Hope at the Height of Covid-19 Crisis in Hendrick’s Poem: A Pragmatic Study

Fareed Hameed Al-Hindawi
Department of English, College of Education, Islamic University, Najaf, Iraq
fareedhameed3@gmail.com, 009647808229001

Wala’a Hashim Mohammed
Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, Babylon University, Hillah, Iraq
walaa.h.mohammed@gmail.com 009647709799776

Abstract

Though defining literariness is problematic, literary works are definitely known for making special use of language. Their main aim is to convey certain messages. In relation to pragmatics, the implied messages in literary works are shaped and interpreted by the collaborative utilization of pragmatic notions, such as relevance theory and others, by both writers and readers. Concerning poems, literary devices play a central role in the processes of their writing and interpreting. Hendrick, a priest and a poet, has had a message of hope to convey by a piece of literature, his “lockdown” poem. The intended message for him is to give hope on the current issue of COVID-19. COVID-19 is one of the highly effective global disasters of the age. It has made people depressed and hopeless. For its unprecedented fame and influence on people, the poem is chosen for investigation. Also, though it is possible that readers generally may fail in interpreting literary works, it seems that people could reach the intentions of the poet successfully and, thus, react deeply to it. The study, therefore, aims at showing the poetic effect of Hendrick’s poem and how the audience could reach the intended meaning. It investigates how the pragmatic theory of relevance contributes in shaping messages and directing people to grasp them. The study also tries to raise the awareness of people on the different literary devices that convey implied meaning and contribute in guiding readers to grasp the optimal relevant interpretation of literary works.

Keywords: Literary Pragmatics, literary devices, hope, COVID-19, Relevance theory

Introduction

COVID-19 is a disease that has been announced as a pandemic in very few months from its very appearance. It has hit people and societies in all the aspects of life. Thus, a blue mood and fear has spread among most people. This has been a motivation for poets and religious men to raise their voice and tell their words.

Hendrick has introduced to people his piece of literature, a poem, through the social media, specifically Facebook. The poem aims at raising high spirits in people and giving hope. Interestingly, the main messages of the poem are implicitly conveyed. Yet, literature is known for its ability to make people change their perspectives on things and the life in general, if well shaped no matter of implicitness.

The current study is inspired by the questions of how people could reach the intended meaning and messages of the work, what pragmatic and literary notions inspire and help them to grasp the messages, and accordingly, what helps the poet to shape an implied message that can still be well-interpreted, in addition to how achieving the poetic effect is pragmatically done.

To clarify the above questions, the study adopts a literary pragmatic frameworks focusing, specifically, on Sperber and Wilson’s (1995) theory of Relevance. Meanwhile, it investigates the different literary devices (such as allusion, metaphor, connotations, etc..) that contribute to providing relevance theory with the set of implied meanings and implicatures that altogether raise the optimal interpretation of an intended message.

The procedure of conducting the study starts with a review of literature on some main
concepts relevant to the study. Secondly, a pragmatic analysis is done to reveal the implied meaning conveyed by the use of different literary devices. Thirdly, a discussion is held to draw the way hope is interpreted as the main message of the poem, with the help of relevance theory and the poetic effect. Finally, conclusions are introduced on the basis of the findings of the analysis. references.

Literary Pragmatics

Al-Hindawi and Saffah (2019:394) cite useful definitions of literary pragmatics. The definitions all together form a comprehensive account on the field. They start with Mey (1999:12) who opines that literary pragmatics is a field of study that investigates the kind of cooperation achieved between the authors of literary works and their audience through exerting influences on them (on the audience) by means of certain language properties. To achieve such influences successfully, conditions of linguistic and socio-cultural contexts, that is, conditions of use need to be precisely considered.

Al-Hindawi and Saffah (ibid:395) also clarify that the core concern of literary pragmatics is the focus on “the user’s role in the societal production and consumption of literary texts”. In other words, literary pragmatics concentrates on the interaction that is achieved between the writer of the literary work and its reader through language.

Suffice to say, what makes the application of pragmatic theories to literature invaluable is the fact that both of the fields do center on language use. Pragmatics is the study of language use. Literature is the use of language for meaningful purposes, i.e. literature is the best form of language use. (Chapman, 2011: 141 cited in ibid)

Pragmatic Notions

Since the poem selected communicates an implied message (hope) about an implied situation (COVID-19 crisis), the pragmatic notions to be central for the investigation are introduced below.

