

## A Pragma-Stylistic Analysis of Deixis in Beckett's Mimic Act Without Words-I in terms of Levinson's (1983) Model

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**Abstract:** Beckett's dramatic works represent a significant reference for linguistic investigations as they reflect his style and dramatic language as they directed through theatre, radio, movies, and T.V screens. Act Without Words-I has considered one of his master theatricals mimics plays in which deictic expressions play a critical textual role. Hence, a pragmatic interpretation of these expressions may contribute to the critical literature of this play. The present paper attempts to carry out a pragma-stylistic analysis and interpretation of Beckett's first mime play, Act Without Words I (1956), based on his employment of deixis. For analysis purposes, Levinson's (1983) model of deixis uses. Levinson categorizes deixis into personal deixis, spatial deixis, temporal deixis, social deixis, and discourse deixis. The main aim of the study is to shed light on the deictic expressions that have been employed by the playwright. It is concluded that the playwright adeptly uses deixis categories in a way they play a crucial role in developing the discourse processes and structure as they underlie specific linguistic codes of the play in terms of its dramatic interpretation and plot development. Also, Levinson's (1983) model of deixis finds to be an excellent linguistic tool for the analysis and interpretation of dramatic works.

**Keywords:** Deixis, Deictic Expressions, Spatial Deixis, Mimic Play, Act Without Words-I

### 1. Introduction

The word 'deixis' is a derivative form of the Greek term 'pointing' (Macrae, 2019: 37). It is a crucial linguistic phenomenon that should not overlook considering language use and analysis. As defined in Lyons (1977: 637), deixis refers to placing and recognizing of people, things, actions, and practices which are the subject of speech or mentioned in relevance to the spatial-temporal settings created by the story of the expression or being involved in it, generally of an individual talker and one addressee.

Deixis is the term set to a group of words that serve to 'point to' somewhat or somebody from a specific perception. Deictic words are peculiar in the manner they overlap the figurative and indexical operations of language. (Macrae, 2019: 22-37). Rodney et al (2006) refer that the deixis notion is applicable to the usage of expressions where meaning is amenably attributed to facets of the action of expression, time and place of its happening, and those that contribute as a speaker or as the addressee. In basic meaning: "now" and "here" are used deictically to denote correspondingly to the time and place of the utterance. Likewise, *this house* could understand in a deictic perspective as the house where the expression takes place. For Leech (1983: 145), deixis is a cohesive textual means. Deixis implies the manner whereby certain statements may understand in connection to the utterer who instigates deixis (Levinson, 1983).

For Yule (1996: 9), deixis is a practical notion for essential issues we do with utterances that indicates to "pointing" by language. In turn, the term deictic expression used to define those linguistic practices used to achieve this "pointing by language." Yet, Lacstro (2012: 24) classifies the deictic expressions categories further into: personal, spatial, temporal, social, and discourse deixis. This classification adopted by Levinson, Yule, Brown, and some other scholars.

In terms of how deixis is interpreted or understood by the readers or listeners, Macrae (2019: 22) emphasizes that deictic words that are interpretable just in connection with the context in which they are being taken. According to Levinson (1983), the concept of deixis underlies the methods whereby language encrypts facets of the situation of expressions and hence refers to how the understanding of terms relies on the analysis of that set of the word. It is close to the exploration of conversation and pragmatics, and it often labelled as "verbal pointing" that identified as pointing via language. The verbal forms of this pointing are called deictic lexemes, deictic expressions, or deictic indicators.

#### 1.1. Categories of Deixis:

Hereafter, the different varieties of deixis will explain and discussed in line with the different conceptual definitions aforementioned. In terms of deixis categorization. Yule (1996:15) identifies three types of deixis as personal whereby person pronouns like *him* or *them*, temporal implies the use of time lexicon like *now* and *tomorrow*, and spatial like *here* and *there*, which are all used as a means of pointing to people, time and places

through language. In this study, Levinson's (1983) categorization of deictic expressions vis deixis used as summarized hereafter:

### 1.1.1 Personal Deixis:

Personal deixis underlies grammatical persons used in an expression, where the immediate participants are: the speaker and the addressee. Those immediate contributors are over-hearers who hear the statement but who aren't openly talked to. In addition, we have people who are indicated in the statement. In the English language, such variances are typically designated by the use of personal pronouns (Levinson, 1983:45).

