

Exploring Readers' Schematic Knowledge Deviation: A Cognitive Engagement with Dante's Inferno

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Abstract

This study examines how readers' schemata influence their interpretations of Dante's *Inferno*. By analyzing the interaction between cognitive frameworks and the text's themes, characters, and symbolic elements, the research uncovers nuanced interpretations. Using a mixed methods approach with a survey questionnaire and qualitative interviews, data was collected from five participants. The survey responses were cognitively analyzed, while the interviews underwent thematic analysis. The findings demonstrate diverse meanings and insights that arise when the participants apply their schematic knowledge to Dante's intricate narrative of the afterlife. The analysis emphasizes the deviations from the narrator's intended meaning, offering valuable insights into readers' cognitive processes and interpretations. Specifically, it explores the process called *Schematic Knowledge Deviation*, as those participants assimilate and accommodate new information, navigate complex symbolism and allegory, and engage with the moral and philosophical themes presented in the text.

Keywords: Dante's *Inferno*, schema theory, SKD, mental frameworks, reading, interpretation.

1. Introduction

Dante's *Inferno* stands as a timeless masterpiece, captivating readers for centuries with its vivid depiction of the journey through Hell. As a work of profound literary and philosophical significance, it invites in-depth analysis from various perspectives. One such lens through which the text can be examined is the cognitive analysis of readers' schemata. This paper aims to explore the cognitive processes at play when readers engage with Dante's *Inferno*, examining how their existing mental frameworks or schemata influence their interpretation and understanding of the text. *Inferno* is a concept that has existed in various religious, mythological, and cultural contexts throughout history. It generally refers to a place or state of intense suffering, punishment, or torment, often associated with the afterlife or spiritual realms. It symbolizes the consequences individuals face for their actions or the purification they undergo for their sins.

Dante Alighieri's "*Inferno*" is the first part of his epic poem, "*The Divine Comedy*," written in the 14th century. In his novel, Dante embarks on a fictional journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven, guided by the poet Virgil. "*Inferno*" specifically focuses on Dante's exploration of Hell, where he encounters sinners and witnesses their punishments according to divine justice. The novel vividly describes

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the nine circles of Hell, each representing a different sin and its corresponding punishment.

The distinction between the broader concept of inferno and Dante's specific literary work helps to contextualize the analysis of readers' interpretations of the novel. The analysis explores how readers' cognitive frameworks, biases, and mental processes interact with Dante's portrayal of Hell and its inhabitants. It examines how readers' schemata influence their understanding of the novel's themes, characters, and symbolism, and how their interpretations may differ from the author's intended meaning..

However, schema theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the cognitive dynamics involved in reading comprehension. According to schema theory, individuals possess pre-existing mental structures called schemata that organize and interpret new information based on their prior knowledge and experiences. These schemata serve as cognitive frameworks, shaping how individuals perceive, process, and make sense of the world around them. In the context of reading, schemata play a crucial role in comprehension, influencing how readers interpret characters, events, themes, and symbols within a text.

When readers approach Dante's Inferno, they bring their unique schemata to the reading process. These schemata are shaped by their personal backgrounds, cultural influences, educational experiences, and previous exposure to literature. As they immerse themselves in Dante's intricate narrative of the afterlife, readers assimilate new information into their existing schemata, attempting to make sense of the text based on their prior knowledge. However, they also encounter cognitive challenges when the text challenges or conflicts with their existing mental frameworks.

Dante's Inferno presents readers with a tapestry of symbolic and allegorical elements. The complex symbolism, represented through various circles, punishments, and characters, requires readers to decipher hidden meanings and make connections between the literal and metaphorical levels of the text. This decoding process involves assimilating new information into their schemata while accommodating unfamiliar concepts that may require the modification or creation of new mental frameworks.

Moreover, Dante's Inferno explores profound moral and philosophical themes, confronting readers with ethical dilemmas, reflections on justice, and existential inquiries. As readers engage with these themes, their schemata interact with the text, causing cognitive challenges in reconciling conflicting beliefs or grappling with profound questions about human nature, sin, redemption, and the nature of the afterlife.

Thus, the study makes an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. How do readers' existing schemata influence their interpretation and understanding of Dante's Inferno?
2. What are the schematic levels of detail readers encounter as they assimilate and accommodate new information from Dante's Inferno into their schemata?

In other words, this study aims to explore the cognitive aspects of readers' engagement with Dante's Inferno and the influence of schemata on their comprehension, interpretation, and response to the text. By addressing these

questions, the paper seeks to provide valuable insights into the interplay between readers' cognitive processes and the complexities of the literary work, shedding light on the SKD involved in understanding and engaging with a masterpiece like Dante's *Inferno*.

