

ESSENTIAL DIDACTIC AND REALISTIC COMPONENTS
OF "CHARLOTTE'S WEB"

By

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Introduction

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate the interaction between the fictional characters and the reader of Charlotte's Web. The text is a sample of the twentieth century children literature which is a genre of primary interest. Within an analytical framework, the fictional situations are interpreted so as to reveal typical behaviour patterns which provide reasons for determining the speech acts. Charlotte's Web has become one of the most popular children's stories since its first publication in 1952 till the present.

Part I is an attempt to describe how the text is organised by identifying the sequence of thematic structures. Typical speech acts are selected to convey true information about the particular daily events of the American farm life. In part II the analysis of discourse is concentrated on the description of selections of speech patterns and narrative structures. Their organisation into clear didactic patterns is carefully constructed to achieve comprehensive communication of information. In part III the author's selections of incidents,

situations and speakers are analysed from the perspective of their effects on the child reader. The language contact through the text is to result in changes in the information repertoire of the reader by providing facts about the lives of persons, animals and insects living on farms.

Finally, the research illustrates how White's particular didactic and entertainment motives attain success by means of expressive linguistic structures.

The popular children's story Charlotte's Web has an effective pattern of ideas which is formulated to convey scientific information and images of the life of contemporary peasants' societies. In a flow of successive images the child Fern is introduced speaking directly to her mother. The dialogue sets the personality of the young girl as being very sensitive to the preservation of life. Green (1989) demonstrates that mutual understanding of the referent depends on the shared knowledge of the speaker and the listener. This initial situation reveals the writer's knowledge of what the child reader already knows and what the text has to supply. The reader knows the animals of a peasant's farm and likes to listen to exciting activities which end with saving the lives of various animals.

Part I

A comprehensive discourse within a family household is initially placed to attract the attention of the young reader of the story. Fern, who is the main human character, initiates the action by her direct question "Where's Papa going with that axe?". Searle and Vanderveken (1985) specify illocutionary points as the points that direct the subsidiary actions towards the direction of future course of action. The illocutionary point in the first situation is directed towards the idea of a child's comprehension of concepts around her. Fern continues her figuring out of the situation by asking again after a short while "You mean kill it? Just because it's smaller than the others?". The inference of the child is that of relating its own situation to that of the referent of the utterances which is a small pig newly born on their farm.

The emotional situation of Fern is excited and she runs as fast as she could to her father, whose first words are "Fern, you will have to learn to control yourself.". The simultaneous description of the situation clarifies the implications in the context. The dimensions of the vast differences in the point of

view of the child, Fern, and her parents is large, because she identifies herself with the small pig, as she is the youngest member of her family. Life experience guides the parents attitude towards the exceptionally small pig, for they realise that it will be a source of trouble which they do not need.

The structure is intentionally organised to clarify this natural phenomenon so as to invite the young reader to identify his place in relation to the activities in the story. In dealing with similar situations usually children group together and the reader, therefore, is expected to sympathise with Fern. The suspense of the situation is caused by the incomprehensive situation. The idea that a young animal is to be killed just because its size is very small makes Fern angry and moves her to do all she can to save the animal. She manages to rescue the pig and gets it in her own hands.

The concept of joy and happiness is introduced as being caused by saving a life. This is a semantic component that is to be found in the successive segments of structure. The individual whether child or animal thinks of himself and the immediate environment around him. Comprehensive values become more clear to Fern when she is away from human society. Fern's mother finds

that the child spends most of her time in the farm near the animals where she can watch them and especially the saved pig. Therefore a gap is set between the girl and her society. She is drawn gradually to the world in the barn and soon she learns to understand the animal language. She acquires a certain universal competence through her private experience. This phenomenon is introduced to convey the informing abilities of the animals and insects in the barn. The feelings of sympathy and friendship grow between Fern and the inhabitants of the farm regardless of their sizes and species.

The uncle's barn is a private place where Fern has a type of cosmic society which is inhabited by many animals and insects. The exploration of the situation denotes the great imaginative abilities of the child. Fern does not stay at the focus of the activities but she assumes a peripheral role of a bystander. At the farm she is watching lively endeavours done by a number of creatures to preserve their existence and that of others if possible. A proper name is given to the pig which is Wilbur; and his close friends are the spider Charlotte and Templeton the rat. The other inhabitants of the barn that do not have proper names, such as the goose, the sheep and the horses. They do not really contribute to the activities in the structure of incidents. Daily living experiences are portrayed to set the normal order of

events in the situation. Green and Olsen (1988) describe adapted materials for children comprehension. A universal language is introduced in the speech of the spider to Wilbur which is a form of a friendly gesture to set a useful relationship. All the inhabitants of the barn can participate in the animal language with the exception of Fern who is capable to understand only but not to speak.

