

Stylistics of the English Language 13

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Emotive Prose Excerpt Analysis - “Dombey and Son” by Ch.Dickens

Message

- The aim of the author is to set the ironic tone of the novel through the description of the father and the son.

Explicit meaning

- The father is a mature middle-aged man, and his son is an infant. They both are described as bald and red, with a lot of wrinkles, but the reasons for this are different: too much of a life burden with the former and having just come from the mother’s womb for the latter.

Emotive Prose Excerpt Analysis - “Dombey and Son” by Ch.Dickens

Principles of Balance and Contrast

Each element of Mr.Dombey’s description is balanced against a similar element of the description of Paul. The balance is achieved with the help of grammatical parallelism:

sentences 1 and 2– S+V+PrPh;

- sentences 3 and 4 – S+V+Adj+[though+Adj+N (positive remark)] + Adj (negative remark),

- sentence 5 - Adverbial of place+S+V + clause of comparison [Obj+S+V] +WHILE + S+V+prep+Obj+which+S+V...

- Also, the balance is strengthened by lexical repetition – eight and forty, bald, red, handsome well-made/undeniably fine, on the brow of Dombey/the countenance of Son, Time and Care/deceitful Time.
- Against the balance of the description, we see the contrast foregrounded by means of antithesis – years/minutes, rather bald/very bald, too stern and pompous/crushed and spotty, to come down in good time/a preparation of the surface – the author may have used it to highlight the idea that they belong to two different generations, yet they share the same fortune.

Emotive Prose Excerpt Analysis - “Dombey and Son” by Ch.Dickens

The tone of the language is poised between the comedy and moral seriousness, and the dominant note of irony is struck in:

- 1) the reiterated unmodified nouns *Dombey* and *Son* – appropriate references to individuals whose lives are respectively **dedicated** and **mortgaged** to the gods of family pride and commerce (the trade house was called “Dombey and Son”);
- 2) the use of personifications of Time and Care, often extended by parenthesis (—remorseless twins they are for striding through their human forests, notching as they go—).

Outline

- Stylistics and Pragmatics - Pragmastylistics
- Act of Communication
- Illocutionary Act
- Speech Act Types

Stylistics

- A scientific orderly objective study of style of a particular text (writer, movement) as distinct from an intuitive reaction to it

[Hickey 1993]

- Addressing a person: Honorable Mr.Jones, Mr.Jones, Jones, Jonsy, J-J, Nappy

Pragmatics

- focus is not on the language but on its uses and users, ex. “He is a genuine singer – a nightingale!”
- the most important aspect of language learning (compare artificial intelligence machines and human communication)

Pragmatics (Gr. *pragma* – ‘deed’)