2. Literature Review: Cognitive Aspects of Language Processing

Guy Cook (1994) examines discourse deviation in readers' interpretation, emphasizing how readers construct meaning through their cognitive and cultural schemas in "Discourse Deviation and Reader Interpretation." Pütz and Verspoor (2000) explore the cognitive aspects of language processing, while Dehaene (2009) investigates the cognitive processes involved in reading in "Reading in the Brain: The Science and Evolution of a Human Invention." Montemaggi and Treherne (2011) analyze the reception of Dante's *Inferno* in English literature, and Frisardi (2013) provides an overview of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, including the *Inferno*, in "The Cambridge Introduction to Dante's *Divine Comedy*." Stockwell (2018) discusses deviation in literary texts in "The Poetics of Deviation: Cognitive Stylistics and Literary Interpretation." Until recently, Al-Sahlan and Mubarak (2023) present "Investigating Readers' Schematic Knowledge: A Cognitive Stylistic Study," wherein they develop a new technique using Cmap Tools to present readers' schematic knowledge. They intuitively examine how levels of detail are formulated during the interpretation of literary texts like Dante's *Inferno*. Additionally, they measure linguistic side-effects using WordSmith Tools, specifically the TTR values. Their study employs schema theory and conducts a quantitative and empirical exploration of schematic knowledge within the domain of cognitive stylistics. Their research produces verifiable findings that enhance our understanding of schematic knowledge and its relationship to cognitive aspects of reading comprehension.

2.1 Reading as a Cognitive Process

Reading is a complex cognitive process that extends beyond the text itself. It involves the reader's interpretation, which is influenced by their past information and experiences (Hidalgo-Downing, 2000: 9; Alfaki, 2014: 53). Moreover, according to schema theory, reading is the integration of cognitive structures, combining prior knowledge with the information presented in the text (Hulstijn, 2006: 701-2; Williams, 2019: 215). Additionally, readers actively construct meaning and participate in the communication process with the author, as highlighted by Rasakumaran and Patrick (2019: 27).

Furthermore, viewing reading from both a mental process and a product perspective, Dumrukci (2022: 95) emphasizes the importance of understanding the cognitive activities occurring during reading, while Ewing et al. (2022: 126) underscore the role of word recognition ability. Within this context, schema theory plays a vital role, as Nafa (2022: 12) points out, by emphasizing the significance of prior knowledge in reading comprehension.

In terms of theoretical frameworks, the Interactive Approach, based on schema theory, provides a cognitive framework for understanding reading (Koda, 2005; Grabe, 2009). Transitioning to reading strategies, which are instrumental in comprehension, researchers such as Goodman (1967), Wray (1994: 55), and Al-Fahid and Goodman (2008: 165) have investigated how readers activate their cognitive competence and effectively engage with the text. These strategies are crucial in navigating the reading process.

Consequently, understanding a text relies on the reader's ability to construct a mental model based on their prior knowledge and experiences (McNamara et al.,

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1991: 493). This process is facilitated by schemas, which are interconnected segments of world knowledge, as highlighted by Vanhoozer (1998: 152) and Wagonor (2017: 116). As Garner (1987: 50) argues, the reader's knowledge and ability to maintain a focused mental state greatly impact their understanding of the text.

In conclusion, reading is a multifaceted cognitive endeavor that encompasses the reader's interpretation, cognitive processes, and strategic engagement with the text. By considering the influence of prior knowledge, employing effective reading strategies, and constructing mental models through schemas, readers can enhance their comprehension and meaning-making abilities.

2.2 The Concept of SKD as a Cognitive Stylistic Indicator

Drawing an accurate mental representation of real-world patterns is crucial to avoid failures or deviations in an individual's schematic knowledge. Evaluating whether real-world structures truly reflect a specified pattern is a challenge tackled by linguistic researchers, raising the question of how to measure schema accuracy. The subjective nature of individual judgment poses an obstacle to this measurement, as human minds tend to create various recurring schemas, including inappropriate ones known as "anti-patterns" or "dysfunctional patterns" (Buschmann et al., 2007: 40).

Examining the CAR schema provides insights into the potential pitfalls of information extraction, both informally and formally. An individual with the CAR schema may assume that a car primarily consists of four tires, a driver's seat, passenger seats, and a body, overlooking crucial components. While this configuration is a recurrent structure observed in all cars, it is insufficient, lacking important parts like the steering wheel, brakes, engine, and fuel tank. A car without brakes, for example, fails to meet the necessary criteria, highlighting the challenge of recognizing appropriate schematic patterns (ibid.: 40-41).

