

FROM LITERARY THEORY TO LANGUAGE PRACTICE: APPLYING CHRONOTOPE IN SCIENCE FICTION TO FOSTER EFL SPEAKING AND CRITICAL THINKING

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ABSTRACT

This paper will investigate the pedagogical opportunities of the chronotope as an instrument in the development of speaking in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situations. Based on the idea of unity of time and space developed by Mikhail Bakhtin, the study examines the chronotopic structures that are used in the book series *Agent Cormac* by Neal Asher and discusses how it can be applied in B2-level classrooms. Although chronotope has been extensively applied in literary studies, yet there is a lack in its application in language teaching. This paper suggests a discussion-based activity where the learners discuss temporal and spatial arrangements to create meaningful interaction. The results indicate that the chronotope-based conversation increases speaking fluency, promotes interpretive reasoning, and critical thinking. Through its combination of literary theory, as well as the communicative practice, the study provides an interdisciplinary model that improves both English Second Language (ESL) development, and analytical involvement in EFL learning.

KEYWORDS: Chronotope; Science Fiction; EFL speaking skills; Communicative Competence; Critical Thinking; TESOL Literature; Discussion-Based Learning; Literary Pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

The peculiarity of science fiction is that it can create rather complicated narrative worlds uniting technological-innovation and alien spatial and time scales. This phenomenon is quite complex, and the analysis of its specifics in the literary theory is skillfully carried out with the help of the idea of chronotope, which interprets the inherent unity of time and space in narrative schemes. It is a very significant notion in plot development, creation of characters, as well as organization of themes in literature (Grigoryeva, 2026, p. 117). Furthermore, this complication presents further complications to students in the English as a Second language (ESL) settings where the unfamiliarity of the speculative concepts, like non-human agents, alternate times, and technologically mediated space-time, can augment the cognitive load and impede the understanding. As a result, the chronotopic structure of the science fiction texts is not only a stylistic device, but also a pedagogical tool to help the ESL readers make sense.

The chronotopic analysis has been widely used in other genres of literature and is very rare in modern science fiction. The speculative temporalities and spatial configurations have been studied by scholars like Darko Suvin and Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr., who have shown that science fiction holds a meaning in a unique time-space arrangement. Nevertheless, the chronotopic structure of the *Agent Cormac* series by Neal Asher has not been adequately studied, which has been identified as a research gap.

Meanwhile, literature is gaining acceptance as an important pedagogical tool in the scholarship of Furthermore, this complication presents further complications to students in the English as a Second language (ESL) settings where the unfamiliarity of the speculative concepts, like non-human agents, alternate times, and technologically mediated space-time, can augment the cognitive load and impede the understanding. As a result, the chronotopic structure of the science fiction texts is not only a stylistic device, but also a pedagogical tool to help the ESL readers make sense. The literary texts serve as the source of real language input, varied patterns of discourse are introduced to the learners and communicative competence is developed (Hişmanoğlu, 2005, p. 1). They also improve vocabulary, cultural awareness, and effective language skills, especially speaking (Fatma and Al Ajam, 2020, p. 1030). Notably, literature promotes high-thinking skills like analysis and evaluation as expected by Bloom in the taxonomy of Revised.

Here, science fiction is especially a valuable contribution to EFL classrooms, since it speaks of conceptual complexity and poses interpretive challenges. A typical EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom in Tashkent, Uzbekistan is a formal educational setting, in which English is being taught primarily at schools, colleges, or in private linguistic institutions. The English language is not used in day-to-day interaction, and therefore, most of the students are only exposed to English in a school setting. A mixture of English and Uzbek or Russian is usually used to facilitate meaning, particularly at lower grades. There is a growing emphasis on methods of teaching with communicative abilities like speaking and interacting, although conventional grammar-based learning is still the primary teaching strategy. In general, the multilingual, oriented to the development of practical language competence in academic and professional aspects, EFL classroom in this case is organized. As an analytical device, chronotope may be applied to direct the comprehension of narrative meaning in a learner, as well as to help them conduct discussions to practice the language in a student-centered environment. The following research questions are therefore covered in this study: (RQ1) What do chronotopic structures built up in the Agent Cormac series by Neal Asher look like? (RQ2) What can be done to develop the speaking skills of EFL learners using chronotope-based discussions? The purpose of the study is to bridge the gap between the literary theory and the pedagogy of the language by showing how the chronotope analysis can be applied to enhance the speaking fluency, confidence, and critical thinking of the B2-level EFL contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The application of literature in language teaching has been largely recognized as a powerful way of enhancing not only linguistic competency but also cognitive ability. Within Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) teaching strategies, literary texts are regarded as authentic resources that expose students to the actual use of language; they have different vocabulary, syntax, and discourse construction (Hişmanoğlu, 2005, p. 1). This exposure helps the learners to build a more in-depth insight into the language as opposed to learning solely through teaching via a textbook.

