

Globalization, Hypertext and Literature: Changes in Authoring and Reading

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Abstract

The main purpose of the paper is to shed the light on the effect of hypertext on the role of reading and authoring, after the spread of globalization in the entire world. Since its appearance, Globalization has affected all the economic, political and technological environments and changed the behavior of consumer in general and reader and author in particular. Several empirical investigations are carried out to determine the impact of hypertext and technological advances on readers and authors, these surveys showed changes in the behavior of the two actors of literature: readers and writers. The present paper provides a new analysis framework to find out the changes occurred in modern literature, and raised some arguments in accordance with the contribution of several authors.

Keywords: hypertext, literary reading, links, eBook, authoring

Introduction

Globalization and high technology has recorded a huge spread in all fields surrounding modern life, the technological advance recorded by the globe during the last two decades, has played a vital role as highway to ensure the comfort of consumers, it leads to change the behavior of customers in general and readers in particular. The advent of the internet in early nineties necessitate the appearance of hypertext as a new medium of communication and a new tool of expression available for writers and authors. This paper is an attempt to shed the light on the changes occurred in writing style recently, especially the literary one, due to the use of hypertext as new way of authoring.

I- Hypertext and Globalization

Hypertext refers to the digital aspect of a text that reflects information through: media, video, text, figure etc. Also, Hypertext could be defined as a collection of documents including some references or provides the access to other information about the same issue, through some links, allowing the reader to formulate some knowledge about a specific topic.

I - 1 – Globalization

For Globalization, we could define it as the changes occurred to societies and the world economic, political, and cultural aspects, it is highly depending on the increase of international trade and multiplicity of cultural exchange. Many authors consider globalization as a phenomenon marked by the rapid changes in technology, specifically in transport and communications, allowed all the observers to consider the world as a global village¹.

Global village is a notion to sum up the rapidity of electronic mass media and hypertext through the decrease of time barriers in human communication, authorizing people to interact and share the same living conditions. Definitely, the change of the globe to a village is the direct result of the spread of electronic mass media and concentration on using hypertext technology in the internet, to facilitate the diffuse of information.

The “global village” as a term is mostly utilized as a metaphor to argue the spread of internet and World Wide Web and to insist on the pivotal role of internet in the life of consumers and readers.

¹Leu, D. J. (2001). Exploring literacy on the internet: Internet Project: Preparing students for new literacies in a global village. *The reading teacher*, 568-572.

In fact, we could argue that the hypertext had facilitated the communication on networks through authorizing people to connect and share information among them. In fact, the rapid enhancement of networks and computers allowed users to share their knowledge and stay informed together.

Some authors consider globalization as the end of the nation-state concept and the eradication of national boundaries, facilitating the network implementing among places. Currently, almost all the world is interconnected and the spread of the network growth are rising rapidly beyond all previous estimations. From geographic perspective, the connectivity process remains to be complex, where we witnessed the creation of many types of connections due to the advent of new protocols and high technological advances.

For many authors, Globalization and computer technology seems to be joined, and without the rapid evolution of computers, the globalization would never appear.

The formation of financial poles such as New York, London and Tokyo are the direct consequence of the evolution and the spread of new communication technologies, facilitating the decentralization process, one of the most important concept for the advent of globalization (SaskiaSassen, 2001).

I - 2 - The Advent of Hypertext in Literature

In the literary area, we could highlight the advent of major changes in technology that affected the literary writing². Hypertext decentralizes the story and removes it from the ordinary context of storytelling in the sense of presenting different perspectives into the plot.

In fact, what distinguish the Hypertext as tool to diffuse text is its multilinearity, nodes, fragmentation, links, and networks. The major deduction to denote relied on altering the principal reader behavior through several aspects. Thus, we could infer that literary concentration changed its specific features, from linear and hierarchical to non-linear and open access to text.

Several studies assumed that hypertext has altered the readers by affecting the function of readers, they are no longer consumers, some readers also contributed in producing the text. Arguably, it changed the authors' behavior through accepting the desire of readers to decide the course of events in the novels, and to approve the contribution of readers to finalize the narrative, even if their text seems very different from the intention of the writer. We need more input on the theory of writerly and readerly text. In accordance with Landow (1992), the newest technology advance suggested variation between reading and writing texts, it seems necessary to mention the major difference between text printing technology and digital hypertext.

The previous classic texts were under the control of authors. Although, currently, the writer become under the control of the reader. Landow (1992) stressed that Hypertext provides a new re-centrable system whose emphasis depends upon the readers' interaction. The last made up one of the fundamental features of hypertext, enclosed in the essence of the term through connected texts.

