

‘Suddenly, I am part of the poem’: texts as worlds, reader-response and grammar in teaching poetry

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Abstract

This paper draws on research in using reader-response theory as a way of thinking about teaching grammar and poetry in the English classroom. Framing my discussion around world-based models of reader-response such as Transactional Theory (Rosenblatt 1938; 1978) and Text World Theory (Werth 1999; Gavins 2007), I argue that this approach is useful in that it foregrounds the creative nature of reading whilst providing a systematic way of analysing language. I analyse data from a series of Key Stage 3 poetry lessons, showing how world-based approaches provide a ‘concept-driven pedagogical tool’ for the teaching of grammar, giving KS3 students the opportunity to build and develop on KS2 grammatical knowledge. I also show how this approach helped to produce authentic responses to literature and generated meta-reflective discussions on the reading process. I argue that this approach offers an intuitive, accessible and contextualised method to exploring how language and grammar work.

Keywords

text world theory, transactional theory, reader-response theory, grammar teaching, poetry

1 Texts as worlds

The human mind has a remarkable capacity and ability to imagine fictional people, events and worlds that are different from our own. This ability is often at its most striking when we encounter literary texts: through language, we can be transported to and immersed within alternative worlds, often so realistic that we feel we are actually a part of them (Gerrig 1993). In a 1992 chapter called *Secondary Worlds*, Michael Benton begins with a quotation from J.R.R Tolkien, who describes a writer as a ‘successful sub-creator’ of a secondary world, which a reader’s mind has the capacity to enter:

Children are capable, of course, of *literary belief*, when the story-maker’s art is good enough to produce it [...] the story-maker proves a successful ‘sub-creator’. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is ‘true’: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken: the magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the

Primary World again, looking at the little abortive Secondary World from outside. (Tolkien 1964: 36).

In writing this, Tolkien drew on the ‘text-as-world’ metaphor that has since pervaded much work in reader-response theory and context-driven models of language. Out of this has seen the emergence of *world-based* approaches to how we process and conceptualise language.

World-based models posit that language has the capacity to project fictional worlds, which readers then mentally construct by drawing on their own unique background knowledge and experiences. As such, they provide a particular way of thinking about reading that encourages and allows for responses governed by a combination of text, author and reader. They conceive reading as a kind of ‘transaction’ (Rosenblatt 1938), emphasising that active participation by readers is crucial to making meaning. In addition, contemporary world-based models such as Text World Theory (Werth 1999; Gavins 2007) have provided a set of stylistic tools for examining language in close detail. In short, world-based models treat the construction of meaning as a combination of linguistic content *and* a reader’s knowledge and experiences. It is the potential of this combination as a pedagogical tool for the teaching of poetry and grammar that I seek to explore in this paper.

2 Teaching poetry and teaching grammar

In many secondary school English classrooms, a literary transaction may run the risk of being no more than the simple transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. English teachers increasingly find themselves existing within a culture of high stakes testing and pressure, in what Ball (2003) calls the ‘performativity agenda’ and Goodwyn (2012) calls the ‘assessment regime’. This has seen a rise in a ‘teaching to the test’ pedagogy, where meaningful explorations of literature are often replaced with activities focused on assessment objectives, timed exam question drills and teacher-led explanations. Poetry is a genre that has been hit particularly hard by such changes, with teachers often acting as ‘gatekeepers to meaning’ (Xerri 2013: 135) and poems being conceptualised as ‘puzzles’ that have ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers (e.g. Dymoke 2003). Such metaphors leave little room for student-centred interpretations and appear to deny the opportunity for authentic, idiosyncratic and immersive readings.

At the same time, students are now entering secondary school with a wealth of grammatical knowledge, partly as a result of the primary school Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GPS) tests which were introduced in 2013, along with the substantial grammatical content on the English National Curriculum. Despite the controversies surrounding them, the tests have re-emphasised grammar in English teaching and shown that both young children and teachers are capable of learning about (and enjoying) a wide range of grammatical concepts (see Bell 2016; Safford 2016). I see this as an opportunity for secondary school teachers to maintain and build on primary school grammar knowledge, and suggest that world-based models offer an accessible and enabling framework with which to do so. Due to their roots in stylistics and literary criticism, contemporary world-based models such as Text World Theory provide a model of language analysis that is fully contextualised, and whose theoretical principles arose out of the analysis of authentic texts. They are also concerned with how linguistic choices create readerly effects, looking to both text *and* reader in how meanings are made.

