

# Dual Implementation of the Dual Nature and Dialogue in Extensive Reading —A New Perspective of Reading *A Unicorn in the Garden*\*

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**Abstract**—This paper attempts to show a new perspective to read James Thurber’s famous short story—*A Unicorn in the Garden* in the extensive reading class by the way of analyzing the dual dialogues in it based on Halliday’s explanation to his interpersonal function, thus studies the dual implementation of its dual nature: first, to realize the conversation between the heroin and hero through the analysis of their unconventional dialogues; and then realize the actual conversation between the writer and the readers. In this way, students’ interest in extensive reading can be motivated to some degree; furthermore, it can provide students with a new and relatively easy way to combine the learning of basic subjects with more professional ones; finally, students can be aware of the multi-disciplinary demand for the purpose of training excellent English majors with all-around education and providing them with the chance to improve and challenge themselves in extensive reading classroom.

**Index Terms**—interpersonal function, dual dialogue, dual nature, mood, subject, finite, statement

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading has always been studied by both language teachers and researchers and the significance of it has already been recognized. Alderson (2004) once argues that reading’s the most important skill to master. Deanne (1995) emphasizes that when students learn to read well, they can read anything they wanted. However, the atmosphere of learning and teaching in extensive reading is not satisfying enough. Several researchers and teachers try to search for effective methods to improve the current situation, but they find it’s not an easy task. Short story is one of the most common genres appearing in extensive reading materials. The way to deal with short stories partly decides on the teaching efficiency of this course. Halliday made great contribution to linguistics and students always need to make great efforts to understand his theories. Few teachers or researchers try to help their students to combine finding out the fascination of appreciating short stories with interpreting Halliday’s theory in a relatively simpler way in extensive reading class, which just aims to motivate the students to read and lay the challenge for improving and developing themselves.

### A. Reading and Extensive Reading

Reading always plays a critical role in language learning and teaching, and it’s “a complex, multifaceted pursuit” (Koda, 2007, p.227). Even though both the teachers and students can recognize its prominent position, the challenging situation often happens in extensive teaching class. Students are either lack of interest of reading because of the vocabulary problems or lost in the superficial plots there even facing to the most classic short stories in the world.

Given the significance of reading in language learning and teaching, it’s worth revitalizing the nature of reading not only in theory, but also in practice to find an exact approach to extensive reading teaching, which must make a difference to second language teaching and learning (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Several researchers and teachers commit to studying the reasons and try to solve the not satisfying atmosphere in extensive reading classroom.

### B. Focus and Necessity in Extensive Reading

Current researches on reading mainly concentrate on grasping four key elements in a process of making meaning from print. Alderson (2011) argues that the process of reading is “the interaction between a reader and the text” (p.3). In the process, readers combine information from a text and their own background knowledge with meaning building, which involves readers’ ability to read at an appropriate rate with adequate comprehension and to use a wide variety of reading strategies to accomplish a purpose for reading. In reading teaching, intensive reading and extensive reading are

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the two basic approaches. "Extensive reading is reading of longer passages with a focus on enjoyment and/or learning new information while reading" (Nunan, 2013, p.8). In order to achieve the reading comprehension including literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, critical or evaluative comprehension, appreciative comprehension, applied linguistics emphasize that extensive reading must be above a certain amount to develop a good reading habit and raise their interest for reading by gradually accumulating the knowledge of vocabulary and language structure. Therefore, reading more to cultivate the language sensibility for English learning is crucial for both beginners and advanced or intermediate-level learners. While, for the learners with intermediate or advanced level, on the one hand, they should learn to conclude, summarize the authors' ideas and opinions; on the other hand, they need to melt these ideas and opinions with their own ones, actually they prefer to further develop their own opinions by reading to acquire English efficiently (Oxford, 1990). Based on improving students' reading ability, extensive reading class should provide a chance to experience the sense of achievement by reading to deal with difficult problems. In English extensive reading class, to find a proper perspective and combine it with a challenging analysis is an accessible way to raise students' interest of reading according to the author's teaching experience. The analysis for the exact materials in extensive reading class must get contact with other major fields; however, it should be different from them to stand out the unique character of extensive reading class. Extensive reading class can act as a bridge to connect some cross disciplinary areas (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Once students, especially the ones with intermediate or advanced level, can get some essential knowledge about the difficult subject they'll study on, they can get proper psychological preparation for the difficulty of their future study and their interest of reading can be aroused with necessary foundation laid in due time. Researches for extensive reading, which based on the second language reading theory, almost focus on reading assessment, reading skills, reading problems and reading strategies in and out of reading class. In actual extensive reading classroom, students are easy to be lost in difficult words and outstanding characters. Even though, the analysis for characters is interesting to some degree, some students still neglect the deeper perspective to explore the textual codes arranged by the author. Due to this, their interest in extensive reading class can't last for long. In the author's opinion, the key to successful extensive reading class lies not only in providing students with information from the texts, but in providing them with a chance to experience new perspective to get insights into the passages, especially the short stories; it should aim to provide a challenge to understanding deeply; to provide an awareness to get rid of cross-disciplinary barriers; to provide a goal to be advanced readers. In order to achieve this, extensive reading classroom must emphasize the significance of designing and help students to autonomously explore the challenging part of it to lay a foundation for other disciplinaries consciously. For the students who are not proficient enough, teachers' modeling and scaffolding seems extremely important (Harmer, 2007). Students should be encouraged to construct their own way of reading by trying to analyze the materials creatively and bravely.

