

An Analysis of Moves in the Novel “The Old Man and The Sea” by Ernest Hemingway

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the discourse structure and interpersonal meaning in selected dialogues from *The Old Man and the Sea*, with a focus on moves and speech functions. Using a qualitative descriptive method, it applies Halliday’s moves and speech functions analysis to explore how grammatical forms, interrogatives, declaratives, and imperatives, perform pragmatic and interpersonal functions beyond their literal meanings. The analysis reveals a predominance of ‘k’ type moves or information exchange, including k2, k1, k1f, and k2f, over ‘a’ type moves or offers of service, which appear as a1, a1f, and a1. Declarative clauses are the most frequently used, encompassing structures such as RSQ, S, RRSQ, and AS. The findings highlight dynamic exchanges of knowledge and action, showing how dialogue advances the narrative and develops character relationships. Despite their brevity, Hemingway’s dialogues convey complex meanings, reflecting authentic interaction and his minimalist style. The study underscores the dual function of literary dialogue as a vehicle for both storytelling and social interaction.

Keywords: Moves, Speech Functions, Literary Dialogue

ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini mengkaji struktur wacana dan makna interpersonal dalam dialog-dialog terpilih dari *The Old Man and the Sea*, dengan penekanan pada moves dan fungsi tutur. Menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menerapkan analisis moves dan fungsi tutur menurut Halliday untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana bentuk-bentuk gramatikal—interogatif, deklaratif, dan imperatif—menjalankan fungsi pragmatik dan interpersonal yang melampaui makna literalnya. Hasil Analisis mengungkapkan bahwa dominasi gerakan tipe ‘k’ atau pertukaran informasi, seperti k2, k1, k1f, dan k2f, dibandingkan dengan gerakan tipe ‘a’ atau pemberian layanan, yang muncul dalam bentuk a1, a1f, dan a1.*

Klausa deklaratif merupakan yang paling sering digunakan, mencakup struktur seperti RSQ, S, RRSQ, dan AS. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya pertukaran pengetahuan dan tindakan yang dinamis, yang menggambarkan bagaimana dialog mendorong alur narasi sekaligus membentuk hubungan antar tokoh. Meskipun singkat, dialog-dialog Hemingway menyampaikan makna yang kompleks, mencerminkan interaksi yang otentik serta gaya minimalis khasnya. Penelitian ini menekankan fungsi ganda dialog sastra sebagai sarana untuk penceritaan sekaligus interaksi sosial.

Kata kunci: Moves, Fungsi Tutur, Dialog Sastra

A. Introduction

Literature, as a mirror reflecting human life and thought, often presents the complexities of interaction and communication through its characters' dialogues. Novels, in particular, offer a window into narrative worlds where utterances and conversations not only serve to advance the plot but also act as mediums for character development, thematic conveyance, and the reflection of social dynamics. Understanding how this communication is structured within a literary work can provide deeper insights into its inherent meaning. As explained by Nisa et al. (2020), discourse analysis in a literary context allows researchers to "uncover how language is used to shape reality and meaning in narrative texts." Furthermore, as argued by Saragih (2018), "Literary texts, through their intricate use of language, provide fertile ground for linguistic analysis to reveal deeper layers of artistic and social expression."

Discourse analysis approaches, particularly through the frameworks of speech act analysis and turn-taking analysis, have become relevant tools for exploring the layers of meaning in linguistic interactions. In the study of narratives, attention to "moves" in dialogue is crucial. A move refers to a functional unit within a conversation that serves a specific purpose, such as offering, accepting, rejecting, or clarifying. This concept helps in identifying patterns of interaction and understanding the communicative goals of each utterance. According to Renkema (2018), "Each turn in a conversation can be seen as performing one or more illocutionary acts, contributing to the overall communicative goal of the interaction." Moreover, Seedhouse (2017) emphasizes that "the sequential organization

of talk, including turn-taking and adjacency pairs, is fundamental to how meaning is cooperatively constructed in interaction." Wodak and Meyer (2016) further elaborate on the importance of context in discourse analysis, stating that "Discourse analysis critically examines how language is used in specific social contexts to construct meaning and power relations," an idea echoed by Gee and Handford (2020) who note that "meaning is not simply 'in' words but is actively constructed through social practices and interactions."

This emphasis on context and meaning-making through language provides a useful lens for analyzing literary texts, such as Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, where dialogue plays a crucial role in shaping both narrative and social dynamics. Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* is a classic novel renowned for its terse writing style and minimalist yet profoundly meaningful dialogue. The interactions between Santiago, an old fisherman, and Manolin, a young boy, though limited, form the core of a narrative rich in symbolism and philosophy. Their conversations, often brief and concise, imply a deep relationship, mutual respect, and the transmission of life values.

Despite this, there has been limited research specifically analyzing the interactional structure (moves) in the dialogues of the characters in *The Old Man and the Sea*, thus understanding of how communication is constructed and meaning conveyed through exchanges of utterances remains restricted. This gap highlights the need for further investigation, as underscored by Paltridge (2018) who states that "unexplored areas within existing literary works often reveal crucial insights into authorial intent and reader reception."

Furthermore, as contended by Halliday and Matthiessen (2016), detailed linguistic analyses can illuminate the subtle ways in which meanings are built up and exchanged in literary discourse, especially in texts with seemingly simple surface structures.