An alternative approach

In this paper, I present data taken from a series of KS3 poetry lessons where teachers made use of Text World Theory to inform their lesson design and classroom talk. I argue that this not only provides a way of reconceptualising the reading process towards a more reader-orientated stance, but also offers an accessible, concept-driven and fully contextualised way of teaching aspects of grammar and meaning that bridges the perceived gap between linguistic and literary studies. This research draws and builds on recent studies that have demonstrated the value of pedagogical stylistics and applied cognitive linguistics in school teaching (Giovanelli 2010; 2014; 2016a; 2016b; Holme 2009; Littlemore 2009). Although this work is encouraging, as of yet there has been little attempt to explore cognitive linguistic principles to native language grammar teaching in particular. Given the recent changes in the National Curriculum, I offer Text World Theory as a timely and relevant approach to teaching grammar. As a context-driven, ‘cognitive discourse grammar’ (Werth 1999: 50) which is concerned with how language triggers meanings in the minds of readers, Text World Theory provides an alternative to grammar pedagogies that prescribe language as a set of formal rules, restrictions and constraints.

Next, I sketch out a brief account of the two world-based models that were used to frame the teaching materials, Transactional Theory and Text World Theory, before describing the lesson design, rationale and discussion of student’s written and verbal responses.

3 Reading as a transaction

Rosenblatt’s Transactional Theory (e.g. 1938; 1978) is a reader-response theory born out of a concern for the lack of reader involvement in literature classes. For Rosenblatt, reading is a *transactional* process between the text and the reader, and at a more distant level, the author. Transactional Theory distinguishes between (1) the *reader*, who is an active participant in the meaning-making process, drawing upon a wealth of background knowledge when reading; (2) the *text*, which is the words on a page; and (3) the *poem*, which is only created when reader and text come together in a literary ‘transaction’. It is at the point of transaction that meaning is made (Rosenblatt 1978: 14).

Rosenblatt advocates that a key purpose of the literature teacher’s role in the classroom is to construct a literary ‘experience’, rather than a simple transmission of knowledge. Literature teaching should foreground the reader’s background knowledge within the reading process, creating a ‘live circuit’ between reader and text:

There is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work; there are only the potential millions of individual readers of the potential millions of individual literary works. A novel or poem or play remains merely inkspots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols. The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings. (Rosenblatt 1938: 25).

Transactional Theory distinguishes between two types of reading: aesthetic and efferent. Aesthetic reading is a process whereby the reader is engaged in the experience of reading itself, where the reader’s primary concern is what happens *during* the act of reading. Efferent reading is a process where the reader is focused on extracting information from a text, where the reader’s attention will be primarily focused on what will remain as a residue *after* the reading. Rosenblatt suggests that it is the role of the teacher to harness and promote aesthetic

reading, to ‘keep alive this view of the literary work as personal evocation; the product of creative activity carried out by the reader under the guidance of the text’ (1938: 280). The difficulties of engineering this in the secondary classroom are clearly complex, but contrast with the concept of *pre-figuring* (Giovanelli and Mason 2015: 46; Mason and Giovanelli 2017). Pre-figured reading is likely to occur when a student’s attention is focused on things that could potentially limit or steer away from authentic and aesthetic reading, such as lesson objectives, assessment objectives, a heavy amount of contextual information given before reading a text, and teacher-led interpretations. In a pedagogy that permits aesthetic reading, a student’s interpretation is allowed to develop without potential disruptions or blockages that might arise as a result of pre-figuring.

4 Text World Theory

Text World Theory is a cognitive discourse grammar that offers a coherent apparatus for analysing both context and text (Werth 1999; Gavins 2007). A central tenet of the model is the metaphor A TEXT IS A WORLD, and it aims to account for how participants (readers and hearers) combine language and background knowledge to construct such worlds. Text World Theory architecture works within three conceptual ‘levels’, which I briefly outline here.

First, the *discourse-world* is the ‘the immediate situation which surrounds human beings as they communicate with one another’ (Gavins 2007: 9). Participants may share the same discourse-world (as in face-to-face communication), or it may be split (such as when reading a poem, where it is likely that the poet and reader(s) do not share the same immediate environment). Within the discourse-world, participants have access to their own background knowledge, attitudes and feelings which feed into how they interpret language.

