

THE IMPACT OF AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS ON TEACHING NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE IN FILM VERSIONS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Consistency and dynamics in applying audio-visual aids while studying and sizing up the narrative and cinematic points of view greatly contribute to the identification of certain stylistic patterns which refer to the narrative perspective in both the English novels and their film translations. The aim of the given article is to analyze particular structural and stylistic elements proper to the novellistic point of view and its adaptation. Also, the comparative and contrastive analyses of the literary and audio-visual language particularities are made, and elements of analytical exercises, as well as stages of pedagogical activities which can enhance the process of determining types of narratological perspective at the English classes are suggested.

Keywords: *narrator, narratoin, focalizer, focalization, narratee, audio-visual aids, point of view.*

IMPACTUL MIJLOACELOR AUDIOVIZUALE ASUPRA PREDĂRII PERSPECTIVEI NARATIVE ÎN VERSIUNI CINEMATOGRAFICE ALE LITERATURII ENGLEZE

Aplicarea consistentă și dinamică a reperelor audiovizuale în studierea și evaluarea punctului de vedere narativ și cinematografic contribuie în mare măsură la identificarea modelelor stilistice legate de perspectiva literară. În prezentul articol sunt analizate unele elemente stilistico-structurale ale punctului de vedere în romanele engleze și în versiunile lor cinematografice. De asemenea, se efectuează analiza comparativă și contrastivă a limbajului literar și audiovizual, fiind propuse elemente de exerciții și etape de activități didactice care pot contribui la depistarea tipurilor de perspectivă literară în cadrul lecțiilor de limbă engleză.

Cuvinte-cheie: *narator, narațiune, focalizator, focalizare, cititor, mijloace audiovizuale, punct de vedere.*

One of the major questions commonly posed by the contemporary foreign language specialists and educators is the possibility of employing audio-visual aids varying in complexity and sophistication in the process of teaching a foreign tongue. Another issue immediately emerging as related to the previous question is the acceptability of suchlike didactic support and the pitfalls one can come across while implementing it. Alongside with the two issues to be tackled, the students' response to the employment of these forms of teaching, as well as the one of the immediate accessibility and availability of the audio-visuals themselves offered in the English language classroom appears to be a challenge. To resolve these problems, the contemporary audio-visuals should be viewed primarily as an additional, yet indispensable and at times central elements to the process of developing language skills and habits of the educational subjects.

Obviously, the relevance of the modern equipment and educators' ability in resorting to these connect most often to the essence of the class, its thematic component and ideological core, wherein the topic of the lesson, the basic source to work with, as well as the media through which the key information can be transmitted and hence perceived with the varying degrees of efficiency on the part of the learner are considered in the first place. The outcome of the class which makes large use of the audio-visual aids, as well as the overall aesthetic impression exerted on the subject, i.e. the viewer or the listener, can also be put to doubt unless the supporting aids are chosen appropriately.

The focus of the present research is the adequate and appropriate selection, analysis and representation of the audio-visual aids in teaching contemporary American literature to college students, the ultimate goal being the study and a more profound analysis of a narrow field pertaining to textual analysis, namely the narratological concept of the perspective, variously termed the point of view. The comparison of the original source, i.e. the literary work of varying volume, with its verbal adaptation often presenting itself in the form of the script, and the ultimate cinematic version are the aids employed in the process, becoming at times the essential tools for the text scrutiny. The audio-visual method and aids themselves are defined by J.Richards in "Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics" as the realm of radio, film and television, while the method itself prioritizes speaking and listening as contrasted to reading and grammar translation method. The method makes ample use of film strips and dialogues to represent the language in

use [6, p.51]. Yet it is obvious that the elements of the audio-visual aids can be successfully employed when it comes to theoretical approaches and application in practice of the textual construct analysis referred to the comparison and contrast of the novels to their subsequent film translations

An alternative way of identifying the literary narrative without delving into its realistic or imaginary nature in general is suggested by T.Eagleton in his treatise entitled "Literary Theory: An Introduction", where the author claims that the employment of the language means and the manner in which this task is fulfilled determine the value of a work of art, with no specific reference to whether the events conveyed are fictitious or real [3, p.2]. Obviously, it is the matter of representing and viewing, not checking the authenticity of the event that defines and influences its perception by the reader and the narratee. Therefore, the issue of the narrative perspective must be considered as a subject matter which can be successfully employed in teaching literary interpretation to the English language students employing the audio-visual and verbal media of transmitting the narrative data.

The most generic definition given to the notion of the point of view is suggested by M. Abrams in his "Glossary of Literary Terms". The notion itself is treated as the general manner or the 'mode' in which the account is made, the method of presenting it to the reader and hence the narratee, with no specification of either the mode or the channel of conveying the episodes or plotting them. The ample character of this particular identification of the viewpoint consists in involving both the story-teller and the receiver of the message actively involved in the process of transmitting information, be it realistic or fictional [1, p.232].

