

Schematic Coherence in Poetry

تماسك المخططات الإدراكية في الشعر

**Asst. Lect
Ali Abdul ilah Ghani
University Of Kufa
College of Arts**

Schematic Coherence in Poetry

تماسك المخططات الإدراكية في الشعر

Asst. Lect
Ali Abdul ilah Ghani
University Of Kufa
College of Arts

المخلص

المخططات الإدراكية هي الروابط الموجودة ضمناً في الذهن التي تفتح الطريق لتجارب ومعلومات جديدة لتضاف إلى معارف سابقة. وعندما يقرأ الفرد نصاً فإنه عادة ما يستخدم كل مستويات المخططات الإدراكية وهي القابلية على فهم ما يتم إدراكه والمرور به كتجربة في هذا العالم. ويبدل قراء الشعر عادة مزيداً من التروي تفوق ما يبذلونه في الأنواع الأخرى من الخطاب ويتم الحصول على الترابط عندما يدرك القارئ الروابط ما بين المخططات الإدراكية. وهذا الترابط هو العلاقة ما بين المميزات اللغوية والنصية في النص والتوقعات الذهنية للقارئ وكذلك المعلومات المخزونة حول ما يدور في العالم. وتناقش هذه الورقة دور العلاقات المتبادلة للمخططات الإدراكية للشعر وكذلك تأثير الخلفيات المختلفة للمخططات الإدراكية والاختلافات بين القراء على تغييرها وتفسير المعنى.

Abstract:

Schemata are the underlying connections that allow new experience and information to be aligned with previous knowledge. When one reads a text he usually

uses all his levels of schemata. Schemata enable us to make sense of what is perceived and experienced in the world.

In poetry, readers usually examine carefully and deeply what they are reading in comparison with other sorts of discourse. Coherence is achieved when a reader perceives connections among schemata. It is a connection between linguistic and textual features of the text, and reader's mental expectations as well as stored knowledge of the world. This paper discusses the role of schematic correlation in poetry, and the effect of different schematic background and difference among readers on schema change and interpretation of meaning.

1. Introduction

The main aim of this study is to show that discourse approach to literature requires to be complemented by means of schema theory; it is the reader's role and shared knowledge that is activated through reading.

The notion of schemata will be used as a mental representation of pre existing knowledge gained through experience and used in reading and in interpreting literary texts. The idea is that the mind stimulated either by key linguistic items in a text or by context, activates schema and uses it to make sense of the discourse.

The major characteristic of literature is based on schema disruption, namely the change of reader's existing schema. It is the function of 'cognitive change'. The challenge of reader's existing schemata at higher processing levels is usually accompanied by deviation at the linguistic-structural level, which shows the need to incorporate formal linguistic analysis in this type of approach. This phenomenon of relating text deviation to

reader's schemata is called by (Cook, 1994: 182) as 'discourse deviation'.

This study focuses on the role of schema theory in achieving coherence in poetry. The main idea is that schematic knowledge is an essential component of successful interpretation of meaning as linguistic knowledge.

2. The Concept of Schemata

A schema (plural schemata) is a hypothetical mental structure for representing generic concepts stored in memory. It is a sort of framework, or plan, or script. Schemata are created through experience with people, objects and events in the world. When we encounter something repeatedly, such as a restaurant, we begin to generalize across our restaurant experiences to develop an abstract, generic set of expectations about what we will encounter in a restaurant (Van Dijk, 1985: 78; Cook, 1989: 73).

Bartlett (1932: 197) believes that our memory of discourse is not based on straight representation, but it is constructive. This constructive process uses information from the encountered discourse, together with knowledge from past experience related to the discourse at hand to build a mental representation. The past experience, Bartlett argues, cannot be an accumulation of successive individuated events and experience; it must be organized and made manageable. The past operates as an organized mass rather than as a group of elements each of which retains its specific character. What gives structure to the organized mass is the schema, which is proposed as a form of arrangement, but as something which remains active and developing. It is the active feature of discourse that leads to the constructive processes in memory. Ibid (249).