Relevance Theory

Literary pragmatics represents different approaches to deal with the pragmatic interpretations of utterances. One of the essential approaches is the one represented by Sperber & Wilson (1995), through their relevance theory.

Relevance theory is found to be useful in the studies of pragmatic interpretations of poems more than any other literary work types. For this theory, communication and cognition are two key concepts. Communication principle, on the one hand, states that “every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance”. Cognitive principle, on the other hand, states that human cognition seeks for the most relevant interpretation through maximizing relevance eventually (ibid:260).

Optimal relevance, therefore, is the hallmark of this theory. The notion of optimal relevance is meant to “spell out what the audience of an act of ostensive communication is entitled to expect in terms of effort and effect”. Thus, the optimal interpretation can be arrived at if:

a. “an ostensive stimulus is relevant enough to be worth the audience’s processing effort” and,

b. “an ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with communicator’s abilities and preferences.”

To achieve (a), a stimulus is said to be “worth processing only if it is” the most relevant input available at the time among a set of alternatives.

Communicators, on the other hand, want and aim to be understood. Therefore, it is their interest – within the limits of their preferences and capabilities – to make the ostensive stimulus as easy and available as possible for the audience to interpret and understand, and “to provide evidence not just for the cognitive effects” they aim to achieve in the audience “but also for further cognitive effects which”, by holding their attention, will help to achieve the goal (Wilson and Sperber, 2006: 612).

Poetic Effect

Stolarek (2012:5) states that poems do not offer a set of alternative meanings to choose from because literary devices within the poem interact in order to reveal a huge range of weak implications. Therefore, individual readers
cannot evaluate the same number of implicatures and even though they respond to the poem in the most suitable manner, they cannot reject one set of these implicatures and privilege them above the others. In this respect in search of relevance in poems, which often necessitate an excessive amount of processing effort, one ought to seek extensive cognitive effects.

The values of poems come from their poetic effects and they only become successful and valuable if the effects are successfully communicated. Thus, Sperber & Wilson (1995: 236) define the term poetic effect as the peculiar effect of an utterance which achieves most of its relevance through a wide array of weak implicatures.

**Implied Meaning**

Implied meaning is what is communicated beyond what is literally or explicitly stated. It is conveyed by means of different literary and non-literary devices and notions. Implicature, implications, presuppositions, relevance theory are all means by which implied meanings are conveyed pragmatically. It generally includes what is communicated and understood by hints or any other indirect means of conveying thoughts. It plays a special role and has a unique importance in literary works (Verschueren, 1999: 50).

**Literary Discourse**

Literary discourse is of central importance to literary pragmatics. This is because literary pragmatics concentrates on the investigation of “literary communication” rather than mere literary text analysis. Sell (2001:134) asserts that both literary and non-literary texts are “communicative interactions, in a particular context, between participants who, in the case of literature, are fictionalized personae”. Therefore, MacMahon (2006:234 cited in Al-Hindawi and Saffah, 2019:397) state that literary pragmatics believes and investigates the functional and communicative status of literary discourses. By this, the importance of context in literary discourse is centered.

**Literary Devices (Pragm-Rhetorical Devices)**

El-Samir and Ali (2015:164) state that poets make use of literary devices for the aim of adding “layers of meaning to their poems”. Literary devices, not only help in meaning depth and enriches but also add aesthetic values to the work and, in turn, help in distinguishing literary works from the non-literary ones. The current study lists the following devices that contribute to communicating the implied meanings alongside the conversational implicature theory in the literary works:

**Allusion**

The technique of referring to a person, a place, a fact, an event or a piece of another literary work is called the allusion. It is a kind of implied reference. This means that external ideas and information are called to enrich the meaning of the work. Moreover, to use allusion means that the writer is assuming certain shared-knowledge of the past with the reader (Cuddon, 1999, 27). Abrams and Harpham (2009: 11-12), on the other hand, define allusion as “a passing reference, without explicit identification” to people, things and events. They add that allusion in most cases “serves to illustrate or clarify or enhance a subject”. When dealing with allusion, the retrieving of the external information is a pragmatic process.

**Imagery**

Imagery is not a very widely used device. It refers to the process of producing images in the mind of an audience by language. In order to achieve imagery, words which may refer either to experiences which could produce physical perceptions are used (Preminger and Brogan, 1993: 560). The implied meaning in imagery lies in that it bridges the external world (of which we gain awareness through perception) and the human mind (where images evocative of the sensual spring).

