



Pragmastylistic Strategies in Depicting Grief in Ernaux's *La Place* and *Une Femme*

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RÉSUMÉ - ABSTRACT

Cette étude examine les représentations pragmatiques et stylistiques de la mort et du deuil dans les romans modernes français d'Annie Ernaux, *La Place* et *Une Femme*. En employant une analyse textuelle qualitative avec une approche pragmastylistique, la recherche analyse des extraits sélectionnés pour identifier les actes de langage, les éléments déictiques et les caractéristiques stylistiques qui transmettent la profondeur émotionnelle et le contexte social. À travers une lecture attentive et une codification basée sur les théories des actes de langage d'Austin et Searle, la déixis de Levinson, et les principes de la pragmastylistique, l'analyse révèle le style d'écriture minimaliste et "plat" d'Ernaux. Ce style, caractérisé par un langage direct et sans embellissement, juxtapose la mort aux routines quotidiennes, renforçant ainsi la résonance émotionnelle et l'authenticité. Les résultats montrent comment les choix linguistiques et stylistiques d'Ernaux illustrent efficacement les complexités du deuil, soulignant l'importance de l'analyse pragmastylistique dans la compréhension de la littérature autobiographique.

This study explores the pragmatic and stylistic representations of death and grief in Annie Ernaux's modern French novels, *La Place* and *Une Femme*. Employing a qualitative textual analysis with a pragmatic-stylistic approach, the research examines selected excerpts to identify speech acts, deictic elements, and stylistic features that convey emotional depth and social context. Through close reading and coding based on Austin's and Searle's speech act theories, Levinson's deixis, and principles of pragmastylistics, the analysis reveals Ernaux's minimalist "flat" writing style. This style, characterized by direct and unembellished language, juxtaposes death with mundane routines, enhancing emotional resonance and authenticity. The findings demonstrate how Ernaux's linguistic and stylistic choices effectively depict the complexities of grief, reinforcing the significance of pragmastylistic analysis in understanding autobiographical literature.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Annie Ernaux, the first French female author who received a Nobel in literature (Develey & Clermont, 2022; Ernaux, 2022), stands as a pivotal figure in modern French literature, renowned for her incisive exploration of personal and social landscapes through autobiographical narratives. Her seminal works, *La Place* (1983) and *Une Femme* (1987), have garnered significant acclaim, establishing Ernaux's reputation both nationally and internationally. *La Place* (hereinafter referred to as LP), which delves into her father's social class transition, had sold over 100,000 copies in the first week of its release (B., 1984) and received prestigious accolades the Prix Renaudot (B., 1984). Similarly, *Une Femme* (hereinafter referred to as UF), which recounts the life and decline of her mother, has been lauded for its profound emotional depth and socio-cultural commentary (Hauer, 2021; Mihelakis, 2010; Peszat, 2012; Toutounchian & Nassehi, 2014). These works resonate deeply with readers and critics alike, earning Ernaux recognition as a master of autobiographical fiction that bridges personal memory with broader societal issues (Granereau, 2024; McIlvanney, 2001).

The enduring popularity and impact of Ernaux's works can be attributed to her distinctive narrative style and her ability to depict the interplay between personal experiences and social contexts. Her minimalist, "flat" writing style, often referred to as *l'écriture plate*, eschews elaborate metaphors and embellishments in favor of straightforward, unadorned language (Alavai & Gholami, 2015; Garaud, 1994; Moricheau-Airaud, 2021; Sirvent Ramos, 2024; Yücedağ, 2017). This approach not only enhances the authenticity of her narratives but also allows readers to engage more directly with the emotional and psychological nuances of her characters. Ernaux's focus on themes such as death, grief, and familial relationships provides a rich tapestry for literary analysis, particularly within the realms of pragmatics and stylistics.

The exploration of death and grief in Ernaux's narratives offers valuable insights into the human condition and the mechanisms of coping with loss. In LP, the transition of Ernaux's father from a working-class background to a more comfortable socio-economic status serves as a backdrop for examining familial bonds and the emotional ramifications of social mobility. Conversely, UF provides a more intimate portrayal of the mother's decline, highlighting the personal and societal impacts of aging and illness. These contrasting yet complementary narratives underscore Ernaux's ability to capture the multifaceted nature of grief and its pervasive influence on individual identity and familial dynamics.