The reader's perception of reality is focused on the experiences of living creatures. Charlotte describes her life style as pleasantly as she can:

I am not entirely happy about my diet of flies and bugs, but it's the way I'm made. A spider has to pick up a living somehow or other, and I happen to be a trapper. I just naturally build a web and trap flies and other insects.

p.43

The narrator intervenes to direct the reader to the coming incidents where the intelligent trapper will use her nature to save the endangered life of the pig:

Underneath her rather bold and cruel exterior, she had a kind heart, and she was to prove loyal and true to the very end.

p.44

The amount of knowledge that the author places in the text

affects all the aspects of the language used even the phonological structure of tones that the reader is to make as he reads aloud. The syntactic structures clarify the context to a maximum state as the child is not expected to figure for himself difficult ideas. As is explained in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) the place of an information in the whole text is important to the listener of a discourse as the order of information giving is essential. The lexical components of the text are chosen on the basis of their suitability to the situation in the context and the expected child repertoire of information. Lexical sets denote referents which have been mentioned previously in the text as well as to items in the immediate surrounding of children. This is because known objects help in the comprehension of linguistic structures which make use of them in the introduction of new ideas. Lakoff (1973) demonstrates how the speaker, or writer, is limited by his role in relation to the listener or reader and by the effects of the genre he uses. The linguistic structure clearly and directly denotes the selected referents.

The context of Charlotte's Web may be described as a world of living and significant behaviour which is adapted to perform functions of information and entertainment. The reader's inferences augment the writer's knowledge and assumptions to

reach an effective new enlightening situation. The fictional structures which are formed for children's literature draw their units from the language of adults in form and patterns. The main differences lie in the placement of the foregrounded issues. The background units are chosen for contrastive reasons. In Charlotte's Web the author, White, places into focus the information concerning the life style of both the spider and the pig as well as the importance of sincerity and friendship in all situations. The values of giving assistance and sharing information are among those implied by the text by successive illustrations of contextual importance.

The analysis of the text denotes that an important aim of the structure is to provide the reader with specified information essential to the basic common knowledge which is needed by every person in modern society. By an interesting selection of incidents and species the story is made appropriate to the child's sensitive taste. The author's intentions are clearly didactic and the structure is communicatively reliable. The pig Wilbur is pictured as suffering from extreme lack of company and friendship to arouse the ideas concerning the importance of evading selfish loneliness. The distressed situation is perceived by the attentive spider Charlotte. It is a form of distress that

is experienced by almost all children at the present time due to many reasons. The author exploits his knowledge of child psychology and places focus on this painful and experienced incident. White portrays the psychologically isolated and pathetic Wilbur as suffering from the awareness that he is unable to interact with others. The author's information of child's sensibilities is used as a means to introduce his suggestions of the rewards of the friendly and strong feelings of love.

The choice of what to include in the story is an essential step in the constructive activities. White exploits the child's concept of nutrition. His meals are placed in front of him three times a day by a grown up person and this is not done for the other creatures which need regular food daily. Wilbur's discourse with Charlotte provides new information, concerning how the animals and insects have to suffer to get their meals. It reveals to the reader essential background knowledge which he needs to know. The conversation between the animal and the insect furnishes information which is supposed by the author to be new to the reader. Discourse achieves didactic effects when the reader comes to share the particular information in the structure.

'First,' said Charlotte, 'I dive at him.' She plunged headfirst towards the fly. As she dropped, a tiny

silken thread unwound from her rear end.

'Next, I wrap him up.' She grabbed the fly, threw a few jets of silk round it, and rolled it over, wrapping it so that it couldn't move. Wilbur watched in horror. He could hardly believe what he was seeing, and although he detested flies he was sorry for this one.

'There!' said Charlotte. 'Now I knock him out, so he'll be more comfortable.' She bit the fly. 'He can't feel a thing now,' she remarked. 'He'll make a perfect breakfast for me.'

'You mean you eat flies?' gasped Wilbur.

'Certainly. Flies, bugs, grasshoppers, choice beetles, moths, butterflies, tasty cockroaches, gnats, midgets, daddy-long-legs, centipedes, mosquitoes, crickets - anything that is careless enough to get caught in my web. I have to live, don't I?'

'Why, yes, of course,' said Wilbur. 'Do they taste good?'

'Delicious. Of course, I don't really eat them. I drink them- drink their blood. I love blood,' said Charlotte, and her pleasant thin voice grew even thinner and more pleasant.

pp.42-43

The author makes use of the context of situation to convey by means of both speech and action the diet of the spider. The step by step portrayal of the activities of trapping are demonstrated clearly for the reader's comprehension, thus the text is successfully delivering a piece of information which is needed by every child. The expression of Wilbur's feelings implies the reader's feelings towards the situation of realising the vicious diet of the spider. The speaker Wilbur is inviting the reader to a form of participation in the expressive action. Speech acts

demonstrating the feeding of the spider are concretised by the description of the trapping activities step by step. Charlotte's utterances portray the actions in the form of an achievement that is now in action and here in place. Thus the text is used to communicate the lesson on the nutrition by a technique that is easy to comprehend and remember.

Searle (1969) explores the fact that conversational items are formed to serve the attainment of specific intentions of the speakers. White is making use of the conversational style to furnish his reader with the information he thinks is needed by the majority of children. The expansion of the child's scope of knowledge is evident in most of the structural components of the story. The situation inside Uncle Zuckerman's barn is a suitable place to learn about the ~~life style~~ of farm animals.

