GREIMAS'S ACTANTIAL MODEL IN THE HUNGER GAMES MOVIE

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Abstract
This article focuses on applying the two of the narrative syntax theories proposed by Algirdas Greimas to find the basic structures of fairy tales, namely the Narrative Quest Model and the Actantial Model, to analyze Hunger Games movie. As Greimas' claims to have found theories which are applicable to all narrative structures, the writer is interested to see whether the two chosen theories are indeed applicable to scheme in the movie. The theories are not used to explore the theme or the message that underlies the story; instead it focuses mainly to find the basic structure of the narrative as trajectory and the schema or paradigmatic connection among the major elements in the story. The research uses descriptive qualitative approach in which the data are obtained through a series of thorough reading before the story is redacted into a summary. Afterwards, the summary is divided into smaller narrative units using the Narrative Quest Model and the major elements and characters of the story are selected based on their functions in Greimas’ Actantial Model.

Keywords: narrative syntax, actantial model, narrative quest model

Abstrak
Artikel ini berfokus pada penerapan dua teori sintaksis naratif yang dikemukakan oleh Algirdas Greimas untuk menemukan struktur dasar dongeng, yaitu Narrative Quest Model dan Actantial Model, untuk menganalisis film Hunger Games. Greimas menemukan teori yang dapat diterapkan pada semua struktur naratif, penulis tertarik untuk melihat apakah kedua teori yang dipilih tersebut memang berlaku untuk skema dalam film. Teori tidak digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi tema atau pesan yang mendasari cerita; melainkan berfokus terutama untuk menemukan struktur dasar narasi sebagai lintasan dan skema atau hubungan paradigmatis di antara elemen-elemen utama dalam cerita. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dimana data diperoleh melalui serangkaian pembacaan yang menyeluruh sebelum cerita diringkas menjadi sebuah ringkasan. Setelah itu, ringkasan dibagi menjadi unit-unit naratif yang lebih kecil dengan menggunakan Skema Aktan dan elemen dan karakter utama dari cerita dipilih berdasarkan fungsinya dalam Model Aktansial Greimas.

Kata kunci: sintaks naratif, model aktansial, model pencarian naratif
I. INTRODUCTION

Most of this paper will focus on the use of actantial analysis of the tales by Greimas’ Narrative Program/Quest theory, the structure of the narrative is explored in its syntagmatic level while the Actantial Model theory will explore the narrative in its paradigmatic level as mentioned by (Marsen et al. 2003, 11). According to Herbert, as cited from (Peisa 2008, 19), actantial analysis is used as a tool to analyse literary texts or images in the hope of finding the structure of the text. Greimas’ theory was actually a development of Levi-Strauss’ reduction of Propp’s actants and functions (Katylius-Bodystun, 1990). In 1920s, V. I Propp found out that “all Russian “wondertales” contain the same basic characters and plot” (Katylius-Bodystun, 1990). Out of hundreds of Russian fairy tales that Propp had analysed, he found out that Russian fairy tales had limited number of functions; only 31 functions (Onodera 2010, 4). These functions can also be joined with other functions which then result in sphere of actions. The number of the sphere of actions in the Russian fairy tales, according to Propp as cited from (Ondera 2010, 4) is seven; The villain, the donor, the helper, a princess (a sought-for person), the dispatcher, the hero, and the false hero.

The narrative quest model proposed by Greimas is in the level of narrative as trajectory, which (Marsen et al. 2003, 4) describes as “[favoring] the verbal (referring to actions) as opposed to the nominal (referring to objects) aspects of narrative.” A narrative usually begins with a problem to be solved and ends with the problem being solved or remained unsolved The following figure shows a simple structure of a narrative:

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Initial problem → Action and performers → Resolution
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Greimas’ narrative quest model is a significant development in the study of narrative as trajectory. (Marsen et al. 2003, 4) stated that the Subject/Hero of this model does actions to solve the problem by undergoing several tests divided into several stages, which can be linked to three sets of actions:

1. Qualifying Test which corresponds to competence. The Subject/Hero has resources to help bring them to another stage.
2. Decisive Test which is linked to performance. The Subject/Hero uses the resources to deal with the action based on the initial problem.
3. Glorifying Test corresponds with recognition, which suggests either a solution or lack thereof for the closure of the problem.