The relevance of these themes extends beyond the scope of literary studies, intersecting with fields such as sociology, psychology, and cultural studies (Granereau, 2024; Mihelakis, 2010; Parayre, 2008; Usman et al., 2024). Understanding how Ernaux represents death and grief through her narrative techniques offers a window into the broader societal attitudes towards mortality and loss. Moreover, her integration of deictic elements—such as temporal and spatial markers—and speech acts (Mahmoud, 2023) within her narratives provides a nuanced framework for analyzing how language shapes and reflects emotional experiences. This intersection of pragmatics and stylistics, often referred to as pragmastylistics, is particularly pertinent in autobiographical literature, where the conveyance of personal emotion and memory relies heavily on linguistic precision and stylistic choices.

The existing scholarship on Annie Ernaux has extensively examined her works from various perspectives, including gender studies, socio-historical contexts, and sociolinguistics. Researchers have highlighted how Ernaux's narratives interrogate issues of class, gender roles, and personal agency within the confines of societal expectations (Bocci, 2019; Dreux, 2022; Edwards, 2022; Francequin & Valmorin, 2017; Johnson, 1999; Toutounchian & Nassehi, 2014). For instance, studies focusing on LP have explored the dynamics of social mobility and the tension between personal ambition and familial obligations. Similarly, analyses of UF have delved into the portrayal of maternal relationships and the societal pressures surrounding motherhood and aging. While these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of Ernaux's thematic concerns and socio-cultural critiques, there remains a notable gap in the exploration of pragmastylistic dimensions within her narratives.

This research seeks to address this gap by conducting a pragmastylistic analysis of LP and UF, with a particular focus on the lexical-semantic representation of death and the pragmastylistic

expression of grief. By examining how Ernaux employs speech acts, deictic elements, and stylistic strategies, this study aims to elucidate the ways in which language and style interact to convey complex emotional states and social realities. The theoretical framework for this analysis draws upon foundational works in pragmatics, such as Searle's (1975) theory of speech acts, Levinson's concept of deixis, and the principles of stylistics and pragmastylistics as outlined by Leech & Short (2007) and Simpson (2019).

The primary objectives of this research are threefold: first, to analyze how the concept of death is lexically and semantically represented in Ernaux's narratives; second, to identify and explicate the speech acts, deictic references, and stylistic elements related to grief and loss management; and third, to demonstrate the pragmatic functions of these linguistic and stylistic devices in shaping the reader's emotional engagement with the text. To achieve these objectives, the study poses the following research questions: How is the concept of "death" lexically and semantically represented in LP and UF? How are speech acts, deictic elements, and stylistic strategies related to "grief" and "loss management" manifest and function within the narratives? What are the pragmatic effects of these language features on the reader?

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the understanding of how language and style coalesce to depict profound emotional experiences in autobiographical literature. By focusing on the pragmatic and stylistic dimensions of Ernaux's work, this study offers a deeper appreciation of her narrative techniques and their effectiveness in conveying the intricacies of grief and loss. Additionally, this research enhances the theoretical discourse on pragmastylistics by applying its principles to a prominent literary corpus, thereby bridging the gap between linguistic theory and literary analysis.

In summary, Annie Ernaux's LP and UF provide fertile ground for examining the intersection of language, emotion, and social context within autobiographical narratives. Through a pragmastylistic lens, this study aims to uncover the nuanced ways in which Ernaux's lexical choices, speech acts, and stylistic strategies work in concert to create emotionally resonant and socially insightful depictions of death and grief. By addressing the existing research gaps and expanding the theoretical framework, this research aspires to contribute meaningfully to both literary studies and linguistic analysis, offering new perspectives on the enduring relevance of Ernaux's work in contemporary literature.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative-textual research design, utilizing a pragmastylistic approach to analyze Annie Ernaux's *La Place* and *Une Femme*. The choice of this methodology is driven by the need to explore the intricate interplay between language, emotion, and social context within Ernaux's autobiographical narratives. Pragmastylistics, which integrates pragmatics and stylistics, provides a comprehensive framework for examining how Ernaux's linguistic choices and stylistic techniques function together to convey complex emotional and social realities.

The primary data sources for this analysis are the two aforementioned works, specifically selected for their focus on different parental figures and their portrayal of grief and social dynamics. *La Place* centers on Ernaux's father and his transition from a farming background to roles as a factory worker, a soldier during wartime, and eventually a café and grocery store owner. This narrative underscores his modest social mobility and his complex relationship with his daughter's educational achievements and aspirations. Meanwhile, *UF* recounts the life and decline of her mother, offering a more intimate exploration of maternal relationships and the impact of aging and illness. The editions chosen for analysis are the Folio editions published by Gallimard.