Second, when participants encounter language, they create *text-worlds*, rich mental representations of language itself. Text-worlds are triggered by linguistic content and they are further fleshed out by participants’ discourse-world knowledge, memories and experiences. They are built through *world-building elements* (aspects of time, place and entities) and developed through *function-advancing propositions* (actions and events that propel the narrative forward and modify the contents of the initial text-world). In terms of grammar, world-builders are typically adverbs of time and place, noun phrases, preposition phrases and adjective phrases. Function-advancers are typically verbs.

Third, *world-switches* can occur when linguistic content triggers departures from the original text-world, through a shift in time or space. World-switches are typically marked by flashbacks/flashforwards, metaphor, negation, imperatives and modality.

Words on a page do not build complete text-worlds by themselves - texts only provide a limited amount of information about the worlds they project. So, when constructing text-worlds, participants must engage in a great deal of ‘gap-filling’, a process that exemplifies the creative nature of reading. This is an important aspect of world-based theories because it suggests that we model new experiences on what we already know. To illustrate, here are the first two lines from *Salvador*, a 2002 poem by Simon Armitage:

A polio spider
abseils the drop from the sink to the bath.

In my reading of this, I construct a text-world that consists of an eight-legged spider with black and red markings on its back, dropping rather quickly and intentionally from a sink to a bath, both of which are made from white porcelain. But there is nothing in the text that explicitly tells me the spider has eight legs or that the sink and bath are made from porcelain:

I draw on my knowledge of the actual world. Similarly, there is nothing that explicitly details the markings on the spider, but, for me, the noun *polio* triggers schematic knowledge of tropical disease which I then use to mentally ‘design’ the black and red markings, associating such colours with dangerous and poisonous insects. Different readers may well construct a different text-world, and Text World Theory is able to account for such variation because of the way the discourse-world acts as a filter for a reader’s knowledge. Figure 1 is an example of how Text World Theory uses diagrams to show how the different conceptual levels work together in the world-building process:

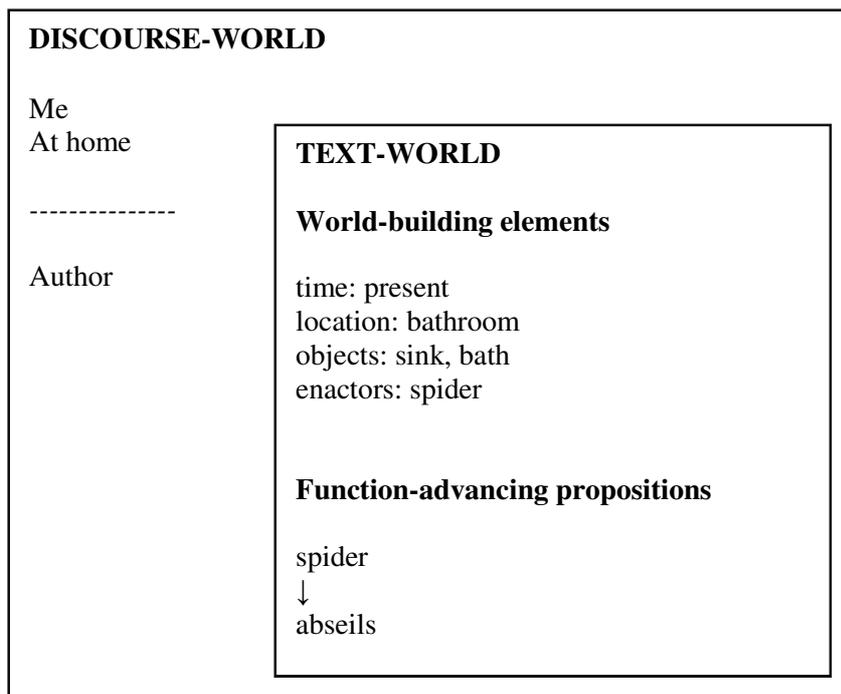


Figure 1: Text World Theory diagram for the opening lines of *Salvador*.