For this information to pass from the author to the reader it has to be conveyed by expressive forms. White makes use of the techniques of speech acts and activities. Charlotte describes how she eats and demonstrates this by actually doing the act of trapping a fly in front of Wilbur who is shocked as he "watched in horror". The conversation develops to denote a comparison between the style of feeding a pig and the efforts exerted by a

trapper. This is ended by the convincing argument stating the useful environmental effects of eating harmful insects. The realistic details reveal to the child-reader unexpected information:

"You have meals brought to you in a pail. Nobody feeds me. I have to get my own living. I live by my wits. I have to be sharp and clever, lest I go hungry. I have to think things out, catch what I can, take what comes. And it just so happens, my friend, that what comes is flies and insects and bugs. And furthermore", said Charlotte, shaking one of her legs, "do you realize that if I didn't catch bugs and eat them, bugs would increase and multiply and get so numerous that they'd destroy the earth, wipe out everything?"

p.43

The question form at the end of Charlotte's speech is carefully organised so as to be directed towards the reader as well as Wilbur so that each reader would think of the importance of spiders to human life. The clause structures "destroy the earth, wipe out everything" denote a form of collective destruction that the author knows is hated by everyone and would succeed in convincing as well as informing all his readers.

Lakoff (1971) describes how the writer bases his ideas on his own concept of the reader's general knowledge. The analysed text demonstrates a selection of everyday life experience of the

pig, Wilbur. Since many of the readers would not know the daily routine of a pig's life for various reasons, the author describes Wilbur's activities and his expected feelings as well. The comprehensive capacity of the child compels the author to use pictures to denote the shape of some animals and things such as the web, which the reader may not be acquainted with. Therefore the book includes pictures of the pig, rat, spider, lamb, goose and the egg sac of the spider. Distances and motion may not be clear to a child, therefore some pictures illustrate relevant activities that the author thinks are essential to the child's understanding of the context. A barn picture shows the door, the place and size of the spider's web in relation to the ceiling and the pig standing on the ground where the near sighted spider can not see him clearly. Other portraits illustrate the writings on the web: "some pig" and "terrific". Both are drawn to clarify the author's concepts of the situations. Wilbur's attempts to jump are pictured to show how impossible for him to construct a web no matter how he tries even with his tale tied to a cord. The dangerous swinging of the children is drawn precisely to denote the children's grasp on the rope as they rejoice in flying back and forth. The rat's hiding of the unhatched egg shows the efforts of Templeton to add the bad egg to his stock of unwanted items which he makes use of later in unpredicted situations. These pictures illustrate characterising mannerisms of the

inhabitants of the barn. However, there are drawings which show the social life of the persons living on the farm. The Fair is pictured in a lively form where the games are placed in focus and the children are drawn near a huge round swinging machine. The receiving of the prize is portrayed in an effective illustration of the general feeling of happiness that encompasses all who care for Wilbur. The prize is a symbol of the unifying effects of collective efforts. Group work is a cultural value that is explained for the child, so that he may be able to participate with his friends in future activities and disregard the egocentric tendencies that frequently affect children behaviour.

White constructs patterns of relationships among persons, children, animals and insects to convey his ideas to his readers. The birth of Wilbur is during spring so as to denote the time of the year when new generations of animals are usually born. Wilbur is a "Spring pig" that is born in the barn of a farmer's family. "I'll let you raise it on a bottle, like a baby". This decision that is taken by Mr Arable means that Fern, his daughter, has to take good care of the tiny pig. One of the first lessons that Fern, and the reader as well, has to learn is that pigs cannot be raised inside a home like the cat or the family dog.

At two weeks of age, he was moved outdoors. It was apple-blossom time, and the days were getting warmer. Mr Arable fixed a small yard specially for Wilbur under the apple tree, and gave him a large wooden box full of straw, with a doorway cut in it so he could walk in and out as he pleased.

"Won't he be cold at night?" asked Fern.

p.13

The events of Wilbur's life interact with a selection of behavioural events of other creatures. The escape incident is vividly rendered by speech acts conveying the communicative activities of the animals and birds living in the same place. As soon as Wilbur escapes from the fence, the goose and the spaniel become very actively engaged in the action of events. While "Every animal stirred its head and became excited to know that one of its friends had got free and was no longer penned up or tied fast.", Wilbur runs and plays. The complexity of the movements behind him causes his perplexity. Then he gets tired of the escape efforts because he has to evade being caught. At last he ends his free wandering and chooses to return to his place. The author exploits this situation to clarify to his reader the feelings such animal might experience by both indirect and direct speech. Wilbur's comments denote that even freedom has to be related to a certain time in life.

He felt peaceful and happy and sleepy. This had been a tiring afternoon. It was still only about four o'clock

but Wilbur was ready for bed. "I'm really too young to go out into the world alone," he thought as he lay down.

p.28

The reader is given a chance to identify his own situation with that of Wilbur and realize that a sheltered life style is what he needs during his youth. Making use of the need for love and friendship which is felt by every child, the author expresses the natural feelings of loneliness which affect Wilbur to the extent that he stops eating his food for a whole day. The need for sociable friendships is conveyed in simple structures : "Wilbur didn't want food , he wanted love. He wanted a friend - someone who would play with him." The text relates to the pig a behaviour that is typical of all children so that the reader can easily experience the emotions in the context.