According to Derrida's (1972), the digital book has altered the main focus of the text through the appearance of the hypertext in modern literature. For the author, the electronic book becomes a new method rather than a destination, altering not solely the diffusion of the text in time and space, but, also in the writing style. The text is estimated to be different for every individual depending on the resulted interaction of the reader with the main content and facts of the text.

The author assumed that in some cases, the same reader could make different interaction through the face when following the facts in the text. According to Derrida (1972), the major change of finding out the impact of hypertext on literature, remain in changing the function of the reader, from passive receiver to active participator. The references raised several arguments in accordance with the previous point, and therefore, ultimately, the electronic book is the direct product of the changes observed in the behavior of the reader, consolidated by the rapid growth of technology.

II- Literature Review

The question of hypertext and its impact on literature is not a new issue to debate, but a topic that recorded several theoretical enhancements and researches to find out the effect of the new way for authoring on internet.

²Bolter, J. (1991). Writing space: The computer, hypertext, and the history of writing.

II - 1 – Types of Hypertextual Literature

The review of theoretical advances regarding the topic of Hypertextual literature enabled us to classify it into two categories: exploratory and constructive.

For the exploratory type, the user is intended to interact with the text, but unable to modify individual lexica.

The best example to mention for the constructive hypertext is Wikipedia. The website enables the reader to read, to add and to edit the content of the articles and to introduce a new method of reading through navigation.

The constructive hypertexts are not citable, due to the continuous change in its content because it is open and subject of continuous reformation and expansion. The text of sites like Wikipedia is object of many updates, not like a printed version of text.

According to Lanham, the new digital medium will transmit texts for coming generations, just like: adaptation from novel. According to the author, in the bulk of the digital production, the electronic content differs slightly from the original and such transmission would not be effective. Lanham considered that Hypertext has definitely some significant effects through several studies in literature, regarding the text provision and the utilization of other resources in digital text transmission.

Birkerts (1994)³ underlined the harmful impact of hypertext on literature and its significant role in our culture. He underlined the weakening effect of electronic version to the main content of the printed version. Birkerts insists on the ruining impact of hypertext on literature and consider it as an act of murdering of the author. Birkerts underlined the significance of “subjective ecology of reading” that stimulate the reader to feel the power of the words, while reading among the lines of the book, the author assumes that the same feeling could not be reached with hypertext reading.

II - 2 – Changes of Role of Reader and Writer

The principal objective of the writer has also recorded a major change. In classical literature, authoring was focused on building up a new pattern to attract readers, to get him seduced by the facts of the story.

The modern reader becomes idler from literary perspective, he is considered to have some features that stems from several theoretical and empirical investigations. It is assumed to be serious, intransitive, has a good ability for writing, he is rational and able to accept and reject the text that seems for him not suitable. Landow (1992) considered any readerly text to be classical text, from literary perspective regarding the issue of the evolution of texts with the technological advances witnessed by humanity.

Hypertext systems provided a non-sequential texts including new means to describe the facts unlike classical literary texts. Such system is assumed to be sufficiently large to offer flexible entry to information through putting forward the ideas of navigation, notes, and customized presentation.

Based on the recommendations of several authors and theorists, the analysis of the possible relationship between hypertext and modern literature, revealed that electronic texts are changing the feelings of readers, and had affected their manner to organize their ideas.

III-Hypertext and Critical Theories

Hypertext has emerged a new pattern of authoring. The majority of papers and researches attempted to find out its major effects on contemporary literature. These papers allowed to denote that hypertext offered modern critical theory, the latter gave prime attention and attempted to identify the model or paradigm of the reader’s behavior on the network.

III - 1 – Networks and Hypertext

It stems from the abundant literature regarding the major contribution of hypertext, the existence of four or five deductions that can be highlighted from the actual hypertext systems and plans, which continues to affect the readers’ interactions.

³Dicks, B., & Mason, B. (1998). *Hypermedia and ethnography: Reflections on the construction of a research approach.*

First, previous works regarding hypertext gave prime attention for blocks, nodes that are joined by a network of hyperlinks and pathways. The network allowed to provide electronic infrastructure to link to digital media that seems to be suitable and appropriate to a published text.

Second, the fact of collecting texts from many authors and assembling their own contribution to the original version to build the final version of the manuscript, made up another type of network.

Third, the idea of network also means a digital system regarding additional computers as well as cables or wire connections that enable individual machines, workstations, and reading-and-writing sites to share facts.

The fourth concept relied on comparing the similarities of using the word in critical processing modern literature through networks.”

Several authors such as: Derrida, Nelson, Barthes and Van Dam attempted to find out the Hypertext influence on literary principle, they underlined the significance of the notion of systems that focuses on the center, peripheral, structure, and linearity and altered them by new other concepts such as: multilinearity, nodes, hyperlinks, and sites.

