EXPLORING MOVES IN THE SHORT STORY *HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS* BY HEMINGWAY

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Abstract

Conversations can simply be described as the medium for delivering messages in which information is exchanged by two or more speakers in different situations. However, they appear to have a well-structured process which follows specific norms. This paper aims to investigate how Moves in dialogues are structured in *Hills Like White Elephants*, a short story written by Hemingway. As regards to conversation analysis for the story, a framework proposed by Burton (1980) is used as a model of the research. The utterances of the characters are categorised in order to find out the underlying structures. This paper reveals the awareness of the subtle yet impactful elements shaping the dynamics of dialogue in the selected short story. The findings show that 5 out of 7 types of Moves are used in 99 utterances, exposing the motives of the main characters in the conversation. The exploration contributes a better comprehension of Moves found in casual, fictional conversation.

Keywords: dialogue, Move, acts, conversation analysis, short story

Introduction

Undoubtedly, literary lens have been used to provide new insights into literary studies in which they offer prosperous yet subjective views for literary analysis. However, application of linguistic techniques to the study of literature emerges as scientific interplay between linguistic description and literary interpretation. Although fictional dialogue has been regarded as a 'tidied-up' talk which differs from casual conversation in many ways, it is governed by certain functional and structural rules. Stylistic approaches pave the way to a focus on the mechanism and forms of organization underlying conversational interaction. Among various approaches to examine spoken discourse, Coulthard (2002) designed an influential model based on the teacher-pupil interaction framework (IRF) in classroom situations. However, Burton (1980) modified and reconceptualised the framework to be applicable to any casual conversation. Conversation analysis provides a tool to explore conversation not as a series of isolated utterances, but as a system in which Moves and exchanges are governed.

In the structure of conversation, Moves are the smallest units of communication that accomplish a specific task such as making a request, using the Move of asking a question or making a statement, depending on the context. Identifying the Moves of speakers helps to reveal their communicative strategies, goals and underlying assumptions.

The present paper seeks to make an exploration of Moves in fictional conversation by applying descriptive model of Burton (1980). Hemingway's short story *Hills Like White Elephants* is chosen since it is essentially a two-party communicative exchange which takes place between a man and a girl. The man tries to persuade the girl to have an operation while the girl insistently opposes the idea by talking about the scenery. However, their conversation gives cues to the readers that there is discomfort, which is not mentioned explicitly till the end of the story. The main message of the story has to be inferred through their dialogues. The focus of this paper is to explore the subtleties of the characters' utterances in the selected short story.

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Theoretical Framework

To develop an interactive dialogue, there are certain elements which navigate the speech to be smoothly delivered between the interlocutors. Burton (1980) restricted the original IRF framework keeping the hierarchy intact with some alterations and additions. She stated that the greatest difference between classroom data and everyday talk is that there is a wide range of verbal activities to anyone answering an opening. On the other hand, fictional dialogue is not merely the talk between characters but functions as a narrative mode through which readers try to comprehend the communication. The framework of Burton (1980) includes *Interaction*, *Transaction*, *Exchange*, *Move* and *Act*. In a spoken discourse, Exchange and Move are considered interesting ranks because the structure of exchange depends on what types of Move are used and how they are interrelated to each other. Fictional dialogue serves as a character to character conversation within a literary text. According to Burton (1980), Move is regarded as the smallest unit at which the most analytical problems centre on.

Burton (1980) proposed two types of Exchanges: Explicit Boundary Exchanges and Conversational Exchanges. Explicit Boundary Exchanges are optional ones which are normally found at the openings of Transactions. They are made up of a Frame or a Focus, or a Frame and a Focus together. They must be supported by another speaker. Conversational Exchanges begin with an initiation which may be either an Opening, a Re-Opening or a Challenging Move. They may be followed by a Bound-Opening which may itself be Supported one or several times, after which Bound-Openings may recur together with recursive Supports.

Moves, the second last rank in Burton's (1980) model, are recognized into seven types of Move: Framing, Focusing, Opening, Supporting, Challenging, Bound-opening, and Reopening.