A plan is set at the barn and changes Wilbur's life completely. It begins by the introduction of the motherly attitude of the caring Charlotte. The name suggests that she is feminine and her initial speech to Wilbur denotes her sincere interest in his situation: "Do you want a friend, Wilbur?" it said. "I'll be a friend to you. I've watched you all day and I like you." The animal-insect speech is an appropriate frame for the introduction of didactic information units of biology.

"You have awfully hairy legs, Charlotte," said Wilbur, as the spider busily worked at her task.

"My legs are hairy for a good reason," replied Charlotte. "Furthermore, each leg of mine has seven sections - the coxa, the trochanter, the femur, the patella, the tibia, the metatarsus, and the tarsus."

Wilbur sat bolt upright. "You're kidding," he said.

"No, I'm not, either."

"Say those names again, I didn't catch them the first time."

"Coxa, trochanter, femur, patella, tibia, metatarsus, and tarsus."

"Goodness!" said Wilbur, looking down at his own chubby legs. "I don't think my legs have seven sections."

"Well," said Charlotte, "you and I lead different lives. You don't have to spin a web. That takes real leg-work."

p.58

Charlotte gives scientific data that is composed of the latin names of every part of her leg, as easily as if she recollects them out of her general knowledge. She relates the structure of her legs to the type of activities she has to perform using them. Her knowledge is contrasted with Wilbur's statement that he "thinks" and not knows that he does not have similar legs. The author's choice of verb denotes his precise description and data.

Another member of a different species is selected by White to be portrayed for his reader through the dialogues in the context. This is the rat which he calls Templeton. The interaction between the pig and the rat reveals patterns of

mannerisms in the form of relationships. It is a sampling technique where the author chooses to describe only the activities which reveal characteristic qualities. The speech acts represent the typical actions in the life style of each speaker. The narrator furnishes the text with notions which belong to the particular context of the situation:

"Will you play with me, Templeton?" asked Wilbur.
"Play?" said Templeton, twirling his whiskers. "Play? I hardly know the meaning of the word."
"Well," said Wilbur, "it means to have fun, to frolic, to run and skip and make merry."
"I never do those things if I can avoid them," replied the rat, sourly. "I prefer to spend my time eating, gnawing, spying, and hiding. I am a glutton but not merrymaker. Right now I am on my way to your trough to eat your breakfast, since you haven't got sense enough to eat it yourself." And Templeton, the rat, crept stealthily along the wall and disappeared into a private tunnel that he had dug between the door and the trough in Wilbur's yard. Templeton was a crafty rat, and he had things pretty much his own way. The tunnel was an example of his skill and cunning. The tunnel enabled him to get from the barn to his hiding-place under the pig trough without coming out into the open. He had tunnels and runways all over Mr Zuckerman's farm and could get from one place to another without being seen. Usually he slept during the daytime and was abroad only after dark.

p.33

The action in the barn is described through the interaction of two speakers at a time so that the behaviour which is illustrated can be clear to the reader. Direct speech is conveyed with present tense verbs while the narrator describes the

situations using the simple past tense.

The analysis of the sentence structure in discourse and narration denotes the use of the question form to introduce new information in the text. Some of the questions require answers and others are basically the means of inviting the reader to think about the ideas discussed and thus figure out the information for himself. The distribution of the interrogative form in discourse is illustrated mainly in structures which denote a form of transition from one topic to another:

"That crazy rat!" thought Wilbur. "Why does he have to stay up all night, grinding his claspers and destroying people's property? Why can't he go to sleep, like any decent animal?"

The second time Wilbur woke, he heard the goose turning on her nest and chuckling to herself.

"What time is it?" whispered Wilbur to the goose.

"Probably-obably-obably about half past eleven," said the goose.

"Why aren't you asleep, Wilbur?"

"Too many things on my mind," said Wilbur.

"Well," said the goose, "That's not my trouble. I have nothing at all on my mind, but I've too many things under my behind. Have you ever tried to sleep while sitting on eight eggs?"

"No," replied Wilbur. "I suppose it is uncomfortable. How long does it take a goose egg to hatch?"

"Approximately-oximately thirty days, all told," answered the goose.

"but I cheat a little. On warm afternoons, I just pull a little straw over the eggs and go out for a walk."

pp.36-37

The excerpt first draws the attention of the reader by a question form to the piece of information about the life style of the rat which is given a few pages earlier in the text. Then a shift in the topic is achieved by the introduction of the goose's movements of "turning and chuckling" which are to grasp the reader's attention and direct it to the goose. In focus, the mode of the goose's behaviour is stressed. The question form is used to present information about the number of days needed for the eggs to hatch. This is given with an interesting mannerism component and an information segment about the fact that the mother goose can leave her place on hot days for a short time and no harm can come to the hatching eggs.