III - 2 – Networks and Changes of Authoring

Barthes considered the evolution of the networks to be the prime actor to stimulate the readers’ interaction, and assumed that the main content of any text is made up of a galaxy of signifiers, in the major meaning and not solely in the structure⁴. For the author, the networks changed the nature of the text, modern text of the digital medium are considered as a system of meanings that depend on the point of view of readers and the large number of languages.

According to Barthes, the non-linearity of the text in question includes some particular information about the electronic text. The author considered hypertext as a system of blocks of texts connected via links. It made up the case of the quoted notes, sections, chapters and the text in overall.

In addition, the statements discussed above made up the principal points raised by several researchers such as Barthes, highlighted by Derrida and Foucault. According to these authors, the reader has the ability to decide his position to accept the statement or to raise another argument in contradiction, the system provided the ability for active readers to argue some notes not suggested by the writer, deepening more and more the issue discussed. The existence of several functions of the hypertext, facilitated the task for active readers to interact with the content of the original text⁵.

The hypertext system provided for the reader and the writer the same technological environment for text producing. Then, opening the content of a text through a program or editor, facilitated to take notes, and to highlight some deductions, depending to the thoughts and the interaction resulting inside the readers. For others text, the reader isn’t able to change the original text but to reply to the content viewed, the link is generated automatically, it remains the major difference with a book.

The firm relationship between hypertext and literary theory could be summarized in the identification of a strong relationship joining the critics to the hypertext as a new style of writing in modern literature. In addition, authors⁶ considered hypertext as the most significant factor that changed the literary creation, the main aspects that recorded a change in literature are: textuality, narration, and the functions of writers and receivers.

IV-Review of Empirical Researches

Researchers had also raised other conclusions figured from their experiences that we could sum up as following:

Some keywords are utilized in speeches regarding hypertextuality, also argued as: multi-linear literature, intertextuality, interactive of readers, the changes of modern authors and readers’ role, and the argument underlining the fact that reader is taking the function of the author.

⁴Landow, G. P. (2006). Hypertext 3.0: Critical theory and new media in an era of globalization. JHU Press.

⁵Bayne, Siân, and Ray Land. "Learning in the Labyrinth: Hypertext and the changing roles of instructor and learner in higher education." World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia and Telecommunications. Vol. 2000.No. 1. 2000.

⁶Landow, G. P. (2006). Hypertext 3.0: Critical theory and new media in an era of globalization. JHU Press.

According to George P. Landow (1989)⁷, the relationships joining the hypertext concept to contemporary literary theories are real and significant. Landow (1989) also consolidated the argument of Barthes, considering that description in hypertext become true in modern literature. Landow raised a point in accordance with other authors, like: Derrida, Bakhtin and Riffaterre that hypertext is able to contain clearly the ideas and expose them effectively. Although, RaineKoskimaa are not in favor of the possible relationship that could exist between hypertext and poststructural ideas.

Espen Aarseth assumed that the reading process could be divided into 4 steps: “interpretation, navigation, configuration and writing” (Aarseth 1997). According to the traditional perspective, the most significant step is the interpretation of the reader.

IV - 2 - Findings

RaineKoskimaa (2007)⁸ highlighted that temporal dimension of any literary manuscript is the most important topic that should be highly debated when discussing the question of hypertext literature. Koskimaa⁹ stressed that with hypertext fiction, we are able to reduce the reading time and thus to decrease the life of the text.

The present analysis is firmly relevant to the criticism provided by Roland Barthes. Therefore, Landow thought that the most significant point of the present changes occurring in the information and high technology pushed Barthes to introduce the distinction between two major notions: reading and authoring texts.

The following notion seems necessary to identify the difference between text and the hypertext. According to Barthes (1974: 4), the purpose of modern literary essay is to attract the reader to the content of the work and to change the consumer’s role from passive reader to a text creator¹⁰. Also, Fish Stainly (1989)¹¹ has elaborated his own theory that puts forward the reader response to texts.

Although, we consider the reader to be more active and highly interested by manipulating the meaning enclosed in any text. He is contributing in creating texts. The investigation about the differences from utilizing the printed version and the hypertext, allowed us to infer:

Firstly, the investigation relied on comparing reading a printed version of a book, to reading the same book on a computer or tablet screen, showed the problem of portability (the case of personal computer), and it made reading somewhat tedious. For these readers, it seems more difficult to read from screens on bed or couch and could be less appropriate with the comfort ability of users. Although, Koskimaa argued also that reading from digital medium through the hypertext system offered some advantages compared to the printed version of a book.