Moreover, authentic literary sources improve the cultural awareness and communicative competence of the learners. By reading literary works, students are exposed to a variety of attitudes, social conventions, and communicative behaviors, which are necessary to use language meaningfully (Fatma and Al Ajam, 2020, p. 1030). Personal input and emotional interaction associated with literary texts is also an encouragement of motivation and involvement in the

interaction within the classroom. Teachers can help their English Language Learner (ELLs) students build self-efficacy in reading by giving structured support, recognising individual progress, and using varied teaching methods (Chiaramonte, 2025). Cognitively, literature can be used to aid the development of higher-order thinking skills. In literary analysis, interpretation, inference, and evaluation are paramount, which stimulates readers to analyze texts critically. Such processes are bound to cause a rise in speaking opportunities since learners must explain and justify their interpretation.

In literary studies, the chronotope has been central in examining the organization of meaning to make sense of the temporal and spatial manner of making sense. It is a structural principle, that determines the organization of the narrative, the development of characters, and their significance (Berdiyeva, 2025, p. 182). Studies also note that chronotope can determine how the reader values the reality of the narrative and makes sense of the text (Kakharova, 2025, p. 1).

The chronotopic structures are especially complicated in science fiction. Even the genre contains non-linear temporalities, future settings, and spaces mediated by technology, each one of which disrupts the standard understandings of reality. Such characteristics render the science fiction cognitively challenging and demand the active interpretation of the readers (Beknazarova and Khujanova, 2025, p. 644).

Regardless of its theoretical importance, the pedagogical potential of the chronotope in TESOL is understudied. Nonetheless, it is an analytical strategy and thus very appropriate to use in discussion-based learning whereby the learners are involved in interpretation, argumentation and negotiation of meaning. This implies that chronotope may be a powerful tool to incorporate literary analysis in the teaching of communicative language.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The Agent Cormac series have a complicated chronotopic framework consisting of interstellar realms, artificial intelligence systems and discontinuous time. All these traits are indicative of the larger role of the chronotope as a standardized principle of narrative meaning (Berdiyeva, 2025, p. 182). Pedagogically, this complexity offers opportunities to discuss the subject matter, especially in the B2 level and above (C1), where a learner can perform abstract reasoning and long speech.

The idea of the chronotope can be put into practice in an upper-intermediate to advanced (B2–C1) EFL classroom in a region like Tashkent, Uzbekistan that has educational environments orientated to preparing a wide range of students for the International English Language Teaching System (IELTS) and the public school system. In this respect, chronotope can be used as a structure of classroom discussion. Students interpret narrate events through the lens of three important dimensions: (1) time structure (2) the space structure (3) and the perception angle. This model of analysis is not only useful in the generation of ideas but also in the verbalization of complex interpretations. Consequently, the learners would be equipped in a better position to create more coherent, structured and meaningful spoken answers and accelerate acquisition of more complex English writing skills.

The interactivity in the classroom may be facilitated by teachers using interpretive prompts to encourage the learners to explore the role of time and space in the story. As an example, students can speak about the impact of technological setting on the sense of time or the impact of spatial displacement on character behavior. These debates also demand that learners should be able to

present arguments, contrast opinions, and negotiate meaning among them, which are vital elements of communicative competence.

Also, critical thinking can be improved through comparative discussions of science fiction and real-life situations. Learners can analyze and evaluate by relating chronotopic structures to current issues, e.g., digital communication or globalization; thus, they acquire higher-order thinking skills. The discussion on chronotopes is another tool that fosters the acquisition of academic speaking skills. Students must be able to arrange arguments, defend interpretations and employ technical vocabulary, which helps them to move between informal and more formal communication. Through literary studies, it has been observed that the linguistic and stylistic elements of texts is one of the reasons that enables learners to convey intricate notions (Kakharova, 2025, p. 1). Though no extensive empirical data is involved in this paper, the qualitative observations that were conducted through action research and experience in the classroom show that chronotope-oriented discussion leads to higher student engagement, longer speaking turns, and better argumentation. These results indicate that the application of literary theory in language instruction might help to promote language as well as cognitive growth.

CONCLUSION

The chronotope can be effectively adopted into a system of literary criticism and become an educative tool in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) as this study demonstrates. By exploring the chronotopic formations in the series of Agent Cormac novels by Neal Asher, the paper develops the legitimacy of an interdisciplinary association between literary criticism and language teaching.

The results indicate that the inclusion of chronotope-based discourse offers a methodological way of building speaking proficiency on B2-level and above English speakers. When learners analyze time and space, they build their interpretive thinking skills, can explain complex concepts and participate in a discussion. By doing this, not only communicative competence, but also critical thinking skills are developed that are among the core goals in TESOL-oriented pedagogy.

Moreover, the action research demonstrates that the literary theory related to chronotope-discourse has the potential to be used as a cognitive scaffold in the process of second language acquisition. Through introducing the elements of analysis into the classroom practice, educators can facilitate the developments in the areas of fluency, coherence, and academic discourse production. The model is interdisciplinary, and it can significantly contribute to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and to the field of literature, as it is an innovative and applicable model that can be used in a binary role first in instruction and then research.

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