

REVIEWS

Locher, M. A. and Jucker, A. H. (2021) *The Pragmatics of Fiction: Literature, Stage and Screen Discourse*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 275 pp.

In their book *The Pragmatics of Fiction: Literature, Stage and Screen Discourse*, Miriam A. Locher and Andreas H. Jucker draw attention to how fiction can provide an intriguing and valuable source for pragmatic analyses, and how pragmatic analytical tools can be applied in the study of fictional data. These two perspectives imply a certain synchronicity. *Fiction* and *pragmatics* have a convenient synergy, which when examined closely reveals original insights that can enrich the perspectives of students of both linguistics and fiction, as well as scholars in the respective fields. Nevertheless, as the book is a textbook, published in the *Edinburgh Textbooks on the English Language* series, the primary readership is students, which is also reflected in its structure.

The book is organised into three parts and eleven chapters: Part I. The pragmatics of fiction as communication (Chapters 1-3); Part II. The pragmatics of story worlds (Chapters 4-6); and Part III. Themes in the pragmatics of fiction (Chapters 7-11). The chapters are divided into sub-chapters, which includes a brief introduction and conclusions. The sub-chapters are to the point and offer readers detailed but concise explanations of the key concepts needed to fully understand the discussed themes. They are accompanied by examples of fiction taken from a wide range of fictional works, from classic literary works by Shakespeare and Austen to contemporary TV series such as *House MD* and *Game of Thrones*. At the end of each chapter, there is a list of the key concepts covered, which is a particularly useful feature as it allows readers to approach the chapters individually, even though the book is structured into a logical sequence of chapters. The closing part of each chapter offers a number of thought-provoking exercises. These are very practical and engaging tasks that encourage readers to explore further the language of fiction through the lens of pragmatics. Each chapter ends with references for further reading with pertinent and interesting comments about each source. Throughout the book, there are brief definitions of linguistic terms and phenomena highlighted in boxes, which are a helpful aid for students unfamiliar with these terms. In addition, the textbook contains a list of figures and tables, a transcription convention, and a glossary that provides short definitions of all the key concepts in the book.

Following the above-mentioned structure, the first part is devoted to the notion of communication and prepares the ground for the overarching theme of the textbook, which is the interplay between the discourse of fictional texts and frameworks for pragmatic analyses. The introductory chapter “Fiction and pragmatics” addresses the fundamental research interest of pragmatics, which is the communicative aspects of language in social interaction. The authors link this underlying theme to the communication of fiction by proposing that the producers of fictional texts communicate through them with their audience. Fiction is viewed as a complex form of communication and differences between the three basic types of fiction, i.e. written, performed and spontaneous, are specified, while it is also pointed out that the textbook focuses mostly on pragmatic elements within written and performed fiction. As part of establishing the foundations for the following chapters, the social and theoretical pragmatic tradition is discussed and it is made clear that the textbook adopts the social pragmatic approach, as its scope is broader and therefore more suitable.

The second chapter entitled “Fiction and non-fiction” considers the difference between fictional and non-fictional texts and refers to their communicative complexities. In fiction we encounter the narration of imaginary events and the depiction of characters, but we also often come across references to real people and places. As part of a classification of fictitiousness, it is asserted that fictitious features such as characters, places and events can co-exist with real world references in fictional texts. To shed light on this complex issue, theories that identify fictional texts are presented, for example by Klauk and Köppe (2014), which leads to the introduction of the term “fictional contract” suggesting that there is a certain agreement between the creators and recipients of the texts. Consequently, it is the interaction between the text, the reader and the reader’s expectations that classifies a piece of text as fiction. Taking the intertwining notion of fiction and non-fiction even further, adaptations, spin-offs and fan fiction are presented as extensions of fictitious worlds.

The final chapter of the first part entitled “Literature and communication” distinguishes between synchronous and asynchronous interaction and takes into account the role of the audience in fictional production. The authors argue that a communicative act in fiction, as part of the interaction between the creator and the reader or viewer, resembles everyday communication, the understanding of which relies, among other factors, on the use of contextual knowledge. This interpretation process, which discusses illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect, is well illustrated with the example of a poem and a text message. Here, in particular, the role of the recipient is dealt with and an adapted model of Bell’s (1991) “audience design” is proposed. The individual layers of the model are

modified to fit the needs of fictional discourse. However, not only the recipients are considered. There is also an examination of the participation structure of the creators adapted to fictional communication as put forward by Goffman (1979).

The second part of the book is mostly concerned with story worlds, and the fourth chapter, “Genre of fiction”, starts with an examination of face-to-face communication, continues with written texts in general, and goes on to explore genres of fiction viewed through the lens of pragmatics. Following Goffman’s (1974) notion of “frame” which derives from the fact that there exist structures of expectations for recurring situations, the authors propose that this type of acquired knowledge can also be conveyed by fiction. In the writing, such frames are represented by genres, the boundaries of which are not clear, and which are characterised by intertextuality. With this in mind, fictional texts are written within culturally dependent frames, which then help us, for instance, to tell tragedy from comedy in the given cultural setting. However, as readers and viewers we often encounter mixed genres in interaction. In that case, “evoking genres can thus work as creating common ground for meaning making process” (p. 70).

