

# PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN LITERARY DISCOURSE: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the stylistical use of phraseological units in literary discourse. A phraseological unit may extend across sentence boundaries and even large stretches of text, creating a continuity, a web of unique interrelationships of figurative and direct meanings, and associative links. Sustained discursive use of a phraseological unit contributes to the perception of the text as a cohesive and coherent entity. Failure to identify stylistic use will be to the detriment of inference and interpretation, and hence a semantic and stylistic loss.

The article also considers the implications of a discourse-based approach to phraseological units in teaching and learning. The exploration of the discursive potential of phraseological units is of immediate relevance to the studies of language and literature as an area of applied stylistics. Teaching stylistic use helps to disclose the cognitive processes of the mind in creative thinking. It can lead to significant gains in stylistic awareness which involves a conscious perception and understanding of: significant changes in the base form and meaning of the phraseological unit, associative links and their networks, stylistic cohesive ties in the text and the creation of a new meaning in discourse.

## KEY WORDS

Phraseological unit, base form, core use, instantial stylistic use, pattern, stylistic awareness, applied stylistics.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo estudia la cuestión de la utilización estilística de los modismos, frases hechas y enlaces frecuentes (en lo sucesivo, unidades fraseológicas) en el discurso literario. Las unidades fraseológicas pueden extenderse a lo largo de una oración o incluso ser incorporadas a lo largo de un fragmento textual creando de esa forma la continuidad, la red de correlaciones excep-

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cionales entre el sentido figurado y el directo, también formando los conceptos asociativos. La utilización eficiente de las unidades fraseológicas contribuye a la percepción del texto como unidad cohesiva y coherente. La incapacidad de identificar la utilización estilística puede bajar la capacidad de hacer interpretaciones y conclusiones acertadas, lo que a su vez lleva a una escasez semántica y estilística.

Basándose en el concepto del discurso, el presente artículo también incluye el enfoque de la cuestión sobre las unidades fraseológicas como partes integrantes del proceso de la enseñanza. El análisis del potencial de las unidades fraseológicas en el discurso tiene una importancia considerable para los estudios del idioma y de la literatura como campos de la estilística aplicada. Enseñar la utilización estilística ayudará a descubrir los procesos cognitivos de la mente durante el pensamiento creativo. Eso puede desarrollar la conciencia estilística del idioma o sea la percepción y comprensión consciente de lo siguiente: cambios considerables en las formas y significaciones claves de las unidades fraseológicas, enlaces asociativos y sus nexos, conexiones cohesivas estilísticas en el texto y la creación de nuevos significados en el discurso.

#### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

Unidad fraseológica, la forma clave, el uso esencial, el uso singular, método, conciencia estilística, estilística aplicada.

#### **RÉSUMÉ**

Dans cet article l'auteur décrit l'emploi stylistique des unités phraséologiques dans un discours littéraire. L'unité phraséologique peut dépasser les limites d'une phrase, même des fragments d'un texte, créant ainsi la continuité, un réseau unique des sens propres et figurés et des liens associatifs. L'emploi continu des unités phraséologiques dans le discours aide à concevoir le texte en tant qu'une unité cohésive et cohérente. L'incapacité d'identifier l'emploi stylistique nuira à l'inférence et à l'interprétation, causant par conséquent une perte sémantique et stylistique de la valeur du texte.

Dans cet article l'auteur analyse également les possibilités d'utilisation de cette approche basée sur le discours dans le processus de l'enseignement et l'apprentissage d'une langue. L'approfondissement du potentiel des unités phraséologiques est d'une grande importance dans les études de la langue et de la littérature dans le domaine de la stylistique appliquée. L'enseignement de l'emploi stylistique aide à découvrir les processus cognitifs de l'esprit dans le processus de la pensée créative. Cela peut développer la conscience stylistique de la langue, c'est-à-dire, la capacité de saisir et de concevoir consciemment des changements importants dans la forme de base de l'unité phraséologique et signifie des liens associatifs et leur réseau, des liaisons cohésives stylistiques dans le texte et la création d'un sens nouveau dans les discours.

#### **MOTS-CLÉ**

L'unité phraséologique, la forme de base, l'usage de base, l'usage stylistique particulier, méthode, la conscience stylistique, la stylistique appliquée.