In this diagram, the discourse-world layer shows information about the reader (me) and the writer (Simon Armitage), with the dotted line indicating the split in time and space between us. The text-world layer is then projected from the discourse-world, indicating how writer intention and reader background knowledge contribute to its construction. World-building elements are shown, as are function-advancers. Here, the downward arrow is used to show a change in state, reflecting the physical movement of the spider which modifies the initial text-world.

4.1 Text World Theory as a tool for teaching grammar

The grammatical content in the 2013 National Curriculum for England and the introduction of the GPS tests have meant that children are leaving primary school with a significant body of grammatical knowledge. I argue that secondary school teachers have a responsibility to maintain and build on on this knowledge, and that in doing so, it opens up a wealth of opportunities for detailed and invigorating language work. But how can secondary teachers make sure that KS2 grammatical knowledge is maintained and developed? Of course, there is no ‘one size fits all’ way of teaching grammar, but as a starting point, the research evidence

points to a contextualised approach (e.g. Myhill et al. 2012). Text World Theory offers opportunities to learn about language in relation to context, meaning and authorial choices, and is concept-driven. This presents an alternative to the terminology-led, feature-spotting approach to grammar teaching that has little to say about linguistic meaning. Terms such as ‘text-world’ and ‘world-builders’ are refreshingly clear and offer systematic alternatives to vague and often ill-defined terms such as ‘imagery’, ‘mental images’ and how texts ‘paint a picture in the mind’. Previous work has demonstrated Text World Theory’s pedagogical potential, both as a creative-writing toolbox (Scott 2016), and as a method of poetry analysis (Giovanelli 2010; 2016a; 2016b), although more empirical work is needed.

Whilst the debate around grammar in schools goes on, Text World Theory offers a plausible and innovative method that is likely to be attractive to English teachers, because of its contextualised and rigorous stylistic principles. But as Clark (2010: 52 - 53) suggests, if a theoretical grammar is to be successfully recontextualised into a pedagogical one, there needs to be ways in which this transformation happens so that all teachers can understand and access it, regardless of their own educational background and knowledge, as well as it being ‘compatible’ with the remainder of the English curriculum. Perhaps a good starting point for such a recontextualisation is to highlight an important difference, as first advocated by Giovanelli (2014: 36 – 7): the suggestion is not that teachers ‘teach Text World Theory’ but instead ‘use Text World Theory as a way of thinking’. That is, using the A TEXT IS A WORLD metaphor to inform lesson design and classroom talk, considering the importance of reader background knowledge in the world-building process and ensuring a linguistic focus during the analysis of literary texts.

In the next section, I show practical ways in which Text World Theory concepts can ‘map on’ to National Curriculum grammar to provide an intuitive and accessible method for teaching aspects of language and literature.

5 Research design

I now illustrate a case study of how two teachers made use of reader-response theory in their teaching, in a series of lessons with Year 7 (age 11 - 12) students. Data is taken from across the lessons. The teachers were interested in language and linguistics, and one had attended a workshop on stylistics co-run by me and other academics. One teacher was particularly frustrated with the over-reliance on what he saw as ‘stock responses’ from his students when discussing poetry, and saw Text World Theory as a way to try and challenge this. Basic terms such as *text-world* and *world-builder* had been introduced to his students throughout the year, and had become part of their vocabulary. Both were keen to teach aspects of grammar during poetry lessons, and to explore the potential of Text World Theory to do so. The lessons were based on Marianne Moore’s poem *A Jelly-Fish* (1959), which is reprinted here:

A Jelly-Fish

Visible, invisible,
 a fluctuating charm
 an amber-tinctured amethyst
 inhabits it, your arm
 approaches and it opens
 and it closes; you had meant
 to catch it and it quivers;
 you abandon your intent.

Marianne Moore was an American poet associated with the imagist movement, and *A Jelly-Fish* is typical of her precise and condensed linguistic style. The poem features world-building elements that trigger a rich text-world: the title, pre-modified noun phrases such as *fluctuating charm* and *amber-tinctured amethyst*, as well as function-advancing propositions mostly in the form of simple present tense verbs: *inhabits*, *approaches*, *opens* and *quivers*. Yet there is still a significant amount of gap-filling that the reader must do, in terms of locating the jelly-fish within an ocean environment and perhaps populating this with other sea creatures and such relevant detail. Furthermore, the grammar of the second-person *you* and the possessive determiner *your* work to bring the reader into the text-world themselves, blurring the boundary between discourse-world and text-world. Because the discourse-world reader and the text-world enactor are pointed to at the same time, the stylistic effect is one of transportation and immersion, where readers feel that they are within a text-world and it is their own arm reaching out to catch the jelly-fish.