2.1 Views on Schemata

A strong view of schemata sees them as something influencing the reader's opinion even before the text is read. Schemata are higher-level complex (and even conventional or habitual) knowledge structures (Van Dijk, 1981: 141) which function as "ideational scaffolding" (Anderson, 1977: 372) in the organization and interpretation of experience. It can be seen as the organized background knowledge which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse. Schemata, whether fixed or flexible, are a way to account for the interpretation and production of discourse (Brown and Yule, 1983: 250).

Tannen (1979) ;(as cited in Brown and Yule 1983: 24) uses the description "structure of expectation" adopted from Ross (1975) to characterize the effect of schemata on our thinking. In addition there is evidence in Tannen's study of (1980) that such expectations affect what type of discourse is produced. Accordingly, there are different aspects that can affect the type of schemata produced. Different cultural backgrounds can result in different schemata for the description of witnessed events (Anderson, 1977). People's personal histories and interests (and sex probably) contribute to the creation of higher-level schemata which cause them to see the text or the event in certain ways.

From the above definitions, it can be concluded that schema is the prior knowledge gained through experiences stored in one's mind. It is an essential component in the process of reading and comprehension.

2.2 Activation of Schemata

Because texts are never completely explicit, the reader must rely on pre existing schemata to provide

plausible interpretations. Readers make use of their schema when they can relate what they already know about a topic to the facts and ideas appearing in a text. Schema theorists have acknowledged that comprehension occurs when a reader is able to use prior knowledge and experience to interpret an author's message (Bransford, 1979; Novak and Crown, 1984).

In this respect, Cook (1994: 69) states that "the mind stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by the context activates a knowledge schema". Cook implies that it is not necessarily a matter of conscious processes, but rather with automatic cognitive responses given to external stimuli. This view clarifies that schemata are activated in one of two ways:

New information from the outside world can be cognitively received and related to already known information stored in memory through retrieval or remembering. In this case, new concepts are assimilated into existing schemata which can be altered or expanded.

New information can be represented by new mental structures. In this case, in absence of already existing schemata, new knowledge builds up new schemata.

3. Discourse Approach to Literature

The general proposal of schema theory concerning discourse processing is well-known: a schema is a mental representation of a typical instance, and various types of schema have been proposed. The relationship of schema to discourse would be as follows: enough detail is given in discourse to trigger the selection of schema in the receiver's mind. This schema is then used in top-down processing. Other than that details are given only where there is a divergence from the schema. Unmentioned details - default elements - can if necessary be retrieved

from the share of knowledge, from the share of schema (Cook, 1995: 146).

Cook (1994:83) shows that the basic claim of schema theory is that human understanding, and text understanding, can be represented as hierarchy of levels of schemata in which failure to understand one level can be corrected by referring to the level above. This relationship shows that plans or scripts at the highest level are realized through the plans or scripts lower down. A theory of coherence may be extrapolated from this, whereby failure of correction at lower level may be referred to at a higher one.

3.1 Schema Refreshment and the Function of Cognitive Change in Literature.

According to Cook(1994:183) in literature there is an attempt to make a connection between formal stylistic, and linguistic analysis on one hand and schema theory on the other, whose result is to bring about coherence in interpretation of the text. Cook develops the idea that literature does have specific function that differentiates it from other discourse types. He calls it the function of cognitive change. It is the function of certain texts to challenge or alter existing schemata in the reader, and literary texts typically carry out this function .

Schema theory is supposed to be the essential function in the establishment of coherence. It is a dynamic interaction between linguistic and text -structural form on the one hand, and schematic representations of the world on the other, whose overall result is to bring about a change in the schemata of the reader. This dynamic interaction is called discourse deviation. This shows the importance of non linguistic knowledge in adopting meaning.

