Lexical Categories in Eleven by Sandra Cisneros: A Pedagogical Stylistic Study

Sandra Cisneros'un Eleven Adlı Eserinin Sözcüksel Kategorileri: Pedagojik Biçembilimsel İnceleme

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Abstract

The present study applies a checklist of linguistic and stylistic categories developed by Leech and Short (2007) to examine the short story "Eleven" written by Sandra Cisneros. Stylistic analysis is the study that examines the level of efficacy in the utility of words or language in a sentence or any writing. In this sense, this study is concerned to provide stylistic analysis of the selected short story concerning its underlying theories from a method of prose text analysis that affianced by literary stylists Leech & Short (1981) to be able to determine its stylistic efficacy concerning lexical category. This study provides awareness in developing and presenting a model for EFL teachers how to use this kind of analysis in EFL context. In this regard, as the analysis is made up the aspects of lexical pattern, it would be prominently crucial in understanding the importance of how to select literary texts for language learners to be able to promote language learning. Thus, this study is useful and worthy endeavor in foreign language teaching as it sheds light in the awareness of selecting appropriate literary texts depending on students' needs, interest and levels for not creating dilemma in learning process and demotivating learners, and clarifying to what extent pedagogical stylistics provide contribution to learning foreign language.

Keywords: *Stylistic Analysis, Lexical Category, EFL*

Öz

Bu çalışma Sandra Cisneros'un "Eleven" adlı edebi eserinin Leech ve Short'un (2007) belirlediği dilbilim ve biçimbilim ilkelerine göre incelenmiştir. Biçembilimsel inceleme, yazılı ve sözlü kelimelerin, cümlelerin

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veya dilin kullanımındaki etkinlik düzeyini bütünsel ve sistematik olarak ele alarak inceleyen çalışmadır. Bu bağlamda çalışmanın amacı seçilen bu kısa öykünün biçembilimsel bakış açısıyla incelenip sözcük türlerini ele alıp irdelemiştir. Bu çalışma, İngilizce öğretmenlerine ve İngilizce öğrenimindeki öğrencilerine bu tür analizlerin nasıl kullanılacağı konusunda bir model geliştirme ve sunma konusunda farkındalık sağlamayıp dahe etkin dil öğrenmeye yol açacaktır. Bu bağlamda, biçembilimsel inceleme sözcük düzeninin yönlerini ele aldığından, bu tür edebi eserlerin dil öğretiminde daha etkili bir şekilde nasıl yapılabileceği ve bu eserlerin sınıf içi kullanımı için nasıl seçilebileceği konusunda farkındalık sağladığından oldukça önem taşımaktadır. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, yabancı dil öğretiminde öğrencilerin ihtiyaçlarına, ilgi alanlarına ve öğrenme sürecinde ikilem oluşturmadan öğrencileri dil öğrenimine etkili bir şekilde motive edecektir. Bu doğrultuda seçilecek olan eserlerin sınıf içi dil eğitiminde kullanılması amaçlandığından seviyelerine uygun seçilmesi de ayrıca önem taşıdığından bu çalışma farkındalık yarttığından oldukça yararlı ve değerli bir çalışmadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Biçembilimsel İnceleme, Sözcüksel Kategori, EFL*

Introduction

Growing interest in English language learning have necessitated search for new methods and procedures. In this respect, various studies have been conducted to be able to determine good characteristics of language learners in order to be able to promote language learning. However, as learning and teaching foreign language are two interrelated areas, one study in one of these fields sheds light on the other one. Teaching profession is like an umbrella that covers many roles. Therefore, language teachers are continuously required to find out different ways for helping their students to improve their language competences. Doubtless, although there are various techniques for teaching foreign language, pedagogical stylistics is one of the prominent ways that brings the new trends to language teaching and significantly provides contribution to the arena of language teaching and learning by the help of using literary texts. Since stylistic is accepted as a prominent tool for empowering L2 performance, it provides contribution to build language awareness and deals with how it works in language context.