Actantial Model simplifies Propp’s and Souriau’s theories into paradigmatic oppositions called ‘actants,’ a term referring to the functions and roles of each element in a narrative (Noth 1995, 372). (Chandler 2002, 119) mentions the simplified version of the actants as follows:

1. Subject: the element who seeks.
2. Object: the element which is sought for by the subject.
3. Sender: the element that sends the object.
4. Receiver: the destination (not necessarily a place).
5. Helper: the element that assists the subject.
6. Opponent: the element that hinders or blocks the subject.

Greimas’s actantial model is further developed into three different axes of actantial description as mentioned by (Hébert 2011, 69):

1. The axis of desire/project speaks of two opposite actants, Subject and Object, and the ‘junction’ (relationship) between them. ‘Conjunction’ is a positive relationship where the Subject wants to be together with the Object, and the negative relationship where the Subject wants to part with the Object is ‘disjunction’.
2. The axis of power/conflict talks about the relationship between the Helper and the Opponent. The helper’s role is to ensure that the wanted junction between the subject and the object is achieved while the opponent ensures otherwise.
3. The axis of transmission/ knowledge/communication establishes the relationship between Sender, the element asking for the junction between the Subject and the Object; and Receiver, the element which may gain profit from the establishment of the junction.

The actantial model is a concept which may be visualized into the following diagram:

The structure of the narrative is explored in its syntagmatic level while the Actantial Model theory will explore the narrative in its paradigmatic level. The two theories have been applied to explore fairy tales and other types of writing, and should Greimas’ claim that his theories are applicable to every narrative
structure and that every story, then it will also be applicable to the chosen source of data, Hunger Games Movie.

II. METHOD

This study uses qualitative approach to analyze the data, which are in the form of a narrative text. Greimas’ theories, Narrative Quest and Actantial Models are used to see the syntagmatic and paradigmatic structure of the story. The data are selected by doing extensive reading followed by breaking the narrative into small units as suggested by Barthes to find the major elements of the narrative, which are then placed into Greimas’ two models.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, Greimas’ Narrative Program / Quest theory, the structure of the narrative is explored in its syntagmatic level while the Actantial Model theory will explore the narrative in its paradigmatic level will be examined through The Hunger Games movie.

Application of the Narrative Quest Model

Greimas’

Narrative quest and actantial models are said to be applicable to all narrative structure, and it is believed that the first step to analyzing a story using these models are by summarizing the story.

The outline of The Hunger Games movie is as follows:

Every year, in the ruins of what was once North America, the Capitol of the nation of Panem forces each of its 12 districts to send a teenage boy and girl, between the ages of 12 and 18, to compete in the Hunger Games: a nationally televised event in which 'tributes' fight each other within an arena, until one survivor remains. When Primrose Everdeen is 'reaped', her older sister Katniss Everdeen volunteers in her place to enter the games, also selected from District 12 is Peeta Mellark. Together, they defy the rule that the Games must have one victor, unintentionally inciting a rebellion against the authoritarian government of Panem.

The above summary is the basis of the application of Greimas’ Narrative Quest Model. Placing Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark in the element of Subject/Hero brings the following structure:

| (a) Main action: |
| Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark are selected as the male and female tribute representing District 12 to compete in the Hunger games. |

| (b) The narrative sequence: |
| 1) Initial problem: |
1. During the yearly "Reaping" of tributes for the gladiator-like Hunger Games, Katniss's younger sister, Prim, is selected as District 12's female tribute during a public lottery. Katniss volunteers to take her place.

2. Peeta is selected as the male tribute representing District 12. He joined up with fellow District 12 tribute Katniss to compete in the Hunger Games.

2) Qualifying test:
1. Katniss joined up with Peeta have to fight to death in the annual Hunger Games until there is only one survivor.

3) Decisive test:
1. Peeta excels at hand to hand combat, camouflage, handling knives and starting fires while Katniss uses her knowledge of hunting and archery to survive.

c. Glorifying test:
Katniss and Peeta are declared joint official winners of the 74th Hunger games.

