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WAYS OF PROMOTING INTERPRETATIVE OUTCOMES OF THE TEXT SETTING

На основі новітніх досягнень в галузі інтерпретації тексту пропонується розгляд “місця дії” твору як важливого джерела текстуального матеріалу для занять з аналітичного читання та інтерпретації тексту. Визначені основні виміри поняття “місця дії” і описано ефективні форми роботи з ними. У розробці обстоюється переконання в тому, що поглиблений аналіз “місця дії” сприяє розвитку здатності студентів до передбачення сюжету, оптимізує сприйняття емоційного та символічного навантаження літературного тексту.

Ключові слова: місце дії, форми роботи, контекст, інтерпретація.

На основаних новітніх досягненнях в області інтерпретації тексту пропонується розгляд “місця дії” твору як важливого джерела текстуального матеріалу для занять з аналітичного читання та інтерпретації тексту. Визначені основні виміри поняття “місця дії” і описано ефективні форми роботи з ними. Утверджується, що углублений анализ “места действия” способствует развитию способности студентов к предвидению сюжета, оптимизирует восприятие эмоциональной и символической нагрузки литературного текста.

Ключевые слова: место действия, формы работы, контекст, интерпретация.

Incorporating the expertise of recent studies in philological textual interpretation, our paper researches into the ways of teaching text setting as an important source of manifold interpretative activities. The basic dimensions of setting are theoretically grounded and a set of teaching techniques provided. The work with the text setting fosters students' anticipation patterns, brings forth their attention to emotional and symbolic loading of works of fiction.

Key words: setting, techniques, context, interpretation.

Problem statement. Comprehension of a work of fiction and discovering the tiniest shades of the author's message is one of the chief objectives of the text interpretation classes. V.A. Kuharenko points out at least two large pedagogical goals of teaching philological textual interpretation: 1) to make students capable of revealing the concept of a work of art, state the objective reasons of its ideal, aesthetic, educational, emotional impact; retrieve the whole of the diverse information from the work of fiction [1, p. 4]; 2) to train reading as a specific kind of cognitive and aesthetic activity [1, p. 10]. However, the wealth of theoretical approaches to philological analysis is not accompanied with a symmetrical support of practice books and methods of teaching interpretation at the university level.

Authoritative manuals on philological textual interpretation and analytical reading basically promote a declarative way of instruction. Specifically, a number of terms can be offered to students to apply to a given text; a scheme of analysis is created in order to provide a “universal algorithm” of inquiry; an expert interpretation of some text is given to learners as a pattern of analogical analyses of other texts. Learners have to interiorize a set of techniques of “doctoring” the text but unfortunately this does not result in deeper understanding. The above-mentioned interpretative activities are detached from the actual cognition patterns and overlook such valuable resources as students' knowledge of life and available modes of understanding people, things and situations. Teachers and learners experience the lack of techniques that could take advantage of procedural knowledge [9]. Incorporating the expertise of recent studies in philological textual interpretation, our paper researches into the ways of teaching text setting as an important source of manifold interpretative activities in meaningful contexts.

The **goal** of the research is (1) to provide the theoretical background of the category of setting and prove its importance in conveying the author's message; (2) to point out ways of preparing students to interpret setting of works of fiction.

Scholars generally view text interpretation as an integrated language and literary study that leads to the inference of textual meaning as a coherent whole from all from textual structures. However, the process of interpretation begins at the very moment when the reader crosses the imaginary threshold of the fictional world – evaluates the title, ponders over an epigraph, restores the story setting. In case some elements and dimensions of settings are not taken into account, the communicative breakdown can occur. In exactly this regard, M.W. Smith and J.D. Wilhelm emphasize that in order to become a competent and effective interpreter of settings both in literature and life we need to know what it is that is important in the setting – what must be noticed, attended and interpreted [9, p. 66].

Setting is often associated with the initial part of natural and artificial narratives (such as novels, dramas, short stories). T. van Dijk states that settings in general feature descriptions of the original situation, the time and place of the various episodes, a description of the main character(s) involved in these episodes, and possibly further background information about the social or historical context of the events. In natural narratives, such Settings may be very brief or even deleted when they are assumed to be known to the hearer. As a rule, short Setting sentences are: (1) This morning when I came in the office; (2) Yesterday I was driving on Highway 10; (3) Last week Harry came to see me [2, p. 113].

