THE ROLE OF COGNITIVE FRAMES IN SHAPING NARRATIVE STRUCTURES: A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH FICTION

Husanova Dilshoda Abduganiyevna
Samarqand Davlat Chet tillar instituti magistranti.

Annotation: Stylistic processes in literature play a crucial role in shaping the aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual impact of literary texts. This article explores the significance of stylistic processes from a cognitive perspective, examining how language choices, narrative techniques, and linguistic devices contribute to the reader's understanding and interpretation of literary works. By employing cognitive theories of language and perception, we delve into the intricate ways in which stylistic elements engage readers' mental faculties, evoke imagery, and elicit emotional responses. Through examples drawn from various literary genres and periods, this article illustrates the diverse manifestations of stylistic processes and their profound influence on literary meaning and reception.

Key words: Cognitive approach, stylistic processes, literature, comprehension, interpretation, metaphor, comparison, personification, irony, reading experience.

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive frames, also known as mental schemas, are the structures in our minds that help us organize and interpret information. These frames shape how we perceive the world, understand language, and make sense of narratives. In literature, cognitive frames play a crucial role in shaping narrative structures, influencing both the style of the text and the reader's interpretation. This article delves into how cognitive frames and mental schemas influence the structure and style of narratives in contemporary English fiction, examining how authors manipulate these cognitive structures to guide reader interpretation and evoke specific emotional or intellectual responses.

Literature review: The literature review explores the cognitive approach to studying literature, focusing on the role of stylistic processes in shaping readers' comprehension and interpretation of literary texts. Previous research has highlighted the importance of attention, memory, understanding, and inference in the cognitive reading process, as well as the cognitive impact of stylistic devices such as metaphor, comparison, personification, and irony.

Methodology: This study employs a qualitative research methodology to investigate the cognitive impact of stylistic processes in literature. Data is collected through textual analysis of selected literary texts, supplemented by cognitive assessments and reader responses. The methodology integrates insights from cognitive

psychology, linguistics, and literary theory to provide a comprehensive understanding of how readers engage with stylistic elements in literature.

Findings: The findings reveal that stylistic processes play a significant role in shaping readers' cognitive experiences of literary texts. Metaphors, comparisons, and personifications enhance comprehension by providing vivid imagery and facilitating mental associations. Irony and other rhetorical devices stimulate critical thinking and inference, prompting readers to consider deeper layers of meaning beyond the literal text. Overall, stylistic processes contribute to readers' engagement, emotional resonance, and interpretation of literature.

Overview: This article offers an overview of the cognitive approach to studying literature, with a focus on the cognitive impact of stylistic processes. Drawing on insights from cognitive psychology and literary theory, the article examines how readers engage with literary texts at a cognitive level and explores the role of stylistic devices in shaping readers' comprehension and interpretation.

Participants: Participants in this study include scholars, educators, and students with an interest in literature and cognitive science. Literary texts selected for analysis serve as the primary data source, supplemented by reader responses and cognitive assessments. The study aims to elucidate the cognitive processes involved in reading and to deepen our understanding of the role of stylistic processes in literature.

Procedures: The study follows a multi-stage research process, beginning with the selection of literary texts for analysis. Textual analysis is conducted to identify stylistic processes and their cognitive impact on readers. Reader responses are collected through surveys or interviews to gauge readers' interpretations and emotional responses to the texts. Cognitive assessments may be administered to measure readers' attention, memory, and inferential reasoning skills.

Materials: The materials used in this study include a selection of literary texts representing various genres, styles, and periods. These texts serve as the primary data source for textual analysis and reader responses. Additional materials may include cognitive assessments, survey instruments, and interview protocols designed to measure readers' cognitive engagement with the texts.

Cognitive frames, or mental schemas, refer to the mental structures that help individuals organize and interpret information. These frames are formed based on past experiences, cultural norms, and societal influences, and they shape how we perceive and understand new information. In the context of narratives, cognitive frames guide how readers process and interpret the story, influencing their understanding of characters, plot developments, and thematic elements.

Cognitive frames are often linked to "narrative schemas", which are the mental blueprints that readers use to make sense of stories. These schemas include familiar narrative structures such as the "hero's journey", "tragic downfall", and "redemption

arc". When readers encounter a narrative, they activate these schemas, which helps them predict plot developments, understand character motivations, and grasp the underlying themes of the story.

In contemporary English fiction, authors often manipulate cognitive frames to create complex, layered narratives that challenge readers' expectations and provoke deeper engagement. By subverting, blending, or reinforcing cognitive frames, authors can guide readers through a narrative in a way that shapes their emotional and intellectual responses. Example 1: Subversion of cognitive frames in Ian McEwan's "Atonement"

Ian McEwan's "Atonement" is a compelling example of how an author can subvert cognitive frames to create a narrative that challenges readers' expectations and perceptions. The novel begins with what appears to be a conventional narrative frame: a coming-of-age story set in the English countryside before World War II. The reader is introduced to the Tallis family, particularly young Briony, who aspires to be a writer.

The narrative initially follows a familiar cognitive frame associated with domestic dramas—exploring themes of class, love, and family dynamics. However, as the story unfolds, McEwan begins to subvert this frame. The pivotal event in the novel—Briony's false accusation against Robbie, which leads to his imprisonment—upends the reader's expectations and shifts the narrative into a darker, more complex frame associated with themes of guilt, redemption, and the consequences of one's actions.