(1) Framing and Focusing Moves

They perform as explicit markers of transaction boundaries and involve Acts. Acts function as attention-getting, pre-topic items. Frames are made up of a head which is either a Marker or a Summons, and silent stress as a qualifier. Focuses comprise an optional signal; followed by an optional pre-head (Starter), a compulsory head (Metastatement or Conclusion) and an optional post-head (Comment).

(2) Opening Moves

They can be Transaction-initial in which Frames and Focuses are not involved. They are understood as Informatives, Elicitations or Directives which have no anaphoric reference to the immediately preceding utterance of a Transaction. They are known as topic-carrying items and are recognizably new in terms of the immediately preceding talk. When they do not act as Transaction-initial, they directly follow after Frame and/ or Focus. In such situation, they are used to attract the attention of the co-participants to announce that a new topic will be coming.

(3) Supporting Moves

These Moves occur after all the other types of Move. A Supporting Move may follow another Supporting Move. It includes items that concur with the initiatory Moves they are Supporting. In casual conversation, speakers use Supporting Move to support a previous piece of text, not a previous speaker.

(4) Challenging Moves

They function to hold up the progress of the topic or topic-introduction in some way. They can occur after any other Move. Different kinds of Challenging Move can be found: the idea of Discourse Framework, the idea of discourse-topic steps, presented in Keenan and Schieffelin (1976, cited in Burton, 1980) and an expansion of the necessary preconditions for interpreting any utterance as a request for action, as suggested by Labov (1970, cited in Burton, 1980).

The first type of Challenging Move which is based on the Discourse Framework is a simple kind of Challenging Move. It can occur by withholding an expected or appropriate reciprocal Act. Therefore, the absence of a Reply after an Elicitation can be seen as a Challenge. In the same way, a Challenging Move can be produced by providing an unexpected and inappropriate Act where the expectation has been made. This type of Challenge may elicit the opening of a new Transaction.

The Second type of Challenging Move has to follow one of the four steps proposed by Keenan and Schieffelin (1976, cited in Burton, 1980).

(1) He may refuse to give his attention.

(2) He may ask for a repetition of the utterance.

(3) He may ask for clarification of information about the identification of objects, persons, ideas in the discourse topic.

(4) He may ask for more information concerning the semantic relations that obtain between the referents in the discourse topic.

Labov (1970, cited in Burton, 1980) suggested four preconditions for the third type of Challenging Move. His rule offered a general rule for interpreting any utterance as a request for action – a Directive. If A requests B to perform an action X at a time T, A's utterance will be interpreted as a valid command only if the following preconditions control: B believes that

(1) X should be done for a purpose Y.

(2) B has the ability to do X.

(3) B has the obligation to do X.

(4) A has the right to tell B to do X.

Burton (1980) added more preconditions to the former for hearing any utterance as either a valid Informative or a valid Elicitation. If A informs B of an item of information P, A's utterance will be heard as a valid Informative only if the following preconditions hold: B believes that A believes that

(5) A is in a position to inform B of P.

(6) P is a reasonable piece of information.

(7) B does not already know P.

(8) B is interested in P.

(9) B is not offended/ insulted by P.

If A asks B for a linguistic response from B concerning a question M, it will be heard as a valid Elicitation only if the following preconditions hold: A believes that B believes that

(10) B hears M as a sensible question.

(11) A does not know M.

(12) It is the case that B might know M.

(13) It is the case that A can be told M.

(14) It is the case that B has no objection to telling M to A.

During a conversation, challenging Move performs as a disturbance to the progress of the topic. However, certain conditions need to be considered for specific utterance in identifying Challenging Move.

(5) Bound-opening Moves

They can be seen after a preceding Opening, Bound-opening or Re-opening Move has been Supported. They enlarge the Discourse Framework by extending the ideational-textual aspect of the original Opening Move, employing various types of Informative and Comment Acts.