Speaking in terms of macrostructures and macrorules universal for all the possible text kinds, T. Van Dijk enumerates the **informative components of a model introduction**: “With this kind of functional relation in mind, we may speculatively assume first that many discourse types exhibit some kind of *Introduction*. This global schematic (meta-) category may of course be different for the various discourse types (e.g., the Setting in a story), but in general it provides the following kinds of information: (1) background knowledge; (2) time and place; (3) major participants; (4) the actual state of affairs or problem; and (5) the topic, global plan, etc., of the text. In other words, the Introduction specifies the necessary *presuppositions* with respect to which something ‘new,’ ‘interesting,’ etc., can be said. In this respect there is some similarity with the semantic-pragmatic function of sentence topic, which is also sometimes intuitively characterized in terms of ‘starting point’ for a sentence” [2, p. 110-111].

The category of setting should be treated in close connection with the **category of context**. H. Widdowson argues that, "you do not just put two and two together: the information from text does not co-exist with but interacts with that of context [11, c. 45]. The essence of the **relevance theory** is that "... procedures for homing in on intended contextual assumptions, and so establishing relevance, are not confined to covert inference based on pre-existing knowledge. They are also externalized as interaction whereby the relevant contextual assumptions are overtly negotiated, not just identified but created in the interactive process itself" [11, p. 47].

In our study, we would enumerate different aspects of the context in order to study the potential informative loading of the setting and elaborate some practical recommendations for the courses of philological textual interpretation and analytical reading.

First and foremost, the context can be defined as the **situation of utterance**. B. Malinovsky (1923) even used to exaggerate the importance of the context to the extent that words taken out of context were considered mere "figments" devoid of sense: "A statement, spoken in real life, is never detached from the situation in which it has been uttered... Without some imperative stimulus of the moment, there can be no spoken statement. In each case, therefore, utterance and situation are bound up inextricably with each other and the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of the words. Exactly as in the reality of spoken or written languages, a word without *linguistic context* is a mere figment and stands for nothing by itself, so in the reality of a spoken living tongue, the utterance has no meaning except in the *context of situation* [7, p. 307].

This categorical statement was later debated by R.J. Firth (1957) who considered the context a linguistic phenomenon reflecting **personal aspects of the authorial speech, its milieu and effects**:

A. The relevant features of participants: persons, personalities.

(i) The verbal action of the participants.

(ii) The non-verbal action of the participants.

B. The relevant objects.

C. The effect of the verbal action" [5, p. 182].

The rise of pragmatics prompted the definition of the context as some amount of **information about preceding events shared by the author and recipients** of the utterance, the **prehistory** of the situation. J. Mey argued that "... 'context' is a notoriously hard concept to deal with ...; often it is considered by linguists to be the sum and result of what has been said up to now, the 'prehistory' of a particular utterance, so to speak, including the prehistory of the people who utter sentences [8, p. 8].

The context can as well be viewed as a **psychological construct of a hearer (a reader of the utterance)**. D. Sperber and D. Wilson defined it as a set of premises necessary for interpretation: "A context is a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world. It is these assumptions, of course, rather than the actual state of the world, that affect the interpretation of an utterance. A context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or the immediately preceding utterances: expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker, may all play a role in interpretation" [10, p.15-16].

The important conclusion H. Widdowson makes on the ground of previous inferences is that the context is literally not bound to the given text; generally it can be considered a **result of our cognition**: "Clearly there will be many features of the situation in which a language event occurs which are not relevant at all, but are simply contingent circumstances with no bearing on the nature of that event. And it is **not, of course, only features of the immediate spatio-temporal setting** that we are talking about, but **conceptual realities internalized in the minds of the participants** as well" [11, p. 45-47].

To sum up the above cited, we can state that the basic dimensions of the context of natural narratives are as follows: (1) situational (spatial-temporal); (2) personal (psychological/ behavioral); (3) social (socio-cultural); (4) cognitive.