In addition to the primary texts, supplementary data includes interviews with Annie Ernaux and relevant academic journals that provide contextual background and critical perspectives on her work. These secondary sources enhance the understanding of Ernaux's thematic concerns and narrative strategies, offering valuable insights that inform the textual analysis.

Data collection involved a meticulous close reading of selected excerpts from the opening sections of LP and UF. The focus was on key moments depicting the announcement of the father's and mother's deaths, followed by events such as the preparation of the body, the presence of mourners (for

the father), the church service, and the formalities related to death registration. The analysis extends to Ernaux's reflections where she explicitly states her intention to write about her parents. The excerpts were then coded according to a predefined scheme that categorizes them based on speech act type (representative, directive, expressive, commissive), deictic reference (temporal, spatial, personal), stylistic elements (irony, repetition, minimalism), and their pragmatic effects.

The analysis process involved several steps. First, each coded excerpt was categorized according to Searle's (*ibid*) taxonomy of speech acts, identifying whether the utterance was representative (stating facts), directive (issuing commands or requests), expressive (conveying emotions), commissive (making promises or commitments), or declarative (bringing about changes through utterance). Second, the deictic references were analyzed based on Levinson's (*ibid*) framework, examining how temporal markers (e.g., specific dates, durations) and spatial markers (e.g., locations, directions) anchor the narrative in specific contexts and contribute to the portrayal of grief. Third, stylistic elements such as irony, repetition, and minimalist language were scrutinized to understand how Ernaux's stylistic choices enhanced the emotional resonance and thematic depth of the narratives.

Finally, the pragmatic effects of these linguistic and stylistic devices were interpreted to assess how they influence the reader's emotional engagement and comprehension of the characters' experiences. This involved synthesizing the findings to draw connections between Ernaux's narrative strategies and their impact on the portrayal of death and grief.

By systematically categorizing and analyzing the speech acts, deictic elements, and stylistic features, this method allows for a nuanced understanding of how Ernaux constructs her narratives. The pragmatic-stylistic approach not only highlights the functional aspects of language in conveying emotion and social context but also illuminates the aesthetic dimensions of Ernaux's minimalist writing style. This comprehensive analysis framework ensures that the study captures the multifaceted ways in which Ernaux's language and style contribute to the depth and authenticity of her autobiographical narratives.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

3.1.1. Lexical Representations and Meanings of "Death"

In both works, Ernaux frequently adopts a direct yet understated lexicon to articulate death. For instance, the announcement "*Mon père est mort deux mois après, jour pour jour*" (LP, 11) or "*Ma mère est morte le lundi 7 avril*" (UF, 11) are presented with minimal elaboration. The verbs *mourir* (here in past tense) used by the narrator marks the concept of dying in an almost factual manner, devoid of euphemisms such as "passed away" or "left this world." This lexical directness underscores Ernaux's core principle of "no poetic embellishment" — referenced as *l'écriture plate* evoked the first time by the narrator/Ernaux in LP (24). The significance is twofold:

- It conveys authenticity, as if she refuses to shield herself or the reader from the stark reality of mortality.
- It creates a paradoxical emotional effect, where a seemingly neutral statement hits the reader more powerfully precisely because it is so unembellished.

Such straightforward references to death operate semantically on two levels. On one hand, they mark a final state, a severance of life. On the other, they initiate a reflection on the narrator's altered identity: once her father or her mother has died, the narrator frequently reverts to self-reflection, asking how to proceed with life's tasks. The absence of figurative language around the event of death itself effectively forces readers to confront the rawness of dying without rhetorical distance.

Part of Ernaux's power arises from the lexical juxtaposition of death with everyday routines. For example, while describing the father's body lying upstairs, the mother continues to serve drinks in the café downstairs — words like "pastis," "rouges," and references to bar service appear side by side with mentions of the deceased father's presence in the upper floor [*Mon père décédé reposait en haut et elle servait des pastis et des rouges en bas*] (LP, 17). Similarly, in UF, the mother's body is found with a white band around her face [... *une bande de tissu blanc lui enserrait la tête, passant sous le menton toute la peau*

autour de la bouche et des yeux.] (UF, 11), yet the text also mentions the inventory of mundane belongings (clothes, a razor, summer blue shoes) (UF, 12). Lexically, this interplay of routine objects—“*un rasoir électrique*,” “*des chaussures*,” “*le commerce*”—with markers of death—“*le corps*,” “*la morgue*,” “*les funérailles*,” “*l’inhumation*”—creates a semantic tension. It underscores how death penetrates ordinary spaces, stripping them of normalcy.