### C. Short Stories in Extensive Reading Class

Short stories appear more frequently in extensive reading class, comparing with the novels and poems, etc. Teachers get used to adopting the traditional way of studying literature, which usually involves consulting the background knowledge about the era, the society and the authors; then they guide students to explore the implied meaning of the titles; read between the lines to beyond the lines to get insights into the author's original purpose and the implicit meaning; next, it's necessary for the readers to analyze the characters, their features and the relationship among them and to exact era; they'd better know the clues to connect the different sections and how the ending correlates to the beginning to emphasize feature of that era; in all, readers should always ask themselves several questions to clarify not only the content of the story, the background information about the era; but also why the author wrote them; what his intention was; and how he organized it and why he arranged it like this; what the advantage of organizing in this way was and what the advantages of wording in the story were. Reading is like a journey and every journey is a pursuit (Foster, 2016). As reading teachers, she should lead students to find a unique way of experiencing the colorful life by reading short stories; she should teach students to explore something beneath the story's surface, that's the thing left untold and unfulfilled because of its brevity (Hamilton & Kratzke, 1999). As readers, it's a good chance to experience a new way of life. It requires the readers to create a mental world by using textual codes, especially authors' different ideas in order to get a better understanding towards the life. According to the author's experience in teaching extensive reading, extensive reading class should not just aim to build students' reading skills to promote reverence for literature; they need to motivate students to discover their own reading innovation point and apply them autonomously to explore human nature. Both the students and teachers should play an active role in the process of doing so. If the teacher can find a new angle to analyze, students can experience the freshness and the challenge can stimulate them to read to get more knowledge, not just the short story itself.

## II. THE NATURE OF DIALOGUE

Halliday puts forward three language metafunctions in his *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*: ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. And he defines interpersonal function as: that people use language to communicate with others, establish and maintain relationship, influence others' behaviors and express their opinions. (Halliday, 2000)

He also studies the realization of interpersonal function from grammatical level, that is, from the perspectives of

mood, modality. With its organization as a message, the clause is also organized as an interactive event involving speaker, or writer, and audience. According to his opinion, “in the act of speaking, the speaker adopts for himself a particular speech role, and in so doing assigns to the listener a complementary role which he wishes him to adopt in his turn”(Halliday, 2000, p.68). The most fundamental and hidden types of speech roles are giving and demanding. There lies an interaction between the speaker and the listener. When the speaker is doing something, he is also requiring something. It is an exchange, in which giving implies receiving and demanding implies giving in response. The commodity being exchanged is either goods-&-services or information. Halliday also defines the four primary speech functions as offer, command, statement and question. “These, in turn, are matched by a set of desired responses: accepting an offer, carrying out a command, acknowledging a statement and answering a question” (Halliday, 2000, p.69).

