

THE DISCURSIVE FUNCTION OF METAFICTION IN DAVID LODGE'S *CHANGING PLACES*

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Abstract. *This article explores the discursive function of metafiction in David Lodge's Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses. The study investigates how metafictional discourse transforms the academic novel into a self-conscious narrative structure that simultaneously satirizes university culture and reflects upon the processes of literary representation. Drawing upon narratology, discourse analysis, and postmodern literary theory, the research examines narrator intervention, epistolary structure, metalinguistic commentary, and genre self-awareness as major metafictional devices. Particular attention is devoted to how the novel foregrounds its own fictionality and challenges conventional distinctions between reality and representation. The findings demonstrate that metafiction in Changing Places serves both aesthetic and ideological functions: it destabilizes narrative authority, critiques academic discourse, and encourages readers to participate in interpretation actively. The article concludes that Lodge transforms the campus novel into a postmodern narrative experiment in which storytelling itself becomes the subject of analysis.*

Keywords: *metafiction, discourse analysis, academic novel, postmodernism, David Lodge, narratology, self-reflexivity.*

Аннотация. *Данная статья посвящена исследованию дискурсивной функции метапрозы в романе Дэвида Лоджа Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses. В исследовании рассматривается, каким образом метапрозовый дискурс преобразует академический роман в самосознательную повествовательную структуру, которая одновременно сатирически изображает университетскую культуру и осмысляет процессы литературной репрезентации. Опираясь на нарратологию, дискурс-анализ и теорию постмодернистской литературы, автор анализирует вмешательство рассказчика, эпистолярную структуру, метаязыковой комментарий и жанровое самосознание как основные метапрозовые приемы. Особое внимание уделяется тому, как роман акцентирует собственную фикциональность и ставит под сомнение традиционные различия между реальностью и репрезентацией. Результаты исследования показывают, что метапроза в Changing Places выполняет как эстетические, так и идеологические функции: она дестабилизирует повествовательный авторитет, критикует академический дискурс и побуждает читателя к активному участию в интерпретации текста. В заключение делается вывод о том, что Лодж преобразует университетский роман в постмодернистский повествовательный эксперимент, в котором сам процесс рассказывания становится предметом анализа.*

Ключевые слова: *метапроза, дискурс-анализ, академический роман, постмодернизм, Дэвид Лодж, нарратология, саморефлексивность.*

Annotatsiya. *Mazkur maqola David Lodgening Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses romanida metaprozaning diskursiv funksiyasini tadqiq etishga bag'ishlangan. Tadqiqotda metaprozaik diskursning akademik romanni universitet madaniyatini satirik tarzda tasvirlovchi va ayni paytda adabiy representatsiya jarayonlarini aks ettiruvchi o'z-o'zini anglovchi narrativ strukturaga qanday aylantirishi o'rganiladi. Narratologiya, diskurs tahlili va postmodern adabiyot nazariyasiga tayangan holda, tadqiqot narrator aralashuvi, epistolyar struktura, metalingvistik sharh hamda janriy o'zini anglashni asosiy metaprozaik vositalar sifatida tahlil qiladi. Asarda uning o'zining badiiy sun'iyligini namoyon qilishi va reallik bilan representatsiya o'rtasidagi an'anaviy chegaralarni shubha ostiga qo'yishi alohida e'tibor markazida turadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, Changing Places romanidagi metaproza ham estetik, ham mafkuraviy funksiyalarni bajaradi: u narrativ hokimiyatni beqarorlashtiradi, akademik diskursni tanqid qiladi va o'quvchini talqinda faol ishtirok*

etishga undaydi. Maqola yakunida Lodgening kampus romanini hikoya qilish jarayonining o'zi tahlil predmetiga aylangan postmodern narrativ eksperimentga aylantirgani ta'kidlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: metaproza, diskurs tahlili, akademik roman, postmodernizm, David Lodge, narratologiya, o'z-o'zini reflektivlik.