In this respect, Cook (1994) shows that discourse deviation is based on the incorporation of schema theory to a literary discourse. If it is the primary function of a particular category of discourse to affect the refreshment (change) of schemata, it seems likely that this change will take place not at one level, but in correlation with them. Where there is deviation at one or both of the linguistic and text-structural levels, and this deviation interacts with reader's existing schemata to cause schema refreshment, there exists the phenomenon of discourse deviation. The study puts an emphasis on this process as a literary device used by poets to achieve coherence and multiplication of meaning. For example, in one of William Blake's poems entitled "The Tyger" the deviation relies for more on lexical combinations and grammatically ambiguous structures. The form of the poem which, in interaction with reader's schemata, will create differing interpretation

3.2 The Process of Discourse Deviation.

Cook elaborates his own theory of schemata with discourse deviation to improve the analytical and interpretive potential of Shank and Abelson's (1975) model applied to literary texts. Cook draws to make a relationship between stylistic, linguistic analysis and schema theory, since both deal with expectations as the norm : "schemata are expectations, and the essence of schema theory is that discourse proceeds, and achieves coherence, by successfully locating the unexpected within a framework of expectations" (Cook, 1994 : 130). It is the highest level of meaning that can be accounted for by combining schema theory with linguistic analysis.

The concept of schema refreshment and cognitive change are intuitively felt to be necessary categories in the understanding of literary discourse. Cook develops the idea

of hierarchy of schemata by establishing three different types corresponding to the processing levels involved : 'language schemata' which operate at the lexico-grammatical level, 'text schemata' which are concerned with rhetorical structures of the text and 'world schemata' which involve knowledge of the world and of discourse contextual factors.

The process of discourse deviation involves a dynamic interaction between linguistic features and reader's mental representation or schemata. The three previous levels are present in the mind of any reader. A readers' expectation about a given text whether it is normal or deviant derives from a comparison of its structure and its language with the readers' pre-existing text schemata and language schemata. This interaction creates illusion of a world in the discourse which can be compared with the world schemata of the reader (Cook, 1994:201).

From the correlation above it can be concluded that deviation or schema refreshment is a relative concept, since it depends on personal and socio – historical variables such as reader differences, time and cultural variation and different genre conventions. For example, what may be deviant and schema refreshing for one reader might not be so for another. Reader's rejection for a kind of a poem might be regarded as a kind of deviation even though there is no such deviation in the text itself. A text which at one time was schema refreshing might not be so any longer.

4. Coherence in Poetry

Literary texts in general and in poetry in particular are highly coherent pieces of language-use where many levels of content and form unit realizing a complex tissue

of interrelations and interdependencies spanning the whole of the text to achieve overall unity. Poems have many aspects of internal coherence such as phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic patterning of reiteration. The extra poetic structure brought about by meter, rhyme, refrains, alliteration, assonance, consonance, regular stanza forms and other poetic devices are sources of coherence.

Semantic coherence is of great importance in poetry. To a certain degree, this coherence is achieved when the successive verse lines are easily related to one another. Thus, the appropriate integration between the poem's verses lines is realized when each new line has a clear semantic relation to the prior material and the present new information. It is a coherent connection between the underlying macrostructure features of the poem (Caroll, 1985: 220).

How this coherence is attained is the job of the poet himself and the reader's approach, as a result of the mode of interaction with the prevailing linguistic, social, cultural, historical, aesthetic, and pragmatic paradigms.

In this respect, schema theory may contribute to the analysis and characterization of coherence in poetry. Schemata can be used as a literary device to trigger reader's perception and to reach an appropriate and coherent interpretation.

4.1 Schemata in Poetry

Schemata are interconnected in our minds to represent how we perceive, act, react and consider a text. It is a cognitive model used to recognize different styles of human expression. In the analysis of any poem, we find a correlation of more than one schema at the same time.

The grammar of poetry in any poem shows readers prediction of a variety of conventional lineation and stanza

divisions, parallelism, the syntax position of adjective phrase, and the propositional phrase. In addition to the role of lexis and metaphor, they represent text schemata, whether lexis is ordinary words or rather poetic and ambiguous. Metaphor in poems does not only constitute meaning, but reflects schema as which are construction of reality using the assimilation and association of sensorimotor processes to anticipate actions in the world (Lackoff and Johnson). Intertextuality is very important in any poem, because it is related to intertextual meaning. They are intertextual illusions which are used as triggers in creating the schemata of the text of the poem (Cook, 1994: 171).

Schema in poetry reflects the awareness of reader variations and their effect in interpretation. Perception is necessary in approaching schematic aspects in any poem. To make a concrete perception, we make use of existing represented objectivities, previous experiences of the same or similar experiences.