Reading a digital book gave the user many options, such as: to choose the size and the style of font that seems more comfortable for the reader. The conclusions become more obvious, since the electronic book let the reader able to read from a large page and to organize the notes that he could take through reading.

Koskimaa argued that underlining some notes, seems to be highly different for a reader of an eBook compared to a printed book. First, in the electronic book, there is some links that directly refers to the reference of the writer, not necessary in conformity with the classic numbered list at the bottom of the main text. Second, the click on the link, opened another page including the reference in detailed for readers.

V- Interpretation and Recommendations

V - 1 – Hypertext and Readers

The new process stimulated the reader to interact with the text, as mentioned above, he also participated in the writing¹² of the text, he will find his-self engaged in the process of evolution of the text content. It seems obvious that hypertext writing is a renewed process for readers, to build linear texts such as essays and articles.

⁷Landow, G. P. (1989). Hypertext in literary education, criticism, and scholarship. *Computers and the Humanities*, 23(3), 173-198.

⁸Koskimaa, R. (2007). The challenge of cybertext: teaching literature in the digital world. *UOC papers*, 4, 1-10.

⁹Joyce, M. (2001). *Afternoon, a story*. Eastgate Systems.

¹⁰Miall, D., & Dobson, T. (2006). Reading hypertext and the experience of literature. *Journal of Digital Information*.

¹¹Fish, S. (1989). *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary & Legal Studies*. Duke University Press.

¹²Miall, D., & Dobson, T. (2006). Reading hypertext and the experience of literature. *Journal of Digital Information*.

Hypertext writers should attempt to develop new abilities and strategies to consolidate the readers contribution friendly, to enhance the text content.

Hypertext allowed readers to interact with the content of the text through contributing in the producing process and it is slightly different from the original writing by the author. Many researchers consider that Hypertext is confusing the roles between the reader and the author. The classical book is assumed to identify the notion of the authorship, but with the emergence of the hypertext, we recorded the the attempt to rethink the boundaries existing between the role of the reader and the writer. Hypertext authors acknowledge the new right of readers to contribute to the content through a manner merely different from their anticipation and their desires.

V - 2 – Hypertext and Authoring

Hypertext notion requires a merely analysis of the document's objective to find out the differences from the print version. Some authors argued that bulk of readers visit the web to acquire some information, and absolutely not to read thoroughly a text (Horton, 1994; Mitternight, 1998). The following statement highlights that the major objective of electronic documents from the web is to provide relevant information for readers solely.

The consideration of the aspect of openness of Hypertext, it put forward the major function of the author as catalyst to accelerate the diffusion of the text solely. Hypertext as notion is not classic process of writing: beginning, middle, and end.

Hypertext readers can provide an instant answer for the author. The new power of the reader to edit the text content making the creation of particular dialogue between the reader and the writer, difficult to occur with the classical aspect of the printed version. Hypertext concept needs a deep analysis of audience that relies on different approach than the printed version of any text.

Henrietta N. Shirk (1991) underlined the particular aspects of hypertext, for the author, it is simplistic and outdated since tracking the audience of a text on internet is more efficient and effective than the printed version. Shirk assumes that hypertext contains a rich mechanism of tracking, allowed it to reach an unlimited array of audiences.

William Horton (1994) stressed that hypertext authoring gave prime attention to put emphasis on the interaction of readers. For example, authors should consider the interest degree of readers, the author argued: "the user may be totally absorbed in the subject matter of the topic, slightly interested. Frustrated beyond rational thought or bored to tears".

Conclusion

Hypertext authoring should provide a new perspective of analysis regarding the traditional concepts of the text and its organization. According to Shirk (1991), the text design and the format of the story make up the most important aspect for the printed version, including the quality of paper. But, for the hypertext, these features are simple and not important. Transitions are ensured through some associative links, which authorizes the readers to adopt their own transitions, depending on their rhythm of reading. Other authors raised the point that hypertext needs more transitions between the issues covered by the text. Some additional features as material could orient readers to deepen his knowledge, through entering several issues at different points.

The major deduction to infer from the thorough review of the previous theoretical and empirical development regarding the issue of Globalization and Hypertext. We could highlight that Hypertext could be recognized as the direct effect of the emergence of new technology and communications, especially after the advent of Internet. Hypertext exploited the new way to diffuse information and affected the writing style in modern literature.

The present paper is an attempt to shed the light on changes occurring on the behavior of readers and writers due to the advent of hypertext as a new writing style of stories and novels. Hypertext makes up a revolution in writing styles and has several effects on authoring and writing, the paper provided strong evidence about the pivotal role of hypertext in altering the writer and reader functions.

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