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LITERARY COMPREHENSION THROUGH NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES: TEACHING READING AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

ЛИТЕРАТУРНОЕ ПОНИМАНИЕ ЧЕРЕЗ НАРРАТИВНЫЕ ТЕХНИКИ: ОБУЧЕНИЕ ЧТЕНИЮ НА УНИВЕРСИТЕТСКОМ УРОВНЕ

Abstract:

This article explores how analyzing narrative techniques fosters deeper literary comprehension among university students. Focusing on classics such as *Romeo and Juliet*, the study illustrates the limitations of simple plot summaries in capturing the essence of storytelling. Key narrative devices, such as *in media res*, foreshadowing, discriminated occasions and Freytag's Pyramid are examined to emphasize their roles in developing nuanced understanding. The article also delves into the significance of conflict, categorizing obstacles (e.g., protagonist vs. self, antagonist, society, or fate) and demonstrating how they drive narrative progression. By comparing the structures of comedies and tragedies, it highlights how narrative resolution reflects character struggles and thematic depth. Designed for university reading courses, the study offers strategies to help students critically analyze why and how events occur in literature, moving beyond summaries to engage with the mechanics of storytelling, thereby enhancing interpretative and critical thinking skills.

Keywords: reading comprehension; narrative; literary analysis; storytelling techniques; conflict analysis; university-level education; critical thinking

Аннотация:

Эта статья исследует, как анализ речевых методов способствует более глубокому литературному пониманию среди студентов. Сосредоточившись на классических произведениях, таких как «Ромео и Джульетта», исследование демонстрирует ограничения простых сюжетных пересказов в раскрытии сути повествования. Ключевые речевые приемы, такие как «*in media res*», предвещание, выделенные случаи и пирамида

Фрейтага, анализируются, чтобы подчеркнуть их роль в формировании глубокого и нюансированного понимания текста. Статья также углубляет значение конфликта, классифицируя препятствия (например, главный герой сталкивается с конфликтами: с самим собой, антагонистом, обществом или судьбой.) и демонстрируя, как эти конфликты определяют развитие сюжета. Сравнивая структуры комедий и трагедий, исследование подчеркивает, как разрешение повествования отражает борьбу персонажей и придает произведению тематическую глубину. Предназначенное для университетских курсов по чтению, исследование предлагает стратегии, помогающие студентам критически анализировать, почему и как происходят события в литературе. Эти подходы выходят за рамки простого пересказа сюжета, вовлекая студентов в изучение механики повествования и развивая их навыки интерпретации и критического мышления.

Ключевые слова: понимание прочитанного; нарратив; литературный анализ; техника повествования; анализ конфликтов; университетское образование; критическое мышление

Introduction

Educating university students in reading goes beyond simply helping students understand the sequence of events in a story. It involves leading them to examine the underlying aspects of time and action that propel the storyline. This article delves into methods educators can use to improve students' understanding of literature by concentrating on these factors. By using "Romeo and Juliet" as a key illustration, it demonstrates the drawbacks of basic plot summaries and focuses on the importance of exploring the reasons behind events and their unfolding. The article initially explores different methods in which time is utilized in storytelling. Exploring techniques, such as *media res* (beginning in the middle of the action), foreshadowing (hints of future events) and discriminated occasion (slowing down to focus on significant moments) enhances reader engagement and narrative complexity. Moreover, the article explores the significance of comprehending action and conflict in the analysis of literature. It presents Freytag's Pyramid, a structure outlining the stages of a narrative: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement. This model assists students in understanding how various story elements lead up to the climax and its resolution. The main hindrance or issue in a narrative is essential to its storyline. The article discusses different kinds of conflict, including protagonist versus self, antagonist, society, nature, machine, and fate. Comprehending these disputes enables students to recognize the importance to the characters and their efforts to conquer challenges. Ultimately, the article offers hands-on methods for teachers. The recommendation is to concentrate on the reasons and methods behind events in a story, rather than simply the occurrences. Classroom discussions and assignments need to prompt students to recognize and examine narrative techniques linked to time and action. Utilizing these ideas in different texts helps students acknowledge their significance and universality in storytelling. By emphasizing time and action, educators can foster a deeper literary appreciation and comprehension among students, moving beyond superficial plot summaries to a more nuanced analysis of narratives. This approach not only enhances students' engagement with literature but also equips them with critical analytical skills.