(6) Re-opening Moves

These Moves occur after a preceding Opening, Bound-opening or Re-opening has been Challenged. They reinstate the topic that the Challenge either diverted or delayed. They are made up of optional Pre-faces, as pre-heads, with compulsory Informs/Comments as heads.

To categorize the Acts, Burton tried to use the rank from the bottommost rank upwards, i.e. considering Acts first then Moves. The original model listed by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, cited in Burton, 1980) was restricted to twenty-two Acts in which Burton (1980) made some alterations and additions because some Acts used for the classroom were not appropriate for natural conversation.

1. Marker (m) is realized by a closed class of items such as 'well', 'OK', 'Alright'. There are other expressive particles like (Kaw, Blimey) whose function is to mark boundaries in the discourse, and to indicate that the producer of the item has a topic to introduce.

2. Summons (sum) has the same function as that of a Marker and are realized by a closed set of verbal and non-verbal items: the use of the name of another participant, or mechanical devices like doorbells, telephone bells, etc.

3. Silent stress (^) is realized by a pause to highlight a marker or summons as the head of a boundary change.

4. Starter (s) is realized by a statement, question, command or moodless item. It provides information in order to make an appropriate response to the Initiation.

5. Metastatement (ms) functions to make clear the structure of the immediately following discourse. It also indicates the speaker's wish for an extended turn.

6. Conclusion (con) makes clear the structure of the immediately preceding discourse and is realized by anaphoric statements.

7. Informative (i) is realized by statements that provide information.

8. Elicitation (el) is realized by questions requesting certain linguistic responses.

9. Directive (d) is contrary to elicitations. It involves requesting non-linguistic responses, and is verbalized by commands.

10. Accusation (accn) functions to request an apology or a surrogate excuse.

11. Comment (com) is made up of a statement, question, command, or moodless item. It functions to expand, justify, provide additional information to a preceding Informative or Comment.

12. Accept (acct) is realized by indicating that the speaker has heard and understood the previous utterance and is compliant.

13. Acknowledge (ack) can be realized by 'yes', 'ok', 'uhah' to show that the speaker has heard and understood the previous utterance. Its function is to show that an Informative has been understood, and its significance appreciated.

14. Reply (rep) can be realized by a statement, question, moodless items and non-verbal surrogates such as nods. Its function is to provide a linguistic response appropriate to a preceding elicitation.

15. React (rea) involves a non- linguistic response to a preceding directive.

16. Excuse (ex) provides a formulaic apology or an excuse in response to a preceding accusation.

17. Preface (pr) is realized by combinations of placement markers, self-referential meta-terms, or meta – references to preceding talk in order to reinstate a diverted topic.

18. Prompt (p) reinforces a preceding directive or elicitation through a closed class of items like: 'Go on', 'What are you waiting for?', and 'Hurry up'.

19. Evaluate (ev) comments on the appropriateness of a preceding utterance in statements, questions, commands, or moodless items.

The analysis of discourse Moves in literary works, particularly within the literary analysis of short stories, has been a subject of growing interest among scholars exploring the subtleties of characters' communication and narrative construction. Examining how characters interact and convey meaning through dialogue provides a unique entry point into finding out the underlying themes and tensions within a narrative. Several studies in the field of discourse analysis and linguistic criticism have paved the way for a deeper exploration of this intersection.

Ernest Miller Hemingway (1899-1961) is famous for creating dialogues with a distinctive feature called "Iceberg Principle". Scholars have explored various aspects of his narrative technique, often focusing on the minimalist style and understated communication prevalent in his stories. Moreover, dialogues from his works are studied from different perspectives such as speech act, Move, fictional conversation, politeness, etc. By adopting the framework of (D. Burton 1980) for Move analysis, this paper seeks to contribute to this evolving field of study, offering a focused examination of the conversational dynamics in *Hills Like White Elephants*.