These juxtapositions situate death not as an isolated or rarefied event but as a disruption embedded in the flow of daily life. By retaining references to routine activities—preparing meals, waiting for the bus, or finishing administrative tasks—Ernaux highlights death’s capacity to expose the fragility of normal existence. Semantically, “death” thus becomes both a shocking finality and a phenomenon intricately intertwined with the practicalities of living.

A notable aspect arises in references to bodily changes post-death—terms such as “*méconnaissable*” (unrecognizable) and “*son visage d’homme [...] avait déjà disparu*” (his manly face ... had disappeared) (LP, 16) when describing the father’s corpse. These lexemes highlight the transformation of a loved one into a lifeless state, emphasizing the stark finality of death. In *La Place*, the father’s physical appearance is detailed through stark, unembellished language: “*Dans son costume bleu sombre lâche autour du corps, il ressemblait à un oiseau couché*” (In his loose dark blue suit, he resembled a lying bird), underscoring both his fragility and the inevitability of death.

In contrast, *UF* presents the mother’s postmortem state with a clinical precision reflecting institutional protocols: “*On lui avait déjà fait sa toilette, une bande de tissu blanc lui enserrait la tête*” (She had already been washed, a white band of cloth encircling her head) (UF, 11). The imagery of her being wrapped and resembling “*une petite momie*” (a little mummy) evokes a sense of alienation while underscoring the depersonalization common in institutional settings.

While the father’s preparation occurs at home, with family members present, the mother’s body is cared for in the nursing home, reflecting differences in social and emotional dynamics. Such contrasts between the home and institutional environments emphasize the varied ways Ernaux navigates grief and memory, shaped by context and surroundings. Together, these depictions provide an unflinching representation of death’s physical and social realities, capturing its dual roles as deeply personal and procedurally detached.

Another dimension of lexical usage pertains to “absence.” Ernaux often employs stark, unadorned phrases to convey the void left by her parents’ deaths. In *LP*, the absence of the father is articulated primarily through physical descriptions: “*Son visage d’homme aux yeux grands ouverts et fixes de l’heure suivant sa mort avait déjà disparu. Même celui-là, je ne le reverrais jamais.*” (LP, 16) The focus on the father’s transformed body emphasizes the irreversible severance of life and death but remains anchored in the visual and tangible realm. By contrast, *UF* delves deeper into the emotional and existential aspects of absence, as Ernaux repeatedly reflects on her mother’s void. Lines such as “*Elle ne sera plus jamais nulle part dans le monde*” (LP, 21) and “*ce n’est plus la peine de ...*” (LP, 21) evoke a persistent awareness of loss that permeates even mundane activities, like peeling vegetables or choosing groceries. While the father’s absence is evoked succinctly, the mother’s is explored through a series of reflective and affective observations. This discrepancy mirrors the differing relationships Ernaux shared with each parent and highlights her mother’s absence as more psychologically destabilizing. Ernaux’s minimalist style across both texts intensifies the emotional resonance, leaving readers with an unfiltered confrontation of mortality and its aftermath.

3.1.1. *Speech Acts, Deixis, and Stylistic Expressions of “Grief” and “Loss Management”*

Representative speech acts dominate the narration, particularly when Ernaux recounts factual details about how or when her parents died. These acts align with Elizabeth Black’s observation (2006, p. 20) that representative speech acts offer the speaker’s view of the world as understood by them, adhering to felicity conditions that ensure their statements are grounded in evidence and truth. Ernaux’s simple yet direct statements, such as “*Mon père est mort deux mois après, jour pour jour*” (LP, 11) or “*Ma mère est morte le lundi 7 avril*” (UF, 7), exemplify this focus on factual truth. These declarative acts create an unembellished narrative tone, a hallmark of Ernaux’s “flat” style.

