in the following example, one can also observe the same feeling of discrimination in Davies' mind. With the help of contextual study, it is easy to understand the hidden meaning and feelings of the characters particularly their bitterness and jealousy against the Black people.

ASTON. Family of Indians live there.

DAVIES. Blacks?

ASTON. I don't see much of them.

DAVIES. Blacks, eh? (Pinter, *TC*, 13).

Our society is based on certain assumptions. People come together for their mutual cooperation, progress, security and so it is necessary that in society everyone has to follow certain civil rules and regulations. The absurd elements come due to the violence of these principles. Color or racial discrimination creates threats for harmonious society. Here Davies violates the maxim of relation by expressing his disbelief in social agreement, even he violates quantity maxim by uttering unnecessarily about Black people. He repeatedly uses the word Blacks denotes his deep hatred towards them. Aston deliberately avoid to criticize on Black people suggests his moral nature and he follows cooperative principle. He observes the maxim of manner and quality by explaining the truth with politely that they never troubled him. Even Aston's reply that he does not saw them suggests his unbiased attitude towards them. Davies is a very selfish person that is why whenever any matter is related with him he becomes soft and suddenly he behaves cooperatively with Aston and follows relation and manner maxims by explaining that even he does not like empty rooms.

The situational reference suggests that there is a feeling of discrimination and hatred among White people including the dramatist against the Black people. The contextual study denotes the



socio-cultural conditions of post war world, suggests that White people always think them as superior and never want to work with Black people. Thus this study suggests that *The Caretaker* is not only a absurd play but the pragmatics study gives the socio-cultural conditions and physical and mental ethos of characters. It also helps to understand the real intensions of author, characters and make the play colorful for overall interpretation.

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To Cite the Article: Dodal, Suyog, "The Study of Cooperative Principle in the First Act of The Caretaker". Literary Cognizance, IV - 1 (June, 2023): 48-54. Web.