Part II

The text portrays to the reader successive events which are described from the point of view of the person or animal who experiences them. The reader benefits from following the incidents as they are described by the author. A distance of the fictional dimension lies between him and the activities. The text conveys the aspect of similarity between fiction and real events, thus the interested reader intentionally involves himself with the causes and results of all textual incidents. At the same time

he has the ability to detach himself from any situation he wants to evade. The author's selection of events determines the factors of every situation in the text. White carefully pictures a selection of farm life items which can evoke personal involvement. The didactic aims intensify the logical form of the activities and clarify any ambiguous concepts in the semantic structure. Discourse is characterised by original descriptions of familiar incidents which are related to the experiences of the speakers. Expressive speech acts are understood as illustrative by means of explanatory comments and these are based on the particular information which is based on past experience. The author takes use of familiar situations and adds to them the new information which he wants to give to his reader. The connotations in the analysed text are stressed by their relations to personal experiences in collective activities such as watching a young animal grow, winning a prize in competitions and participating in collective games. The textual illustration compel the reader to experience the action from both his own past and the focus intensifying the exposition.

For a moment after this announcement, the Arables and the Zuckermans were unable to speak or move. Then Avery picked up a handful of straw and threw it high in the air and gave a loud yell. The straw fluttered down like confetti into Fern's hair. Mr Zuckerman hugged Mrs Zuckerman. Mr Arable kissed Mrs Arable. Avery kissed Wilbur. Lurvy shook hand with everybody. Fern hugged

her mother. Avery hugged Fern. Mrs Arable hugged Mrs Zuckerman.

pp.145-147

The analysis of the text defines some social and biological ideas which the author intends to convey to every reader. The interesting and persuasive style is to set a relationship between the writer and his readers who accept the textual influence. Discourse units describe the situations of the speakers; and at the same time, implications are drawn from their mental concepts. Grice (1975) categorises the implications which are always in movement from linguistic structures to recipients. The textual form of Charlotte's Web implies moral and didactic concepts that influence the reader because they are drawn from normal life situations. The aim of saving a life is a moral implication in Fern's and Charlotte's efforts. The greatness of the efforts exerted for this aim persuades the reader that it is for his own interests that he should follow their ideal in future situations. The success and happiness they achieve is manipulated by the author to give psychological effects that carry persuasive forces. The reader accepts the ideational development of the incidents and thus he infers similar concepts about similar life situations. An active form of competence is gained from this experience of comprehending the text as the reader realises that he personally gained general and specific knowledge by means of

very interesting reflections of animal life situations. Though the utterances are not probable, the dialogue is so expressive that speech units seem to reveal the expected animal and insect reasoning procedures. Because there is rational participation from the reader to figure out what really happens in the text, his own inferences manipulate the incidents as they take place one after the other.

Levinson (1983) defines discourse segments and their succession in turn taking and development of discussed ideas. The humanising effects of giving animals human traits connect them to human situations and serve to invite implications concerning the problems to be solved. Emotional causes of finding a happy ending to a sad situation is manipulated through the analysed story of the humble pig Wilbur.

The information structure has didactic features which are set to define scientific facts. The effective utterances do not violate the maxims described by Grice (1975). The statements conveying scientific facts of life concerning the species described are all precise, and they provide information that is in proportion to the situations where they are used. The biological knowledge is not too little or too much. The dialogue

is so organised that Charlotte's life style is portrayed as wisely lead by a responsible character, therefore the information she gives to Wilbur, and the reader as well, is not rejected by the recipient. An interaction of ideas is constructed by the interference of the reader's inferences; and thus the pragmatic effects of the construction are stressed, and the moral implications are comprehended.

"But no - with men it's rush, rush, rush, every minute. I'm glade I'm a sedentary spider."

"What does sedentary mean?" asked Wilbur.

"Means I sit still a good part of time and don't go wandering all over creation. I know a good thing when I see it, and my web is a good thing. I stay put and wait for what comes. Gives me a chance to think."

p.63

The text is appealing to the emotions of the reader to contemplate on the vital comparison of life situations. The constant motion is different from the immobile situation which provides suitable environment for thinking. The reader's attention is directed towards the conditions which are necessary for useful thinking. The dialogue displays the author's concept of quiet rational thinking where the logical structure of the utterances combines his persuasive goals with present day life situations. The explicit use of the movement activities unifies the reader's world with that of the text, thus an effective

analogy is attained. Prince in Cole (1981) differentiates between shared knowledge and that which is given by the text. In the illustration the idea of clear thinking in a silent static environment is common knowledge but the reference to it serves to remind the reader of background information that is relevant.

The analysis of a discourse segment is based on the fact that it represents one unit in the whole structure of the text. Its part in the order of events is chosen by the author to give the maximum denotative function of its constituent elements. Moreover, discourse is also characterised as the expression of attitudes to various situations. At the same time, it represents the intentions and the beliefs of all those who are involved. The effects of the sustained semantic components are mainly found in the reader's interpretations of the conveyed meanings. The spider's usage of the language by writing words in its web is discussed from different points of view.

"Have you heard about the words that appeared in the spider's web?" asked Mrs Arable nervously.

"Yes," replied the doctor.

"Well, do you understand it?" asked Mrs Arable.

"Understand what?"

"Do you understand how there could be any writing in a spider's web?"