Yet expressive acts surface in the moments of direct emotional release, breaking through the predominantly representative framework. For example, lines like "*Je ne comprenais pas qu'elle soit encore vivante et que ma mère soit morte*" (UF, 21) and "*Je suis restée prostrée devant la valise béante*" (UF, 21) convey shock, disbelief, and despair. According to Black, expressive acts reveal the speaker's attitudes and emotions, often carrying a strongly interpersonal function (*ibid*, pp. 20–21). Ernaux's inclusion of such acts in an otherwise restrained narrative mirrors what Black identifies as moments where expressive speech, although sparse in narratorial voice, enhances the personal and emotional resonance of the text.

Moreover, Ernaux's "flat" narrative style creates a contrast that heightens the illocutionary force of these expressive acts. Black's analysis of interjections as deictic items—anchored in the speaker's situation—provides insight into how Ernaux invites the reader to share her emotional reactions. For instance, Ernaux's restrained description of her mother's belongings in UF transitions abruptly to an emotive outburst: "*Elle ne sera plus jamais nulle part dans le monde.*" This shift echoes Black's theory that expressive acts in first-person narratives often correlate with representative acts, allowing emotional depth to emerge within factual recounting.

By embedding expressive statements within a framework of representative speech acts, Ernaux intensifies their impact. The juxtaposition of factual details with raw emotional utterances exemplifies Black's observation that first-person narratives can use malformed or unexpected speech acts to challenge readers' expectations and deepen engagement. Ernaux's "flat" narrative, punctuated by moments of vulnerability, ensures that even sparse expressions of grief leave a lasting impression on the reader.

Though less frequent, directive acts sometimes appear when family members instruct each other on funeral tasks, or when the narrator demands something be done—like wanting to place a crucifix or certain clothing on the deceased body. These directives reflect attempts to manage or "organize" grief, asserting some agency in an uncontrollable situation. Commissive acts, rare but significant, emerge when Ernaux vows to write about her parents. Such promises to write become forms of self-therapy or closure, signifying a personal commitment to preserve memory.

Deictic elements are central to Ernaux's narrative construction in both "La Place" and "Une Femme." Personal deixis, such as the recurrent "je," firmly anchors the autobiographical perspective, while "ma mère" and "mon père" serve as stable reference points that underscore familial intimacy. For example, in "Une Femme," the narrator repeatedly uses "ma mère" when recounting moments surrounding her mother's death, such as "*Ma mère est morte le lundi 7 avril*" and "*Je suis restée prostrée devant la valise béante*" (UF, p. 21). These references provide a direct, personal lens through which events are relayed.

Temporal deixis plays a significant role in marking the chronology of key events, such as the timing of deaths, funerals, and their aftermath. Phrases like "*deux mois après*" and "*le lundi*" situate these events within a specific timeframe, offering clarity to the sequence of actions. In LP for instance, the narrator's description of her father's death ("*Mon père est mort deux mois après, jour pour jour*") establishes not only the temporal distance but also a sense of precision and finality. Similarly, in UF, the phrase "*la veille de l'inhumation*" situates the preparations for burial, linking them to the broader narrative arc of mourning and ritual.

Spatial deixis provides tangible settings for the narrative, with references such as "*en haut*," "*dans la chambre*," and "*à la morgue*" grounding the events in specific locations. These spatial markers distinguish private, intimate spaces like bedrooms and morgues from more public venues like churches and cafes. For example, in LP, the mention of "*vers la fin de l'après-midi, je me suis trouvée seule dans la chambre*" (LP, p. 16) highlights a moment of solitary reflection in a confined personal space. In "Une Femme," the description of the morgue as "*un bâtiment de béton à la lisière des champs*" (UF, p. 15) emphasizes the stark, impersonal nature of institutional spaces.

Throughout both texts, the interplay of personal, temporal, and spatial deixis creates a multilayered narrative structure. Ernaux's precise use of deixis not only organizes the events but also imbues them with an intimate immediacy, as the narrator revisits moments of loss and transition through these linguistic anchors. By focusing on specific pronouns, time markers, and spatial

references, Ernaux delineates a deeply personal yet universally resonant experience of grief and memory.

A striking stylistic motif is irony, often found in the dissonance between official or commercial routines—*inventaire des affaires*, *acheter un cercueil*—and the narrator’s emotional turmoil. For instance, an employee gestures politely as if showing off the “quality” of funeral services, and the narrator quietly perceives it as a sales display. This ironic register arises not through explicit condemnation but through subtle narrative framing. Readers experience the gulf between the businesslike approach of funeral staff and the narrator’s overwhelming sorrow, resulting in an understated but searing critique of how institutions handle death.