A special emphasis should be made on the idea that every context is a part of other contexts. Metaphorically, they are nested in one another. However, the system of concentric rings is not an exhaustive symbol for their co-existence. A hypothesis was put forward that a cooperation of two or three individuals makes a unique context integrated into a set of larger ones [9].

M.W. Smith and J.D. Wilhelm suggest a students-friendly system of "nesting" contexts. The first level of the ecology of the context of human development is called the **microsystem**. This level has the most immediate and earliest influences and includes the family along with local friendship and peer groups, and neighborhood and or community institutions such as a particular school or church.

The next level of nested context is the **mesosystem** that possesses intermediate levels of influence such as larger and less personal social institutions like government, transportation, entertainment, news organizations and the like, or geographical regions larger than neighborhood. The most global level of contextual surrounding is the **macrosystem**. This is the most distant from individuals and their influence and includes aspects such as international relations or global changes or even more abstract aspects of culture [9, p. 67].

In natural narratives, setting generally is bound to the beginning of narration. In the works of fiction, establishing the setting can take time and effort, because different spots of contextual information are unevenly spread all over the text. In their recent works, contemporary scholars (G. Hillocks, etc.) give valuable tips on arranging skills and knowledge necessary for competent interpretation of setting. The "inquiry square" comprises: 1) the procedural (strategic) knowledge a writer or reader needs in order in to get what's necessary to construct meaning in this genre or with this convention (*procedural knowledge of substance*); 2) the procedural/ strategic knowledge necessary to shaping the material one has collected into a powerful iteration of this genre or convention (*procedural knowledge of form*); the declarative (nameable) conceptual tools about the form the genre or convention takes (*declarative knowledge of form*); and 4) the declarative conceptual tools that practitioners use to think about the subject of the reading and writing (*declarative knowledge of substance*) [9, p. 65].

Scholars suggest a number of techniques to improve the understanding of settings.

1. M.W. Smith and J.D. Wilhelm advocate the use of *simulated texts*, i.e. texts created by an instructor in order to show the peculiarities of the text Setting in a simplified, explicit way. Methodologically, the work with simulated texts can be carried out in the form of a “case study” accompanied with *ranking sheets* designed to visualize micro-, -meso, and macro- levels of the setting and *story maps* to classify problems and factors influencing the situation on these levels. This inventory can also be used to evaluate changes in Setting. Hands-on activities as a technique of procedural instruction are also justified. Creating illustrations, drawing setting sketches, elaborating scenery stimulate creative thinking and actualize different intelligences.

2. Sophisticated texts can as well provide a valuable source for initial activities with the setting. Rather unexpectedly, the extra-complexity of such texts levels up the class, stipulates numerous logical inferences. Being literally lost in a mass of contradictory details, students have to inscribe the text in their cognitive frames, restore the temporal and spatial location of actions, find out the characters, etc. In this way, the importance of Setting is brought in the foreground.

The excerpt below represents the opening lines of J. Joyce’s novel “Finnegan’s Wake”: “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs. Sir Tristram, violer d’amores, fr’over the short sea, had passen-core rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor to wielderfight his penisolate war: nor had topsawyer’s rocks by the stream Oconee exaggerated themselfe to Laurens County’s gorgios while they went doublin their mumper all the time: nor avoice from afire bellowsed mishe mishe to tauftauf thuartpeatricks not yet, though venissoon after, had a kidscad buttended a bland old isaac: not yet, though all’s fair in vanessy, were sosie sesthers wroth with twone nathandjoe. Rot a peck of pa’s malt had Jhem or Shen brewed by arclight and rory end to the regginbrow was to be seen ringsome on the aquaface” [5]. Whimsicaltoponyms (“riverrun”, “swerve of shore to bend of bay”, “North Armorica”, etc.) merge here with Biblicisms (“Eve and Adam’s”, “bland old isaac”, “Jhem or Shen”) and urge the learner into J. Joyce’s “doublin” (doubling?) universe.