Synopsis of the short story

The story *Hills Like White Elephants* reveals the dilemma mainly through the conversation between a man and a girl called Jig whose detailed information is limited. The story is set in Spain. The man and Jig are at a train station where they converse upon a disagreeable topic of having an operation or keeping the pregnancy while waiting for the train. As the train arrives and the characters continue their journey, readers never know what final decision they have made on the topic. The story makes room for the readers to speculate the final decision that the characters made on the disagreeable topic.

Research Questions

This paper aims to answer the following questions:

(1) What types of Moves are used in the utterances by the main characters in the short story *Hills Like White Elephants*?

(2) Which Moves are used mostly by each character?

(3) How does the use of Moves in the conversation shape the sequence of Moves?

Methodology

The material used for this paper is a short story of Hemingway *Hills Like White Elephants* which was from the short story collection "Men Without Women", published in 1927. The story describes an American man and a girl who are discussing what to do with the girl's pregnancy. To explore the underlying Moves in the dialogue, the model of Burton (1980) for Move analysis is used focusing on the level of Moves and Acts in the conversation of the two characters. All the utterances by the characters will be categorised and listed along with the underlying use of Acts. The conversation depicts the proposition of the girl implying that she wants to keep the baby and the persuasion of the man to have an abortion while trying to hide his true intention at the same time. The researcher will explore the types of Moves used by each character and examine how the two proposing ideas are directed in the conversation by means of Acts.
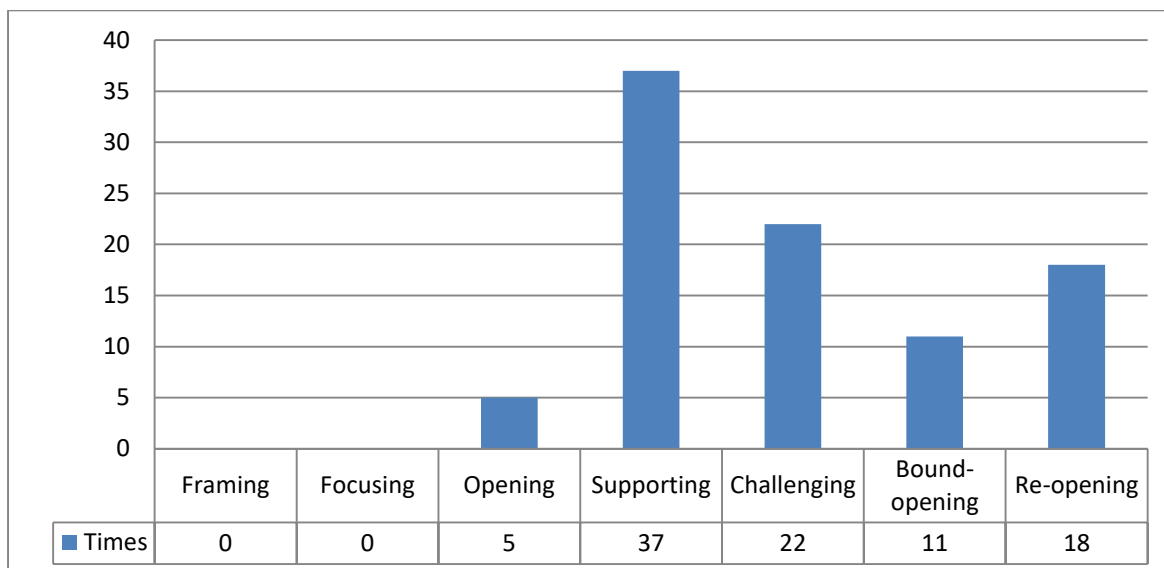
Findings

Based on the categorization of Moves and Acts proposed by Burton (1980), Table 1 and Table 2 show Moves and Acts which are found in the conversation of the story. According to the data shown in the Table 1, the total number of utterances between the man and the girl are 93 in which 4 Opening Moves, 37 Supporting Moves, 22 Challenging Moves, 11 Bound-opening Moves and 18 Re-opening Moves are found. According to the rank of the spoken discourse, exchanges in this short story are conversational exchanges. Therefore, framing and focusing Moves are not found. According to Burton's (1980) reconceptualised Acts, 9 out of 19 Acts, namely Acknowledge, Accept, Accuse, Excuse, Directive, Elicit, Informative, React and Reply, are frequently found in the utterances of the story.