The lesson design centred around two main objectives: (1) to generate discussion around the nature of the world-building process, and (2) to explore how the grammar of the poem creates a sense of reader immersion. The lesson plan was as follows:

- Students are shown a copy of the poem *without the title*. Students read the poem individually and discuss what kind of text-world is triggered, and why. Share ideas as a class.
- Teacher reveals the title of the poem, generating discussion around how and why text-worlds have changed as a result of new information.
- Students sketch their new text-world and write justifications for this. Compare images and explain the world-building process to each other, in terms of grammatical patterns, word choices and their own background knowledge.
- Class discussion of important world-builders in positioning the reader and creating a sense of immersion, with a focus on the second-person pronoun and possessive determiners.

6 Analysis

6.1 World-building

The poem's title is a key world-builder, and a neat way of highlighting the world-building process was to only reveal the title *after* students had discussed what they thought the poem was describing. Ideas from students were imaginative and varied: the majority thought of concrete nouns such as a butterfly, a bubble, a firefly and a golden snitchⁱ, and some thought of more abstract concepts such as hope or aspirationsⁱⁱ. One or two students thought it might be a jelly-fish, but this was not assigned a 'correct' answer by the teacher. During this discussion they offered reflective comments on the world-building process and enjoyed the fact that there was no 'wrong' answer. Because students were asked to focus their attention on the kinds of images their own minds were conjuring up, there was no anxiety or worry about any 'deeper meanings' of the poem, and they were able to enjoy the time and space to reflect on the experience of the reading process itself. After this discussion, the teacher revealed the title of the poem, asking students to consciously reflect on their own text-worlds:

T: *ok I'm going to show you the title now and I want you to monitor very carefully what happens in your mind (.) when I show you the title, all of your text-worlds are going to drastically change and I want you to really try and concentrate on this*

(title is revealed, to gasps and wows)

let's read the poem again [reads poem] so what's happened now?

Zara provided a particularly detailed version of her new text-world:

well now I see a jelly-fish (.) with a blue background and you see it but then you can't see it it's really purpleley with spots of orange and you go up to it but you can't reach it and it just keeps on moving away from you like when you try and reach the stars every time you get close they go further away

In Text World Theory terms, this is known as the process of *world-repair* or *world-replacement* (Gavins 2007: 141 - 142), where readers are forced to update or replace their text-worlds as a result of new information. Because communication is dynamic, participants are constantly having to increment new information into their mental representations, and text-worlds have the potential to shift and change at any given moment. Zara's response also highlights the creative nature of reading that world-based models argue is such an important part of the meaning-making process. She fills in gaps for herself: the 'blue background' and 'spots of orange' are not information found in the text itself, but are added in via her own background and schematic knowledge of oceans and sea creatures. She also draws on intertextual connections to help flesh out her own unique text-world, in her mention of 'reaching to the stars', building deeper metaphorical connections that the poem evokes for her.

The importance of a reader's background knowledge becomes even more evident during the next task, where students were asked to create visual representations of the poem. The use of images as a teaching tool is well documented (e.g. Benton 1992, 2000; Giovanelli 2016a; 2016b), and they allow for the material expression of abstract thoughts, as well as a useful way of explicitly showing the world-building process (Giovanelli 2016: 3 - 4). Indeed, Benton (1992: 29 - 32) suggests that mental images are the primary source of meaning for a reader, and that their use is part of a chain of meaning-making: writers shape their mental images via words into a text, and readers interpret a text into mental images and meaning. Figure 2 is a visual representation of Arabella's text-world:



Figure 2: Arabella's visual representation

Arabella's drawing shows a high level of engagement with the text, and she has shown how salient world-builders of noun and adjective phrases (*jelly-fish; hand; amber-tinted*) feed into her text-world. She also uses her own background and schematic knowledge of oceans, adding detail such as light refraction, which is presumably based on her own experiences of the sea but also cued up by the 'ethereal' quality of the poem, something that students commented on when discussing world-building as a group and in their own written annotations of the text:

These words conjure up a sense of grace, amethyst hints at a vivid purple colour with amber accents. Fluctuating charm seems quite graceful and delicate and hints at a sense of rarity or preciousness

This gives me really good imagery [...] I understand the different 'magical' colours that are flickering on the skin of the jelly fish (specifically purple due to the amethyst and red tint). The fluctuating charm gives me the idea of colour shifting and shape shifting

Activities like this, where students are encouraged to reflect on the way that their own background knowledge contributes to building a text-world can be an empowering experience for young readers. They also provide opportunities for meta-reflection on the reading process itself and serve to 'validate' their readings and interpretations as authentic and acceptable, rather than relying on the teacher to provide 'answers'.

6.2 The grammar of immersion

A striking pattern across verbal and written discussions of the poem was the feeling that students had of being part of or 'immersed' (Gerrig 1993) within the fictional world of the poem. Student comments revealed the 'invitation' they had felt in entering the world of the poem, a feeling that is represented in Figure 2. Many of the student drawings followed this same pattern, showing a single arm and hand reaching out from the bottom of the frame, towards a jelly-fish within the centre. This phenomenon was the source of much lively discussion across the lessons, as in the following exchange:

- T: *so what does the text-world look like to you now?*
 Eve: *like a blue background with loads of jelly-fish in it and a hand coming out to it*
 T: *is there a person?*
 Eve: *not a person just a hand (.) oh and an arm*
 T: *do you just see your arm?*
 Eve: *yeah because it says 'you' right so that means that you are doing it*

At this point, students were keen to use movement to show what they meant, with many of them bringing their arms to their face so that they looked down the length of them, in an attempt to replicate the text-worlds within their minds. Although this was not a planned part of the lesson, it could be easily integrated and established into a more formal activity.

Once the concept of immersion had been discussed as a class, attention turned to the grammar of the text, in trying to account for which words and grammatical patterns were responsible for creating such readerly effects. After students had suggested that the second-person *you* and the possessive determiner *your* were responsible for creating the feeling of

immersion, students wrote down their ideas and thoughts on their own copies of the poem. These notes were similarly revealing about how the poem invited them to feel part of its world, but many students were now able to use grammatical knowledge to help qualify their ideas and engage in a more stylistically-orientated analysis:

It really brings the reader into the world of the poem, it makes them feel involved, as if they're trying to catch the jelly fish.

Suddenly bringing me into the poem, I am included, suddenly like my eyes are capturing what's happening like a camera, suddenly I am part of the poem

A second-person pronoun, which can introduce another character into the text-world. Another person (you) is completing the action

The possessive determiner points directly at me, like I am there as part of the poem, it's my arm

In Text World Theory terms, the pronoun *you* creates blurred boundaries between different world levels – participants in the discourse world become a text-world enactor, where they are able to interact and be part of the text-world itself. A sense of textual cohesion is built up through the use of the second-person *you* and the possessive determiner *your*, as both words work together to create the sense of immersion within the text-world of the poem. Students were encouraged to explore how such cohesion was created, by tracking and monitoring their own conceptual shifts through the poem, describing this through speaking, writing and movement. The Text World Theory approach allowed students to see the complexities of the poem and begin to understand how discourse-world and text-world layers can become blurred. Such discussion was evident of their engagement in literary criticism and stylistics at the same time.

Crucially, because the concept of immersion had been discussed first, this placed attention on readerly effects and meanings rather than terminology. It was only *after* students were comfortable with the concept of immersion that terminology was introduced, and this was strongly linked back to readers' interpretations. This way of teaching grammar is concept-driven and contextualised, empowering students to explain language use systematically. At the same time, it avoids pitfalls such as an over-reliance on technical terms for their own sake, and seems to me to be an inherently natural way of thinking about how language works: concept first, terminology second, connections third. This approach is in line with Giovanelli (2014: 7 - 8), who argues that an over-reliance on terminology can often lead to barriers in learning about how language actually operates. This is not to say that terminology is not important, but instead that it should be taught in a way that provides a toolkit for analytical and conceptual understandings. Because the majority of students in the lessons had taken the KS2 GPS tests, they were familiar with terms such as pronoun and determiner, and lesson activities such as the ones presented here allowed students to build on their grammatical knowledge by defining terms further and discussing them in a literary context.