Application of the Actantial Model

Just as the Narrative Quest Model, this model also uses the summary as the basis to select the Subject of the story. The Subject is usually the element or character that moves the plot of the story, and based on Greimas’ description of what property an element should have to be a Subject, it is seen that the Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark are a suitable character to fit the role of a Subject in this model.

Having chosen a Subject, the other elements may then be put into place by breaking down the story into the following actants:

Subject ............Katniss Everdeen, Peeta Mellark
Object ........................................... Survival
Sender .......................................... The Capitol
Receiver.......Katniss Everdeen, Peeta Mellark, Helper .........................Haymitch Abernathy
Opponent.........Tributes from other Districts

According to Greimas in his axis of desire, a subject is a character or element that longs for something. Here, Katniss and Peeta is said to be the subject as they have a desire of something which is to compete in Hunger Games. In District 12, after her younger sister
Primrose is chosen, Katniss Everdeen volunteers to take her place.

**KATNISS**

I volunteer! I volunteer as tribute!

After Katniss is accepted, Effie chooses the male tribute for the Games. Peeta is picked as the male tribute representing District 12.

Effie takes the first slip out from the boy’s raffle while trying to hide the fact she’s fixing her wig. She reads it aloud hastily.

**EFFIE**

Peeta Mellark!

Effie immediately goes to fixing her wig, and this time it works. Peeta walks up to the stage and stands beside Katniss.

Greimas’ axis of desire mentions that in order to function as an object, an element should be something that the subject seeks for and there should be a relationship that is called a junction between the element and the subject. As survival the element that is looked for by Katniss and Peeta, the subject of this model, the survival function as the object. It is not difficult to say that the junction between the subject and the object is achieved as the story does specify Katniss and Peeta are declared joint official winner of the 74th Hunger Games.

**CLAUDIUS**

Stop! Stop! Ladies and Gentlemen, I present the victors of the seventy-fourth Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark, tributes of district twelve!

Therefore, it concluded that the junction is achieved.

The Capitol holds the function of the sender in this model. The Hunger Games takes place in a nation known as Panem. The nation consists of the wealthy Capitol and twelve surrounding, poorer district under Capitol’s dictatorial control. As punishment for a past rebellion against the Capitol, one boy and one girl between the ages of 12 and 18 from each district are selected by an annual lottery to participate in the Hunger Games, a contest in which the "tributes" must fight to the death in an outdoor arena until only one remains. The event is televised.

As Greimas mentioned that the sender is the element that requests “the establishment of the junction” between a subject and an object, Capitol is then the sender in this model. Katniss and Peeta do not only have the functions as the subject and object, respectively in that order, in this actantial model. They function as the receiver as well.
In this model, the two characters will gain benefit from the achievement of the junction for the reason that they receive income from the Capitol for life, are given a special status in their districts, and are allowed to live in the part of their district called the Victors’ Village with their families. In this model with Katniss and Peeta as the subject, Haymitch plays the role as the helper. The function of a helper is to assist the subject in achieving the desired junction, and in this focus Haymitch guides Katniss and Peeta in a cleverly designed, highly unorthodox strategy aimed at ensuring the survival of both tributes.

The tributes from other Districts are assigned with the function of the opponent. As explained by (Chandler 2002, 119), an opponent in an actantial model is the element or character that hinders the achievement of the junction between the subject and the object. In this case, the other tributes do not wish Katniss and Peeta to survive during the Hunger Games. In other words, they desire do not co-exist with the subject’s desire.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

Greimas’ models used in this study focus on analyzing a narrative structure in its syntagmatic and paradigmatic levels, and therefore do not look into the underlying message of the story itself. The application of Greimas’ Narrative Quest Model and Actantial Model to the structure of The Hunger Games movie shows that the two theories are applicable for science fiction adventure film. In the application of the theories, an extensive reading of the data source is done to discover the smallest unit of the story, after which the elements are applied into its roles and functions. The character Katniss and Peeta act as the Subject/Hero in both models, and while it is not explicitly mentioned in the Narrative Quest Model, it can be concluded that the Haymitch used as the Helper in Actantial Model is the “Resource” of the Narrative Quest Model.

**REFERENCES**


