

PRAGMATIC PATTERNS IN BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA*

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A written version of this talk is due to appear in a memorial volume for Geoffrey Leech (1936–2014), planned for publication in 2021.

The talk relates Leech's work on semantics and pragmatics (Leech 1974, 1983) to his work on literary linguistics (Leech 2007, Leech & Short 1981, 2007). The relation is illustrated with an analysis of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*. The novel is a classic in popular culture, but is much more than a melodramatic thriller: it alludes to scientific and social developments in the late Victorian age, in areas such as technology, medicine and religion.

Keywords software (Anthony 2018) was used to compare *Dracula* with a reference corpus of literary prose, and shows that the novel contains a large number of negatives. Leech (1974, 1983) proposes that negative statements are typically interpreted as a denial of their positive counterparts. The combination of these quantitative grammatical findings and this pragmatic maxim constitute an important linguistic feature of the novel.

Literary scholars often remain unconvinced by studies in corpus stylistics. The talk provides a simple demonstration of the value of combining statistical data and pragmatic principles. At the level of the individual novel, the analysis illustrates how the frequency, distribution and pragmatic function of negatives express a central theme: the protagonists' uncertainty about the confusing world in which they find themselves. At the level of general textual theory, the analysis illustrates how literary meaning can be expressed by formal grammatical patterns.

Leech and Short (2007) see strengths and limitations in the quantitative analysis of literary prose, but could have been more explicit about how their arguments relate to classic puzzles in the philosophy of science, including distinctions between subjective and objective, induction and abduction, and data-driven and hypothesis-driven research.

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