### III. THE DUAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DUAL NATURE IN THE APPRECIATION OF THE SHORT STORY IN EXTENSIVE READING CLASS

The author tries to appreciate the famous short story *The Unicorn in the Garden* by analyzing the theory of speech functions. The author limits her study to just concentrate on the analysis of the simple dialogues between the husband and his wife, even though there are only three short conversations between them. She intends to prove that the dialogue here breaks the common rules of speech functions and responses. Just because of the breaking of the common rules, the readers can read out the different kind of relationship between the hero and the heroine. And it's useful and possible for readers to understand the real implied meaning among the simple words which can help them to capture the essence of the short story.

In order to make the point above understood, the author ticked out the conversations between the husband and the wife in the story and edited in the common way of dialogue, in which readers could see their same external pattern. With the author's analysis, readers could get the exact meaning hidden between the lines.

(1) Husband: “There's a unicorn in the garden,” he said. “Eating roses.”

Wife: “The unicorn is a mythical beast,” she said...

According to Halliday's theory, in the act of speaking, the speaker adopts for himself a particular speech role, and in so doing assigns to the listener a complementary role which he wishes him to adopt in his turn (Halliday, 2000). The husband here gives a statement to his wife, and what he desires is the acknowledging of the statement from his wife. Even though the husband doesn't add a tag to the statement, he really needs a response. It's a common way for the wife to respond like: “Is there? Yes, it's eating roses.” This is the typical interaction between the speaker and the listener; it is an exchange, in which giving implies receiving and demanding implies giving in response. The husband here is waiting for his wife's acknowledging, at least her interest to know more. But the wife answered: “The unicorn is a mystical beast.” with her unfriendly expression and her indifferent action of turning her back on him, which obviously shows her distrust. As readers, it's easy for them to be impressed with the wife's uncommon response. Readers' interests are inclined to be aroused to guess the relationship between the husband and wife; and why do the couple communicate with each other like this? Does the author want to tell readers something more with this intentional arrangement? When the readers think a lot, then they can find the enjoyable process of reading, in which they always try to communicate with the passage writer spiritually. The analyzing of the dialogue between the husband and his wife not only serves as a way to know more about the relationship among the characters in the short story, but an access to talk with the writer and touch the soul of the writer, thus, readers can realize the dual dialogue in reading. More examples from this short story can prove this and the extensive reading teachers' task is to guide their students to explore such perspective.

(2) Husband: “The unicorn,” he said, “ate a lily.”

Wife: “You are a booby,” she said, “and I am going to have you put in the booby-hatch.”

In the second dialogue, the husband told the wife that the unicorn had ate a lily. This unicorn was an exciting event in his otherwise dull boring life, therefore he went upstairs to share with his wife. He's giving a statement and he's requiring an acknowledgment. The response required should be: “Really? Yes, he did eat a lily.” This should be the expected response. Instead, his wife not only showed disgust with the story, she actually threatened to send him to a mental hospital. She called him “booby” and she was going to have him put in the booby-hatch. “Booby”, in this context, means a crazy person. The booby-hatch is a mental institution, a place where the insane are kept. It's hard for the readers to imagine that the wife treated her husband in this way. Readers' imaginations could be stirred by the words here. Did the husband always do anything so strange before that the wife couldn't stand it anymore? What did he do? How terrible relationship between the husband and the wife! With the speculation and astonishment in readers' mind, they usually wanted to go on their reading and they were eager to know what's going on and verify their guessing.

(3) Husband: “We'll see about that,” he said.

Wife: (no answer)

Husband: “He has a golden horn in the middle of his forehead,” he told her.

Wife: (no answer)

In the third dialogue, the “interact” is similar to the first two dialogues, or we should say there's no interaction at all, but the husband's monologue. The husband's statement is lack of the expected response from his wife. He said two statements here. For the first statement, he said “we'll see about that”, he made himself be involved. This is not a

common giving. Maybe he needed the wife's contradiction to him. For the second statement, it's a kind of giving. The expected response should be a kind of acknowledgment, like "Does he? Yes, he has a golden horn in the middle of his forehead." But the husband didn't wait for his wife's response at all; he went back to the garden.

From the wife's point of view, maybe her husband was crazy because there is no such animal as unicorn in real life and her husband claimed to find one in their garden eating roses, lilies, etc. But the husband would say that he was simply being imaginative and creative. And the policeman and psychiatrist would decide that the woman was insane to say such things about her husband. In real life we find the same dilemma often. It was difficult to decide who was telling the truth and normal, and who was not.