**Personification**

Personification means attributing human characteristics to an inanimate object, animal, or abstract idea. It is not used for mere decorative purposes. Poets use this device to add deeper and richer meanings to poems. “It adds life and vividness to expressions or concepts as we always look at the world from the perspective of a human being”. It increases the chance of being “better understood because it is easier to relate to.
something that is human or that possesses human qualities” than to non-human things (Saykhan, 2016:6).

**Authorial Intrusion**

It is an interesting literary device wherein the author penning the story, the poem or the prose steps away from the text and speaks out to the reader. Authorial Intrusion establishes a one to one relationship between the writer and the reader where the latter is no longer a secondary player or an indirect audience to the progress of a story but is the main subject of the author’s attention (Website1).

**Metaphor**

Grey (2000:1) states that metaphors enable a secondary interpretation for a word so that readers can infer a different meaning other than the letter one from a metaphorical expression. Metaphor is a direct comparison between two unlike things, stating that one is the other or does the action of the other.

**Euphemism**

It is the use of an acceptable or pleasant idea as a substitute for one that is unpleasant. This device is used when writing about matters such as sex, violence, death, crimes and matters which are taboo or “embarrassing”. The purpose of euphemisms is to mask the harshness. Euphemistic expressions require the reader to infer the other meaning that is hidden.

**Symbolism**

It can be defined as “the art of expressing ideas and emotions not by describing them directly, not by defining” them through “overt comparisons with concrete images, but by suggesting what these ideas and emotions are, by recreating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained symbols” (Chadwick, 1971:100). Pragmatically speaking, symbolic meaning interacts with the literal meaning, but does not ‘cancel’ it because a symbol “should not be an intrusion into the text, but should have a function on the literal level” (Quinn 2006: 408). To understand the symbol being used is to connect its meaning to the poem and interpret the story on a deeper level (El-Samir and Ali,2015:164)

**Connotation**

It means the associative and implied meaning of words, that is the non-literal one. It is the psychological, emotional or social overtones of words. Connotations usually decide the appropriateness of words in particular use. Connotation refers to “the range of further associations that a word or phrase suggests in addition to its straightforward dictionary meaning (the primary sense known as its denotation); or one of these secondary meanings” (Baldick 2001: 49). Context is of a central role to the interpretation of connotations. Context here refers to the extra-linguistic circumstances that both the writer and the audience shape. This is because what makes a connotation is some set of nonlinguistic matter such as social conventions or events, psychological matters, etc. (Leech 1974: 14)

**Contrast**

It is a rhetorical device through which writers identify differences between two subjects, places, persons, things, or ideas. Simply, it is a type of opposition between two objects, highlighted to emphasize their differences. (Website1)

**COVID-19 and Hendrick**

COVID-19 disease (also known as Coronavirus) is an infectious disease. It is caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. It was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China. Then, it has spread all over the world and has been reported as a pandemic disease. According to Medical News Today website (Website 2), by assessing the likely number of COVID-19 deaths, it is suggested that “the virus may have hit even harder than” the authorities initially thought. Moreover, till the moment of writing this paper, the virus has been reported to have no treatment or vaccine. Thus, people all around the world have been advised by the authorities to stay in isolation, away from other people. Even more, many countries have declared restrictive measures, such as lockdown or stay at home orders to contain the pandemic at a local level.

Dealing with the unforeseen challenges caused by the COVID-19, the pandemic has taken a significant toll on people all across the world. Coronavirus has proven effects on all the aspects
of life not just on the level of health; it has extended its effects on the political, religious, economical, educational, domestic, and every other aspects of life. Alongside, COVID-19 has proven effects on people's mental health and psychology. It is reported that the negativity spread in the world about the COVID-19 pandemic is leading situations to the highest degree of depression. On this concern, for instance, Healthline website (Website 3) states that “Americans are reporting significant and sustained increases in symptoms of depression and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic”, “Women, minorities, people with preexisting health conditions, and adults under 34 all reported higher rates of fear and anxiety.” It adds that “the numbers of people reporting these symptoms are well above historical norms”.