5. Application of schemata in analyzing one of Blake's poems entitled "' London"

In this study the notion of schemata will be used as a mental representation of pre existing knowledge gained through experience and used in reading and interpreting literary texts. Coherence is created when the reader perceives connections between schemata. The task is to show how coherence and meaning are constructed in the interaction between text and the interpreter's background knowledge.

Following Cook's (1994) model, these steps should be taken into account: a) we establish the structures in the different schemata and trace the relationships between

them that account for the coherence; b) postulating a scriptlike schemata (\$S) those are schemata whose contents whether in terms of objects, people, or events are specific under each \$S we name the suggested words or phrases from the text referring to defaults, and the relationship they have to the main concept. These are all headers in the text or predicted from the word's world schemata. Also in each scriptlike schemata (\$S) there is a dominance of qualities and attributes (IS or HAS) and actions (events). As Cook says "it is often shared attributes and actions which create a metaphoric link from one schemata to another"; c) these schemata associate with each other in various ways through common plans and themes; d) the process of discourse deviation which involves a dynamic interaction between linguistic features and reader's mental representation on schemata is very important and essential in interpretation. The task is to show how schema refreshment is affected through language and text structure. It relates linguistic and text structural features to particular changes in schemata.

Those components will be used as steps in tackling and analyzing this poem . Correlation will be made between high level processing of reader's interpretive schemata and formal linguistic features of the text and the result is directing, refreshing and changing reader's schemata in different approaches.

5.1 A Reader's Suggested Schemata

The Text: "London"

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man , 5
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning church appals; 10
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most thro' midnight street I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear, 15
And blights with plaques the marriage hearse.
(Diyanni, 2002:758).

Let us suppose that this poem triggers scriptlike schemata (\$S) representing: London, chimney sweeper, church, soldier, person and harlot. These may be the most prominent schemata. Under each of these schemata there are a number of qualities and attributes (IS) and actions which create a metaphoric link from one schema to another.

1- \$S London
 Props:
 Locations Charter'd street, Charter'd Thames
 has marks of weakness, woe, cry, appals
 Is like prison (see \$S prison)
 Result fear, ban, oppression

2- \$S CHIMNEY SWEEPER
 Props: has cry of fear, sweeper
 Is dark like blackening church
 Events: work, cry.

3- \$S CHURCH

Event blackening church, appals
Is dark, weak like \$S London
Is like harlot (see \$S harlot)
Result blight, sigh, weakness

4- \$S SOLDIER

Has hapless sigh
Is fear and cry see \$S chimney sweeper
Is curse like harlot
Result: death, blood down palace

5- \$S PRISON

Has ban, mind forg'd, manacles
Result: more restrain

6- \$S HARLOT

Props: has curse, cry
Is fear and cry like \$S chimney sweeper
Is like soldier (see \$S soldier)
Events: Midnight Street, walking with fear
Result: new illegal born, blight, plaque

5.2 Plans and Themes

Possible interactions between linguistic features and schematic representation can be achieved by a reference to common plans and themes. In this poem Blake uses his talent and vision for art and poetry, therefore he creates many images. For example, 'blackening church' is a religious image used to represent the theme of spiritual and moral oppression. Repetitions are used not only as a literary device, but also as one of his themes. Words such as every, mark, and cry contribute in approaching different schemata and show the theme of conflict and suffering.

Association between schemata of chimney sweeper, soldier and the prostitute can be noticed through a

common theme of loss of rights and freedom. Also the poem might be a protest against industrialization and corruption of society. The writer is able to free himself from this hypocrisy and be rectified by self realization. It is a new connection that can be achieved by changing the theme from passive contemplation to plans of resistance because nature will not obey this futile arrogance of rulers. Thus, the themes employed in this poem are:

Themes: 0 religious corruption; 0 child labour; 0 spiritual oppression.

The plans for manipulating these themes are:

Plans: II seize resistance; II preserve vitality; II attain nature superiority

5.3 Schema Connections

The greatest development of 'London' reflects the connection between different schemata and gives the poem the most powerful closing line. The notion of experience is proceeded and moves from the 'chartered street' of the first stanza to the 'midnight street' of the last stanza. The choice of words, dialect, metaphorical language, tone, the form of the poem, symbolism, in addition to allusion are literary devices used by Blake to make coherence and connection between schemata.