3. Paradoxically enough, nonsense stories successfully show students that setting is first and foremost the “rule-setting”. Being purposefully devoid of the “solid” load of meaning they tend to be very accurate in imitating **conventions of genre** whatever these may be – a culinary recipe, a lyrical verse or a family saga. In fact, the coherence of these texts is established through the conventions. Therefore a case study of nonsense stories is justified for finding out the milestones of genre as an important factor of interpretation. “In former days, – that is to say, once upon a time, – there lived in the Land of Gramble-Blamble seven families ... One day all the seven fathers and the seven mothers of the seven families agreed that they would send their children out to see the world. So they called them all together, and gave them each eight shillings and some good advice, some chocolate-drops, and a small green morocco pocket-book to set down their expenses in. They then particularly entreated them not to quarrel; and all the parents sent off their children with a parting injunction ... So all the children of each family thanked their parents; and, making in all forty-nine polite bows, they went into the wide world [6]. In the case cited, the nonsense story setting carefully reconstructs the frame of a fairy-tale with its conventional time indication (“once upon a time”), number symbolism (“seven families”), repetitions and parallel constructions. Accordingly, the plot predictions activities may be carried out and the effect of defeated expectancy discussed.

4. In order to visualize spatio-temporal relations of a work of art painting, photographs and film versions can be used. Since the physical dimension is the most concrete and tangible of all, it is recommended to start familiarizing with Setting from exposing visual artifacts. Artistic landscapes and presentations of interiors are preferable. A set of leading questions provided by an instructor can carefully guide students and provide a framework for noticing salient features about the physical setting. Examples of questions are as follows: “what would you name as the setting; what do you notice; how do you know the artist wanted you to notice these aspects and objects, etc.” The methodological goal of this activity is show that the “physical interacts with the temporal and social/psychological dimensions [9, p. 80]. Visual objects also help to make a transition to the notion of foregrounding as a fundamental of philological interpretation.

5. With the view of reconstructing sensations the author imparted to the reader, a “*sensorium*” of setting may be written. Typical rubrics of the helping chart can be as follows: “is there a title that invites the reader into the described place or lived experiences; is there one place described over a limited time; are all five senses specifically used; does the reader experience the place in a totally stimulating way, just as the writer originally did, etc. The “*sensorium*” of the setting necessarily brings to light socio-cultural coloring of the milieu: “how does the writer show the social status of the people described; are symbolic possessions, gestures, actions, styles and so forth used that truly reveal status and character, etc” [9, p. 88].

Creating sensorium charts with above mentioned prompts for analysis is very fulfilling for decoding psychological writings such as “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilmore. This is a powerful, sad and stunning story of a young woman who became a victim to a “rest cure treatment” of neural diseases. The heroine of the semiautobiographical story had been closeted in a secured “ancestral hall” room for three months with no possibility of independent movement, work, and socializing. This was exactly what the leading doctrine of 1890s prescribed for patients with depressions and women suffering from a postpartum fatigue.

The setting of this novella is specifically important to analyze because it is masterfully turned into a living, breathing and moving monster that gradually drew the heroine insane. She had spent hours watching the queer pattern of the ugly yellow wallpaper and its intermittent shades deeply affected her imagination: “I’m getting really fond of the room in spite of the wall-paper. Perhaps because of the wall-paper. It dwells in my mind so! I lie here on this great immovable bed – it is nailed down, I believe – and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we’ll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion. I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of ... ” [3]. In the end of the novella, the heroine was not only obsessed with the “pointless pattern” but also with the “yellow smell” of the notorious wallpaper. The life of her family was ruined.

The story by Ch. Gilman reveals numerous issues such as personal space, individual freedom, the right of choice. Thereby the detailed analysis of the setting fosters important questions, discussions, generalizations.

Summary. Teachers and learners experience a lack of techniques that could take advantage of procedural knowledge in the courses of analytical reading and philological textual interpretation. The basic dimensions of the text setting are as follows: (1) situational; (2) personal (psychological/ behavioral); (3) social; (4) cognitive. The work with the setting draws students' attention to basic regularities of literary communication, such as (1) estrangement of form and content; (2) defeated expectancy; (3) highly conventionalized text exposition.

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