Therefore, this research aims to thoroughly analyze the communicative "moves" occurring in the dialogues between characters in *The Old Man and the Sea*. By applying a discourse analysis framework, this study is expected to uncover interactional patterns, the communicative functions of each utterance, and how these "moves" contribute to the formation of meaning and character development within the novel.

B. Research Method

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method, which focuses on gaining in-depth understanding through the interpretation of textual data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The approach enables the researchers to describe each linguistic element carefully and systematically, producing findings grounded in the data..

The data in this study consist of selected dialogues from Ernest Hemingway’s novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. Moreover, Silverman (2017) says qualitative data such as literary texts allow for rich and in-depth analysis of language use. The dialogues were selected purposively based on their potential to reflect interpersonal interaction and the characters’ experiences.

The data collection technique employed was documentation. This technique involves gathering data from written sources that are relevant to the research objectives, such as literary works, which offer rich material for linguistic and discourse analysis.

The following is the bridge dialogue:
 A: "Do you want coffee?"
 B: "We'll put the gear in the boat and then get some."
 A: "How did you sleep old man?"
 B: "Very well, Manolin,"
 "I feel confident today."
 A: "So do I,"

"Now I must get your sardines and mine and your fresh baits. He brings our gear himself. He never wants anyone to carry anything."

B: "We're different
 . "I let you carry things when you were five years old."

A: "I know it,"
 "I'll be right back. Have another coffee. We have credit here"

C. Result and Discussion

Table 3.1

Move	Conversation	Speech Functions Mood	
a1	A: Do you want coffee?	O	Offer
a1f	B: We'll put the gear in the boat and then get some.	RSQ	Declarative
k2	A: How did you sleep old man?	Q	Question
k1	B: Very well, Manolin, I feel confident today.	S	Declarative
k1f	A: So do I	S	Declarative
	Now I must get your sardines and mine and your fresh baits. He brings our gear himself. He never wants anyone to carry anything.	RSQ	Declarative
k2f	B: We're different. I let you carry things when you were five years old.	S	Declarative
a1	A: I know it.	AS	Declarative

	I'll be right back. Have another coffee. We have credit here		Imperative
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Based on the analysis results presented in the table, the conversation reveals a greater number of type *k* (information) moves—namely k2, kl, klf, and k2f—compared to type *a* (offers of service), which only include al and alf. This predominance of *k* moves suggests that the dialogue in the novel primarily serves an informative function, where characters exchange knowledge, thoughts, and observations rather than offering assistance or services. It reflects the nature of the relationship between the characters, which centers more on sharing experiences and understanding than on transactional interactions.

Meanwhile, the speech function mood is dominated by declarative types, such as RSQ, S, RRSQ, and AS, further emphasizing the informative and reflective tone of the conversation.

The analysis using the model proposed by Halliday's theory in Saragih & Saragih (2021) revealed a systematic interactional structure in the dialogue between Santiago and Manolin. The types of moves identified include:

K1 (primary knower move) – responding or providing the answer.

K2 (secondary knower move) – initiating or raising the question

K1f (primary knower follow up move) – following conversation.

K2f (secondary knower follow up move) – following conversation.

A1 (primary actor) – the person who gives goods & services.

A2 (secondary actor) – the person who demands goods & services

A1f (primary actor follow up move).

A2f (secondary actor follow up move).

For instance:

Manolin: "Do you want coffee?" →

A1

Santiago: "We'll put the gear in the boat and then get some." → A1f

This sequence illustrates an action-oriented exchange, with the offer of coffee and subsequent follow-up indicating cooperation and continuity. Similarly:

Manolin: "How did you sleep, old man?" → K1

Santiago: "Very well, Manolin." → K2

This structure represents a knowledge exchange, where the boy initiates a request for information, and the old man provides a factual response.

As Thompson (2014) explains, while mood and speech function are typically correlated (e.g., interrogative for questions), speakers often manipulate grammatical forms for interpersonal purposes. In the data, interrogatives like "Do you want coffee?" serve as offers rather than pure inquiries, reflecting politeness and solidarity.

This pragmatic shift in function aligns with Li (2019), who emphasizes the role of context and tenor in shaping the actual function of an utterance. The consistent use of modulated or softened commands, such as "Have another coffee," rather than direct imperatives, indicates the speakers' sensitivity to social relations and emotional nuances.

This dual-layered analysis of discourse move and speech function confirms that the dialogue in *The Old Man and the Sea* exhibits a structured, meaningful interactional pattern. By analyzing how characters initiate, respond, and elaborate through their utterances, the study reveals the linguistic architecture behind fictional conversations.

In response to the stated problem—that prior studies have rarely explored the move structure in literary dialogue—this research demonstrates that fictional conversations operate under systematic principles of real-life discourse, combining action and knowledge exchanges with interpersonal affect and modality.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

The discourse analysis of the dialogues in *The Old Man and the Sea* reveals a structured and meaningful interactional pattern between Santiago and Manolin. The use of moves such as knowledge initiation, knowledge response, action initiation, and their follow-ups demonstrates how the conversations construct meaning and character development. Despite their brevity, the dialogues reflect a deep relationship, mutual respect, and the transmission of life values between the two characters. This research fills a gap in previous studies that have rarely explored the move structure in literary dialogues.

Further research could expand this analysis by examining other novels by Hemingway or other authors to compare the interactional patterns and moves employed. Research could also investigate the influence of social and cultural contexts on the structure of dialogues and their communicative functions.

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