In the context of sense-making, the recipients of fictional texts seek certain familiar storylines, which is the key theme of the following chapter, entitled “The narrative core”. The premise is that genres, conceived of as cognitive concepts, entail narrative core. Story-telling is an interaction, an integral part of which is the role of the audience. Hence, the combination of genres within stories then results in intertextuality, which may be linked to the concept of Bell’s (1984) “audience design”. The authors state that the communicative acts are transformed into narratives. In light of that, some common features, i.e. a narrative core which is cultural-dependent, can be found across genres. In addition, as addressed by Hoffman (2017), the interpretation of story worlds by readers is realised via textual cues, while it is the author’s choice as to which narratorial voice will be used. It follows that the way readers approach story worlds is heavily influenced by the different perspectives used by the author. Therefore, the chapter touches upon the distinction between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrative, as well as the notion of foregrounding.

The following chapter entitled “Character creation” deals with “the linguistic cues through which the characters of story worlds are shaped” (p. 98). The focus is on regional, social and ethnic linguistic variation in character creation, with specific reference to the role of accent and visual features, and also multilingualism. Moreover, the authors discuss an important factor within pragmatic analysis, which is the construction of identity. People define themselves by the particular way they involve themselves in social interactions. However,

“how we say things can change depending on whom we address and what we wish to achieve” (p. 100). By doing so via a combination of indexical cues, we are involved in identity construction, as some of our identity specifications are shared with others. Aware of the richness of indexicality in language use, the creators of fictional characters have a powerful tool at their disposal.

With Chapter Seven, “The performance of fiction”, the authors open the final part of the textbook, which informs readers about various pragmatic themes in fiction. The function of a dialogue is presented as the first of the studied themes. Following Bednarek’s (2017) definition of dialogue in fiction, it can be assumed that dialogue is a manifold feature and, as such, a very effective stylistic tool. It also serves here as an instrument to illustrate some of the specifications of fiction that were discussed in the previous chapters. These include fictional contract, a comparison of written, performed, and spontaneous interaction with respect to orality, the reader’s expectations, and the plot of a narrative.

The following chapter, “Relational work and (im/politeness) ideologies”, examines how societal ideologies are reflected in works of fiction and concentrates on the development of relationships with respect to the frameworks of im/politeness and gender. The authors observe that “the fictional artefacts can raise issues of gender or im/politeness explicitly or implicitly” (p. 170) and thus provide unique material for studying ideologies. Another interesting commentary in this chapter is made within the context of the censoring and manufacturing of fictional production approached through the use of swearwords. It is concluded that swearing is a creative linguistic device that is used by the producers of fictional texts to shape the characters, especially from the emotional point of view. The representation of such characters may then have an emotional impact on the audience.

Emotions and emotional reactions with respect to fictitious characters and the audience is the theme of Chapter Nine, which is entitled “The language of emotion”. With regard to the characters, two modes of presenting emotions are introduced. The first is the showing mode, which includes emotion cues, and the second is the telling mode, which comprises emotion vocabulary. The intersection of the two modes is a common feature, especially in performed fiction, where the viewers witness a character’s physical demonstration of an emotion while it is expressed verbally. How the fictitious emotions of the characters relate to the real emotions of the audience is the second issue. Despite knowing that the emotions being presented are not real, viewers and readers develop their own emotions based on what they are seeing and reading, which is referred to as the paradox of fiction by Radford and Weston (1975). Based on Planalp (1999) and Langlotz (2017), the authors present “five levels of emotional connection with fiction”

(p. 192), including emotional recognition, accuracy, understanding, sympathy, and empathy. Moreover, in films and TV productions the emotional representation and further impact on the audience is stressed by the well-established scene, i.e. the *mise en scène*, use of camera, and music.

In the chapter entitled “Poetic language” the authors argue that the same pragmatic principles may be applied in the study of everyday communication and processes that arise when involved with fiction. The basic hypothesis is that all utterances, whether fictional or non-fictional, “require an interpretation process that the addressee has to go through” (p. 196). In order to support the hypothesis, the relevance theory developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995), with the two relevance principles: cognitive and communicative, is used by the authors to demonstrate the similarities of the two types of communication. In connection with relevance theory, figures of speech of irony and metaphor are discussed from the perspective of their interpretation.

The final chapter, “Fiction, pragmatics and future research”, summarises the underlying themes and arguments discussed in the textbook and puts forward suggestions for future research that could focus on the pragmatics of translation in fiction.

This stimulating textbook presents novel ideas of employing pragmatic analytical tools in relation to fictional texts in order to provide insights into the creation of characters, their interplay within story worlds and the way the fictional and non-fictional worlds blend together in relation to the role of audience and their interpretation of fiction. The well-elaborated and well-structured combination of explanation, with engaging examples that illustrate the fictional worlds ranging from novels, poems and lyrics to films and TV series, constitutes an extraordinary and very engaging textbook.

Helena Worthington

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