McEwan further complicates the narrative by introducing a metafictional twist in the final section of the novel, revealing that the story is Briony's fictionalized account of real events. This revelation forces readers to reevaluate their understanding of the narrative, questioning the reliability of the narrator and the truth of the story. By subverting cognitive frames in this way, McEwan engages readers in a more active process of interpretation, making them reconsider the nature of storytelling and the power of narrative to shape reality. Example 2: Blending of cognitive frames in Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go"

Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go" provides another example of how cognitive frames can be manipulated to create a unique narrative experience. The novel blends two seemingly disparate cognitive frames: the boarding school narrative and the dystopian science fiction genre.

At the outset, "Never Let Me Go" presents itself as a conventional coming-of-age story set in a boarding school called Hailsham, where the protagonist, Kathy H., and her friends Ruth and Tommy navigate the complexities of adolescence. This cognitive frame, familiar to readers from countless other boarding school stories, leads them to expect a narrative focused on personal growth, friendship, and the challenges of growing up.

However, Ishiguro gradually introduces elements of the dystopian science fiction genre, revealing that the students at Hailsham are actually clones, created for the purpose of donating their organs to prolong the lives of others. This blending of cognitive frames creates a dissonance that forces readers to reconcile the two genres, leading to a deeper exploration of the novel's themes of identity, humanity, and the ethics of scientific advancement.

By blending cognitive frames in this way, Ishiguro challenges readers to think beyond the confines of genre conventions and engage with the novel on multiple levels. The emotional impact of the narrative is heightened as readers come to understand the tragic fate of the characters, who, despite their seemingly normal lives, are ultimately doomed to a predetermined and inescapable destiny.

While some authors subvert or blend cognitive frames, others reinforce them to evoke specific responses from readers. By adhering closely to established cognitive frames, authors can create narratives that resonate deeply with readers' expectations and cultural understandings. Example 3: Reinforcement of cognitive frames in Colson Whitehead's "The Underground Railroad"

Colson Whitehead's "The Underground Railroad" is an example of how an author can reinforce cognitive frames to create a powerful and emotionally resonant narrative. The novel uses the cognitive frame of the "escape narrative"—a story of a character's journey to freedom—to structure the narrative. This frame is deeply embedded in American cultural consciousness, particularly in relation to the history of slavery and the African American experience.

Whitehead adheres to this frame while also introducing a fantastical element: the Underground Railroad is depicted as a literal, physical train network that transports escaped slaves to freedom. This combination of realism and fantasy reinforces the cognitive frame of the escape narrative while also adding a layer of allegory, emphasizing the harrowing journey to freedom and the enduring legacy of slavery.

By reinforcing this cognitive frame, Whitehead creates a narrative that is both familiar and innovative, evoking strong emotional responses from readers. The novel's structure, guided by the escape narrative frame, allows readers to connect with the protagonist's struggle on a deeply personal level, while also prompting them to reflect on the broader historical and social implications of the story.

Cognitive frames play a crucial role in shaping how readers interpret and engage with narratives. When readers encounter a story, they activate relevant cognitive frames, which help them make sense of the plot, characters, and themes. However, when these frames are manipulated—whether through subversion, blending, or reinforcement—readers may be prompted to reassess their initial interpretations, leading to a more dynamic and reflective reading experience. For example, in "Atonement", the subversion of cognitive frames forces readers to question the

reliability of the narrator and the truth of the story, leading to a deeper exploration of themes such as guilt, redemption, and the power of storytelling. Similarly, in "Never Let Me Go", the blending of cognitive frames creates a narrative that challenges readers' expectations, prompting them to consider the ethical implications of the story and its relevance to contemporary debates about science and humanity.

Conversely, in "The Underground Railroad", the reinforcement of cognitive frames allows readers to connect with the narrative on a visceral level, as the familiar structure of the escape narrative evokes strong emotional responses and a deep engagement with the novel's themes.

In addition to shaping interpretation, cognitive frames also influence the emotional responses that readers have to a narrative. When cognitive frames align with readers' expectations, they can create a sense of satisfaction and emotional resonance. For example, in "The Underground Railroad", the use of the escape narrative frame evokes feelings of empathy, hope, and determination as readers follow the protagonist's journey to freedom.

However, when cognitive frames are subverted or blended, they can create a sense of disorientation, tension, or surprise. In "Atonement", the subversion of the coming-of-age frame and the introduction of a metafictional twist provoke feelings of unease and uncertainty, as readers are forced to grapple with the complexities of the narrative and the implications of Briony's actions. Similarly, in "Never Let Me Go", the blending of the boarding school narrative with dystopian science fiction creates a sense of melancholy and dread, as readers come to terms with the characters' tragic fate.

Authors can manipulate cognitive frames to evoke specific emotional responses, guiding readers through the narrative in a way that enhances the overall impact of the story. By understanding the role of cognitive frames in shaping narrative structures, we can gain a deeper appreciation of the stylistic techniques used by contemporary authors to engage and move their readers.

Conclusion. The role of cognitive frames in shaping narrative structures is a critical aspect of contemporary English fiction. By manipulating cognitive frames, authors can create complex, layered narratives that challenge readers' expectations and provoke deeper engagement. Whether through subversion, blending, or reinforcement, cognitive frames guide readers' interpretation of the story, influencing their understanding of characters, plot developments, and themes.

The stylistic analysis of contemporary fiction reveals how cognitive frames are used to evoke specific emotional and intellectual responses, enhancing the overall impact of the narrative. By exploring the role of cognitive frames in literature, we can deepen our understanding of how narratives function and how they resonate with readers on both cognitive and emotional levels.

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