Repetition, particularly of the father’s or mother’s name or the phrase “*mon père*,” “*ma mère*,” underscores the personal stakes of every event. While the text rarely delves into flamboyant metaphors, it resonates with repetition of mundane details—lists of personal belongings, the mention of the father’s café, the mother’s bandaged head, the repeated bureaucratic steps of obtaining documents. This recurring emphasis functions as a reflection of how grief fixates on the same points, circling around the last memories and routines. Each repeated reference to the mother’s condition or the father’s death date accumulates emotional intensity, as the narrator re-encounters them at different emotional junctures.

One of Ernaux’s hallmark stylistic features is the consistently neutral or factual tone—even during emotionally loaded scenarios. Whether describing the father’s or mother’s final bodily states, the text remains starkly descriptive: “*Le corps a dû être enveloppé dans un sac de plastique et traîné*,” “*Une bande de tissu blanc lui enserrait la tête*,”. This dryness is not indicative of coldness; rather, it functions pragmatically to allow readers to insert their own emotional reactions. The understated style, therefore, becomes a powerful conduit for empathy. Scenes of funeral gatherings, with minimal commentary, often produce a more potent emotional effect than overtly sentimental language would.

The family gatherings (*repas d’inhumation*, visitors to the café, final clothing choices) illustrate how grief is partially managed via social and cultural frameworks—coordinating funeral rites, discussing who “deserves” to see the body, or preparing meals for mourners. Stylistically, these rituals are depicted in straightforward enumerations (“*On a fait cuire une pièce de veau*,” “*On laissait de chaque côté du lit les barres...*”). Yet such plain listing highlights the tension between personal anguish and the normative scripts of society. On a lexical level, terms like “*faire-part*,” “*costume*,” “*capitonnage*,” “*pompes funèbres*” are present in both works, emphasizing that the “management” of loss is intrinsically tied to tradition, commerce, and religious or familial expectations.

3.2. DISCUSSION

This discussion synthesizes how lexical representations of death intertwine with speech acts, deixis, and stylistic strategies that encode grief and coping mechanisms in *La Place* and *Une Femme*. We revisit the research questions to argue that Ernaux’s minimalist approach amplifies each scene’s emotional resonance and underscores the underlying tensions around mortality, social status, and family bonds.

3.2.1. Lexical Representations and Meanings of “Death”

The most immediate finding is the lexical directness with which Ernaux addresses death—“*Mon père est mort*,” “*Ma mère est morte*,” “*Je l’ai trouvée dans sa chambre*.” By refraining from figurative or euphemistic phrasing, Ernaux invites readers into an unmitigated confrontation with mortality. Paradoxically, this move intensifies emotional impact, as the neutral words appear to carry more weight. Such directness also resonates with broader cultural debates on whether “passing away” should be softened in language. Ernaux, however, chooses the plainest diction, aligning with a self-imposed aesthetic of “flat writing.”

Yet directness is not equivalent to emotional detachment. Through the constancy of personal pronouns—particularly “*je*” and “*ma mère/mon père*”—the text fosters a persistent intimacy. Each mention underscores the family tie, thus the bold statements of death ring out as confessions of a wounded child rather than mere factual reports. This phenomenon supports the claim that lexical

minimalism can contain profound emotional undercurrents, especially when it repeatedly references close kin.

In both narratives, death collides with mundane routines. The father's death scene in *La Place* emerges amidst the café operations, while the mother in *Une Femme* passes away in a clinical environment, surrounded by staff completing forms. The repeated mention of normal activities—serving drinks, buying groceries, choosing a coffin color—lends an air of dissonance. Norms of daily life appear jarringly incongruous with the finality of death. This semantic tension signals how death disrupts the stable lexical fields of routine. The abiding references to "*commerce*," "*pompes funèbres*," "*inventaire*," and "*calculette*" (the funeral worker tapping a calculator) ironically remind us that mortality is transacted within the frameworks of bureaucracy and social customs.

In line with both research questions, these lexical patterns highlight a dual representation of "death" and "grief": they are intimately personal yet codified by public rituals and commerce. Words like "*fleurs blanches*," "*crucifix*," "*chemise de nuit*," or "*liasse de billets*" become pivot points around which the narrator's sorrow interacts with cultural or economic structures.

