The Effectiveness of Text World Theory Approach in Analyzing Literary Texts in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract: In response to the perceived pedagogical demand of modern teaching, EFL teachers are constantly looking for efficacious and student-centered methods to bring about to their classrooms. In today's educational world, pedagogical stylistics grows in influence and occupies a central position. Educationists and practitioners dedicate a big body of research to it thanks to its potency in the field of education. It is opted for as it enables learners to taste literary works in a more systematic way by allying language and literature. Pedagogical stylistics draws its raw material from the wide range of linguistic models, analytical techniques and methodologies, and applies them in analyzing texts and discourse. Stylistic analysis is thus the actual realization of theoretical linguistics as it primarily considers the linguistic patterns and the formal features of a given text. The present paper sheds light on one of the models of analyzing literary texts within the scope of pedagogical stylistics that is the Text World Theory (the TWT henceforth). The latter is a language-based approach that positions students at the core of text in order to unravel its underlying meaning. The aim of the current study is to investigate the usefulness of the TWT in the EFL classroom as an approach to intensify students' centeredness and as an effective aid to analyze the literary text.

Keywords: Pedagogical stylistics, Text world theory, Literary text, EFL student, Stylistic analysis

Introduction

Stylistics plays a key role in demonstrating how texts work. Pedagogical stylistics as a sub-branch of stylistics concerns itself with teaching stylistics in the classroom and promoting students' awareness of how language operates (Zyngier & Fialho, 2010). Pedagogical stylistics represents work field where stylistic analyses are tested. Indeed, it is in the classroom that pedagogical stylistics can check the efficacy of analyses and examine what works best with what sort of students. It is in this context that students learn how to read between the lines and how to put into operation what they have learnt to their various purposes of working with texts (Burke et al., 2012).

In their process of negotiating literary texts' meanings, students often come across a number of difficulties because these literary texts are often rife with language that is challenging for a learner to comprehend (Van, 2009). Hence, students' ability to process texts to create meaning is an ultimate goal EFL teachers seek to attain. Meaning creation is the outcome of successive processes within different frameworks where readers play an active role. Therefore, it is evident that the process of meaning creation is the result of the interplay between textual triggers and readers' pre-existing world knowledge. According to Semino's (1997), texts reflect meaning while readers build it.

Among the most influential theories of text processing adopted by stylistics is the Text World Theory (TWT). TWT is a cognitive process which represents principally the union of three elements: the author, the text and the reader. The present paper attempts to give a general

overview of the principles of TWT and to bring to light its significance to approach literary texts in the EFL classroom.

Literature review

A. Pedagogical Stylistics: An overview

Stylistics is a method of bringing together the linguistic form to the aesthetic value, by reference to the reader's inference, in a thorough and systematic way, and thus providing as much clear evidence as possible towards particular interpretations of texts (Short, 1996). Pedagogical stylistics seeks to provide some practical tools for teachers to help them to teach literary texts proficiently. According to Clark and Zyngier (2003), pedagogical stylistics is first and foremost intended to draw learners' attention to linguistic and poetic features specific to a text (be it literary, yet, even non-literary texts can be included), then encouraging them to suggest possible analysis in the most appropriate and adequate way, and considering how the interaction between students, teachers and texts crops up.

Consequently, pedagogical stylistics allows students to comprehend and interpret literary texts and then negotiate the meaning. Additionally, this approach is characterized with three distinctive traits which are student-centeredness that denotes engaging students actively in the process of analysis. What characterizes pedagogical stylistics also is being activity-based which stands for enabling students to do activities and tasks, and process-oriented which means that the emphasis is on the progression of the analysis rather than on its expected outcomes (Carter, 1996).

Clark (2007) points out that the ultimate goal of pedagogical stylistics is to raise students' awareness of language use in the texts under investigation. Moreover, it also aims at placing greater prominence on the text as an action entailing the mental processing which is a proactive factor in reading and interpretation, and casting light on how all these overlapping elements of a text; pragmatic, cognitive and linguistic; function within a given context.

B. Text World Theory

The initial underpinnings of TWT appeared with the work of Paul Werth during the 1990's; Werth introduced his brainchild by publishing a series of papers during this period. The TWT is founded upon the pillar that articulates that human beings figure out discourse by means of constructing mental representations or text worlds in their minds. The TWT is a model of human language processing which extracts these mental representations from cognitive psychology and draws its principles from cognitive linguistics (Garvins, 2007).

According to Werth, the practical aim of the theory is to account how the human acts of communication function, considering all their cognitive and psychological intricacy. The TWT does not consider only how texts are constructed, but it is centrally concerned with discourse. This means examining both the discourse itself and the context within which it takes place, its production and reception. This is on the grounds that the consideration of contextual features is a quintessential side when studying the language from a cognitive point of view.