Considering various benefits of stylistics, it has gained an interest by many language teachers. Therefore, stylistic analysis of literary texts yields up a great awareness of these texts by inspecting linguistic components explicitly as it takes into account meaning and form of the words and deals with to reveal how meaning is constituted by the writers' stylistics choices on language components by reflecting their culture, thoughts, and seeing the world from the perspective of

those writers. This study is limited according to Leech & Short's categorized determinations about stylistic studies, since according to Leech & Short (1981:75) the categories are considered on the basis of four general headings namely as lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context. However, this study is devoted to examine the selected short story "Eleven" of Sandra Cisneros from the stylistic point of view to reveal how language is used in the literary text for being able to determine to what extend it provides contributions to language learners in terms of efficacy of lexical category.

1. A general overview of the author and the story

Sandra Cisneros, as a short story author presented "Eleven" in her 1991 collection Woman Hollering Creek, and Other Stories. As a Mexican female author raised in the United States, Cisneros prefers the language and images by reflecting her community. Therefore, Cisneros ensconces Spanish words, phrases, and expressions without translation for emphasizing the dual linguistic lives of those live in Mexico. Although the author is so generous in using emotional content of her experiences to engender her stories, they are not directly related with the events in the author's own life.

"Eleven" is a brief narrative short story which is written in the first person. The word choice is also very simple and straightforward. "Eleven" is titled as it is about a Latina girl named Rachel and is about her experience at school on her eleventh birthday. The story begins with Rachel's reflection to her new age; therefore, she is the main character and protagonist –the character that the story revolves around her.

2. Stylistic analysis of "eleven"
2.1 lexical category

Stylistics analysis of the short story "Eleven" of Sandra Cisneros is conducted. In terms of analysis lexical categories are used to clarify how choice of words involves various types of meaning.

General description of vocabulary choice, examination of nouns, verbs and adjectives are taken into account in this analysis. The table below shows the quantitative data based on stylistic analysis of "Eleven" in terms of considering lexical category.

	Eleven (by Sandra Cisneros)		General English	
1. **Number of graphological words in extract**	1200			
2. **Number of graphological sentences**	68			
	(per 100 words)		(per 100 words)	
LEXICAL DATA				
Major word classes	138	11.5	(25.1)	
3. **Nouns**	152	12.6	(13.4)	
4. **(Main Verbs) Verbs**	53	4.4	(7.5)	
5. **Adjectives**	343	33.08	(46)	
TOTAL				

2.1.1 Nouns

It is clearly identified that a large number of concrete nouns (eyes, mama's lap, onion, ring, tree trunk, dolls, penny, tin, box, sweater, desk, pencil, book, eraser, mountain, cake, candle, etc.) are used for describing outer setting. In other words, they are preferred for clarifying what is intended to be seen from Rachel's eyes. Therefore, the author generally prefers to use concrete nouns in the story for describing physical appearance *("Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me"* p.248), description of the sweater *("It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump-rope"* p.248), the author is so generous in the use of abstract expressions (*being scared, sad, stupid...*). Most of the abstract nouns in the story embodies the girl's dilemma about her situation since she tries to

convince her teacher as that red sweater does not belong to her and she tries to get used to her new age since she does not feel herself as eleven.

The other striking identification is that the author uses four human senses in this short story based on the red sweater which is the object that she hates and tries to convince her teacher that it does not belong to her (for hearing *"That's not mine, not mine, finally say in a little voice"*; for seeing *"red sweater", "puts it right on my desk";* for smelling *"...smells like cottage cheese"*; for touching "I take it off right away and give it to her…"). Therefore, Sandra Cisneros's stylistic choice of the words reveals that she aims drawing the reader into negative feelings towards the red sweater (*"It's maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me I wouldn't say so." p.248)*; therefore, by the help of these detail description will lead to the reader in discerning the girl's feelings with ease.