It is a common expectation to encounter phraseological units<sup>1</sup> (PUs) in their usual base form<sup>2</sup>. Readers are used to treating them as one unit that is easy to perceive, grasp and survey. Learners believe that in a text PUs will be as compact as the form they find in dictionary entries. Core<sup>3</sup> use is, indeed, largely predictable, it presents neither novelty nor surprise. At discourse level<sup>4</sup>, however, PUs are often represented by instantial forms which are stylistic instances of naturally occurring PUs in discourse. Instantial stylistic use<sup>5</sup> explores experiences far beyond the possibilities of mere core use, is more sophisticated and therefore requires a greater amount of processing and analysis than core use.

Hence, a sentence-level approach to PUs proves to be insufficient, as isolated sentences do not reveal the wealth and variety of instantial use. A discourse situation calls for enhanced stylistic awareness and a discourse-based view of PUs, their stylistic properties and the patterns of their application. A thorough analysis of instantial use establishes a clear picture of the involvement of phraseology in the interrelated web of discourse and reveals the subtle semantic and stylistic interrelationships between the instantial and base components, their ties<sup>6</sup> and the interaction with other elements of the text. It also reveals the way instantial use creates coherent relationships between various parts of the text.

The knowledge of phraseology does not only imply language accuracy, but also its creative use in specific discourse environments. This entails appreciating figurative meaning and associations which are sus-

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<sup>1</sup> A *phraseological unit* is a stable, cohesive combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning.

<sup>2</sup> The *base form* of a PU is the form to which other forms can be related and with which they can be compared. It is the dictionary form and meaning, recorded as the head form. The base form is stored in the long-term memory of the language user as a language unit, which is accessed when a discourse situation calls for it.

<sup>3</sup> *Core use* is the use of the PU in its most common form and meaning. In core use the PU does not acquire any additional stylistic features in discourse and does not exceed the boundaries of one sentence.

<sup>4</sup> I keep to the understanding of discourse as language in use across sentence boundaries (see Cook, p. 25; Carter, p. 40).

<sup>5</sup> *Instantial stylistic use* is a particular instance of a unique stylistic application of a PU in discourse resulting in significant changes in its form and meaning determined by the context.

<sup>6</sup> According to Halliday and Hasan a tie is the occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items (3).

tained across sentence boundaries. By teaching the subtle workings of instantial use the objective is to teach to understand figurative language, its creation and meaning.

One of the most common patterns of instantial use is *phraseological pun* which involves the juxtaposition of the figurative meaning of the PU and the literal meaning of a component or components. As PUs are figurative cohesive combinations of words they lend themselves to punning very well, for each figurative component invariably has a literary meaning at the same time, affording a dual perception:

to pull someone's leg<sup>7</sup>

But I laughed and said, "Don't worry, Professor, I am not pulling her ladyship's leg. I wouldn't do such a thing. I have too much respect for that charming limb.

J. Cary, *The Horse's Mouth*.

Phraseological puns are frequently sustained beyond the level of the sentence. Punning creates an abrupt semantic shift as the PU is also simultaneously perceived as a non-figurative combination of words which reveals the secret of image creation. Another example:

the white feather

David had asked about the apparent paradox of the old man's pacifism in 1916 and his serving as medical orderly with the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War.

'White feather, dear boy. *Quite literal*, you know. *Had a collection of the damn' things*. Didn't care, all a joke. Russell, he converted me...'

J. Fowles, *The Ebony Tower*.

It is important to learn to read with awareness and process a literary text, which will not be complete without the interpretation of instantial stylistic use. Another widespread stylistic pattern involving PUs in discourse is *extended phraseological metaphor*. A sustainable development of a PU is due to the associative links of the image-bearing components of the base form and the newly-formed sub-images. Lengthy cohesive phraseological chains may be formed by gradual extension of the semantic links of the PU, as the following example shows:

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<sup>7</sup> I have indicated the forms of PUs for emphasis. Base forms are marked bold. Instantial elements are italicized. Underlining helps to bring out the cohesion of the PU. Replaced elements are underlined double. Cues are marked with an interrupted line.

a pretty kettle of fish

Meanwhile a pretty kettle of fish was preparing for Mr. Noon. He smelled nothing of it for some days.

D. H. Lawrence, *Mr. Noon*, Ch. VI, p. 51.

More than two pages later Lawrence returns to the PU and gives the hint “smelled the above-mentioned fish” which stretches the reader’s imagination and sustains the image. It is curious to note that Lawrence gives the cue<sup>8</sup> “the above-mentioned” which plays a supporting role in the metaphoric network and acts as a guide in the process of recall in case the reader has failed to keep up the figurative thread:

When he arrived at the town hall, the porter told him the meeting was already sitting. He went to the waiting-room, and there sat cooling his heels. Doubtful if even now he smelled the above - mentioned fish, which were stewed and nearly ready for him in the next room.