### 1.1.2. Spatial Deixis:

In defining spatial deixis, it's significant to clarify that places are not objects and objects are not placed as they subjugate the space and objects help to determine the spaces they inhabit (Lyon, 1977: 693-699). Spatial deixis is referring to the position of spaces between talkers and hearer. They explain the relative place of people and things (Natalia & Santos, 2020: 349).

Special deixis is employed to designate places to identify points in discourse and normally the talker. Hence, two principle methods for pointing to entities for the purposes of description or naming and locating them. Sub-classification is made for this category into: proximal that is close to the talker like this and these and distal that is close to the addressee like that or those (Levinson, 1983: 79). Further, the four branded adverbs of *HERE*, *THERE*, *THEN*, and *NOW* that is known in conversation usage are deictically used to refer to the talking place and time (Douglas et al., 2002).

### 1.2.3 Temporal Deixis:

For Levinson (1983) and Fillmore (1975), TEMPORAL DEIXIS suggests the different situations whereby time expressions are employed within an expression or talking event. This usage comprises time adverbials like NOW, THEN, SOON, and the various types of speech tenses. For example, the item TOMORROW refers to successive day. Adverbial of time could be proportional to the time when an expression is done or when it is received.

### 1.2.4. Social Deixis:

The deixis category, which denotes social details determined through various utterances, is defined as SOCIAL deixes like social rank in relation and acquaintance. Television distinctions and honorifics, which are both considered as attitudinal deixis, are categorized as basic types of this category. They are functioned to mark facets of social ranks and conducts of esteem (Lacastro, 2012; Levinson, 1983).

### 1.2.5 Discourse Deixis:

Discourse deixis is a subtype of deixis that functions to refer to features of the statement, whether verbal or textual and the setting of communication in which it occurs. It is the language that refers to a piece or feature of the speech context or co-text in which it is used. (Macrae, 2019: 23-35).

For Levinson (1983: 85), deixis of discourse mainly underlies the statements used in specific utterance to denote a certain part of the discourse that includes that utterance. Hence, it contains the meaning of reference devoted to its part of the current utterance. For example, anyway when it occurs at the beginning, specifies the utterance where it is used and is not spoken to the immediate prior speech, nevertheless to aforesaid ones.

A clear cut difference is between deixis of discourse and the notion of anaphora, which refers to the connection of the pronoun of the same object while discourse deixis relates links the pronoun with the preceding linguistic utterance (Ibid). The below Figure exemplify these categories of what is called as the deictic center:

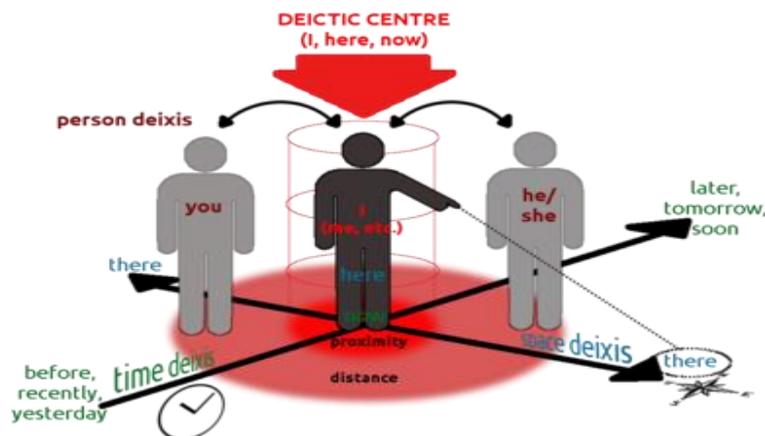


Figure (1): The Concept of Deictic Center (<http://www.studymode.com>)

Accordingly, deictic expressions fall into three categories:

1. Personal deixis (`you,` `us`)
2. Spatial deixis (`here,` `there`)
3. Temporal deixis (`now,` `then`)

Levinson (1983) defines deictic expressions as those linguistic structures whose understanding in simple sentences creates an important reference to aspects of the extra-linguistic context of the utterances where they take place. Also, linguists developed a number of models to account for the grammaticalization of context through deixis. Deixis is evidently connected to the discourse producer's setting of situation. In brief, as far as Levinson's (1983) model is related, a specific list of categories of deixis is used in this study, as shown in the below Table (1):

Table (1) Levinson's (1983) Categorization of Deixis

No.	Categories of Deixis
1-	Person Deixis
2-	Spatial Deixis
3-	Temporal Deixis
4-	Social Deixis
5-	Discourse Deixis

### 3.An Analysis of Deixis in Beckett's Act Without Words I:

Cohin (1962: 247) elucidates that this play is Beckett's first mime, which considered as an affronted manuscript in Beckett's convention. The mime in this play is apparent in specific perspectives. The act set in a desert highlighted by stunning lights as they cast list includes only a man at the beginning of the play where he is stirred backwards to the stage.