Another way of conceptualizing the essence of the viewpoint can be analyzed, namely the one offered in the "Introduction to Narratology" by the literary critic and specialist M. Fludernik, who claims that the readers themselves recreate the imagery of the novel proper, and it is mainly the readers' priority to reconstruct the greatest part of the narrative, which naturally has quite a lot to offer, yet can hardly atone for the narratee's viewpoint and perspective, aside from the general outline of the 'other' world, i.e. that of the events represented in the novel. This in the broadest of terms would involve the setting in time, space, generic outlines and the background of the characters' external indicators, as well as other details. Film and drama, as the scientist insists, offer a sharper perspective when compared to the novel narrative itself [4, p.40].

It is therefore both the task of the educator and the decision of the students in the EFL classroom to either accept or reject the film medium as a method of recreating the novel characters and events, yet the undeniable merits of a more concrete and pictorial presentation of the literary constructs in the audio-visual and verbal media must be taken into consideration. The exercises involved in the pre- and post-reading, as well as the viewing processes must unavoidably involve the comparison of the perspective evaluation and modes or techniques of character, setting and venue presentation in literature and its film translation.

However, the choice of the analytical focus plays a greater part in determining the objectives of the classroom activity since the educator acquires the possibility, scheduled time and assessment techniques for achieving the purpose of teaching narrative perspective via the film and novel medium accordingly. Therefore, limitations are inevitably imposed upon the textual constructs that become targets of the semiotic and stylistic textual study. Characters are the primary step of the novel cognition since students are most likely to either relate their experience to the former or perform an ample analysis of the modes and methods of characterization provided the script offers a number of characterizing techniques which would either be congruent with the initial source, i.e. the novel, or different from it in a number of aspects.

P.Huhn in his scientific study "The Living Handbook of Narratology" suggests that the narrative perspective as rendered in any kind of a story, though basically literature, which is accounted for in his case, is the priority of the characters taken as either separate or collective narratorial entities, and it is the character that offers the perspective and gives the account of the facts and the events. However, the visual arts are also of relevance when the viewpoint comes to the fore, defined as 'perspective', which, as has been found out, is applicable to literary works as well. The point of view is, by P.Huhn, a more commonly employed terminological unit which conforms to the Anglo-Saxon tradition of literary analysis and is hence taught at the intermediary and advanced stages of literary analysis and critical scrutiny. The analysis of the point of view, or perspective, by P.Huhn, culminates in the assertion that in drama and probably visual arts, such as motion pictures, as can be presupposed initially, the perspective is multiple. There are basically as many perspective orientations as there are characters, and thus the focus is definitely multiple [5, p.1-2].

The example which would be particularly helpful in demonstrating the salient divergences emerging once the total focus of the film narrative is opposed to the focalization proper of the novel taken as both a construct and a text decoding instrument would be the fragment from K. Stockett's appraised 2009 novel "The Help", which is exposed by the fixed focalizer and hence represented through the unchanging lens of the main character Aibileen Clark. The latter represents one of the children in the family of Leefolt's she is raising at the moment the novel narrative takes place. The focalization technique, as the students may identify it after the information about the focalization types has been made explicit either empirically or traditionally, is obviously fixed and internal, hence the 'eye' does not change and is persistently dominant, as well as stylistically colored:

"Babies like fat. Like to bury they face up in you armpit and go to sleep. They like big fat legs too. That I know...By the time she a year old, Mae Mobley following me around everywhere I go. Five o'clock would come round and she'd be hanging on my Dr. Scholl shoe, dragging over the floor, crying like I weren't never coming back. Miss Leefolt, she'd narrow up her eyes at me like I done something wrong, unhitch that crying baby off my foot. ..

Mae Mobley two years old now. She got big brown eyes and honey-color curls. But the bald spot in the back of her hair kind a throw things off. She get the same wrinkle between her eyebrows when she worried, like her mama. They kind a favor except Mae Mobley so fat. She ain't gone be no beauty queen. I think it bother Miss Leefolt, but Mae Mobley my special baby" [7, p.2].

As one can determine it from the very first line of the narrative, the obtrusive opinions, objective as they may seem, are rendered in the authoritarian nanny-like manner by Aibileen Clark, the fact proved by the repetition of the adjective 'fat' at times either substantivized ('babies like fat') or used in its traditional qualifying function ('big fat legs'). The emphatic inversion in 'That I know' leaves no doubt as to the fact that anything said against the explicitly dominating focus and opinion of the protagonist is likely to either be disregarded or rejected as irrelevant.