D. H. Lawrence, *Mr. Noon*, Ch. VI, p. 53.

The extended metaphor conveys apprehension in a situation fraught with danger. In the next room there is a long table around which various members of the committee are seated, “mostly fat fossils and important persons of complete insignificance” (Lawrence 53). Gilbert calls them *lobsters*:

Gilbert suddenly felt like a baby that has fallen to the bottom of the sea and finds all the lobsters staring at him in the under-sea light. So they stared, like inquiring lobsters, and he felt like a baby, with his fresh face and pouting mouth.

D. H. Lawrence, *Mr. Noon*, Ch. VI, p. 53.

Chain relationships have been evolved on the basis of the two figurative components:

*kettle*: smell – stewed – ready;

*fish*: the bottom of the sea – lobsters – the under-sea light.

The two sets of sub-images are related to each other by phraseological cohesion, their meaning depends on their cohesive relations with the PU and each other. The text becomes a figurative whole, unified by phraseological meaning.

The network of sub-images creates metaphoric space. The instantial extension of the base metaphor provides semantic and stylistic enrich-

<sup>8</sup> A cue is a prompt which plays a supporting role in the metaphoric network, facilitates associative responses to the PU and acts as a guide in the process of recall.

ment of the flow of discourse and generates indirect information. New associations and sub-images are facilitated by the previously established items of the metaphoric chain. The underwater image, based on extended metaphor, is perpetuated over 7 pages and carried over to the next chapter, contributing to the metaphorical field of text and creating “an entire metaphorical undercurrent” (Werth, p. 79).

Gilbert's kettle of fish had been all lobsters but one: but that didn't make it any the sweeter.

D. H. Lawrence, *Mr. Noon*, Ch. VII, p. 57.

The PU has evolved a whole cluster of associated metaphors. All the sub-images need to be kept in mind to secure a complete semantic and stylistic interpretation of the context. The interrelated elements of the textual web have an effect on the reader who can feel and sense the image. The stylistic effect augments as discourse unfolds with every successive part of the metaphoric chain, never losing a link with the image of the base form.

Let me turn to an example of *phraseological allusion* which is an implicit mental reference to the image of a phraseological unit represented in discourse by one or more explicit image-bearing components, hinting at the image. Allusion is one of the classical examples of hidden meanings which, as van Peer points out, may play a significant role in literary texts, at the same time contributing to the reader's uncertainty (see van Peer 39).

In cases of allusion the PU is seemingly disjointed and remains incoherent if these items are viewed in isolation. Alone they do not cohere. Taken together, the separate elements serve as explicit signals of allusion. In fact cohesion is provided by what is left out and by the semantic links with the whole PU. A coherent mental picture is established only if the absent components are, consciously or unconsciously, recalled in the mind of the reader and the base form is retrieved from the long-term memory.

It is quite common that longer PUs undergo instantial changes in discourse. In the following example quite a number of the phraseological components do not surface into explicit form in discourse. The remaining notional components function as an explicit signal that allusion has been exploited.

he should have a long spoon that sups with the devil

Trinculo. I should know that voice: it should be – but he is drowned; and these are devils: O defend me!...

Stephano. ... This is a devil, and no monster: I will leave him; I have no long spoon.

W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act II, Sc. 2.

Separate items of the PU have been retained in the context. The components are not presented in a regular logical sequence and are difficult to understand due to the disjointed order. Some explicit elements may be located elsewhere in an earlier sentence or in the subsequent one, while some components may not be found in the text at all, but they all are necessary for the comprehension of the text.

It may be quite surprising that the PU can be retrieved from a few isolated components or even a single component. In an extreme case of phraseological allusion only one base component is retained in discourse. In order to assign and interpret the meaning it is essential to comprehend the interaction of the PU and the context, and the process that the PU has undergone in a certain segment of discourse.

a cat has nine lives

Burge - Lubin. But damn it, man –I beg your pardon, Archbishop, but really, really–

Archbishop. Don't mention it. What were you going to say?

Burge - Lubin. Well, you were drowned four times over. You are not a cat, you know.

B. Shaw, *Back to Methuselah*.

The presence of the image-bearing component *cat* acts like a recall cue in the face of the absence of the full form. The missing components can be retrieved due to the cohesion of the base form, the discursual cohesion rooted in the phraseological meaning and the anaphoric tie *you were drowned four times over* together with the negation *you are not a cat*. The implicit components are invisibly present in the text. Thus allusion shows the strength of cohesion inherent in the PU: one component evokes associations with the whole unit.