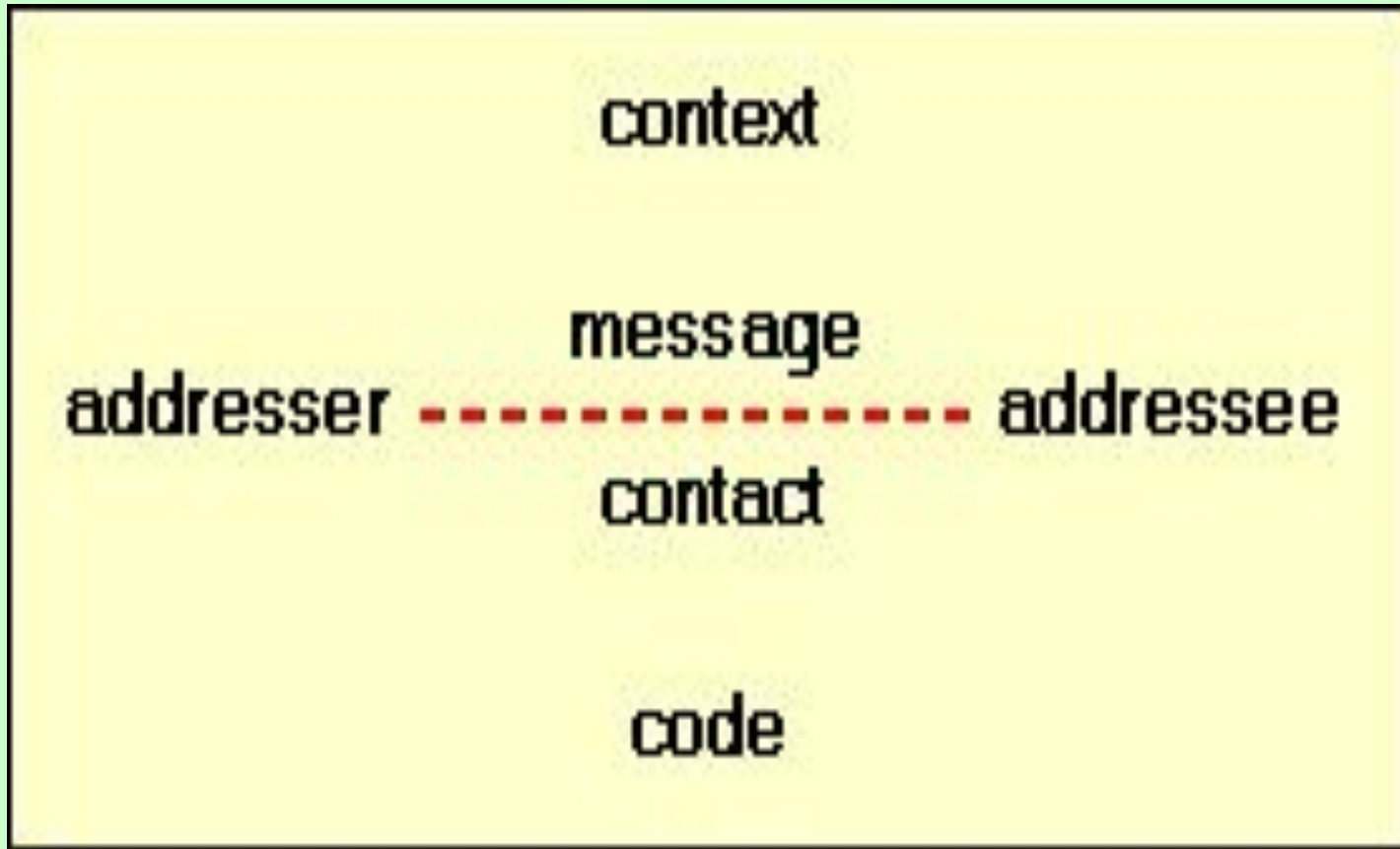
- a term of semiotics: the science of signs suitable for communication of any kind
- Charles Morris (*Signs, Language and Behavior*, 1946) – 3 aspects of semiotics:
 - semantics – the relations of signs to objects and phenomena of real life
 - syntactics – the relation of signs to one another
 - pragmatics – the relation of signs to their **users**, those who interpret them

Pragmatics

- as an aspect of semiotics, pragmatics studies the

act of communication

Act of Communication (Roman Jakobson)



Act of Communication - Context

- **Verbal** context – text or speech surrounding an expression (word, sentence, speech act)
- **Social** context – objective social variables (class, gender, age, race, space) that are instrumental at construing/interpreting a social identity in text and conversational discourse

Act of Communication - Message

○ Message:

- **Propositional content** (proposition) – what the words put together in an appropriate way mean – referential information
- **Pragmatic implications** (presupposition) – information about a segment of real life – the conditions and participants of the communication, the intentions and attitudes of the speaker or writer, the relations between the addresser and the addressee, the aim of communication and the calculated effect

E.g. - “I know the feeling.”

Act of Communication – understanding a natural language

- “To understand a natural language is, in part, to be able to distinguish the propositional content of a sentence (or text, message) from its pragmatic implications.”

[Marshall and Wales, 1974, Nayer, 2002]

Act of Communication: Example

- “Excuse me. Do you know the way to Cardiff, please?”
- “Yes, of course, I do.”
- “Could you tell me how to get there?”
- “Yes, I could.”
- “I mean, would you kindly show me the road?”
- “Yes, I would. There is no reason why I wouldn’t.”

Pragmatics: J.Austin

- John Austin “How to do things with words” (1962): people perform speech acts, they do things with words
- “illocutionary act”:
 - illocution - **intention**,
 - locution - **speech**,
 - perlocution - **effect**
- “Are you bored?”

Illocutionary Act: Example

“Tom: "Everything that has a beginning, has an ending. Make your peace with that and all will be well" - The Buddha.

Erica: All will be well.”