"Oh, no," said Dr Dorian. "I don't understand it. But for the matter I don't understand how a spider learned to spin a web in the first place. When the words appeared, everyone said they were a miracle. But no

body pointed out the web itself is a miracle."
"What's miraculous about a spider's web?" said Mrs Arable. "I don't see why you say a web is a miracle - it's just a web."
"Ever try to spin one?" asked Dr Dorian.
Mrs Arable shifted uneasily in her chair. "No," she replied. "But I can crochet a doily and I can knit a sock."
"Sure," said the doctor. "But somebody taught you, didn't they?"
"My mother taught me."
"Well, who taught a spider? A young spider knows how to spin a web without any instructions from anybody. Don't you regard that as a miracle?"

pp.106 - 107

The question, that is placed at the end of the convincing rational expressions of one sustained idea, invites the reader to follow the discourse development and eventually accept the idea that is given in successive simple components. The speakers represent social accepted figures, the doctor and the careful mother.

Part III

Searle and Vanderveken (1985) define the functions of speech acts in usage. They assert that mainly there are five types of illocutionary usages of any linguistic structure in the act of speech. Therefore discourse is carried out within limited

boundaries in any context. Discourse segments can "assert" and show the state of items in the situation discussed. They may be used to "direct" that is to convince persons to carry out an act desired by the speaker. The third is to "declare" by using speech to cause various new situations in the context, and to "commit" is the fourth which is to decide to do action. The last type is the "expressive" which is the revelation of inner emotions. This theory is implemented by specifying the direction of any speech unit according to the components of the utterances. An important condition is that the usage of any word is based on its significance. The linguistically significant words have special semantic relations with the life conditions of the speakers, such as the "time and place, the position of the speaker and the hearer, their relative abilities and statuses, what is or is not in their interests" (p.65). The logical description is made complete by the specification of the "strength degree" of force and what they call the "sincerity conditions" of the illocutionary acts.

The application of the logical theory to the analysis of some illocutions in White's discourse is useful to demonstrate the functions of usage. The assertion of the initial situation where the family of Mr Arable got the spring pig is conveyed by illocutionary acts from the "word to the world" as the dialogue

described the existing situation at their home to the reader. Mr Zuckerman's farm is portrayed in the narrator's voice which selects the features that denote the shape, the smell and the contents as well as the general atmosphere. Wilbur's initial dialogue is the expression of his boredom and that is immediately answered by the goose's suggestion to escape from the barn, which he does.

"You don't have to stay in that dirty - little dirty - little dirty - little yard," said the goose, who talked rather fast. "One of the boards is loose. Push on it, push - push - push on it, and come on out!"

"What?" said Wilbur. "Say it slower!"

"At - at - at, at the risk of repeating myself," said the goose, "I suggest that you come on out. It's wonderful out here."

"Did you say a board was loose?"

p.21

The escape is rendered very lively and interesting by the use of discourse units which demonstrate all five functions of illocutionary acts. Wilbur's speech 'asserts' his present situation and thus shows the reader the recent state of affairs. The goose's advice to break through the loose board and go out to the open meadow is very convincing to Wilbur and therefore it can be a 'declaration'. Mr Zuckerman's speech to Lurvy is a form of 'directive' and this is followed by his illocutionary act of stating his own activities in the situation which can be

categorised as a 'comitative' act. The fifth function is realised by Wilbur's own words after the great efforts he had to exercise to hold his freedom. "This is really awful" is 'expressive' of his emotions to the whole situation. The escape and chasing activities encompass almost all the persons and animals in the farm.

The dialogue form is made use of in the discussions of the representative facts of Wilbur's life situations. Various details of his circumstances are selected to reflect his emotions as well as his activities. Conveying information about forms of animal life is a role that is distinctively effective in children stories. The reader of the text, like the listener to the conversational tones of the speaker, is expected to form his own concepts of the fiction characters. The narrator's intrusion to complete the description of the situation is a direct technique that is used by White to give background knowledge which is related to those who are involved in the context. The account of what happens is partly created by the narrator's function as an observant speaker who sincerely gives the reader essential information through general impressions of familiar actions.

Then they pulled into the Fair Grounds, they could hear music and see the Ferris wheel turning in the sky.

They could smell the dust of the race track where the sprinkling cart had moistened it; and they could smell hamburgers frying and see balloons aloft. They could hear sheep blattering in their pens.

p.126

The speaker's attitude towards the reader is an essential component of the logical structure of the utterances. Ideational expressions are always following logical procedures which are necessary for the denotations of new and scientific information. The narrator of the analysed text displays forms of strong commitment and sincerity in his portrayal of facts as coloured by the psychological states that he can figure out. The reader is given assertions concerning the beliefs of the spider then these are followed by her expressions relating her intentions. The rat's nature of successive desires is exploited by the intelligent spider. Templeton apparently illustrates the expected behaviour and this is put to a beneficial procedure that is logically constructed by Charlotte.

"I hope you brought a good one", Charlotte said. "It is the last word I shall ever Write."

"Here," said Templeton, unrolling the paper.

"What does it say?" asked Charlotte. "You'll have to read it for me."