For the above reasons, poets, religious people, and others who have heard and effective voices in societies are trying to spread hope and optimism in the world. Hendrick's famous poem has been one of those tries. Hendrick is a Priest in Ireland. He has represented his short poem entitled “Lockdown” to the world on social media. A news website named “irishcentral” has reported that “Brother Richard shared his poem “Lockdown” on a Facebook post on Friday, March 13. His original post has received more than 19k positive reactions and has been shared more than 34k times”. In other words, the poem has gained fame in a very short time and in a community where everyone is pessimistic. Thus, the present study selects the poem to be investigated to reveal the pragmatic devices that are invested to (i) give people hope on COVID-19, though not even one word about the disease is mentioned directly and (ii) influence people so deeply and help them grasp the message. The present study believes that such kinds of literary works are worth investigating. The poem has successfully communicated itself to the world.

Analysis and Discussion

The first step is devoted to the analysis of the main literary devices (pragma-rhetorical devices) invested in the poem. They are indicated and analyzed in the table below. The analysis of the optimal relevant interpretation of the poem as a whole, depending on the relevance theory, will be presented and discussed after presenting the table of analysis. This means that the model adopted for conducting the current study is an electric one. It is based on (i) Sperber & Wilson’s (1995) Relevance theory, (ii) Sperber & Wilson’s (1995) notion of poetic effect, and (iii) the set of literary devices (or the pragma-rhetorical devices) that all together form the literary work and, thus, form the base for reaching the optimal relevant interpretation, see 3.1, 3.2, and 5 respectively for details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Extract</th>
<th>Literary Devices</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>They say that in the streets of Assisi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People are singing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In these two lines of the poem, the poet makes reference to an event that occurred and gained fame in a short time between people during the outbreak of COVID-19. It is an event when a group of people sung a song in one of the Streets of Assisi during the quarantine time, each from their own balcony. The pragmatic meanings in this device include (i) an indication of attention drawing to the shared knowledge between people about the occurrence of some bright and happy events in such dark days, and (ii) an effort to enhance the implicature of attracting attention to the positive consequences of such dark days.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This is another example of allusion by making a reference to the event of offering food and place to the homeless, which is something that was less done in the ordinary days. The poet pragmatically tries to shed light on the problem in making good deeds and the new traditions towards people helping one another after the crisis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>He told a young woman I know</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Here, through this allusion, a reference is made to a woman. This woman does not stand for herself alone; she actually stands for the good and activities of the young that have been extensively established in different societies by the crisis of COVID-19. This use of allusion serves the same pragmatic intentions of the other allusions invested earlier. They all serve in different ways and from different sides the aim of shedding light on the bright side of these dark and difficult days.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All over the world people are waking up to a new reality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In this piece of the poem, the poet utilizes imagery. He uses a very simple and clear language and wording to bring the man positive changes that occurred in people’s life to people's awareness. This imagery can pragmatically motivate people to put aside the negative images and the fears that conquered their mind and instead imagine the other bright sides and effect of the crisis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Birds are singing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The sky is clearing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spring is coming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imagery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moreover, the poet extends the imagery to cover the reference to an individual’s life. By this utilization of imagery, the poet shows how birds, sky, and other things are prospering in these days. The pragmatic intention here can be to draw addition to two things: (i) to make people think how much being busy with human needs has affected nature negatively, and (ii) to remind people on the fact that other creatures have the right to prosper for some time, and this is their day and time, because human activities and life as a whole is slowing down and giving space to other creatures and aspects of life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rebirth of love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In this personification, the poet tries to deepen and enrich the meaning of love by treating it as something equal to human, i.e. something that loves and dies. He indicates the fact that love, which is an abstract thing, was about to die (disappear). Yet with these special circumstances, there is a chance for rebirth of love since people have started to show concern, sympathy and passion to one another again. The poet replaces the concepts of appearance and disappearance (which fit more an abstract thing like love) with both birth and death (the latter implicitly) to make people feel more related.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Extract Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Extract</th>