Mae Mobley, Elizabeth Leefolt's daughter, is given a very pictorial presentation, which the students can be suggested to analyze from the standpoint of direct characterization and description, granted the novel provides plenty of qualitative adjectives serving the purpose indicated: *'She got big brown eyes and honey-color curls. But the bald spot in the back of her hair kind a throw things off. She get the same wrinkle between her eyebrows when she worried, like her mama'*. The element of repulsiveness which mars the angelic image about to be shaped ('the bald spot') may also bear symbolic connotations to decipher by the students in the classroom, which in the given case enhances the effect of the fixed internal focalization that sharply details the minor traits of the secondary character.

Contrary to the novel, the deep focus of the cinematic narrative, which is represented by the script version of the initial source, neutralizes the edged features depicted by the fixed focalizer of the novel. Consequently, the presentation of Aibileen's blends with the one of the scriptwriter's, whose occasional remarks diversify the focus itself;

"Aibileen shakes her head.

Aibileen: Miss Leefolt still don't pick Baby Girl up but once a day. The birthing blues had got holt of Miss Leefolt pretty hard... I don't seen it happen plenty a times...once babies start having they own babies... I take care a Baby Girl...The dress has become too small to button. And Lord, I worry she gonna be fat... Ain't gonna be no beauty queen either" [8, p.4-5].

The body language index is obviously suggested by the scriptwriter ('shakes her head'), and the external focalizer's presentation of the events defines the cinematic narrative. This is the point which would be challenging to suggest for either group work or individual assignment, as well as homework to the students working out the divergences of the deep narratological focus, i.e. the viewpoint. In this case the deceptive neutrality of the scriptwriter inevitably yields to the inner world of Aibileen's, whose opinion, compared to the initial version analyzed above, is still authoritarian, with a certain degree of fidelity to the original source also preserved.

The final characterization, critical as it is, makes its way into the script as borrowed from the initial source with no modifications: *'Ain't gonna be no beauty queen either'*. The explicit qualifier 'fat' omitted in the novel, or avoided by Aibileen, is introduced into the script version, making the focalization snappier. The protagonist is also made, owing to the generic requirements of the script version meant to be filmed, more

reticent and less critical, since the fuller focus of the film version, assumed primarily by the scriptwriter, allows for a more comprehensive visual characterization of the narrator herself: aside from merely speaking, she occasionally ‘shakes her head’, thus displaying criticism through the body language, the detail which only the audio-visual medium and the mise-en-scene would offer.

Apparently, the students within the English language classroom would be compelled by the tutor to perform a more comprehensive comparative analysis of the singular focalization present in the novel mentioned to its cinematic counterpart, wherein the focus flows smoothly from the scriptwriter who only passes occasional comments and remarks to that of the actual story-teller, i.e. the protagonist, who, in her turn, apparently limits the range of vision owing to the time limitations and generic requirements of the audio-visual narrative. The exercises offered by the language instructor can be directed primarily toward finding common traits of the tonetic, atmospheric and characterization elements or techniques in both film and novel focalization.

The contrastive analysis, in its turn, would invite the interpretations of the influences exerted by the transition from the verbal medium to the audio-visual verbal one of the film, with the stylistic and lexical properties of the figure’s alterocharacterization involved. Basically, the students can be asked, after watching the corresponding film fragments, to perform the sheer quantitative analysis of qualitative and relative adjectives employed in both narratives to represent the characters either directly or indirectly as the first step of the activity, which is determining the characterization techniques. The second step would reside in the repeated demonstration of certain cinematic episodes and in thus contrasting the employment of the means mentioned in the novel to the ones preserved in the script, as well as defining the changes in the character perception transferred from the verbal to the audio-visual medium. The ultimate step in character cognition would be determining the level of figurativity imparted to the character imagery represented via fixed internal and mixed focus of the film narratives, contrasting the effect produced to the novel impact as the final step of the interpretation exercise.

It turns out that the study of the novel and film as the verbal and audio-visual media of the literary piece presentation can prove to be a prolific activity and analysis generator within the EFL classroom, provided that the concept of the narrative viewpoint referring to literature almost exclusively, that of the narrative perspective applicable to both verbal and visual arts, and the generic concept of focus and focalization are given proper analytical presentation and practical analysis at the classes of textual stylistics and semiotics, as well as literary analysis. Also, the educator should make the students aware of the vantage points and the constraints that both genres imply while the point of view and changes of the narrative perspective are analyzed collectively or individually at the English classes, with literature offering a more specified and emphatic, yet character limited event presentation and focalization technique. The audio-visual aids through which the film may be represented, aside from the perspective of the scriptwriter, expose as many voices as there are characters involved in the cinematic discourse.

The critical basis employed in the process of the study of narrative perspective in both the genres should not be confined to the mere aspects of either retaining or refraining from keeping fidelity to the original source on the part of the adaptation. Rather, the evaluation should focus on the comparative-contrastive analysis as a grounding method for determining lexical, stylistic, tonetic and semantic, as well as general pragmatic links and divergences that particularize the verbal and audio-visual verbal channels of rendering literary plots accordingly.

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