7 Conclusions

World-based models, reading and grammar

I have shown how teachers who drew upon world-based models of reader-response aimed to provide spaces for authentic readings and a concept-driven approach to grammar. Text World Theory and Transactional Theory share a number of similarities and values: that reading is a transaction between text and reader; that the reader is a crucial part of the meaning making process, and that a contextually-sensitive approach must be adopted. I argue that they can inform ways of thinking about reading in the classroom, suggesting that a blending of the theories offers an enabling, accessible and powerful pedagogy that serves to foreground the reader's autonomy and authenticity as a meaning-maker. For many students, even being asked to think so much about their own minds during the reading process was clearly a novelty: level of engagement was high, and the students enjoyed being asked so explicitly about their own mental representations.

Work still remains in order to successfully recontextualise Text World Theory into a fully usable pedagogy for school teachers, but this paper has shown that it can be mapped onto National Curriculum grammar content and be beneficial for teachers and students. Although this study was limited to looking at a small number of grammatical features, Text World Theory has the potential to be fully mapped onto the formal and functional labels of National Curriculum grammar. Perhaps more importantly, it also offers ways of developing knowledge about language *beyond* grammatical form and function: metaphor, negation, pragmatics, foregrounding, narrative, and so on.

Subject knowledge

I have argued elsewhere (Cushing 2014) that English teachers who identify as 'literature specialists' should be willing to engage in developing their own knowledge about language, in the same way that those who identify as 'language specialists' must do for literature. Because much of Text World Theory research is based on the analysis of literary texts, has strong connections with reader-response theory and literary criticism, it is a particularly attractive model for teachers who see themselves as literature specialists and wish to learn more about how language works. However, there is certainly more work to be done to engage those teachers who feel resistant or anxious about language study, especially in providing training and attempting to change some of the negative discourse surrounding grammar. Workshops for teachers on Text World Theory, such as those offered by myself and others, have attempted to engage with this issue, as indicated by participants' feedback from these:

Particularly enjoyed the grammar focused session and idea of using text-worlds to allow students to apply terminology

Provided clear approaches that can be easily slotted into lessons

Opportunity to apply theory/research in the classroom

Comments such as these are encouraging, but the fact remains that teacher confidence in linguistics is a potential barrier to using a text-world approach in the classroom. Although I argue it is an accessible model, the teachers involved in this research were motivated to learn about linguistics and one came from a linguistics background. Understandably, teachers with a literature background may well feel differently, as is suggested in research around teacher attitudes towards grammar and language, such as that by Giovanelli (2015) and Watson (2015). Studies such as these found that many practitioners conceptualised linguistic terminology as 'really scary', expressing deep concerns related to a lack of confidence, and associating grammar with prescriptivism and decontextualised approaches. However, not all

teachers subscribed to the view that grammar is threatening and dull – Watson’s data, in line with results from Safford (2016), also revealed an oppositional discourse that positioned grammar as inspiring, fascinating and empowering. Giovanelli’s (2015) results indicated that teachers felt knowing more about language had a positive impact upon their teaching and professional identity as a whole. Crucially, across such studies, teachers that reported more positive attitudes towards grammar also had a secure and confident grasp of linguistic subject knowledge. If we are to encourage teachers to make more use of linguistics in the classroom and take up stylistics as a teaching tool, then we must increase provision for linguistic subject knowledge in pre-service and in-service training. Many teachers are motivated to find out more about linguistics (and are increasingly required to, given National Curriculum changes), but more support is needed to do this.

It is hoped that studies such as the one here present an accessible and usable pedagogical framework for thinking about how language works in the classroom. Given recent advances in linguistics (especially cognitive linguistics and stylistics), as well as a revived commitment to grammar in the National Curriculum, there is a prime opportunity to develop ways of teaching grammar. This paper, and others before it, show an emerging set of principles for carrying out an exploratory, engaging and stylistically-robust pedagogical grammar that are likely be in line with English teacher’s views. The research presented here builds on previous work by showing how world-based models can be used as an accessible and concept-driven method of teaching National Curriculum grammar, as well as demonstrating the value of reader-response theories in general.

ⁱ A small winged golden ball, from the *Harry Potter* books.

ⁱⁱ Similar answers are given by adults in response to this task, as during teacher workshops on Text World Theory.

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