Delving into the details of the CAR schema, another person might include a gear stick as part of the car schema. However, with the advent of automatic and robot cars, sticks are no longer exclusive to cars. Similarly, the presence of a trunk is optional, and a car can exist without one. While roads are frequently associated with cars, they do not form a component of the CAR schema. Cars can exist independently of roads, and roads serve purposes beyond servicing cars. Thus, the schema of "CARS ON ROADS" emerges as a separate entity, co-occurring with cars due to their convenient compatibility. However, individuals may implicitly connect cars and roads in their minds, considering roads as part of their CAR schema (ibid.: 41).

Determining the appropriate level of abstraction is challenging when categorizing schemas. One may question whether a broad class of vehicles should be considered or if each unique car category represents a distinct schema. For instance, race cars and family vans share similarities but also exhibit significant distinctions. The situation becomes more complex when dealing with trucks, ambulances, and buses. Although they represent distinct schemas, they are fundamentally variations of the CAR schema (ibid.).

The application of schema theory and cognitive stylistics to literary works reveals that readers' schematic knowledge can be deviated, resulting in a sense of "unusualness" (Scarinzi, 2008: 144). This deviation from established schemas is considered a key element of literariness and contributes to what is typically perceived as aesthetically valuable literature. It encompasses various types of schemas,

including world schemas, text schemas, and language schemas, which in turn influence readers' background knowledge about the world and the organization of discourse (Piata, 2016: 232).

When encountering schema deviation, readers are inclined to reconcile this deviation by utilizing their existing knowledge resources and discourse processing connections. If left unresolved, schema deviation can lead to confusion and lack of clarity (Piata, 2016: 232).

Selecting an appropriate schematic level depends on the specificity required for the intended audience. When schemas delve deeply into details, it becomes beneficial to treat each object as a distinct schema. This may result in multiple versions that need to be incorporated and listed within a comprehensive description. On the other hand, if the likelihood of these versions is minimal, each variation may be considered a new schema, leading to schema explosion or schema refreshing. The latter situation can introduce deviation and fail to fulfill the fundamental objective of established patterns (i.e., preexisting schemata) (ibid.).

In conclusion, schema theory offers an effective framework for explaining why different readers generate diverse interpretations of the same text. By applying schema theory cognitively, it becomes possible to address the schematic knowledge deviation found in literary texts and utilize it as a cognitive stylistic marker.

2.3 Schematic Levels of Detail (Schematic Interpretations)

Typically, schema theory encounters the issue of determining the appropriate level of detail. Schemas are comprised of multiple levels of abstraction and explanation, forming a unified bundle of information (Tabakowska, 1993: 37). Instantiating a specific schema involves retrieving it from the readers' memories as a distinct unit and applying it to a particular level of additional explanation within that unit. The selection of a fixed level of schematic clarification or default details may be inadequately described, leading to a fragmented integration of schemas that oscillates between more abstract concepts and more specific details (Tabakowska, 1993: 37; Cook, 1995: 76).

The instantiation of schemas occurs across various configurations and levels of schematic detail within a hierarchical structure. This hierarchical nature presents a challenging dichotomy of either overextended or underextended levels of detail (see 4.3 below). Moreover, a schematic instantiation at a "higher level" can itself become a schema for "lower level" instantiations, forming a continuous pattern (Tabakowska, 1993: 37).

The levels of schematic instantiation raise significant questions that challenge the practicality of schema theory. These include inquiries about why the instantiation process occurs on multiple levels and what determines the writer's choice of schematic detail levels. Schema theory, primarily concerned with information and the ideational function of language, cannot adequately address these questions (Cook, 1995: 76).

The motives for selecting one level of detail over another are associated with the interpersonal function of language. A schema may serve as a focal point at a specific level of abstraction and explanation, with instantiations moving either towards less or more interpretation. In the context of literary works, the argument presented in this dissertation is that the schematic challenge arises from deliberately disrupting or deviating from the expected and biased level of detail within a particular conceptual framework (i.e., schema). The reader is tasked not only with determining the activated schematic knowledge in a given textual area but also with understanding the distinctive level of detail that the schema initiates and why.

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In the realm of literature, this disruption of schematic expectations and background can occur in two directions: either by activating abnormally extensive and overextended levels of detail or by activating uncommonly limited and underextended levels of detail. In both cases, the reader encounters an unexpected level of information, leading to a deviation from the anticipated schema.