Texts present an enormous variety of cohesive ties which provide sustainability of phraseological images throughout a stretch of text, including the *umbrella use* of a PU in the title which is comprehensive of all the text. If the title is a PU in instantial use, the whole text may become its context, and the PU may turn into a narrative technique by force of repeated reference to it. This can be very well illustrated by John Fowles' story The *Ebony* Tower<sup>9</sup>. To convey the artist's ideas on

<sup>9</sup> For discourse analysis of J. Fowles' short story *The Ebony Tower* see Short, pp. 45-62.

abstract art Fowles uses the PU *an ivory tower*<sup>10</sup>. Fowles is known for working and reworking his images. He tends to return to them by reiterating them, the same refers to phraseological images.

an ivory tower

Art is a form of speech. Speech must be based on human needs, not on abstract theories of grammar. Or anything but the spoken word. The real word.

J. Fowles, *The Ebony Tower*, p. 50.

Then the old man spoke, with a strange lucidity, as if he had only been pretending to be drunk, and now summarized with one final inconsequence.

"Ebony tower. That's what I call it".

J. Fowles, *The Ebony Tower*, p. 51.

Certainly the replacement of the epithet in itself would not constitute discursal use, however, the whole of the work is a context for this application, thus instantial use in the title has an umbrella function, sustained by the reiteration of the image. Interestingly, in *A Personal Note to Eliduc* Fowles refers to *The Ebony Tower* as a variation on a theme, dealing with "*black*<sup>11</sup> proof of an ultimate shirking of creative responsibility" (see Fowles, p. 119). In core use the PU appears a few pages later establishing an explicit metaphoric link with the instantial form and what it stands for:

She drew back to go, but he stopped her. "What on earth did that last thing he said mean? The ebony tower?"

"Oh." She smiled. "Nothing. Just one of the bats in his belfry". She tilted her head. "What he thinks has taken the place of the ivory tower?"

"Abstraction?"

She shook her head. "Anything he doesn't like about modern art. That he thinks is obscure because the artist is scared to be clear..."

J. Fowles, *The Ebony Tower*, p. 54.

Abstraction is seen not only as "the ivory tower", an isolation, a condition of seclusion or separation from the world and the harsh realities of life. Abstraction is seen as betrayal, as "the ebony tower", representing a flight from human and social responsibility. Fowles returns

<sup>10</sup> *An ivory tower* - studies, interests (esp. academic or artistic) that cut one off from the realities, struggles of life; observation and imagination in place of direct experience (Cowie, Mackin and McCaig, p. 323).

<sup>11</sup> The italics are mine.



to the PU towards the end of the story where it appears as a one-member sentence forming a paragraph of its own acting like a coda and summarizing the previous paragraph on abstraction:

It was not just his own brand of abstraction that was a fault, but the whole headlong post-war chain, abstract expressionism, neo-primitivism, op art and pop art, conceptualism, photo-realism ... *il faut couper la racine*, all right. But such rootlessness, orbiting in frozen outer space, cannot have been meant. They were like lemmings, at the mercy of a suicidal drive, seeking *Lebensraum* in an arctic sea; in a bottomless night, blind to everything but their own illusion.

The *ebony* tower.

J. Fowles, *The Ebony Tower*, p. 112.

The novel formation “the ebony tower” would be incomprehensible without an understanding of instantial use which has been sustained throughout the story and which is directly related to its message. The instantial use of the PU in the title turns into a comprehensive line of thought spanning the whole of the text and testifying to Fowles’ narrative skills. Thus, instantial stylistic use is part of his method of narrative presentation.

I have tried to explore a few of the patterns of the instantial stylistic use of PUs in discourse. These patterns have never been the concern of the traditional teaching of phraseology. Traditionally PUs have been sparingly taught by language teachers and the ones that have been taught have been handled in traditional ways, dealing with the meaning and grammatical features of the base form or teaching core use contained in one sentence. There is a need to review this attitude and the practices of teaching phraseology. A rigid view of PUs is not conducive to understanding discursal use.

McCarthy and Carter observe that with the old approach “the emphasis is on a static, decontextualized view of language” (McCarthy and Carter, p. 2). This approach does not take into account the potential of PUs to go beyond the framework of one sentence. It does not bring out the discursal features of instantial use and the cohesive interrelationships in the web of discourse. Neither the old translation method nor the subsequent cloze tests, multiple choice exercises and box exercises foster an understanding of the discourse environment. These exercises do not promote the ability of language learners to use PUs appropriately, nor do they help them to be creative.