In the story, the number of the utterances of the characters is nearly the same, 48 utterances by Jig and 45 utterances by the man. In Table 2, types of Moves used by each character are compared in order to explore the motive of the characters' utterances because the reason of choosing certain Moves is conveyed by the choice of constituent Acts. In the utterances of the man, 1 Opening Move, 25 Supporting Moves, 6 Challenging Moves, 5 Bound-opening Moves and 8 Re-opening Moves are used. Jig uses 4 Opening Moves, 12 Supporting Moves, 16
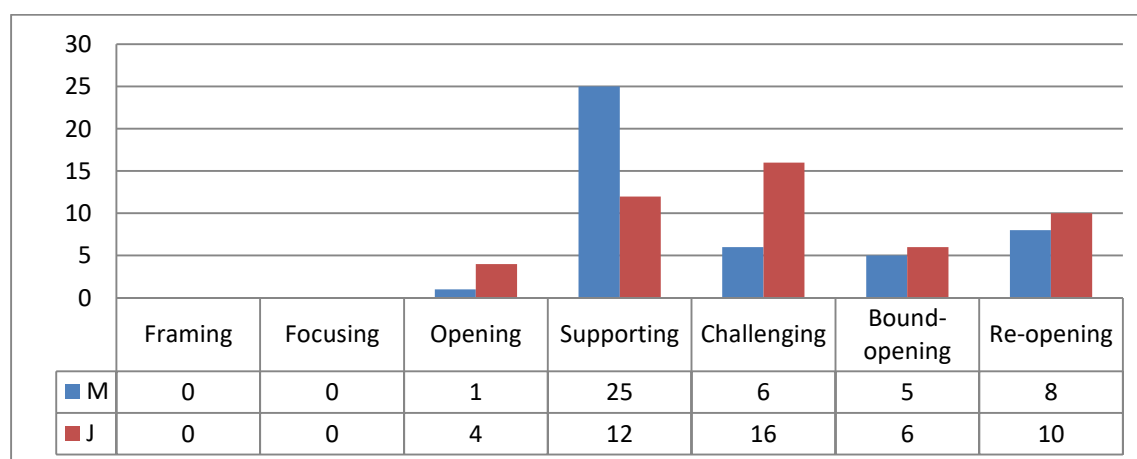
Challenging Moves, 6 Bound-opening Moves and 10 Re-opening Moves are found. Throughout the story, Supporting Move is significantly used and the Opening Move used by the man is least frequently found. For Jig, it is found that she mostly uses Challenging Moves and Opening Moves is least frequently used.

Table 1: Moves found in the utterances in the story

	Framing	Focusing	Opening	Supporting	Challenging	Bound-opening	Re-opening
■ Times	0	0	5	37	22	11	18

The reason of choosing certain Moves is conveyed by the choice of constituent Acts. According to the reconceptualised Acts by Burton (1980), 9 out of 19 Acts, namely Acknowledge, Accept, Accuse-Excuse, Directive, Elicit, Informative, React and Reply, are frequently found in the utterances of the story. To discuss the traits of characters, the use of Moves by the two characters is compared and the data is shown in Table 2. The analysis using the model of Burton (1980) can be found in the Appendix.

Table 2: Moves found in the utterances of the man and the girl in the story

	Framing	Focusing	Opening	Supporting	Challenging	Bound-opening	Re-opening
■ M	0	0	1	25	6	5	8
■ J	0	0	4	12	16	6	10

Discussion

Through the use of Moves and Acts, the unuttered conflict between the two characters is highlighted, but not resolved. In the story, girl uses Opening, Bound-opening and Re-opening Moves more than the man to initiate her talk which leads the right way for her intention, not wanting to lose her baby. She never tells explicitly that she wants to keep the baby.