ACT WITHOUT WORDS-I is a symbolic drama that exposed to various explanations. From a social point of view, the play has no specific atmosphere or space as the character represents a model for every human. The playwright doesn't repeat a certain person of a certain nation. Hence, he reveals a person like a human with dreams, fantasies, and misery (Pattie, 1968: 385).

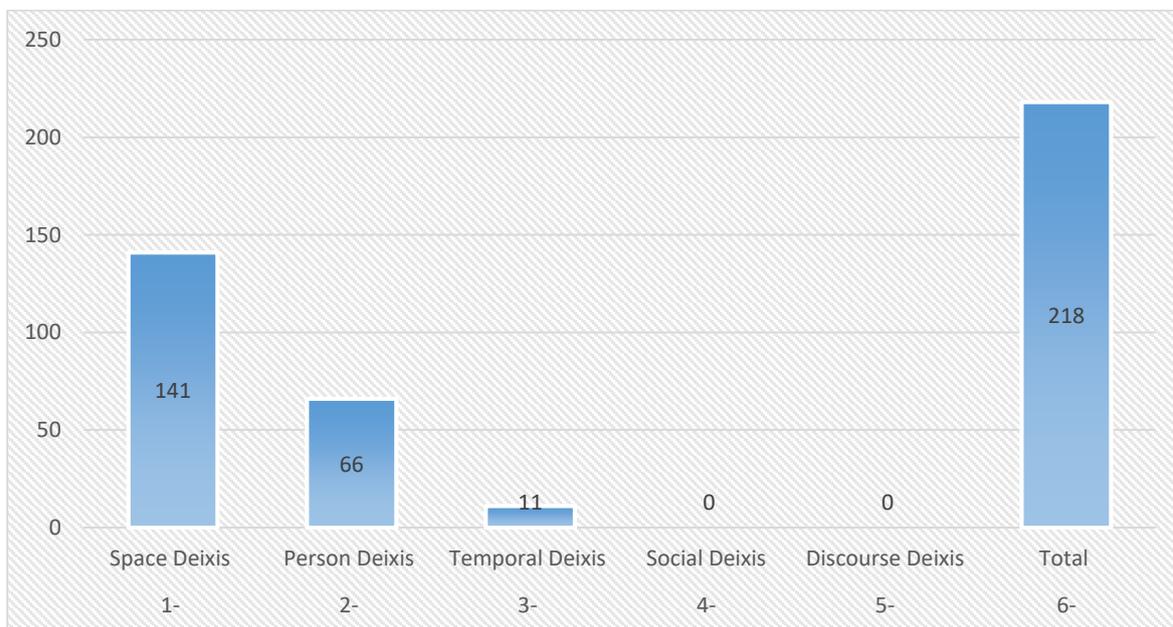
Furthermore, the play has no verbal speech where one actor in a mimic style tries to bring up questions on human existence and life. The playwright adopts the desert as his dramatic setting. Nonetheless, he gives no precise definition to its geographical layout. This setting is a representation of everywhere in the world (Hashish, 2011: 4).

Nevertheless, silence understood in a different respect. The central character is inaudible an obligation due to the absence of an interlocutor who may start a dialogue with him. This self-segregation in the severe climates of the deserts prohibits this man from speaking and worsen his trauma in a bleak place with no water or foodstuff (Ibid).