A discourse-based approach to PUs allows us to view teaching and learning as an area of applied stylistics<sup>12</sup>. It enables the teacher to shift emphasis from the preoccupation of teaching separate PUs and their translation options to the natural flow of language. In contrast to the orthodox static teaching of PUs as dead clichés and the concept that stylistic changes are violations of the language norm, a discourse-based approach focuses on discourse features. It is vital to present a dynamic view of phraseology, bringing out the process of text creation and the role PUs play in the web of discourse. It is also crucial to establish the choice, occurrence and co-occurrence of the stylistic use of PUs and their distribution, as well as the prevalence of a certain type of stylistic use in certain parts of text.

Teaching instantial stylistic use is an essential strategy for raising stylistic awareness. By focussing on the discorsal qualities of the use of phraseology, it is possible to develop an appreciation of and a creative approach to figurative meaning. Stylistic awareness implies a number of essential aspects, first and foremost it means an awareness of:

- significant changes in the standard form and meaning;
- figurative meaning and the creation of a new meaning in discourse;
- associations, associative links and their networks;
- cohesion and stylistic cohesive ties in the text.

The learner needs to be exposed to phraseology and its stylistic use. Unfortunately most dictionaries are of little help, as they tend to avoid the stylistic use of PUs in their entries. Even if the dictionaries were improved they would never be able to reflect all the wealth and variety of instantial use. The main task is to train the stylistic awareness of the learner to cope with discourse phenomena.

The best way of getting learners to focus on close and remote semantic and stylistic ties created in the web of discourse is the actual observation and interpretation of a stretch of text. This effort implies search, identification and analysis of specific cases of use, taking into account all the implications of creative use with an aim of extending

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<sup>12</sup> *Applied stylistics* is an area which explores the practical utilisation of the principles, discoveries and theories of language, literature and stylistics. It denotes the application of the stylistic competence of the language user in the fields of teaching, translation, lexicography, the compilation of notes and comments on literary texts, sociocultural studies, visual representation, advertising and marketing.

and stretching the mental vision and imaginative thinking of the language learner.

Stylistic awareness helps to concentrate on a number of relevant discourse features. It is worth noting the prevalence of a certain pattern of instantial use in the works of one writer or poet, or of one period. The reiteration of a PU or a pattern is another important item to focus on in discourse. It is also a good idea to look at titles, their implications and umbrella role for the whole of the text, as well as the opening and closing textual segments, and search for any significant anaphoric and cataphoric lexical or phraseological cues offered by the unfolding narrative. This orientation will reveal the sustainability of a PU: the spread of its image over a length of text in sequential segments as part of the interrelated web of discourse.

The exploration of the discursual potential of PUs is of immediate relevance to literary studies. It constitutes a vast field of inquiry. One of the most interesting aspects is the link between the frequency and the type of instantial use and various kinds of discourses, genres or periods. These features are relevant to the role of phraseology in conveying the overall stylistic message of the text. A comparison of the differences in the use of PUs, their presence or absence in various types of texts may stimulate awareness and provide a good basis for stylistic analysis and interpretation. Thus, integrated language and literary activities afford an opportunity to fuse linguistic and literary comprehension, develop a feel for the text and the skills of “reading between the lines” (see McRae and Boardman).

The stylistic and phraseological competence of the language user is a task that is not easy to deliver, but it is rewarding both for the teacher and the learner. However, a number of difficulties may arise in teaching language through literature:

1. *Inadequate training of teachers.*

As interest in the application of stylistics in classroom has not been sufficiently high, teachers have received inadequate or no training in discourse and stylistic interpretation, and there are still relatively few textbooks with an eye to stylistics for practical use.

2. *Challenges caused by the use of figurative language.*

In order to maximize text interpretation and independent reading opportunities, it is essential to teach the meaning of figurative language and foster the awareness of the development of a figurative line of

thought with the aim of enhancing the comprehension of instantial use. Each instantial image represents a mental picture<sup>13</sup>. The teaching of images enables the reader to discern the effects of discoursal figurativeness, create a mental image of instantial use and establish the links which are provided to help to sustain it.