2.1.2 Adjectives

While adjectives are examined from the stylistic point of view, it is clearly perceived that most of the adjectives that has been selected to refer what the girl feels regarding to her age and to the red sweater. It is obvious that majority of the selected adjectives have negative in meaning. The following words are frequently used in the story to mention her negative feelings towards red sweater and her age: "*stupid, scared, sad, ugly, raggedy, sick, mad, nonsense, itchy, invisible…*" Other adjectives also have a negative element of meaning (not right, not smart). Her negative feelings towards the red sweater and the ages of hers have been supported by using similes that provide the short story to be interesting and vivid in terms of comparisons; therefore, it is clearly detected that she has negative feelings toward all of her ages ("Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten.", "you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five." All the adjectives used in the story are used according to the main character's feelings toward her ages until being eleven as she regrets being eleven until being twelve ("It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you." p.247), sweater considering its appearance and her teacher who insists on the red sweater belongs to the little girl. This chart below clarifies the stylistic organization of the writer in a clear way:

Role of Adjectives

Her ages until being eleven	Stupid, scared, sad, quiet
Red sweater	Ugly, raggedy, old, sick, itchy, stupid, stretched
Her teacher	Stupid, mad, old, dumb

It is depicted that one of the most substantial lexical variation in the story is repetition. Sandra Cisneros has repeated some expressions to put emphasis by saying "You don't feel eleven" and "not mine". Moreover, "the red sweater" has been repeated frequently to show her negative feelings towards it. The writer repeats "the red sweater" more often to show her psychological mood has damaged apparently until the owner of that sweater is found it stays on her desk like a red mountain.

2.1.3 Verbs

Analyzing the story in terms of the use of verbs, it is clearly identified that the writer generally uses agentive verbs with a human subject (*they never tell you; you're eleven; you wake up; you expect to feel; you might need, etc.*). Importantly, it is worth to mention that the writer uses action verbs (tell, wake up, open, sit, grow up, cry, put, come, etc.) and state verbs (understand, expect, need, have, know, belong, remember, pretend etc.) equally in the story.

3. Pedagogically-oriented stylistic activities on the sample short story

Among literary texts, short stories are one of the best tools to integrate them into language classes. The crucial point in this step is how to integrate them into language classes to be able get benefits from them. Like many scholars, Parkinson & Thomas (2001) mainly dissect the use of literature in language classes into two parts as literature as object of study and literature as topic. After selecting the suitable short story, it can be conducted into three parts namely as pre-reading, while reading and post-reading. The activities below show how it is possible to integrate pedagogical stylistics in term of considering lexical features of the text into three parts.

3.1 suggested pre-reading activities:

The first step in reading activities is to create curiosity for the students to read the given literary text enthusiastically; therefore, pre-reading activities play crucial role in reading classes to make readers read the whole text, to make them ready for the intended ensuing activities, to become more prepared for what they are going to read, to develop their abilities to think critically about the author's message, and to facilitate language learners' awareness. Thus, what pre-reading activities have in common is that they are student-centred. The following activities based on the selected short story are intended to exemplify before reading activities:

- Writing a short summary based on using the information that is given in the information web and comparing it after reading. It can be more enjoyable if it is organized as a group activity to choose the winner group.

Birthday of a girl named Racheal

A red sweater

Mrs. Price

ELEVEN

by Sandra
Cisneros

"Not mine"