<th>Literary Device</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>“You can hear the birds again”</td>
<td>Authorial Intrusion</td>
<td>Through this literary device, the poet directly reminds the audience that messages implicitly conveyed in this work are directed to them (i.e. to each reader personally). The poet establishes a relationship of trust and intimacy between himself and readers. Interestingly, the poet through this device sends some advice and directs the audience to the way they need to consider and determine what can be chosen to result out from and after these days and tough experiences, the criss of COVID-19 and its consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>across the empty squares</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>The poet uses the metaphorical expression of “empty squares” to refer to the streets that look empty as a result of the lockdown. Actually, the metaphorical expression pragmatically intends to ease the anxiety of empty streets by directing the mind of people to simply consider them as empty squares that will sooner or later get crowded again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>disease of the soul</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>This metaphorical expression, on the other hand, can stand for all the negative, violent and hatred feelings that people may encounter. The poet through pragmatic inferences tells people that it is not COVID-19 that needs to be feared, but it is actually the negative feelings that are growing in people’s heart nowadays that need more attention, and they are the real enemy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behind the factory noises of your panic</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>This metaphorical expression stands for the fear that people get drawn in more and more each day. The poet calls the negative feelings and reactions of people as “noises of panic” as they are the result of a “panic factory” that people created themselves. He pragmatically directs people to release from the panic factory and start looking to things differently, in some positive way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Open the windows of your soul</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>This is a famous metaphoric expression that stands for “eyes.” It means to open your eyes. However, it does not mean to watch or observe things in the normal way. It implicates that you need to see the inner side of everything, to see the feelings and the thoughts of everyone around, and to tell the reality behind the appearance of everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sickness</td>
<td>Euphemism</td>
<td>The poet clearly avoids the mentioning of the disease’s name (COVID-19 or coronavirus). He instead uses the euphemistic general expression “sickness.” Actually, the pragmatic intention behind this can be to direct people to think about COVID-19 as any kind of sickness and to avoid the over-negative reaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise</td>
<td>Symbolism</td>
<td>Wuhan, name of one of the cities of China, is turned to be used as a symbol standing for the famous global pandemic disease “COVID-19.” Thus, the use of Wuhan by the poet pragmatically implies “COVID-19.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples</td>
<td>Symbolism</td>
<td>Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples, on the other hand, are also symbols; they stand for the different groups of people from different origins and ethics. It also pragmatically shows how the people who used to be defined differentially with totally different interests are now somehow gathered with a shared aim, which is making good and helping each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>To Love.</td>
<td>Connotation</td>
<td>The word love, in normal circumstances, can directly intend the kind of love between couples. Here, the connotation of the word has been extended to cover and refer to all the kinds of love on the earth, couple love, family love, friends love, strangers love, animals love, nature love, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And though you may not be able to touch across the empty square, Sirs</td>
<td>Connotation</td>
<td>The word “sirs” here does not only stand for the literal meaning of producing rhythmic sounds; it rather stands for the idea of “a positive spirit.” The poet calls people to have positive spirits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>“many years of noise VS. a few weeks of quiet” &amp; “The sky... this is an expression of change”</td>
<td>Contradiction</td>
<td>In all these instances of contrast that the poet makes, he wants to compare and contrast between the reality before and after the appearance of COVID-19. He presents six examples of contrast. In the first three, he shows the negative attitudes that are changed to positive by the appearances of the disease. By the other three, he contrasts between central concepts and feelings to people’s life (such as fear VS. love, isolation VS. loneliness, death VS love) to show the options that COVID-19 has reminded people about them and to show that COVID-19 motivates people to make a choice for the way they want to live in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before going deeper into the discussion part, a glance needs to be given on the title of the poem. The poem is entitled “lockdown”. The term lockdown is one of the mostly used words in the age of COIVD-19. It refers to one of the main safety measures that the authorities offered and/or forced people to follow. Cities have been locked-down to lessen the spread of virus transmission between people. Thus, it can be said that the word is turned to have a new implied meaning conveyed by its new connotation, which is a reference to COIVD-19. Therefore, the title can be claimed as representing the first implicature among the set of implicatures that lead readers to the intended interpretation.