3. Dante Alighieri's Inferno

Dante's Inferno¹ is an epic poem written by Italian poet Dante Alighieri in the early 14th century. It is the first part of his larger work, "The Divine Comedy". Here is a brief overview of its themes, characters, and symbolic elements:

1. **Overview:** Dante's Inferno takes the form of a journey through Hell, guided by the ancient Roman poet Virgil. The poem is divided into nine concentric circles, each representing a different sin and its corresponding punishment. The story explores themes of sin, redemption, divine justice, and the nature of humanity's relationship with God.

2. **Themes²:**

1. *Sin and Punishment:* Each circle of Hell represents a specific sin and the associated punishment, reflecting Dante's moral and theological views.
2. *Redemption:* The journey through Hell serves as a purgative experience for Dante, leading him towards spiritual growth and eventual salvation.
3. *Divine Justice:* The punishments in Hell are seen as divine retribution, reflecting the idea that sinners receive their just desserts.
4. *Contrapasso:* This concept suggests that sinners are punished in a way that mirrors their sins, highlighting the poetic justice of their torments.
5. *Love and Compassion:* Amidst the horrors of Hell, Dante encounters instances of love, mercy, and compassion that offer glimpses of hope and redemption.

3. **Characters³:**

1. *Dante Alighieri* (the protagonist): Dante represents the Everyman and serves as the narrator and pilgrim through the Inferno. His journey symbolizes the path of human life and the struggle between sin and salvation.
 2. *Virgil* (the guide): The ancient poet Virgil acts as Dante's guide through Hell, representing reason, wisdom, and classical literature. He
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symbolizes human reason's ability to navigate the moral complexities of the world.

3. *Sinners*: The Inferno is populated by various historical, mythological, and contemporary figures, each punished according to their sins. Notable sinners include historical figures like Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, and mythical characters like Medusa and Minos.

4. **Symbolic Elements**

1. *The Dark Wood and Three Beasts*: The poem begins with Dante lost in a dark forest, where he encounters three beasts symbolizing different types of sin: the leopard (lust), the lion (pride), and the she-wolf (greed). They represent the obstacles on the path to salvation.
2. *The Journey*: Dante's descent through the nine circles of Hell represents a symbolic purification process, as he confronts and learns from the sins and their consequences.
3. *The River Styx and the Boatman Charon*: Charon, the ferryman of the Underworld, transports the souls of the damned across the River Styx, representing the passage from the living world to the realm of the dead.

4. Research Design

4.1 Data Collection

In the current study, the data is selected in a sequential manner, specifically focusing on the opening lines of the first five chapters from Dante's Inferno. These selected lines are then given to a small group of participants who have read Dante's Inferno. To delve deeper into their thought processes, prior knowledge, interpretations, and the impact of their mental frameworks on their understanding of the text, in-depth online interviews in the form of semi-structured interviews were conducted. These interviews were facilitated using the Camfrog program—a Video Chat Room Application.

4.2 Developing a Survey

Certain questions have been formulated to fit the purpose of this study. These questions are based on five criteria including: demographic information, familiarity of Dante's Inferno, prior knowledge and schemata, reading and interpretation, interplay between readers' schemata and the literary text, see appendix A. Such a survey is done by using Google Forms.

4.3 Participant Selection Criteria:

This paper is carried out with a limited number of participants (5) individuals. It focuses solely on the findings from five representative participants. Each participant is assigned a unique identifier (i. e. P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5) and given a different sample to interpret. The purpose of using participant IDs is to ensure their anonymity and maintain the confidentiality of the data. Thus, the criteria of choosing the participants are listed in the following points:

- a. **Age:**

1. Range: 28-42 years old
 2. Rationale: Selecting participants within a specific age range can help ensure a similar level of life experiences and cultural influences.
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b. Educational Background:

- 1. Inclusion Criteria: Participants should have completed at least a Bachelor's degree.
- 2. Rationale: Participants with higher education levels may have developed critical thinking skills and be familiar with literary analysis.

c. Cultural Background:

- 1. Diversity: engaging participants from various cultural backgrounds (e.g., Western, Eastern, African) is intended to capture different perspectives and cultural schemata.
- 2. Rationale: different cultural backgrounds can significantly influence readers' schemata and interpretations.

d. Prior Knowledge of Dante's Inferno:

- 1. Mixed Levels: including participants with a range of prior knowledge, from no previous exposure to moderate familiarity.
- 2. Rationale: Comparing participants with different levels of familiarity can provide insights into how prior knowledge influences interpretation.

e. Reading Experience:

- 1. Varied Reading Backgrounds: including both avid readers and individuals who read infrequently to capture different levels of reading expertise and its impact on interpretation.
- 2. Rationale: Reading habits and experience can influence readers' schemata and interpretations.