3.2.2. *Constructing Grief Through Pragmatics and Stylistics*

Examining speech acts in these narratives reveals that even when the language appears neutral, underlying emotional or interpersonal tensions abound. Representative acts establish factual truths—dates, circumstances of illness, or funeral arrangements—while expressive acts distill shock or sadness. For instance, the line "*Je ne comprenais pas qu'elle soit encore vivante et que ma mère soit morte*" showcases expressive disbelief at an institutional environment where other patients survive but the mother dies.

Directive acts also shed light on how family members or staff instruct one another amid tragedy. For example, the mother instructs the final dressing of the father's body, or the staff direct the protagonist to sign inventory forms. Each directive indicates attempts to impose order on chaos. Commissive acts, though rare, become pivotal in capturing commitments: Ernaux's vow to "*continue writing about my mother*" underscores how writing itself is a coping strategy, transforming personal grief into textual memorialization.

The "I" voice saturates both texts, enabling the narrator to claim personal ownership of the experience. Meanwhile, the mother's or father's presence is anchored in repeated personal deixis—"ma mère," "mon père"—that evoke closeness. Temporal markers ("*ce matin*," "*deux mois après*," "*le mercredi de l'inhumation*") delineate a progression from a normal existence to post-death shock, culminating in funeral rites. These discrete time-bound references establish a chronology that intensifies the process of grieving. The father's or mother's death is never presented as a single event but as a series of steps—dying, preparing the body, funeral, aftermath—each one flagged by distinct time expressions.

Spatially, references to houses, the café, the morgue, or the cemetery ground the grief in tangible locales. Often, those places highlight the social or economic background: the father's café in a modest neighborhood, the mother's nursing home that feels alien and bureaucratic. Deictic use of "*ici*" or naming city suburbs (Lyon, Croix-Rousse, Y..., or Pontoise) underscores social divisions and personal histories. Hence, deictic language not only locates the characters physically but also discloses class, regional identity, and emotional stance.

Stylistically, Ernaux demonstrates how "flat" narration can be laden with emotional subtext. Her direct references to decomposing bodies or pragmatic details of final arrangements might seem stark, yet they yield a deeply moving effect. Coupled with repetition—reiterating "*mon père*," "*ma mère*," "*elle*," "*le corps*," "*les affaires*"—this approach ensures the act of grieving is relived multiple times throughout the text. Each mention is a renewed confrontation: that father or mother is gone forever.

Irony often emerges through abrupt collisions between official or economic language and raw sorrow. The "employee tapping on a calculator" while explaining coffin options or the mother's personal belongings being shoved into a plastic bag highlight the tension between institutional routines and familial heartbreak. The text rarely spells out its critique in an overtly moralizing tone. Rather, the

irony seeps into narrative gestures, leaving readers to sense the incongruity and empathize with Ernaux's quietly anguished perspective.

Additionally, the narratives show how ritual—funeral gatherings, shared meals, final dressing of the body—functions as a mechanism for handling loss. Speech acts in these contexts (relatives offering condolences, family members insisting the narrator stay for a meal) reflect communal efforts to soften the blow of grief. Yet Ernaux's portrayal often underscores the inadequacy or superficiality of these gestures. Some family members voice relief that “she died instead of lingering,” indicating a pragmatic acceptance of the mother's demise. Ernaux, however, cannot easily reconcile that sentiment with her own ongoing sorrow. The synergy of speech acts (often expressive or phatic) and minimal lexical style reveals a gap: the rituals exist, but they seldom quell Ernaux's deeper emotional turbulence.

Answering the second research question more directly, these pragmatic elements (speech acts, deictic references) and stylistic choices (repetition, irony, minimal commentary) converge to illustrate how “grief” is simultaneously personal and socially orchestrated. The text becomes a vantage point on the paradox of mourning: externally, families perform standard rites, while internally, the narrator wrestles with confusion, anger, regret, or longing.

Examining how “death” appears lexically across *LP* and *UF* highlights Ernaux's preference for clear, unvarnished language that intensifies the emotional blow. Words like “*morte*,” “*le corps*,” “*l'odeur*,” or “*démence*” supply a stark semantic palette; they do not shield readers from the harshness of mortality. Meanwhile, the interplay of speech acts and deictic references—especially the repetitive use of “*je*,” “*ma mère*,” “*mon père*”—configures an intimate, confessional perspective that fosters empathy. Stylistic facets of irony, understatement, and repetition work pragmatistically to reveal depth beneath the surface. Whether in the father's café or the mother's hospital room, death permeates routine spaces, forcing characters to reconcile the finality of life with ongoing daily tasks.