Also Blake uses rhetorical devices of metaphors, imagery, and ambiguous words to create meaning and express emotional significance. Thus, there is a connection between blackening church and blood on palace walls. Both are dealt with section of symbolism. Also there is a great gap between the denotation of a word and its understood connotations. This is clear in the image of blackening church and soldier blood church. This connection of these two schemata shows oppressive

system. This image is literary, but figuratively shows death.

The chimney sweeper, the soldier and prostitute are connected in the sense that all of them lost their freedom and they are victims of the system. Take this picture in the following lines:

In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

In these two lines, Blake shows his preoccupation with repression, abuse power. He repeats the determiner 'every' and alliterates the 'M' in mind-forged manacles to hammer home his anger at the crushing of individuality. His invention of the compound adjective mind-forged along with manacles conjures up an image of people minds and souls locked up in chains. Even the pronoun 'I' figure does not appear till very end of the verse, as if he has been overwhelmed by the sounds of human torment. These rhetorical skills and images contribute in bringing together those schemata (Notes and analysis of Blake's poems).

The content of the poem evokes a number of cross references. The image of the soldier creates image of war. 'Hapless soldier' whose sigh in connection like blood running down palace walls.

The sound effects such as alliteration, and parallelism in line four marks of weakness, mark of woe..., and assonance for example 'flow' and 'woe', may contribute in creating connections between schemata.

5.4 Correlation between Texts, Language and World Schemata

A look at the text of 'London' shows that it is a short lyric form with one speaker who expresses his experience and his personal vision. It is written in four stanzas. The poem has a simple rhyme scheme of ABAB, CDCD, EFEF. 'London' is a song like lyrical work. It is a good example of songs of experience. Portraying qualities such as dramatic passion and anger, complex symbols and appealing to experience. The poem maintains the overtones of dramatic monologue in the manner in which the persona speaks aloud, reflecting on the people and places that he sees (Blake's London Essays).

London shares a heavy, slow, measured rhythm. Each line has a pattern of alternating stresses between the average eight syllables to a line. This fluctuating rhythmic pattern adds intensity to the last word at the end of each line. The rhythm of the poem, added to the alternate rhyme, brings out the sense of monotony and restriction as he walks through the 'chartered street'(ibid).

The language of the poem is mainly negative, because Blake uses dark, gloomy adjectives such as 'blackening', this suggests dark, evil and corrupt scene. Also the poet uses dark imagery to create a dark tone of the poem. Blake's use of ambiguous and double meaning words makes this poem both complex and interesting. For examples the word 'appal' may mean that the church is horrified, but it is too helpless and weak to remove the evil. Also appals may imply that corruption has crept over the church as a black soot has crept over the church building. The subtle shift from 'mark' used as a verb in line 3 to a noun in line 4 binds the narrator to those he sees – showing he is not a disinterested observer but one of the

sufferers himself. In stanza three the verse begins as if in mid-sentence: it is a tone of anger and condemnation. This gloomy scene is made clear by the use of capitals; 'London' begins with the verb set in the present tense. This implies that the poem concerns timeless realities unbounded by references to any particular incident.

This formal and linguistic knowledge is interacted with reader's experience and familiarity of the topic under analysis, resulting in different meanings and approaches. Textual schemata of other texts show that many rhetorical structures are used: in the first line Blake uses oxymoron because he says that he wandered through each chartered street which is self contradictory. If something is chartered and restricted it would be impossible to wander, because wandering suggest freedom. By using this oxymoron it would be clear that Blake is trying to free himself from this restriction. Another technique is juxtaposition, when Blake puts marriage and hears together suggesting marriage than death. The effect of placing a symbol of death next to marriage – a happy event is saying that happiest things in life are tarnished by disease, such as the plague, causing death.

It is seen that this mental schemata and perception in relation to the different techniques which are used in the poem, will contribute in widening the context of the poem to more than one age and deviate to change the schemata of the reader.