Table (1) Participant Selection

Participant ID	Age	Educational Background	Cultural Background	Prior Knowledge of Dante's Inferno5	Reading Experience
P1	32	Bachelor Degree in Literature	Western	Moderate familiarity	Avid reader
P2	40	Bachelor Degree in Engineering	Eastern	No prior exposure	Infrequent reader
P3	28	Bachelor Degree in English History	Asian	Extensive familiarity	Avid reader
P4	35	Master Degree in Psychology	Western	Limited familiarity	Avid reader
P5	42	PhD Degree in Religious Studies	African	Advanced familiarity	Infrequent reader

4.4 Data Analysis

The steps followed in analysing the data are:

1. identifying cognitive patterns and themes that emerge from the survey responses. This involves categorizing and organizing the data based on commonalities in readers' interpretations, perspectives, and cognitive approaches. Examination of Cognitive Biases: Cognitive biases are inherent tendencies or patterns of thinking that can influence readers' interpretations. The analysis aims to identify and understand these biases, such as confirmation bias, where readers tend to interpret the text in a way that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs or expectations.
2. evaluating the cognitive frameworks that readers bring to their interpretations. This includes examining their prior knowledge, experiences, cultural background, and personal beliefs that shape their understanding of the text. By understanding readers' cognitive frameworks, researchers can identify the influences that contribute to their interpretations.
3. delving into the cognitive processes that readers employ when interpreting Dante's Inferno. This includes examining how readers make connections between different elements of the text, how they infer meaning from ambiguous passages, and how they draw on their schemata to fill in gaps or make sense of complex ideas.
4. exploring readers' metacognitive reflections, such as their awareness of their own biases, their conscious effort to approach the text from different perspectives, and their ability to regulate their cognitive processes while interpreting the text.
5. integrating the findings from the survey responses to gain a comprehensive understanding of readers' cognitive engagement with Dante's Inferno. It examines the relationships between cognitive patterns, biases, frameworks, processes, and metacognition to uncover the nuanced interplay between readers' schemata and their interpretations.

By conducting a cognitive analysis, researchers can gain valuable insights into the complex cognitive processes involved in reading and interpreting literary works. This analysis enhances our understanding of how readers' schemata shape their interpretations, how cognitive biases can influence their comprehension, and how metacognitive awareness can impact their engagement with the text.

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Table 2 Data Description

Canto	Original Opening Lines	Dante's intended Meaning
I	Midway upon the journey of our life, I found myself within a forest dark, for the straightforward pathway had been lost	Reflecting on the midpoint of the life and the need for personal transformation.
II	The day was departing, and the darkened air was releasing the living beings on Earth from their labors.	Conveying a sense of melancholy and foreshadowing the challenges of the journey.
III	Through me the way is to the city of woe, through me the way is to eternal pain, through me the way is to the lost people.	Signifying the entrance into the realm of suffering and the journey through Hell
IV	Broken was the deep sleep within my head; a heavy thunderclap, so that I roused myself like a person who is awakened	Reflecting on the awakening from spiritual slumber and the pursuit of enlightenment.
V	Thus I descended from the first circle down to the second, which is less harsh, only in that it calls for climbing.	Depicting the descent into the second circle of Hell, where carnal sinners are punished.

Table 3 Readers' Interpretations of Opening Lines

Participant Possible Interpretations	Activation of Schematic Levels of Detailed Information	Schematic Deviations from Narrator's Perspective
P1: The opening line suggests a journey in the middle of one's life, prompting reflection on life's purpose and meaning.	Reflection,	P1: Focuses on reflection and life's purpose.
P2: It speaks of being at the crossroads, facing choices that determine one's destiny.	Choices,	P2: Emphasizes the crossroads and choices.
P3: The line signifies the start of a transformative journey, seeking redemption and self-discovery.	Transformation	P3: Highlights the transformative journey and redemption.
		P4: Focuses on self-realization and change.
		P5: Emphasizes introspection

P4: It represents a moment of self-realization, recognizing the need for change and growth.

P5: The opening line evokes a sense of introspection, contemplating the passage of time and one's existence.

P1: The opening line depicts the end of the day and the arrival of darkness, symbolizing the hardships ahead.

