Teaching Pragmatic Coherence in Literary Text: Analysis of Chimamanda Adichie's Americanah

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Abstract : Literary texts are mirrors of a real-life situation. Thus, authors choose the linguistic items that would best encode their intended meanings and messages. However, words mean more than they seem. The meaning of words is not static rather, it is dynamic as they constantly enter into relationships within a context. Literary texts can only be meaningful if all pragmatic cues are identified and interpreted. Drawing upon Teun Van Djik's theory of local pragmatic coherence, it is established that words enter into relations in a text and these relations account for sequential speech acts in the texts. Comprehension of the text is dependent on the interpretation of these relations.To show the relevance of pragmatic coherence in literary text analysis, ten conversations were selected in Americanah in order to give a clear idea of the pragmatic relations used. The conversations were analysed, identifying the speech act and epistemic relations inherent in them. A subtle analysis of the structure of the conversations was also carried out. It was discovered that justification is the most commonly used relation and the meaning of the text is dependent on the interpretation of these instances' pragmatic coherence. The study concludes that to effectively teach literature in English, pragmatic coherence should be incorporated as words mean more than they say.

Keywords : pragmatic coherence, epistemic coherence, speech act, Americanah
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