Adopting the categorization of deixis set by Levenson (1983) mode, the analysis of Beckett's play "Act Without Words I" reveals that there is a total number of 218 deictic expressions employed by the playwright. This number distributed as 141 for the category of spatial deixis, 66 occurrences for the personal deixis, 11 events for the temporal deixis, and nil occurrences of the discourse deixis and social deixis categories throughout the discourse of the whole play as displayed here below in Table (2) and Figure (2):

**Table (2):** Statistics of Deixis Categories in Beckett's "Act Without Words I"

N o.	Deixis Categories	No. of Occurrences	Percentage
1-	Spatial Deixis	141	64.76 %
2-	Personal Deixis	66	30.27 %
3-	Temporal Deixis	11	5.04 %
4-	Social Deixis	–	0 %
5-	Discourse Deixis	-	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>218</b>	<b>100 %</b>



**Figure (2):** Percent of Deixis Categories in Beckett's "Act Without Words-I"

In this paper, more attention is being given to those deixis categories, which has the highest number of occurrences in the paly text. Therefore, an attempt is initiated to find out the effect of spatial deixis category as it has the highest number of occurrences throughout the analyzed text of the play "Act Without Words-I":

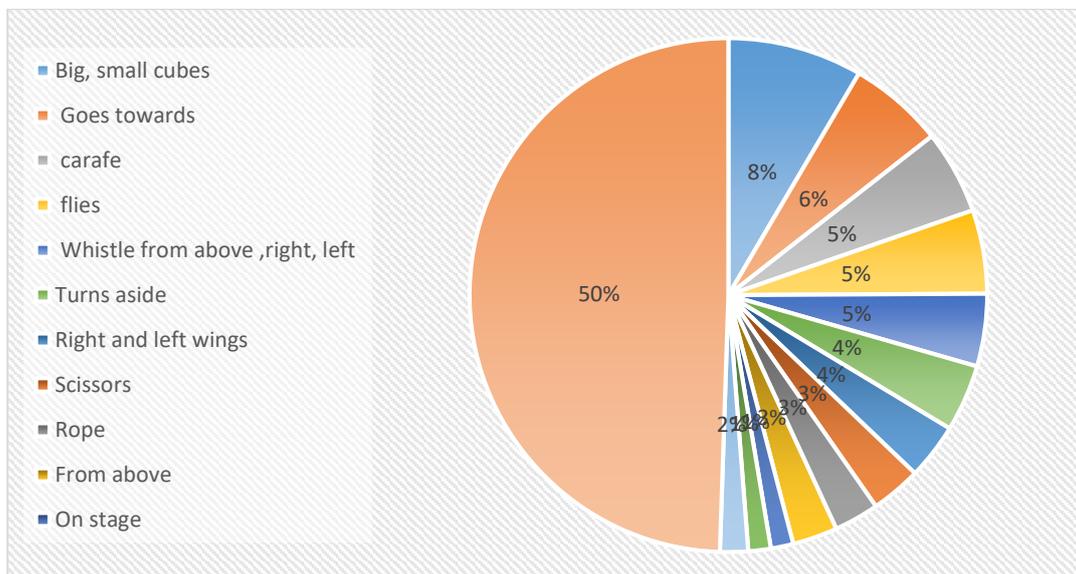
**3.1 Spatial Deixis:**

As per the statistics of the analysis in terms of Levinson's (1983) classification of deixis, there are (141) Spatial Deixis used by the playwright in "Act Without Words I." The analysis gives more attention to the role of this spatial deixis for the interpretation of this play. The main aim is to get the anticipated interpretation of meaning that the playwright wishes to deliver using these forms of language. Because of that, Spatial Deixis is further subdivided following specific points that stand as the main focus or concern by the playwright like cubes (24),

flies (15), a carafe (15), turn aside (12), whistle from left, above, right (13), rope (8), on stage (4), right and left wings (10), scissors (9), from above (8), goes towards (17) and desert (1) as shown below in Table (3) & Figure (3):

**Table (3):** Subcategorization of Spatial Deixis in "Act Without Words I"

No.	Spatial Deixis	No. of Occurrences	Percentage
1-	Big, small cubes	24	17.02%
2-	Goes towards	17	12.05%
3-	carafe	15	10.63%
4-	flies	15	10.63%
5-	A whistle from above, right, left	13	9.22%
6	Turns aside	12	8.51%
7	Right and left wings	10	7.09%
8	Scissors	9	6.38%
9	Rope	8	5.67%
10	From the above	8	5.67%
11	On stage	4	2.83%
12	Lands	4	2.83%
13	Little tree	5	3.54%
<b>Total</b>		<b>141</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Figure (3):** Distribution of Spatial Deixis in "Act Without Words"**3.1.1. Desert:**