When the wife said that her husband was crazy and should be put in a nuthouse, he said: "We'll see about that," which meant "We'll see who will be put in a nuthouse." It was possible that at this moment he began to lay a trap for his wife. At the same time, the wife called the police with a gloat in her eyes and told them her husband was ill and needed a psychiatrist. From the perspective of literature appreciation, this was another evidence to show their special relationship by which the author of the story showed his own attitude towards the marriage, love, etc. By analyzing their speeches, it's obvious that they did not love each other. They did not even have much to say to each other. The husband said that he saw a unicorn; he was either dreaming or making it all up. It could be an attempt to start a conversation with his wife, but the wife was cold to him and refused to show any interest. In this story, the author seems to show his sarcastic attitude toward love, marriage and human relationship in general. The wife in the story did not believe what her husband said at all. And if he meant it to be a joke, she did not enjoy the joke either. She thought her husband had gone crazy, but if he had, it did not worry her. Instead she was happy that now she had an excuse to get rid of him. It is a parody to the proverb: "Don't count your chickens before they are hatched," meaning that you mustn't be too confident that something will be successful. According to the nature of dialogue, we should say they are not successful dialogues in terms with the functional grammar. But just because of the lack of the nature of dialogue with which we are familiar, the short story becomes more charming. It's worth reading and researching its implied meaning between the lines. In fact, the real fun comes in and the true value of reading realizes when students try to appreciate short stories in this way.

#### IV. THE REALIZATION OF THE INTERACTION BY MOOD SYSTEM

When coming to look closely at statements and questions, and at the various responses to which these naturally give rise, students can find that in English they are typically expressed by means of a particular kind of grammatical variation; variation which extends over just one part of the clause, leaving the remainder unaffected. It is called the mood, and it consists of two parts: (1) the Subject, which is a nominal group, and (2) the Finite operator, which is part of a verbal group (Halliday, 2000). The conversations above can be divided into eight complete sentences and the author of the story used the Primary tense to show them, including past, present and future at the moment of speaking, it is time relative to 'now'. Modality means the speaker's judgment of the probabilities, or the obligation, involved in what is speaking. Just from the simple conversations here, it's hard to understand the modality. In order to retain the characteristics of extensive reading, the teacher needn't to analyze the consisting parts of the modality elements sentence by sentence, but they are obliged to provide a chance for the students who are interested in researching to know more. What they can do in extensive reading class is to show their students a direction to investigate the similar structures among typical sentences which embody the general principle behind the expression of mood in the clause. Hence the mood element has a clearly defined semantic function: it carries the burden of the clause as an interactive event. So it remains constant, as the nub of the proposition, unless some positive step is taken to change it. If the readers can learn to appreciate the short stories in this way, they will not only understand more about the authors' attention and something more beyond the words, but also meet the demands of their inner desire to get improved in English by reading, especially the ones with intermediate and advanced levels.

In order to understand the interpersonal meaning of conversation, readers need to know exactly about the structure of Mood. Halliday believed that the four primary speech functions of offer, command, statement and question are realized by Mood. Apart from analyzing the nature of the dialogue mentioned above, students had better be lead to study more about the main Mood elements in these statements to understand the construction of its interpersonal meaning, which aims to bridge the gap between basic subjects and more professional ones and lay some challenges for students with intermediate and advancing levels. In this way, extensive reading teachers can put the goal of developing students' interdisciplinary ability into practice naturally and then students can judge their ability and learning demands from a different perspective.

#### V. CONCLUSION

According to the author's years of extensive reading teaching experience, effective measures are waiting to be proved and can be taken by the teachers to change the not satisfying teaching and learning atmosphere in it. The most significant point is to find out the best matches, that it, some kind of the measures only can be effective enough when it was adopted to solve the corresponding problems. This paper plans to prove that some English majors lose interest in extensive reading class is because they can't be satisfied, especially they can't find the point to push them ahead. If the teacher can help them to explore a new perspective to appreciate the articles, at the same time, they can recognize the

difficulty and the necessity of laying wide range of foundations for future study by raising the difficulty in analyzing the seemingly simple short stories, which can definitely stimulate the spirit to challenge in their mind. Then, to get the nature of extensive reading and to solve other problems in English learning is not a trouble for them.

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