Sylvia Saldivar

A big red mountain

Phyllis Lopez

Ugly, raggedy, old
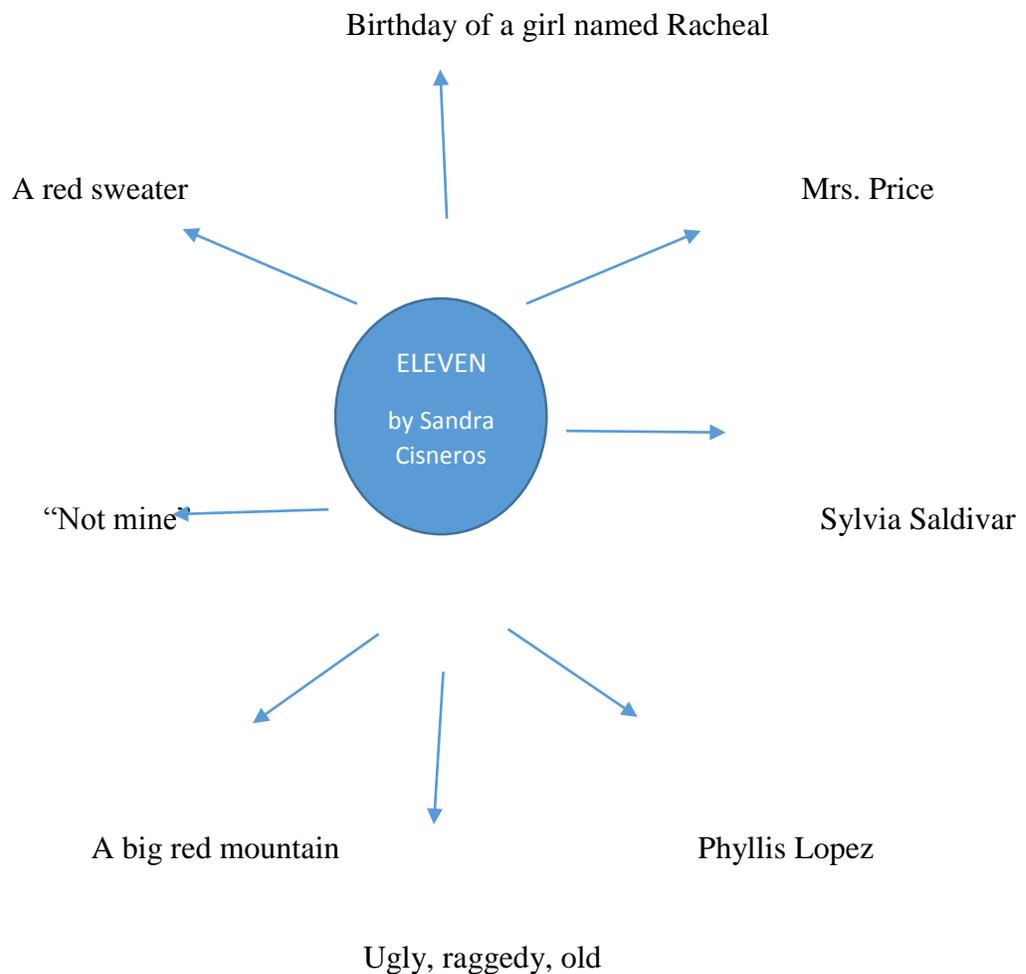
- Having short discussion based on how they feel on the day of their birthdays. After getting some key words based on their feelings, the students can be asked to classify them according to their meanings as positives and negatives.
- Expressing their ideas based on how being misunderstood affects them.
- The title of the short story is "Eleven". Make a list of the lexical items you expect to find in the story.

3.2 suggested while reading activities:

Once the students are prepared ready to the while reading activities by the help of pre-reading activities, they are ready to focus on the text in depth and to understand it better. During this stage, the students are able to confirm their predictions, gather information in a detail way and organize the gathered information a meaningful way. Muhammadzadeh (2015) states that during reading activities are utterly beneficial as they can activate the students' passive vocabulary even by the help of simple activities like asking them to read the paragraphs and to paraphrase or to summarize them.

- Putting the jumbled order sentences into correct order according to the short story.
- Finding out similes for the given expressions below:

    Example: (growing up) – is like an onion / the rings inside a tree trunk / wooden dolls

    (rattling) –

    (a red sweater) –

    (shoving the red sweater) –

    (smell of the red sweater) –

    (crying) –

    (headache) –

- Answering some comprehension questions:

    (How does she feel when she gets older?)