Introduction. Postmodern fiction frequently challenges the assumption that literary narratives transparently represent reality. Instead of concealing narrative construction, postmodern writers foreground the artificiality of storytelling and transform fiction into a discourse about fiction itself. This tendency gave rise to metafiction, a literary mode in which texts become self-aware and expose their own fictional mechanisms.

David Lodge's *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* represents a major contribution to this tradition. Published in 1975, the novel combines satire, academic discourse, and narrative experimentation to examine cultural differences between British and American university environments. At the center of the novel stands an academic exchange program involving two professors: Philip Swallow from England and Morris Zapp from the United States.

Although the novel follows recognizable comic and realist conventions, it repeatedly disrupts narrative transparency through metafictional strategies. Narrator interventions, generic commentary, epistolary structures, and linguistic self-consciousness constantly remind readers that the text is an artificial construct rather than a transparent reflection of reality.

The concept of metafiction has been extensively discussed by scholars such as Patricia Waugh, Linda Hutcheon, and Mark Currie. Waugh defines metafiction as fictional writing that self-consciously draws attention to its status as an artifact to question the relationship between fiction and reality. In Lodge's novel, metafiction functions not only as a stylistic technique but also as a discursive mechanism that organizes interpretation and critiques academic culture.

This article investigates the discursive function of metafiction in *Changing Places*. The research aims to identify the major metafictional discourse markers within the novel and explain how they contribute to narrative self-consciousness, satire, and reader engagement.

Methods. The study employs qualitative textual analysis based on narratological and discourse-oriented approaches. Selected passages from *Changing Places* are examined to identify the novel's primary metafictional strategies.

The analysis focuses on the following categories:

- narrator intervention;
- explicit references to fictionality;
- metalinguistic commentary;
- epistolary discourse;
- genre self-awareness;
- reader-directed narration;

- structural self-reflexivity.

Theoretical support is drawn from postmodern literary criticism, particularly the works of Patricia Waugh, Linda Hutcheon, and Mark Currie. Metafiction is understood as a mode of discourse that foregrounds textual construction and challenges conventional realism. The methodological procedure involves:

1. identifying metafictional discourse markers;
2. analyzing their linguistic and structural functions;
3. interpreting their role within the broader thematic structure of the novel.

Results. Fictionality Announced at the Beginning. One of the clearest metafictional strategies appears in the novel's introductory disclaimer:

"The characters... are entirely imaginary."

Unlike conventional realist novels that encourage immersion, Lodge immediately foregrounds the fictional status of his narrative world. The narrator openly states that Rummidge and Euphoria are imaginary places belonging to a "comic world."

This declaration functions as a metafictional discourse marker because it establishes the reading framework before the narrative begins. Readers are instructed not to confuse fiction with reality, even though the fictional universities resemble real academic institutions.

The expressions "imaginary," "comic world," and "figments of the imagination" repeatedly emphasize the constructed nature of the narrative universe.

Narrator Visibility and Narrative Construction. The novel frequently disrupts narrative transparency by making the narrator visible. One of the most important examples appears in the opening chapter:

"...the narrator of this duplex chronicle."

The phrase openly identifies the existence of a narrating consciousness organizing events. Instead of pretending that the story unfolds naturally, the narrative acknowledges its own constructedness.

The term "duplex chronicle" receives a dictionary-like explanation within the text. This metalinguistic interruption shifts attention away from events and toward language itself. The narrator explains not only what is happening but also how the narrative structure operates. Consequently, the novel becomes simultaneously a story and a commentary on storytelling.

Metalinguistic Commentary as Metafiction. Another significant metafictional strategy appears through metalinguistic analysis. The narrative frequently pauses to define terms, explain narrative structures, or comment on literary interpretation.

The explanation of "duplex" serves as a particularly important example:

"'Duplex'... applies in the jargon of electrical telegraphy to systems in which messages are sent simultaneously in opposite directions."