We notice in this play, Samuel Beckett's reference to the desert as the setting in which he does not outline any geographical limits but let it imply the everywhere in the globe as a general theme. Thus, the desert indicates deictic importance. It's apparent here that the playwright doesn't create an utterly void setting or a physical setting with no space. He gives attention to fill up the area of his dramatic context with many entities. This point comes in line with what Coles (1995: 12) explains that two significant facets: it brings down the materialistic place; the body, and the place in which the body placed as well as the social place which is a holiday where social relations with the significant sensible atmosphere of ideals. So from the title of the play, the reader is invited to think instantly in its place settings.

**3.1.2. Big and small cubes /carafe:**

"Big and small cubs" is used as a deictic spatial expression with 24 occurrences, while the word carafe has (15) circumstances throughout the play.

Within the Table of spatial deixis, a tiny carafe (15) has been used in the play. As Beckett states that, a carafe with a very big tag written WATER inclines from the flies with three yards' height from the floor and stays hanging. The actor is a healthy and active man who attempts to catch the small jug if water as he seems thirsty. Here, water stands as a metaphor for life as it's the source of life, and with no water, no life. The jug is also a clear reference to spatial deixis as it takes place in the space. "A big cube descends from flies" this cube and the latter ones are used by the protagonist as a stepladder to catch the water but in hopeless. He tries to place the cubes one upon the other in an attempt to reach water by using the tools he has along with his normal gears, mind, and physical members.

**3.1.3. The whistle from left, right, and above/little tree:**

In dealing with part of the play, we notice that these deixis "whistle from left, right and above and the little tree" are used as spatial deictic expressions with (13) occurrences, as stated in the above Table (3). Examining these deixes, we see they are adverbials like "whistle from the right-wing, whistle from the left, and whistle from above." They convey the context where the protagonist actor survives. He overhears a whistle and directly traces it to the right and left directions. The whistling voice is a symbol for the devil who lured Adam and Eve to be sinful. In accordance with the little tree that is mentioned (5) times as spatial deixis in the paly, one can interpret that when "tree descends from flies," and the actor stop trying to catch the tree in order to don't do his sin again as happened with Adam when ate from the prohibited apple tree. Here, we notice that the tree entity is employed in an intertextual context with the biblical story of Adam and Eve, wherein both cases, it serves as a deictic expression with a pure spatial role.

Furthermore, a palm tree with "a single bough some three yards from the ground," is clearly referred to as a representation of life. As it appears on stage, a declaration or prediction is made for each entity to come next with a similar voice of whistle. Here, the pragmatic meaning is made clear that every human being is fully conscious of the reality of existence that man passes through it and proceeds to watch at his hands. Apparently, it offers shadow to the protagonist.

**3.1.4. From/ in flies:**

For the expression of flies, (15) occurrences of this expression have been counted as spatial deixis category as in Table (3). These are adverbial deixis, which is described as little tree inclines from flies, a big cube slopes from flies, the rope is pulled up quickly and disappears in flies. These occurrences have pragmatic interpretations as Beckett employs them to serve the denotation that there are exterior powers that controls the movement of the actor. This point is also stated by Gontarski (2013), who explains that the playwright wants to show that the external force that exists in the flies at the top tossed the protagonist on the stage. Flies mean the empty area over the stage, which is obviously spatial deixis symbolizing the external powers that may refer to God, nature, convention, myth, human, and instinct is interrupted with a chain of graphics signifying the writer's dilemma (Gontarski, 2013).

**3.1.5. Scissors/ rope:**

The "scissors" and "rope" are deictically expressed as spatial deixis in (9) times for the former and (8) occurrences for the later. We notice that the use of the tailor's scissors which descends from flies and come to rest before the tree, a yard from the ground. From one hand, the statement "A pair of tailor's scissor descends from the flies" where the actor doesn't recognize them till a whistle voice is being heard. After that, the man begins to cut his nails. This person is an active figure, but again, the man doesn't notice them until he hears the whistle. He then

starts to trim his nails. The man is an active figure. He thinks before he does things, so he is an intellectual, then hopelessly ended to face an aggressive power.