### 3. *The teaching of cohesive ties.*

Studies have shown that cohesion is an element which creates a major difficulty for L2 readers of literary texts in English. Cohesion is the network of explicit and implicit ties which makes a text a unified whole. Misunderstanding of cohesive signs can lead to a misreading of the entire passage (McRae 1990, p. 16). Failure to understand cohesion, rather than lack of lexical knowledge is the most common cause of misreading (McRae, 1996, p. 35). Unresolved or false cohesion is only detrimental to an interpretation or analysis of a text.

### 4. *A lack of training in the cognitive aspect.*

The teaching of the identification of instantial use goes together with insights from cognitive psychology and the training of cognitive skills, as well as the psychology of learning and motivation. Learners become intrigued by the stylistic performance of PUs in discourse, which makes a qualitative difference to the level of acquisition. Moreover, the solution of a cognitive puzzle gives a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. "Meanings that are half hidden (but retrievable) offer the reader cognitive attraction and emotional gratification" (van Peer 47).

### 5. *The art of creation.*

This aim is hard to attain. A creative approach to language implies an appreciation of new discoursal forms and meanings and the creation and development of an image in discourse. It shows that instantial use is a boundless resource for the writer's creativity. It also implies teaching how to create instantial use and networks, extend and sustain an image, linking words and phrases together and providing meaningful associative ties.

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<sup>13</sup> In cognitive psychology the image is viewed as a mental representation, as a picture in the head. The "picture" is not a literal one, but rather a kind of "as if" picture. That is, imagery is a cognitive process that operates "as if" one had a mental picture that was an analogue of a real-world scene (see Reber 358).

It is important to teach creativity as it is manifest in literary texts and dispel the image of phraseology as a body of rigid language units, seemingly set in stone, which are incapable of discourse flexibility and sustainability. Hence it is crucial to view the use of PUs as a developing process rather than fossilized language material. The ultimate goal is the ability of the learner to create instantial use in discourse by exploiting the existing language patterns. Teachers and learners need to develop specific discourse skills to cope with all the relevant difficulties.

Cases of interpretation or misinterpretation difficulties often result from a misunderstanding of the discursive dimensions of the instantial use of PUs. The reading and interpretation of many literary texts become encumbered without an understanding of the subtleties of instantial use. The development of perception and stylistic literacy will help to overcome these difficulties.

The specific aims are to become style-conscious and develop appreciation of the stylistic potential of PUs in discourse, enhance perception and understanding of its nature, as well as give an insight into the process of instantial use and help to capture the stylistic identity of a text in its entirety. There are psycholinguistic arguments for the teaching of discursive use, as it facilitates the development of associative and thinking networks. It can also help the cognitive processes in teaching and learning. As McRae points out, learners should be encouraged to develop their own thinking skills (McRae 1996, p. 30).

A careful identification procedure at all its stages will enhance awareness of the semantic and stylistic interrelationships encountered in the text. The training of a style-conscious language user implies the training of awareness with an eye to accuracy. McRae (1990, p. 27) advises to concentrate on “ways of *looking for detail*<sup>14</sup>” to raise sensitivity to language. Here are some useful tips regarding what to focus on in the search for significant detail and instantial cues in discourse:

- the use of phraseological components in their literal meanings or other metaphoric meanings;
- strings of connected figurative elements which constitute the web of an extended metaphor;
- new, unexpected elements which normally do not belong to the base form and which have appeared in the text additionally;

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<sup>14</sup> Italicized by McRae.

- new, replaced elements instead of some of the base components;
- a loss of components, the disappearance of some of the base components;
- semantic ambiguities or unresolved figurative elements: the presence of the inexplicable, the vague and the ambiguous in discourse;
- implicit components and the way they tie up with the explicit components in the text.

All these elements may contribute to the search for a better interpretation (see van Peer 39). Significant detail lends more insight and offers an explanation of the presence of figurative items which cannot be fully understood and accounted for without the knowledge of the base form of the PU and the whole web of interrelationships in the stretch of discourse. Effective interpretation of instantial use not only calls for a good command of the vocabulary, including phraseology, and stylistic skills, but also a certain element of creativity, a potential for creative thinking and a creative approach. It also implies an ability to generalize and use language involving PUs in novel discourse environments, further leading on to an ability to employ patterns to recreate PUs in discourse. True proficiency is unthinkable without instantial use.

In conclusion, discourse-oriented teaching can lead to significant gains in stylistic awareness and competence, both language and literary competence. The theory of the instantial use of PUs is applicable to the study of various types of texts, promoting sensitivity to language and literature. Competence in instantial use enhances the reader's understanding of the text, thus providing a greater motivation to improve language skills.

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