5.5 Discourse Deviation and Schema Change

A look at the poem shows that there are many features of deviation. It is shown that repeated words such as marks, chartered, and every are used to stress certain points in the poem and affect the mental schemata of the reader. Some words also are used to create contrast such

as soft, calm words like flow, woe, sigh and cry which when put against others with harsher connotations, like plague, blackening and ban create a gulf between the two worlds represented in the poem. Also there are words used in a negative and deviant sense, take 'to wander' this word is deviant from the usual use of it. It is used to represent a dismal picture of London. It is the ambiguous and double meaning words which make this deviation, and complexity of meaning.

Even though it is a lyric form, it maintains the dramatic monologue, but it is deviant in the sense that the poem ends in a pessimistic way which is opposite to the conventional technique of lyrics .In addition , Blake was an orthodox in dissenting tradition (William Blake. London).

It is useful from this text to adopt new situations and to experiment with new possibilities. Illusion of the text and language will be interacted with reader's schematic illusion, resulting in change and refreshment of the schemata. By widening the context of the poem, a multiple approaches of the poem which are deviant to Blake's view and vision can be arrived at. Now London is a beautiful and fair city in the world. This gloomy picture of Blake in accordance to our schematic perception can be changed to more opposite picture. For instance, children are always used for hope and vitality, Blake uses many words which remind the reader of children, for example, 'infants', new born as well as metaphor 'chimney sweeper'. Also the church can be considered as a sacred place for worship and as guidance for humanity towards spiritual salvation. It is opposite to Blake's attitude towards religion. Also it is noticed that the word 'every' can create a romantic sense of solidarity with all humanity and hope that this solidarity may help to overcome the suffering.

It is concluded that 'London' is a poem in which the formal and linguistic features are interacted with the schematic prediction of the reader causing schema change and discourse deviation.

6. Conclusion:

In view of what has been discussed earlier, the following are the main findings:

The concept of Schemata is used as an active strategy necessary for facilitating the recall of knowledge, and activating text processing as well as coherence.

Discourse approach to literature needs to give prominence to the role of reader's schematic knowledge in removing ambiguity and predicting meaning.

Writers of literature especially poets use Schemata as a literary device to trigger reader's expectations and experience in the issues and topics discussed.

Connection between schemata is necessary to achieve coherence. In literary texts different types of schemata are used (text, language and world schemata) in order to make a correlation between writer's implicit meaning and reader's schematic representation.

Schema change (cognitive change) is the primary function of literature. It shows an interaction between linguistic and text structural form on one hand, and schematic representation of the world on the other whose overall result is to bring about a change of reader's Schemata in upholding different thematic possibilities

Bibliography:

Anderson R. c. (1977). The Notion of Schemata and the Educational Enterprise in ceds. R. C. Anderson R. J. Spiro and W. E. Montaque.

- Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Branford, J. (1979). *Human Cognition: Learning understanding and Remembering*. Belmont, CA: words worth Publishing Company.
- Brown, G. and G. Yule (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
- Cook, G. (1989). *Discourse*. Oxford: oxford University press.
- (1994). *Discourse and Literature: The interplay of form and Mind*. Oxford: oxford University press.
- Diyanni, Robert. (2002). *Literature: Reading fiction, poetry, and drama*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ross, R. N. (1975). Ellipsis and the structure of Expectation. *San Jose state occasional papers in Linguistics* 1: 183-91.
- Schank, R. C. and R. Abelson. (1977). *Scripts. Plans, Goals and understanding*. Hills dale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Tannen. D. (1979). What's in a frame? Surface evidence for understanding expectations in (ed.) R. O. Freed le (1974).
- Van Dijk. T. A. (1981). *Studies in the pragmatics of Discourse*. The Hague: Mouton
- (1985). *Hand book of Discourse Analysis (Vol.2)*. London: Academic press.
- mhtml/ : file : Documents and settings/rt/Desktop/ William Blake's London 21st cen... (Retrieved in 4/25/2009)
- mhtml: file: Documents and settings/rt/ Desktop/ Blake's London Essays – Analysis o...(accessed in 4/27/2009)
- http : // www. Planet papers . Com. [A:/notes and analysis of William Blake's poem. Htm].(accessed in 29/11/2009)