Taking the above table into consideration and aiming at interpreting the poetic effect that the poem intends to reflect, relevance theory can provide a lot to the process of interpretation or the arrival on the optimal intended meaning of the poem as one piece. According to relevance theory, we can reach the intended interpretation and comprehend the poetic effect by the help of the wide array of weak implicatures that each literary device implies.

The first point to consider is that how readers could interpret that the poem is tackling COIVD-19 and not some other thing or disease, though there is no literal indication or mention of it. This can be justified by considering the implied meanings conveyed by the devices number 6 and 9, in addition to the title of the poem which is “lockdown”. People can, by decoding the implicatures behind the expressions and words used in those instances, link ideas and reach the optimal interpretation which is concerned with addressing the current situation (the spread of coronavirus disease). In other words, this optimal inferred idea is reached at by the help of using expressions such as: “lockdown”, “disease”, and “fear”.

After the reader has decided on the core concern of the poem (i.e. COVID-19), the second
concern of the reader will be to identify the poetic effect and the poetic message that the poet tries to send to people, which is directly related to COVID-19. Again, readers start sub-consciously reading beyond the lines and interpreting the intended meanings of each line. Eventually, they arrive at the overall message, which is about hope at the height of COVID-19 crisis.

As an initiative step to shape hope and before referring to the call and the need for hope and the existence of a bright side, the poet, as we can see, admits both implicitly and explicitly about the seriousness of the situation. This is clear, explicitly, through the opening lines when he says *Yes there is death*, etc. and implicitly when he, for instance, makes contrasts using the same opening lines in subsequent lines contrasted with others. By this admission, he reflects trustworthiness on the side of the reader as he is defining himself as being talking rationally supported by facts and not just referring to some imaginary things that can never be true. This communication of trust establishment can be interpreted by the reader. Readers can decide based on the poem content whether to give trust and continue reading or not.

After gaining trust, he starts switching the lights of the dark, i.e. he gives hope. He draws attentions to all the positive things that have happened after the crisis on different levels of life. He does that using literary devices such as: allusion, imagery, personification, symbolism, connotations and also contrast. Most importantly, he successfully makes use of well-known stories through imageries, contrasts and allusions to support his message.

The other set of implicatures are represented by a switching tone. The poet employs authorial intrusion, a kind of literary device- see number 4 in the table, to change his tone to establish a special closer relationship with readers. By doing so, he becomes able to advice and direct readers personally to look to things differently. He makes his implicit intentions as clear as the moon in a clear sky to the audience. He successfully establishes his poetic effect and conveniences readers that there is a hope, even in such dark times.

Actually, by the employment of the relevance theory of pragmatics, the poet not only gives people hope on current events, i.e. on the present time of COIVD-19, and opens their eyes to good changes everywhere to ease the situation; he even extends the message of hope to the future period, which is the period after COVID-19.

Focusing on the literary device of contrast, we can see how the poet reflects a deepen concept of hope by applying it on two occasions: (i) before and after: he shows how things were and how they are before and after COIVD-19, and (ii) now and after: he implies that people need to put in mind for the future that there “should not be loneliness, meanness, and disease of soul” any more, and people should “wake to the choices” they make. He emphasizes the need to take COIVD-19 as a point of departure in life style and to extend the good deeds even after the end of the crisis. The poet successfully gives hope to people; this is actually proved by the unprecedent reaction and interaction made by audience to the poem in a very short time.

**Conclusions**

The current study has arrived at the following:

1. Pragmatics plays a central role in the processes of writing and interpreting literary works. Thus, literary pragmatics is a highly beneficial framework and field.

2. The theory of relevance presents a good technique and explanation to the way the readers arrive at the poetic effect of any poem. Hendrick’s poem represents a good sample for this claim.

3. Many literary devices raise or indicate implicatures which all together provide the relevance theory with the set of implicatures needed to arrive at the optimal relevant interpretation.

4. Hendrick’s poem entitled “lockdown” successfully gives people hope. This again proves the necessity of literary communication to change perspectives of life in people.

5. People get subconsciously engaged in the processes of analyzing and interpreting literary devices by making use of relevance theory, mostly in a split-second time, to reach the optimal interpretation.
References


Internet References

https://literary-devices.com/


Appendix

Richard Hendrick’s poem, Lockdown:

1

2

Yes there is fear.
Yes there is isolation.
Yes there is panic buying.
Yes there is sickness.
Yes there is even death.
But, they say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
You can hear the birds again.
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
The sky is no longer thick with fumes
But blue and grey and clear.
They say that in the streets of Assisi
People are singing to each other across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.
They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.
Today a young woman I know
is busy spreading fliers with her number
through the neighborhood.
So that the elders may have someone to call on.
Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples
are preparing to welcome
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary.
All over the world people are slowing down
reflecting

All over the world people are looking at their neighbors in a new way
All over the world people are waking up to a new reality.
To have big we really are.
To have little control we really have.
To what really matters.
To Love.
So we pray and we remember that
Yes there is fear.
But there does not have to be hate.
Yes there is isolation.
But there does not have to be loneliness.
Yes there is panic buying.
But there does not have to be meaness.
Yes there is sickness.
But there does not have to be disease of the soul.
Yes there is even death.
But there can always be a rebirth of love.
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.
Today, breath.
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic.
The birds are singing again.
The sky is clearing.
Spring is coming.
And we are always accompanied by Love.
Open the windows of your soul.
And though you may not be able to touch across the empty square,
Sing.