The scissors are used as tools helping the man to reach his goals. Besides, we perceive this man as a creative artist supported by the deictic expression of "the tailor's scissor" as the tailor reflects a professional craft and maker. Accordingly, the tools have been confiscated later by the outside forces, just because of the man's awareness of how to use those objects. Clearly, the reason behind taking the scissors away is that the man might cut his throat. The scissors are highly referred to as spatial deixis since they take place in the play. So, here we notice these meanings reflect the main pragmatic denotation and interpretation of the used scissor expressions.

On the other hand, rope expression is used deictically (8) times as spatial deixis throughout the play. Our pragmatic interpretations of these occurrences come in relation to the scene as the rope slopes from the flies to the man on the stage. The actor succeeds in catching the rope, and he scratches part of it by the scissors. He creates a noose and links the small cube all around. His outlook mirrors monotony since he does not assist himself by the rope – he only consumes time. As the whistle is overheard again, but this time the actor overlooks it in tedium and absurdist situation: "He starts to trim his nails, stops, reflects, runs his figure along the blade of scissors, goes and lays them on the small cube, turns aside, opens his collar, frees his neck and fingers it."

The rope with the other gears like blocks might be used as some gallows, so one can notice that the exterior forces confiscate them, regarding the confiscation of the tools, which are all referred to spatial deixis. Nonetheless, the character realizes that life is deceiving, hostile, and hostile when all the assisting tools: rope, scissors, and cubes are lifted away from him. He converts into helplessness and becomes frustrated in despair—his silence and motionlessness mark that he is exhausted from the untrue dream. Hence, the voiceless character hideously realizes the uselessness of movements.

### 3.1.6 He turns aside:

We notice that Beckett employs the adverbial of motion expertly as a spatial deictic expression where the actor is the sole deictic centre. This is apparent in his use of the expression "He turns aside" in (12) occurrences throughout the transcript of the play. In other words, his movements towards cubes, right, and left wings are good indicators of using the spatial deixis. The man moves a lot in the play to do several things, including moving the cubes from place to place, reflecting on what is going on around him, trying to reach the carafe of water, setting up the blocks to reach the water, and trimming his nails. All these actions and movements used by the protagonist mean that he is an active and healthy character.

Our pragmatic interpretation for the usage of these adverbs of movement, especially the expression of "He turns aside" and alike, comes in line with the critical interpretation that suggests that Beckett sketches at this point and through these motions, solid and abstract imageries that echoes the birth of an existential person along with implied satire in the happenstance of birth and death. Ultimately, the conclusion of the mime connotes a pitiful collapse of a cognizant revolutionary man who unhurriedly rejects to submit. The character is very energetic when his life gets meaning at its finale. In this rejection, the cutting of the rope, another birth takes place, the birth of human beings.

## 4. Conclusions

Based on the obtained results of the pragmatic and stylistic analysis of the different categories and subcategories employed in Beckett's play "Act Without Words," the present study has arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Beckett's application of deixis in the text of the play, particularly the spatial category, has a significant role in developing certain dramatic scenes of the play as the used deictic expressions imply the pragmatic codes of these scenes dramatic comprehension and interpretation.
2. The study offers a precise pragmatic interpretation of the distinctive implication of Beckett's play, Act Without Words-I by thoroughly tracing its physical and social settings and clarifies the method via which the playwright nontraditionally builds up these settings with speechless character and limitedness of speech with mime, motionless and muteness.
3. The treatment of spatial deixis through the strategic use of adverbial of movement and verbs of motion contributes to the stretchy pragmatic understanding of the text by both the readers and the listeners. In this regard, it's found that the used spatial deixis intentionally or unintentionally afford visions about the character's thoughts, emotions, inspirations, incentives, concerns, and his boldness about his restricted realm that is full of miseries.
4. Deixis analysis of the play helps to elaborate on how readers regularly presume more than usual that may elucidate and get an impression of dissatisfaction and upset. In short, the study reveals the story of a man who has

suffered from being isolated in the middle of an unknown desert. It also tells how man has faced many problems and difficulties in his life.

Levinson's (1983) model of deixis is found to be a good linguistic tool for the analysis and interpretation of dramatic works. In this regard, the researchers recommend future stylistics studies on pragmatic aspects of dramatic works to adopt Levinson's (1983) model as it offers analysts with the applicable, practical, and expedient tools for analyzing literary works and achieve sufficient and important interpretations..

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