[Being Erica, S04E11]

Illocutionary Act: Example Analysis

- **Illocution**: the attempt to assuage the pain of parting / to calm down
- **Locution**: “Everything that has a beginning, has an ending. Make your peace with that and all will be well” - The Buddha.
- **Perlocution**: the addressee understands the change as a natural turn of events

Pragmatics: Searle

- John Searle (1932-, American philosopher, Berkley, California) attempted to synthesize ideas from:
 - J.Austin (the illocutionary act from “How to do things with words”)
 - Ludwig Wittgenstein (the philosophy of language, mathematics)
 - H.P.Grice (the analysis of the nature of meaning, theory of implicature)

Pragmatics: Searle

- John Searle “Speech Acts” (1969):
 - **representatives** (statement, accusation, assertion, conclusion)
 - **directives** (request, advice, prohibition, questions)
 - **expressives** (thanking, apology, regret)
 - **commissives** (promise, oath, guarantee, threat)
 - **declarations** (calling a truce, declaring war, appointing a person Chief of the department)

Representative Speech Act

- commits the speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition; represents the speaker's belief of something that can be evaluated to be true or false:

I suspect the patient has arthritis.
(argumentative statement)

You did it the wrong way.
(criticism/accusation)

Directive Speech Act

- occurs when the speaker expects the listener to do something as a response:

I need your opinion on this urgent matter. (request)

You are not to leave this place.
(prohibition/command)

I'm begging you – will you help me?
(plea for help)

Expressive Speech Act

- occurs in a conversation when the speaker expresses his/her attitudes and emotions (psychological state) to the listener:

Hi, everyone! (greeting)

I really appreciate your suggestion.
(expressing gratitude)

Now if you'll excuse me, I have some work to do. (excuse)

Let me congratulate you on your success! (congratulation)

Commissive Speech Act

- occurs when the speaker commits to a future course of action:
 - I will do this later. (promise)
 - I solemnly declare upon my honour and conscience that I will speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. (oath)
 - I'm telling you one more time – if you disobey, I'll take measures. (threat)

Declaration

- occurs when the speaker (having a special institutional role) contributes to changing the reality in accord with the proposition of the declaration:

Priest: I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride.(wedding)

Jury Foreman: We find the defendant guilty.(trial)

Referee: You are out! (match)

Pragmatics

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|---|-------------------|
| 1) I appoint you to be the monitor of the group. | a) representative |
| 2) I will invite you for the party, I promise. | b) declarative |
| 3) The girls in this group are at advanced level. | c) expressive |
| 4) Ask questions whenever you feel confused. | d) directive |
| 5) I am glad to have so smart students here! | e) commissive |

Speech Acts: Example

Tom: 1) Hello, Erica.

Erica: 2) Where have you been?

Tom: Waiting. Until you were ready.

Erica: 3) I broke up with Ethan.

Tom: I know.

Erica: Kai has gone back where he belongs. I have no job, no boyfriend...

Tom: And how does that feel?

Erica: 4) It feels scary, but, strangely, okay.

Tom: And why is that?

Erica: It's like... talking to Ethan it... it made me realize how much I've changed. Everything that you've taught me, it's made me braver somehow. And fear, it no longer holds me back. It... It actually motivates me, if that makes sense.

Tom: 5) "We cannot teach people anything. We can only help them discover it within themselves" - Galileo. It's time, Erica.
6) Choose a door.

Erica: That one. Right there. [Being Erica, S2; E12]

Speech Acts: Example Analysis

- 1) Hello, Erica. -expressive
- 2) Where have you been? - directive
- 3) I broke up with Ethan. -representative
- 4) It feels scary, but, strangely, okay. - expressive
- 5) "We cannot teach people anything. We can only help them discover it within themselves" – Galileo. – representative
- 6) Choose a door. - directive

Indirect Speech Acts

- In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutual shared background information, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer [Searle 1976].

Indirect Speech Acts

Compare:

- Move out of the way!
- Do you have to stay in front of the TV?
- You are standing in front of the TV.
- You'd make a better door than a window.

Indirect Speech Acts: Example

Tom: I'm not cut out to be her doctor. Or anybody's doctor.

Nadiaah: But that's not how your patient sees it.

Tom: I grabbed her, Nadiaah. I mean, I got so angry, I could feel it, it was just like before. I mean, I couldn't think straight, I couldn't stop myself, even though I know that... She needs someone else. Someone who's more together.

Nadiaah: Like me?

Tom: Yeah, like you.

Nadiaah: So, why does it feel like you're running away?

Tom: Well, I'm not. I've thought this through. This is the right choice. For Erica.

Nadiaah: "Fear is the mind-killer" - Frank Herbert.

Tom: Oh, don't.

Nadiaah: Yeah, it's annoying isn't it?

[Being Erica, S02E01]

Pragmastylistics

“the study of all the conditions, linguistic and extralinguistic, which allow the rules of a language to combine with the specific elements of the context to produce a text capable of causing specific internal changes in the hearer’s state of mind or knowledge”

[Hickey 1993]



Thank you for your attention

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