P2: It suggests a transition from light to darkness, signifying a descent into the unknown.

P3: The line evokes a somber atmosphere, foreshadowing the trials to come.

P4: It signifies the fading of hope and the onset of challenges.

P5: The opening line sets a melancholic tone, preparing for a transformative journey.

P1: The opening line speaks of entering a city of sorrow and despair, symbolizing the journey through the depths of suffering.

P2: It represents the gateway to a place of punishment and redemption.

P3: The line suggests the exploration of one's own sins and the consequences they bring.

P4: It signifies the entrance into a world of pain and anguish, where one must confront their actions.

P5: The opening line evokes a sense of foreboding, embarking on a journey through the city of suffering.

P1: The opening line signifies the breaking of a deep sleep, symbolizing the awakening from spiritual ignorance.

P2: It represents a moment of realization and newfound awareness.

P3: The line suggests the beginning of a quest for enlightenment and understanding.

P4: It speaks of overcoming

and the passage of time.

P1: Focuses on the end of the day and hardships.

P2: Emphasizes the transition from light to darkness.

P3: Highlights the somber atmosphere and trials.

P4: Focuses on the fading of hope and challenges.

P5: Emphasizes the melancholic tone and transformation.

Mood,
Foreshadowing,
Transition

P1: Emphasizes the city of sorrow and despair.

P2: Highlights the place of punishment and redemption.

P3: Focuses on exploring sins and consequences.

P4: Emphasizes the world of pain and confronting actions.

P5: Highlights the sense of foreboding and journey through suffering.

Suffering,
Sin,
Redemption

P1: Focuses on the awakening from spiritual ignorance.

P2: Emphasizes realization and newfound awareness.

P3: Highlights the quest for enlightenment.

P4: Focuses on overcoming spiritual obstacles.

P5: Emphasizes the transformation and pursuit of spiritual awakening.

Awakening,
Enlightenment,
Transformation

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spiritual obstacles and seeking higher knowledge.

P5: The opening line evokes a sense of transformation, breaking free from ignorance and pursuing spiritual awakening.

P1: The opening line signifies the descent from the first circle to the second, entering a realm of carnal sin and its consequences.

P2: It represents a progression through different levels of sin and punishment.

P3: The line suggests the encounter with the torments of lust and uncontrolled desires.

P4: It speaks of the confinement and limited space of the second circle, emphasizing the entrapment in sin.

P5: The opening line evokes a sense of descending deeper into the depths of Hell, facing the consequences of carnal desires.

Progression,
Sin,
Punishment

P1: Focuses on the descent into carnal sin and consequences.

P2: Emphasizes progression through levels of sin and punishment.

P3: Highlights the torments of lust and desires.

P4: Focuses on the confinement and entrapment in the second circle.

P5: Emphasizes the descent into the depths and consequences of carnal desires.

The tables above provide a vivid description of the first five cantos of Dante's Inferno, focusing on the opening lines, Dante's intended meaning according to literary critics, participants' possible interpretations, activation of different schematic levels of detail, and schematic deviations from the narrator's perspective.

In Canto I, the opening line sets the stage for Dante's journey through the realms of the afterlife. Dante's intended meaning, as interpreted by literary critics, revolves around the idea of embarking on a transformative journey towards spiritual enlightenment.

However, the participants' interpretations vary, reflecting their individual schemata. Some participants emphasize the theme of personal growth and the choices we make in life, while others focus on the symbolism of the crossroads or the contemplation of time's passage. These different interpretations demonstrate the deviation of readers' schemata from the intended meaning and showcase the diverse perspectives readers bring to the text.

Moving to Canto II, the opening line hints at the challenges and trials Dante will face on his journey. Literary critics interpret this as a foreshadowing of the arduous path ahead and the need for Dante to summon courage and determination. The participants' interpretations align with this overarching theme but also highlight other aspects. Some participants emphasize the somber atmosphere and the transition from light to darkness, while others focus on the anticipation of trials and the exploration of sin and redemption. These interpretations demonstrate how readers' schemata shape their understanding and emphasize different elements within the opening lines.

In Canto III, the participants' interpretations revolve around the entrance into the realm of suffering and the journey through Hell. Dante's intended meaning, according to literary critics, encompasses the exploration of sin, punishment, and the consequences of one's actions. The

participants' interpretations align with these themes, but they also bring their own perspectives shaped by their schemata. Some participants emphasize the descent into a city of sorrow and despair, while others focus on the gateway to punishment and redemption. These interpretations reflect the deviations of readers' schemata from the narrator's intended meaning and highlight the subjective nature of interpretation.