This dictionary-style commentary creates a self-conscious discourse about language and structure. The explanation also functions symbolically because the entire novel operates through duality: two countries, two professors, two academic systems, and parallel narrative developments.

Thus, language itself becomes a structural principle within the novel.

Academic Theory and Self-Reflexive Discourse. Morris Zapp represents another important source of metafictional discourse. His statements about literature frequently transform literary criticism into narrative content.

For example:

“Life was transparent, literature opaque.”

Zapp’s theoretical observations foreground the distinction between lived experience and literary representation. His discourse repeatedly emphasizes that literature functions according to its own internal rules.

The terms “naive confusion,” “open system,” and “closed system” operate as evaluative discourse markers. Through these expressions, the novel dramatizes theoretical debates about interpretation.

Importantly, the novel also satirizes such theoretical rigidity. Zapp’s intellectual certainty appears excessive and detached from emotional reality. Therefore, metafiction serves not only as self-reflexive experimentation but also as a critique of academic ideology.

Epistolary Structure and Discursive Multiplicity. The “Corresponding” section of the novel represents one of its most innovative formal experiments. Instead of traditional narration, the section consists entirely of letters, telegrams, and written communications.

This structural shift foregrounds mediation and communication processes. Readers no longer observe events directly; they encounter interpretations, descriptions, and emotional reactions filtered through written correspondence.

Hilary’s letters to Philip illustrate this process clearly. Everyday experiences become textual performances shaped by tone, audience, and emotional intention.

The epistolary form, therefore, functions metafictionally because it exposes the narrative as a collection of written discourses rather than an objective representation of reality.

Reader Participation and Narrative Awareness. The narrator frequently addresses readers directly: “Imagine, if you will...”

Such expressions transform readers into active participants within narrative construction. Instead of passively receiving information, readers are invited to imagine scenes and construct meaning collaboratively.

This strategy breaks the illusion of autonomous fictional reality and emphasizes the communicative relationship between narrator and reader.

Discussion. The analysis demonstrates that metafiction in *Changing Places* operates as a complex discursive system rather than merely a stylistic ornament. Lodge integrates metafictional techniques into the thematic and structural foundations of the novel.

One major function of metafiction involves destabilizing narrative authority. By exposing narrative construction, the novel undermines the assumption that storytelling transparently represents reality. Narrators, characters, and readers all become participants within interpretive processes.

The novel also reveals the close relationship between academic discourse and metafiction. Literary theory becomes part of the narrative itself, particularly through Morris Zapp's intellectual monologues. Consequently, the academic novel transforms into a reflection on the production of literary meaning.

Another important function concerns satire. Lodge employs metafiction to critique institutional structures, professional rivalries, and intellectual pretensions within university culture. By foregrounding narrative artificiality, the novel exposes the performative aspects of academic identity.

The epistolary structure further reinforces metafictional multiplicity. Letters, documents, and communications reveal that all experiences are mediated through discourse. No perspective remains fully objective or authoritative.

In broader literary terms, *Changing Places* illustrates how the campus novel evolved during the postmodern period. Traditional academic satire becomes intertwined with experimental narrative strategies, resulting in a hybrid form that combines realism, parody, and theoretical self-consciousness.

Conclusion. This article has examined the discursive function of metafiction in David Lodge's *Changing Places*. The analysis demonstrates that metafictional discourse markers- including narrator intervention, metalinguistic commentary, explicit references to fictionality, epistolary structures, and reader-directed narration- play a central role in shaping the novel's self-conscious narrative form.

Metafiction in the novel performs several interconnected functions. It foregrounds textual construction, destabilizes realist illusion, critiques academic ideology, and transforms readers into active interpreters. At the same time, Lodge combines theoretical sophistication with comic accessibility, ensuring that narrative experimentation remains closely connected to social satire.

Ultimately, *Changing Places* represents an important example of postmodern academic fiction in which storytelling itself becomes both subject and method. The novel demonstrates that literary discourse does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs and interprets it.

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