Ultimately, Ernaux's portrayals of “grief” and “loss management” hinge on a delicate balance between the minimalistic presentation of facts—what one might term reportorial directness—and the searing emotional undercurrents they provoke. The result is a literary space in which readers witness not only the parents' passing but also the narrator's evolving identity under the weight of bereavement. By refusing to glamorize or overly dramatize death, Ernaux elevates everyday detail into a potent commentary on class, womanhood, and the universal complexity of losing a loved one.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has undertaken a pragmatic-stylistic analysis of Annie Ernaux's *La Place* and *Une Femme*, focusing on the lexical-semantic representations of death and the pragmatic-stylistic expressions of grief. Through a detailed examination of speech acts, deictic elements, and stylistic strategies, the research elucidates how Ernaux's minimalist narrative style amplifies emotional resonance and underscores the complexities of mortality, social status, and familial bonds. The findings reveal that Ernaux's direct and unembellished language not only conveys authenticity but also intensifies the emotional impact of her narratives by presenting grief in its raw and unmediated form.

The lexical choices in both *La Place* and *Une Femme*—such as the use of verbs like *mourir* and *s'éteindre*—highlight a stark, factual approach to death, devoid of euphemisms. This directness serves a dual purpose: it authenticates the narrative by presenting mortality without artistic detachment, and it paradoxically heightens the emotional effect by stripping away any rhetorical distance. Additionally, the juxtaposition of death-related lexicon with everyday routine terms creates a semantic tension that reflects the pervasive intrusion of grief into daily life, thereby emphasizing the fragility of normalcy in the face of loss.

Speech acts play a crucial role in Ernaux's narratives, particularly the balance between representative acts that convey factual information and expressive acts that reveal deep emotional states. This interplay enhances the reader's empathy and understanding of the characters' internal struggles. Deictic elements, both temporal and spatial, anchor the narratives in specific contexts, creating a sense of immediacy and continuity in the portrayal of grief. The recurrent use of personal deixis, especially the pronoun “*je*” and references to “*ma mère*” or “*mon père*,” reinforces the intimate, autobiographical perspective, allowing readers to engage closely with the narrator's emotional journey.

Stylistically, Ernaux's use of irony and repetition further enriches the depiction of grief. Irony, evident in the incongruous placement of funeral elements within mundane settings, underscores the tension between personal sorrow and societal norms. Repetition serves to reinforce key themes and emotional beats, creating a rhythmic intensity that mirrors the cyclical nature of mourning. The minimalist "flat" writing style, characterized by its straightforward and unadorned language, fosters a powerful sense of realism and immediacy, making the portrayal of loss both stark and deeply affecting.

The theoretical implications of this study extend to the broader fields of pragmatics and stylistics, demonstrating the efficacy of a pragmatic-stylistic approach in unpacking the complex layers of autobiographical literature. By highlighting the functional and aesthetic dimensions of Ernaux's language use, the research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how linguistic and stylistic choices shape narrative meaning and emotional impact. This approach underscores the importance of considering both the pragmatic functions of language and the stylistic elements that enhance literary expression in the analysis of autobiographical texts.

However, the study is not without limitations. The focus on only two of Ernaux's works restricts the generalizability of the findings across her entire corpus. Additionally, the analysis primarily concentrates on representative and expressive speech acts, with less emphasis on directive and commissive acts due to their limited occurrence in the texts. Future research could expand the scope by including a broader range of Ernaux's works and exploring other dimensions such as gender dynamics and reader reception.

In conclusion, this study underscores the profound impact of Annie Ernaux's pragmatic and stylistic strategies in conveying themes of death and grief within her autobiographical narratives. By employing a minimalist narrative style combined with precise linguistic choices, Ernaux effectively immerses readers in the emotional landscapes of her characters, highlighting the interplay between personal loss and societal structures. The pragmatic-stylistic analysis not only enhances the appreciation of Ernaux's literary craftsmanship but also contributes to the theoretical discourse on language and emotion in literature. Through this lens, Ernaux's works emerge as compelling studies of how language and style can capture the enduring complexities of human grief and resilience.

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