"It says humble," replied the rat.

"Humble?" said Charlotte. " 'Humble' has two meanings. It means 'not proud' and it means 'near the ground'. That's Wilbur all over. He's not proud and he's near the ground".

"Well, I hope you're satisfied," sneered the rat. "I'm not going to spend all my time fetching and carrying. I came to this Fair to enjoy myself, not to deliver papers."

"You've been very helpful," Charlotte said. "Run along, if you want to see more of the Fair."

pp.134 - 135

The definition of the word 'humble' is set in the direct speech of the spider to present exact notions in the usage. Charlotte's commitment is explicit in her intentional attitudes during her life time to the end. This is passed over to Wilbur who is learning from her; and after her death, he is committed to the preservation of her younger generation. The situation implies the effective performance of collective activities and the values of such success.

The act of capturing the interest of the listener or the reader as discussed by Lyons (1977) is centred around the usage of linguistic and non-linguistic means in logical expressions. The referents constitute the centre of investigation because the various ways of referring to objects imply a form of background knowledge to be present at the time of speech. The author's selection of items in the barn presupposes that his reader can realize the referents which he is putting in the portrayal of Mr Zuckerman's farm. These referents do not always have to be concrete objects. White describes the shape, the size, the smell

and the interior items as he manipulates the logical trend towards an appealing situation. This is stressed by the expression of eternal existence from the point of view of the narrator.

The barn was very large. It was very old. It smelled of hay and it smelled of manure. It smelled of the perspiration of tired horses and the wonderful sweet breath of patient cows. It often had a peaceful smell - as though nothing bad could happen ever again in the world. It smelled of grain and harness dressing and of axle grease and of rubber boots and of new rope.

p.18

The linguistic construction of the sentences is composed of clear units which are composed of one syllable or two syllables words in most cases. The portrayal of the barn is essential because it is the setting and background for most of the interaction between Wilbur and the spider Charlotte. The barn becomes "Wilbur's new home" as the context makes clear the fact that the life style of a pig necessitates the existence of a fixed place for him which is the barn cellar for being "warm and comfortable".

The logical frame work of the plan for saving the life of a loved friend is based on the perceptive abilities of Charlotte. She constructs the details of her plan on her spinning gift, for

she can produce unique structures by her web which can attract the attention of Mr Zuckerman and fool him as well.

Finally, one morning towards the middle of July, the idea came. "Why, how perfectly simple!" she said to herself. "The way to save Wilbur's life is to play a trick on Zuckerman. If I can fool a bug," thought Charlotte, "I can surely fool a man." Wilbur walked into his yard just at that moment. "What are you thinking about, Charlotte?" he asked. "I was just thinking," said the spider, "that people are very gullible." "What does 'gullible' mean?" "Easy to fool," said Charlotte. "That's a mercy," replied Wilbur, and he lay down in the shade of his fence and went fast asleep. The spider, however, stayed wide awake, gazing affectionately at him and making plans for his future.

p.69

The act of thinking on the part of Charlotte leads to the saving of Wilbur's life. This is portrayed in the text by an additional lesson of clarifying the meaning of a word for the reader which is 'gullible'. Speech segments in Charlotte's utterance form a comparison between her abilities and that of Mr Zuckerman. She is sure she can fool him by a trick and this assumption is logically based on the fact that she fools a lot of bugs which are not known to be gullible like the human beings.

The excerpt illustrates a feature of style that is

frequently used by White in the analysed text. The introduction of a new idea such as the plan is initially introduced by the narrator to describe and particularise the situation. This is followed by a discourse where the participants take turns using short sentences in relatively utterances. When the exposition of the idea is completed the narrator again is introduced to terminate the situation. The internal structures of the sentences, composed by the narrator to denote identifying structures, are compound because they make use of descriptive clauses. The function of relating the successive segments of the structure is performed by using the technique of topic and comment succession, which is suitable to the internal construction of details. The topics are components of the semantic units and therefore follow the overall logical procedure which binds the particular sets of descriptive details. The author's intentional teaching, of the values concerning the love of life, is conveyed through situations of relational concepts.

The reader's interpretation of the friendly relationship between Wilbur and Charlotte is based on two factors, one is the situation which is described in the text and the other is his own background knowledge concerning similar situations. The author's selection of illustrative incidents is always supplemented by connecting units from the reader's imagination related to various

patterns of activities which suit almost any situation. The implications are drawn from the context then added to the hypothetical picture of the textual reality that the reader constructs for himself, because he is always providing the literary structure with the unmentioned units essential to his own concept of the situation. The abstract realisation of the figures in their contextual life is coloured by the reader's emotional state. Thus Wilbur and Charlotte as well as the others gain in character sketches by the added traits which are provided by each reader from his own recollection of past incidents. Frequently these additions are favourable; and in the situation of Wilbur, he is portrayed to gain the sympathetic love and care of everyone. Charlotte is sure to receive favourable traits from the reader's imagination for her incessant efforts to be giving information, care and love to a friend who is not even one of her species of insects. Her reasoning denotes her exceptional gifts which gains sentimental acceptance from the reader who builds huge expectations on her character sketch in the text. Thus when she exhibits intellectual skills of reading and writing English, the reader accepts this imaginative incident as part of the abstract capacities he puts on her from his own immediate environment. The wisdom in Charlotte's speech stimulates the reader's imaginative abilities. Wilbur gains the reader's

sympathetic feelings while the rat Templeton is not favoured. He receives the reader's abstract image of a character that is guilty of extreme selfishness but not aggressive. The reader is given a character sketch which is full of gaps that he is to fill in the reconstruction of the hypothetical figure of Templeton.