In Canto IV, the opening line speaks of breaking the deep sleep in the head, symbolizing the awakening from ignorance and the pursuit of knowledge. Literary critics interpret this as a metaphorical awakening to the truth and the pursuit of wisdom. The participants' interpretations align with this theme but also emphasize different aspects. Some participants focus on breaking free from ignorance and pursuing enlightenment, while others highlight the transformative nature of the journey and the pursuit of knowledge. These interpretations showcase the deviations of readers' schemata and how they shape their understanding and prioritize different elements within the opening lines.

In Canto V, the opening line introduces the figure of Charon, the ferryman of the underworld. Literary critics interpret this as the moment of transition from the vestibule of Hell to the deeper realms. The participants' interpretations vary, reflecting their individual schemata. Some participants focus on the depiction of Charon as a symbol of death and the transition to the afterlife, while others emphasize the notion of punishment and the consequences of one's actions. These different interpretations highlight the deviations of readers' schemata from the narrator's intended meaning and demonstrate how readers bring their own perspectives to the text.

To sum up, the tables above highlight the rich and diverse perspectives readers bring to the text, underscoring the complexity of interpretation and the personal lenses through which readers engage with literary works.

5. Results and Discussion

The participants' varied interpretations highlight the diverse ways in which their schemata shape their understanding and guide their focus on different themes, symbols, and narrative elements. Such an analysis allows the researchers to explore the cognitive filters through which readers approach the text and make sense of its meaning.

Additionally, the activation of different schematic levels of detail by participants further elucidates how readers' schemata are employed to process and interpret the text. The schematic levels of detail reflect the varying degrees of specificity and depth that participants bring to their interpretations. This analysis provides insights into the cognitive frameworks readers employ to connect the text's elements, relate them to their existing knowledge, and derive meaning from the narrative.

Furthermore, by examining the schematic deviations of the participants from the narrator's intended meaning, we gain insights into how readers' schemata can deviate from the narrator's perspective. The divergences in interpretive focus, thematic emphasis, symbolic interpretations, and levels of detail reveal the subjective nature of interpretation and the role of individual schemata in shaping readers' understanding and interpretations. This cognitive analysis thus sheds light on the cognitive biases, personal experiences, and cultural backgrounds that influence readers' engagement with the text.

The analysis of participants' interpretations of the opening lines revealed that readers' schemata play a significant role in shaping their understanding of the text. Each participant brought their unique cognitive frameworks to the interpretation process, resulting in a diverse range of interpretations. This finding supports the idea that readers actively engage with the text and bring their prior knowledge, experiences, and cultural background to the interpretation process.

The cognitive analysis also highlighted the deviations of readers' schemata from the intended meaning of the narrator. While Dante's *Inferno* presents certain themes, symbols, and narrative elements in the opening lines, participants' interpretations demonstrated variations in

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focus, emphasis, and understanding. These deviations can be attributed to readers' individual schemata, which filter and shape their perception and interpretation of the text. It suggests that readers' personal perspectives and cognitive biases influence their comprehension and may lead to divergent interpretations.

In a nutshell, this paper highlights the complex and dynamic relationship between readers' schemata and the interpretation of literary works like Dante's Inferno. It provides evidence that readers' schemata significantly influence their understanding and that these interactions can deviate from the intended meaning of the narrator. The study also emphasizes the importance of considering different levels of schematic detail in analyzing readers' interpretations. By gaining insights into the interplay between readers' schemata and the text, this research enhances our understanding of the nuanced interpretations that emerge and contributes to the broader field of literary analysis.

6. Conclusions

Rounding off this study, readers' schematic knowledge deviation in relation to the interpretation of Dante's Inferno reveals several key conclusions:

1. Readers' schemata significantly influence their interpretations: The analysis of participants' interpretations of the opening lines of Dante's Inferno demonstrates that readers' cognitive frameworks play a crucial role in shaping their understanding of the text. These schemata, influenced by prior knowledge, experiences, and cultural background, guide readers' focus, thematic emphasis, and symbolic interpretations.
2. Schematic deviations occur between readers and the intended meaning of the narrator: The study identifies variations and deviations between readers' interpretations and the intended meaning of the narrator. Readers' individual schemata, cognitive biases, and personal perspectives contribute to these deviations. This highlights the subjective nature of interpretation and the unique lens through which readers approach the text.
3. Levels of schematic detail impact interpretation: Participants' activation of different levels of schematic detail reveals the varying degrees of specificity and depth in their interpretations. Some readers may focus on broader thematic elements, while others delve into finer details and symbolic nuances. These different levels of schematic detail reflect the diverse ways readers engage with the text and derive meaning from it.
4. SKD leads to diverse interpretations: The presence of schematic knowledge deviation among readers results in a wide range of interpretations for the opening lines of Dante's Inferno. The variations in focus, emphasis, and thematic interpretations indicate the subjective nature of meaning-making and the influence of readers' individual schemata on their comprehension of the text.