The major focus to which TWT attributes primacy is language conceptualization. The process of language conceptualization and understanding any piece of language encountered by language users rests on what has been termed as constructing mental representations, or text-worlds. How these text-worlds are built, their conceptual configuration, and how human beings make use of them are all under the umbrella of focus of the TWT.

The conceptual constructions which are formed to enable humans to understand each other have been given a number of labels: scripts, schemata, mental models, cognitive models, frames, mental spaces and conceptual frames, and worlds. Albeit stemming from different areas of study and having quite various purposes, all these terms signify the mental representations through which language is conceptualized.

C. Text World Theory Model

When developing the TWT, Werth's fundamental aim in 1999 was to explain how readers and listeners comprehend complex utterances when receiving them. In the creation of a text world, Werth stresses on the necessary presence of three elements: author, text and reader. Werth (2007) states the following:

> The author creates only a text; he/she will have a particular text world in mind, but there is no guarantee at all that the reader will manage to produce the same text world on reading that text. We cannot say that the author's world is the definitive one, since, in fact, there is no such thing. We may say, therefore, that a text world does not come into being until each of the three elements—author, text and reader—are present. (p.155)

Werth clarifies that human beings construct text worlds differently; it is not forcefully that authors and readers perceive texts identically. Also, the author's text world does not represent the sole interpretation of the text. Put in other words, texts' interpretation is open to the various constructions of its receivers.

Constructing text worlds is an individual process; the mental picture is peculiar to every human though all linguistically competent human beings process language in the same way. This individual mental picture is tremendously influenced and shaped by the receiver's personal background knowledge and experiences (Garvins, 2007).

The TWT model divides the human communication into three distinctive layers: the discourse world, the text world and the subworld; the three tiered levels compose an architectural structure represented in Figure. 1.

To begin with, the discourse world represents the relationship between the text (the writer or the speaker) and the receiver (the listener or the reader) referred to in the TWT as participants of the discourse. The conscious existence of participants is significant due to the background cultural and personal knowledge they bring to the discourse situation. This represents the first contact between interlocutors. Simpson (2014) argues that the discourse world is the immediate conceptual plot where an author and a reader reside in. Consequently, this level provides a means of discovering how the interrelated contextual factors affect both the construction and the comprehension of a certain discourse (Garvins, 2007). Considering the context where the communicative act takes place is highly important. Studies on text processing

that were developed before the TWT have not given prime importance to context on the grounds that it is unsuited with the rigour of linguistic analysis. The TWT introduces what is termed as the principle of 'text drivenness' which provides a manageable method to scrutinize the context systematically. This principle stipulates that the text produced in the discourse world is the determinant of which areas in the mind are necessary to comprehend the discourse under study. These areas are selected from the vast repertoire of background knowledge and experiences present within the participants' minds.

The second layer is the text world where discourse participants launch their trial to build mental constructions. The process all starts when discourse participants use the common ground information to construct a text world. Text worlds include world-building elements and function advancing propositions, both are retrieved from the text. On one hand, world-building elements indicate time, location, characters and object; they are deemed as tracing a kind of static conceptual background against which certain activities may occur (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010). On the other hand, function advancing propositions work to develop and advance events within the text world; their nature differs according to the type of the text. For instance, in narrative texts there is a profusion of events which contribute to boost and impel the narrative's plot forward. In a prescriptive text, function-advancing elements may include an abundance of instructions and imperatives (Garvins, 2007).

DISCOURSE WORLD
Writer/Speaker and Reader/Listener
Background knowledge
Text

TEXT WORLD
Places

Events

SUB-WORLD
Shifts in time,
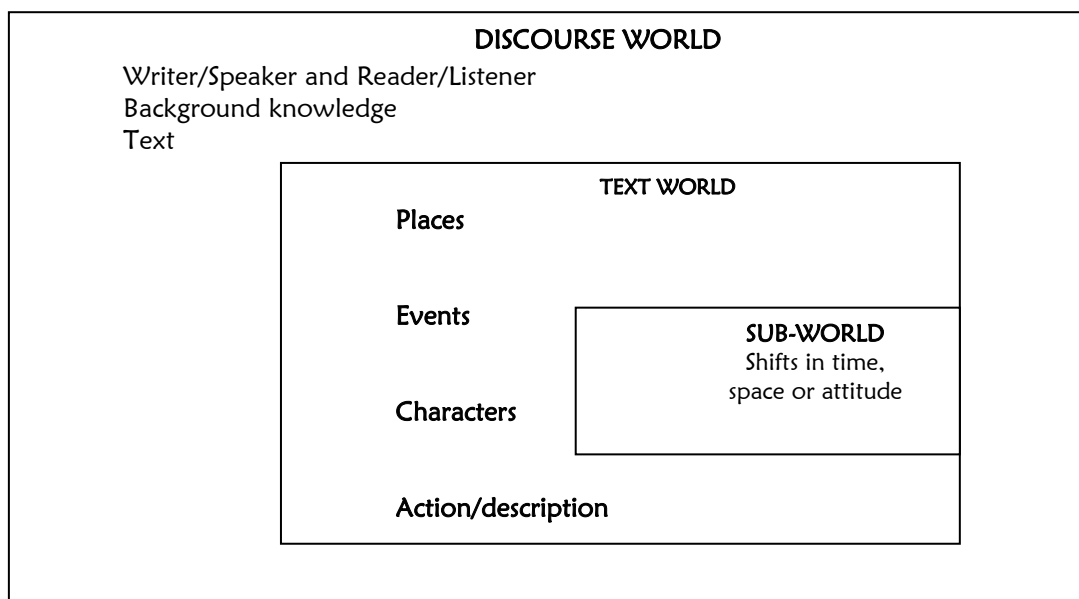space or attitude