    (What does she feel at the age of three? Does she feel the same mood at the age of eleven?)

    (Who is the main character in the short story?)

    (Is the main character male or female? Underline the part that helps you find it.)

    (How many characters are there in the story?)

    (Does the main character like the other characters in the story? Explain your answer.)

(How does she feel about the red sweater?)

(Is the red sweater a birthday present for Rachel?)

- Classifying the given adjectives according to their meanings.

POSITIVE   NEUTRAL   NEGATIVE
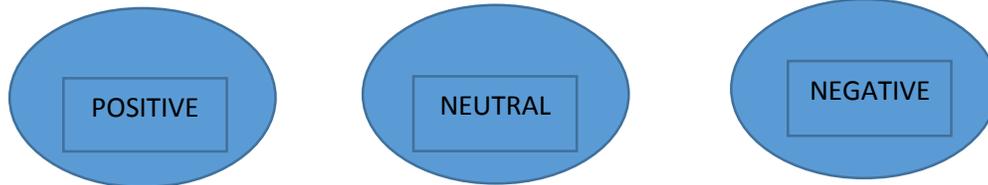
- Classifying the given verbs by putting them into correct category.

ACTIVE   STATE
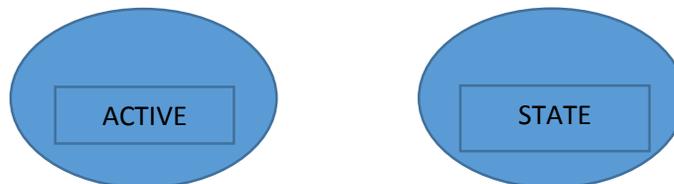
- Classifying the given nouns according to their meanings.

ABSTRACT   CONCRETE

- Matching the words with their definitions.
- Choosing the correct word form to fit into given sentences.
- Finding words associated in meaning unhappiness

3.3 suggested post-reading activities

This step is important as it shows students where to start their analysis; besides they would realize the importance of the stylistic analysis in both making this first interpretation systematic and justifiable and in adding or modifying this interpretation according to the linguistic analysis. The following activities are intended to exemplify post-reading activities:

- Writing down a paragraph based on what they would like to do if they were in the situation of Rachel.
- Writing down a dialogue that takes place between Rachel and her teacher and acting out in the classroom.
- Writing down the relationship between "a red sweater" and "a huge mountain".
- Writing possible reasons based on why Rachel repeat "Not Mine" many times.

Conclusion

Pedagogical Stylistic activities of the selected short story in this study allows the literary text to be understood much better. Since it does not only provide information about the short story, it also shows how to integrate stylistics into language learning context , what benefits of integrating stylistics for language learners and how language use functions for the sake of conveying literary meaning. It encourages language learners to interact with textual structure to infer meaning (Tutas, 2006; Timuçin, 2010). As Short (1996) states "detailed and systematic analysis can be seen as an aid to our understanding and appreciation of the text under discussion as well as providing a rational language-based account to support interpretation and giving insights into the process by which we interpret when we read". Therefore, it facilitates language learning tremendously and can be accepted as the paramount issue for providing the bridge between linguistics and literature.

As Song (2009) states that literary texts are easily comprehended by the help of using stylistic analysis that highlights the prominent role of the linguistic codes of the texts contribute a lot to the development of literary criticism. Undoubtly, students are provided conspicuous opportunities to be deal with the selected literary texts explicitly and consciously rather than in a way of osmosis. (Carter, 1996; Batool et al., 2015). Thus, in the light of having stylistic analysis on the literary texts can provide inestimable benefits in language learning including promoting confidence in

reading and interpretation by selected suitable literary texts for the students. Otherwise, linguistically not suitable literary texts create dilemma in understanding and condense the students' motivation (Mohammadzadeh, 2015); therefore, proper texts should be chosen considering the students' levels, needs and interests. Otherwise, it will be possible to engender various obstacle for learners while trying to facilitate language learning.

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