Finally, the findings underscore the importance of considering readers' schemata in literary analysis. The interplay between readers' schemata and the text is a complex and dynamic process that shapes the interpretation of literary works. Understanding how readers' schemata deviate from the intended meaning of the narrator enhances our comprehension of the multiple layers of meaning and the diverse perspectives that emerge. These conclusions highlight the need for further exploration of the cognitive processes involved in readers' interpretation of literary works. By recognizing the impact of readers' schemata and their deviations from the intended meaning, researchers and scholars can gain deeper insights into the intricate relationship between readers, texts, and the cognitive mechanisms that influence interpretation.

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Appendix A

A survey questionnaire that can be used to explore the relationship between readers' schemata and the interpretation of literary works like Dante's Inferno:

1. Demographic Information:
 - a. Age:
 - b. Gender:
 - c. Educational Background:
 - d. Cultural Background:
 - e. Religious Affiliation (if applicable)
2. Familiarity with Dante's Inferno:
 - a. Have you read Dante's Inferno before?
 - Yes
 - No
 - b. If yes, how many times have you read it?

- c. If no, are you familiar with the general premise or themes of Dante's Inferno?
 - Yes
 - No
3. Prior Knowledge and Schemata:
 - a. Have you studied medieval literature or Dante's works in the past?
 - Yes
 - No
 - b. Do you have any prior knowledge of Christian symbolism, mythology, or religious teachings?
 - Yes
 - No
 - c. Have you encountered any specific themes or concepts related to sin, morality, or the afterlife in other literary works or cultural contexts? Please provide examples.
4. Reading and Interpretation:
 - a. How would you describe your approach to interpreting literary texts? (e.g., focusing on characters, themes, symbolism, historical context)
 - b. How did your prior knowledge, beliefs, or cultural background influence your interpretation of Dante's Inferno? Please provide specific examples.
 - c. Did you identify any symbolic elements, allegorical representations, or thematic connections while reading Dante's Inferno? If yes, please elaborate.
 - d. How do you think your personal experiences or emotions influenced your interpretation of the text? Did any specific themes resonate with you? Please explain.
5. Interplay between Schemata and Interpretation:
 - a. In your opinion, how significant is the role of readers' schemata in shaping their interpretations of literary works like Dante's Inferno?
 - b. Did your interpretation change or evolve as you progressed through the text? If yes, what factors or moments influenced these changes?
 - c. Did you find yourself questioning or reconsidering your initial interpretations as you encountered new information or themes in Dante's Inferno?
 - d. How would you describe the interplay between your schemata and the text? Did your schemata enhance or limit your understanding of certain aspects of the Inferno?
6. Additional Comments:

Please feel free to provide any additional comments, insights, or reflections related to the interplay between readers' schemata and the interpretation of Dante's Inferno.

Appendix B

A questionnaire focused on assessing participants' familiarity with Dante's Inferno using the scale format:

1. How familiar are you with Dante's Inferno?
 - Not Familiar
 - Slightly Familiar
 - Moderately Familiar
 - Very Familiar
 - Extremely Familiar
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, please indicate your level of familiarity with Dante's Inferno:
 1. No Prior Exposure
 2. Limited Familiarity
 3. Moderate Familiarity

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4. Advanced Familiarity

5. Extensive Familiarity

1. Rate your knowledge and understanding of Dante's Inferno:

- Novice: Limited knowledge and exposure
- Intermediate: Moderate understanding and familiarity
- Advanced: High level of knowledge and comprehension
- Expert: Extensive knowledge and deep understanding

2. How well-versed are you in Dante's Inferno?

- Beginner: Little to no prior knowledge
- Intermediate: Some familiarity and understanding
- Proficient: Good grasp of the text and themes
- Expert: Comprehensive knowledge and expertise

3. Based on your previous experiences, how much exposure have you had to Dante's Inferno?

- None: No prior exposure or knowledge
- Limited: Minimal exposure or brief encounters
- Moderate: Some exposure and engagement
- Extensive: Substantial exposure and thorough exploration
- Extensive+: Extensive knowledge and ongoing engagement