Unfortunately, her initiations are ignored by the man. She uses Supporting Moves just to agree with the man. The topic that the girl wants to propose is never close enough to discuss.

In the utterances of the girl, Challenging Move is mostly found compared to other types of Moves. She wants to confirm if he really cares about her. Unlike the man, she cannot completely cut off the conversation. The man continuously urges the girl to undergo the operation. Instead of giving appropriate replies or reacts, she uses more Challenging Moves than the other Moves. By rejecting to respond the man's initiation twice, she challenges the man with the Act of reacts. When the man repeatedly states the topic, the girl's utterances reflect her worries about their relationship. The underlying Acts, elicit and accuse, are mostly used in the Challenging Moves, to achieve her goal, i.e. having a stable relationship.

It is found out that the man mostly uses Supporting Moves in his utterances. The underlying Acts of the Supporting Moves are used to show acknowledgement, to reply, to comment and to conclude the initiated Move. These Acts reinforce the use of Supporting Move and reveal that the man tries to discontinue the talk by simply agreeing or accepting whatever the girl says. Moreover, he uses Supporting Moves when he simply wants to inform the girl that he acknowledges what she says, but does not directly answer the questions. He wants to avoid the Challenging Moves of the girl.

The man repeatedly tells the girl to follow her own desire as if he cares a lot about her. But he implicitly forces the girl to have abortion. This shows in the man's replies of the challenging Moves of the girl, that the Supporting Moves he uses are composed mainly of excuses. Acts of excusing are used frequently to assure that he and his love for the girl will always be the same, and to urge the girl to undergo the operation. Unlike the man, the girl cannot make the man stop discussing the topic. She only requests the man to stop talking but the man doesn't give up. Finally she has to threaten the man, "I'll scream." to stop talking, which is regarded as Supporting Move.

The author makes the characters speak instead of narrating and it is the dialogue that reveals the dilemma between the characters. In the story, the conversation between the man and the girl never reveals the topic 'abortion' explicitly. Throughout the story, before the man starts the certain topic, it is the girl who initiates the conversation and the man tries to avoid the topic by abruptly changing the topic or giving order to stop. However, she doesn't start the conversation explicitly. When the man withholds the talk, she never disagrees but waits for another time to initiate the talk again. When the man picks up the implicit topic, it is the girl's turn to run away from the topic. At first, the girl seems to lead the conversation well, signaling the man to engage in the discussion of having the baby but the man drops the topic indirectly.

When the man tries to persuade the girl to have an operation, she cannot drop the topic like the man does. It is the man who holds the domineering position. The man does not explicitly order the girl to have an abortion and pretends to be a lover who cares a lot. However, the repetition of operation makes the readers suspicious about him. Moreover, the conversation gives a hint of power relations between the two characters as in cutting down the topic, ordering drinks and persuading the listener to follow.

In the early stage of the conversation, the girl uses Opening Moves and Framing Moves to direct her topic while the man uses more Supporting Moves than the others to discourage the topic. Later the man uses Re-opening Moves to bring up the previous topic that has been put on

hold and Supporting Moves to persuade the girl while she uses more Challenging Moves to confirm her doubts about the relationship with the man. Throughout the story, the man uses Supporting Moves more than the other types of Moves. The difference between the characters is that when the girl initiates the conversation, he uses Supporting Moves to drop the subject and when he initiates the topic, he uses them to persuade the girl to undergo The Operation.

Conclusion

Exploring the Moves used in the short story *Hills Like White Elephants* unveils how Hemingway employs dialogue to shed light on nuanced emotions and unspoken conflicts. The chosen theoretical framework reveals the Moves within the conversation, offering a rich perspective on the intricacies of communication. This exploration not only enhances our comprehension of Hemingway's narrative technique but also contributes to a broader understanding of conversational dynamics in literature. *Hills Like White Elephants* stands as a testament to the power of dialogue in conveying complex themes and inviting readers to engage in a profound exploration of the human condition.

Acknowledgements

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