Characters

Action/description

Figure 1. The Text World Theory Architecture (Giovanelli, 2010, p. 219)

Text worlds are built when participants transfer these physical descriptions into mental conceptualizations. According to Garvins (2007), these conceptual spaces or worlds form "the basis of our understanding of the physical space in which we exist, the passing of time, and even the societal structures and constraints which govern our behavior" (p. 36). Once a text world has been established, it starts witnessing departure from its original parameters. These departures emerge during the discourse processes and cause the generation of new worlds to be yielded in the minds of the discourse participants. They form the third and final level of the TWT that is

known as subworld or world-switches. Subworlds are set up for a bunch of reasons, yet the most prominent ones are two distinctive categories. World-switches are the result of change of the temporal or spatial parameters of a text (Garvins, 2003). Temporal and spatial features include for example flash back or forward to a different time zone, or a scene may be described in a different location. Temporal and spatial parameters' changes often happen simultaneously. In each change, a new world is constructed accordingly. Garvins continues to describe the second category of establishing subworlds that is modal worlds which arise whenever modals are employed in discourse. Modalization is often divided into three sub-categories: deontic, boulomaic and epistemic. Within the framework of the TWT, each of these categories creates a modal world. The deontic modal world appears when a degree of obligation is associated with a proposition. Similarly, boulomaic modal worlds function whenever a speaker or writer expresses a degree of desire. Finally, epistemic modal world is concerned with expressions of remoteness in discourse such like indirect speech and indirect thought. These categories are summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Text World Types and Linguistic Triggers (Giovanelli, 2010, p.219)

World Type	Trigger
Text World	Deictic movement in time or space
World Switch	
Boulomaic Modal World	Modal verb processes of desire or want
Deontic Modal World	Modal verb processes of obligation or Requirement
Epistemic Modal World	Modal verb processes of knowledge belief or hypothesis

C. The Significance of Text World Theory in the EFL Classroom

In the EFL setting, the TWT may be employed to help students negotiate the literary texts' meanings and come up with sound interpretations. It is beneficial since it helps to improve students' critical understanding in analyzing texts competently.

Werth (1995) states that the TWT is a conscious process where the maker or the sender and the receiver of a text cooperate to construct a world wherein propositions are extended and embodied to result in forming a structure. It is believed that pedagogy for teaching literature drawn from the cognitive stylistic approach of the TWT can be also useful for teachers.

The advantages of cognitive linguistics, and henceforth, cognitive stylistics, for teaching is that it puts equal weight on both the mental and the experiential sides of processing language, positioning it at the meantime in its social context. Referring to principles from cognitive linguistics in the classroom practice has proven to be paying off in the EFL/ESL context. The application of the TWT as a pedagogical tool is affirmed by a number of scholars and educationists in the field of English language teaching. The TWT can be used to teach specific grammatical constructions (Cushings, 2018). It can be also employed to develop meta-reflective skills during reading and drawing on discourse-world knowledge to support literary criticism, tackling world-shifts across literary discourse and encouraging creative writing (Giovanelli, 2016;

Giovanelli, 2010; Scott, 2016). The TWT has significant implications for literary reader-response research since it highlights the creative nature of reading and the active role of the reader (Cushing & Giovanelli, 2019). Researchers also maintain that text-world pedagogy is featured by a number of principles. It places a tremendous emphasis on the social, functional and cognitive character of language. It strives to present grammar not as merely a list of abstract rules, but as a series of consciously chosen meaning-making patterns.

Cushing & Giovanelli (2019) argue that such patterns are able to help the readers to construct imaginary worlds in their minds. These worlds are solely nurtured by means of the readers' background knowledge which they bring to a text.

Conclusion

The present paper tried to throw light on one of the most influential models of approaching and processing texts. The TWT becomes a canonical stylistic-analytical framework empowering EFL students to access the various meanings of texts by means of building mental representations or text worlds. The TWT model comprises three embedded levels being the discourse world, the text world and the sub-worlds and it helps students in the retrospective reading allowing them to interpret texts more deeply and competently. In a nutshell, this theory which is based on pedagogical stylistics serves to support EFL students to engage affectively, challenge cognitively, promote language awareness, and to reflect critically about and respond imaginatively to the world where they live.

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