Then the oldest sheep spoke up. "I agree that there should be something new written in the web if Wilbur's life is to be saved. And if Charlotte needs help in finding words, I think she can get it from our friend Templeton. The rat visits the dump regularly and has access to old magazines. He can tear out bits of advertisements and bring them up here to the barn cellar, so that Charlotte can have something to copy." "Good idea," said Charlotte. "But I'm not sure Templeton will be willing to help. You know how he is - always looking out for himself, never thinking of the other fellow." "I bet I can get him to help," said the old sheep. "I'll appeal to his baser instincts, of which he has plenty. Here he comes now. Everybody keep quiet while I put the matter up to him!"

p.89

The selfish personality of Templeton is representative of a villain that can be manipulated, which renders the story more interesting to the child reading it.

Discourse is organised to give successive information units concerning the group efforts 'in the difficult act of saving' a life. The reader is placed in a situation of continual

expectation of surprises. As long as the threatening situation exists, the reader is made to anticipate more tricks and his expectations are gradually reorganised to accompany every change in the imaginary direction of incidents.

The concept of time in the text follows the natural order of successive seasons of the year. This adds an aspect of coherence, as the time begins in spring when the spring pig is born and continues by the direct reference to the time of the year as related to the significant incidents. The first incident that is related to the end of summer is the return to school which normally occupies the mind of all children. The author is primarily writing to them.

Everybody heard the song of the crickets. Avery and Fern Arable heard it as they walked the dusty road. They knew that the school would soon begin again. The young geese heard it and knew that they would never be little goslings again. Charlotte heard it and knew that she hadn't much time left. Mrs Zuckerman, at work in the kitchen, heard the crickets, and a sadness came over her, too. 'Another summer gone,' she sighed. Lurvy, at work building a crate for Wilbur, heard the song and knew it was time to dig potatoes. "Summer is over and gone," repeated the crickets.

p.110

The experiences of every person, animal, and insect are different from those of the others but the act of knowing is connecting them and so does the time of the year. The lexical structure of the quoted passage illustrates the repetition of the verb 'knew' which implies an instinct that is found in all. The textual implication denotes a common perception that is related to nature and its normal flow of seasons. White mixes the situation in the farm with ~~units~~ of real life experiences for creating a comprehensible text. This is suitable for leading to imaginary concepts that can fill the gaps of the structural units and completely involve the reader. In a situation that seems familiar the problem solving practice is impressive and guides the reader to inferences depending on his past experience.

The analysed text concentrates most of the referential units within the scope of common places and incidents with the exception of Charlotte's trick. This makes the process of understanding the text easier to the reader and leads to the a positive attitude towards the whole context. The reader's inferences from the text are interpreted into a different organisation of incidents which is composed of his own concepts of the details. The mental scheme follows the author's framework; and the interaction between the receptive faculties of the child and the discourse structure is concluded with the surprising

ending which denotes a long and happy life for Wilbur. The author successfully constructs his story using a sequence of one event after another which contributes to the ultimate popularity of this work.

Conclusion

The textual structure of Charlotte's Web can be characterised by numerous moral implications which are conveyed by discourse units and the narrator's descriptions. The book became very popular during the past few years as the statistics prove that it sold six million copies, Elléde (1984). Children find it interesting and pleasant because it contains a mixed image of almost all the figures and the concepts they know: children, parents, 'successful tricks, loneliness, danger of undeserved death, friendship, selfishness, farm life, collective co-operation and competition. An important component is the truthful information that is given concerning the biological structure of the body of the spider which White quoted from the book 'American Spiders'. The author wrote the life style of the farm animals from his own personal knowledge as he perceived it.

The incident of saving the life of Wilbur is based on giving a model of an accepted plan which depends on a number of common knowledge units. The spider thinks and writes while Wilbur tries to seem similar to the descriptions given to him. The contextual incidents are selected from the child's repertoire of information. The narrator conveys the author's concept of the context and the discourse provides the characters' points of view. The reader is led to imagine a fictional world by his own inferences from the successive situations. The linguistic expressions of various emotions are easily interpreted as they are common such as the loneliness of Wilbur and his sadness for having no friends. The happy feelings of winning at the Fair are part of what every reader looks for in any competitive effort.

This research describes the features of style which formulate the implied pragmatic structure. Descriptive units of structure as well as speech acts define the actions of the persons and animals in the context. The concept of animal speech is directly exemplified to add a dimension of realising impossible events through inferential techniques which depend on the reader's scope of imagination. Some illocutionary acts are investigated according to the implications in the discourse segments.

The text presents a contemporary dream of free life away from the routine of school and compulsory duties. Its didactic components provide new information.

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