Purpose: The primary purpose of this article is to equip university educators with effective strategies for teaching reading through a focus on the concepts of time and action in literary works. By exploring these elements, students can gain a deeper comprehension of narrative structures and develop critical analytical skills that go beyond basic plot recapitulation.

Novelty: This article presents a novel approach to literary analysis by emphasizing the role of time and action in storytelling. Unlike traditional methods that often prioritize plot and character analysis, this approach encourages students to explore the mechanisms driving the narrative. By incorporating examples from renowned texts like "Romeo and Juliet" and

introducing various narrative techniques, the article offers innovative strategies for enriching literary comprehension.

Method: The method involves analyzing narrative techniques related to time and action, using "Romeo and Juliet" as a primary example. The article examines techniques such as *in media res*, foreshadowing, and discriminated occasion, and introduces narrative structures, such as Freytag's Pyramid. Practical strategies for classroom instruction are provided to help educators implement these concepts effectively.

Practical Significance: The importance of this article is found in its offering of effective tactics for teachers to improve literary analysis in the classroom. Educators can lead students to a deeper comprehension of stories by emphasizing time and action, which enhances their critical thinking skills and interest in literature. This method enhances students' literary understanding and readies them for advanced textual analysis.

Statement of basic material

One of the foundational aspects of narrative analysis is understanding how time is manipulated within a story. Gerard Genette introduces concepts such as anachrony, which includes both analepsis (flashback) and prolepsis (flashforward), to describe the non-linear representation of time in narratives [6]. These techniques help authors build suspense and offer insights into events or hints at occurrences in a non linear way within narratives to enhance the readers engagement, with the story. For instance, the use of **in media res**, a technique where a story begins in the middle of the action, can immediately engage readers [1]. This method, tracing back to epics such as Homer's *The Odyssey* enables writers to bypass lengthy expositions and dive directly into the narrative's core events. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* viewers are immediately immersed into the enduring rivalry, between the Montagues and Capulets without a detailed explanation of its origins. This not only heightens the dramatic tension but also mirrors the chaotic and intense nature of the lovers' relationship. **Foreshadowing** serves as a storytelling element that influences the perception of time in a narrative context. By suggesting occurrences in the plotline the writer generates curiosity and tension among readers. Peter Brooks highlights that foreshadowing caters to readers seeking resolution and insight moving the storyline along [3].

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo's foreboding statement before the Capulet ball "I fear, too early: for my mind misgives some consequence yet hanging in the stars" serves as a poignant example of how foreshadowing can deepen the thematic resonance of a story [11]. **Discriminated occasion** involves slowing down the narrative to focus on a particular moment, often marked by a shift in verb tense [6]. This technique allows for a more detailed and vivid depiction of significant scenes, leaving a lasting impression on the reader. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare employs this method during the lovers' first meeting and their subsequent parting scenes, emphasizing the intensity and transience of their relationship.

Moving beyond time, the concept of action within a narrative is equally critical. Forster states that the distinction between story (the chronological sequence of events) and plot (the causal and thematic connections between events) is essential for understanding narrative structure [4]. Plot is driven by conflict, the central obstacle that characters must confront and navigate.

Freytag's Pyramid is a structured tool that can be utilized for performing narrative analysis. This approach helps students to understand how different conflicts are created, developed and resolved after examining each phase. It is essential to recognize how complex the development of a storyline is and the strategies that writers use in creating and maintaining tensions and engagement in the narration.

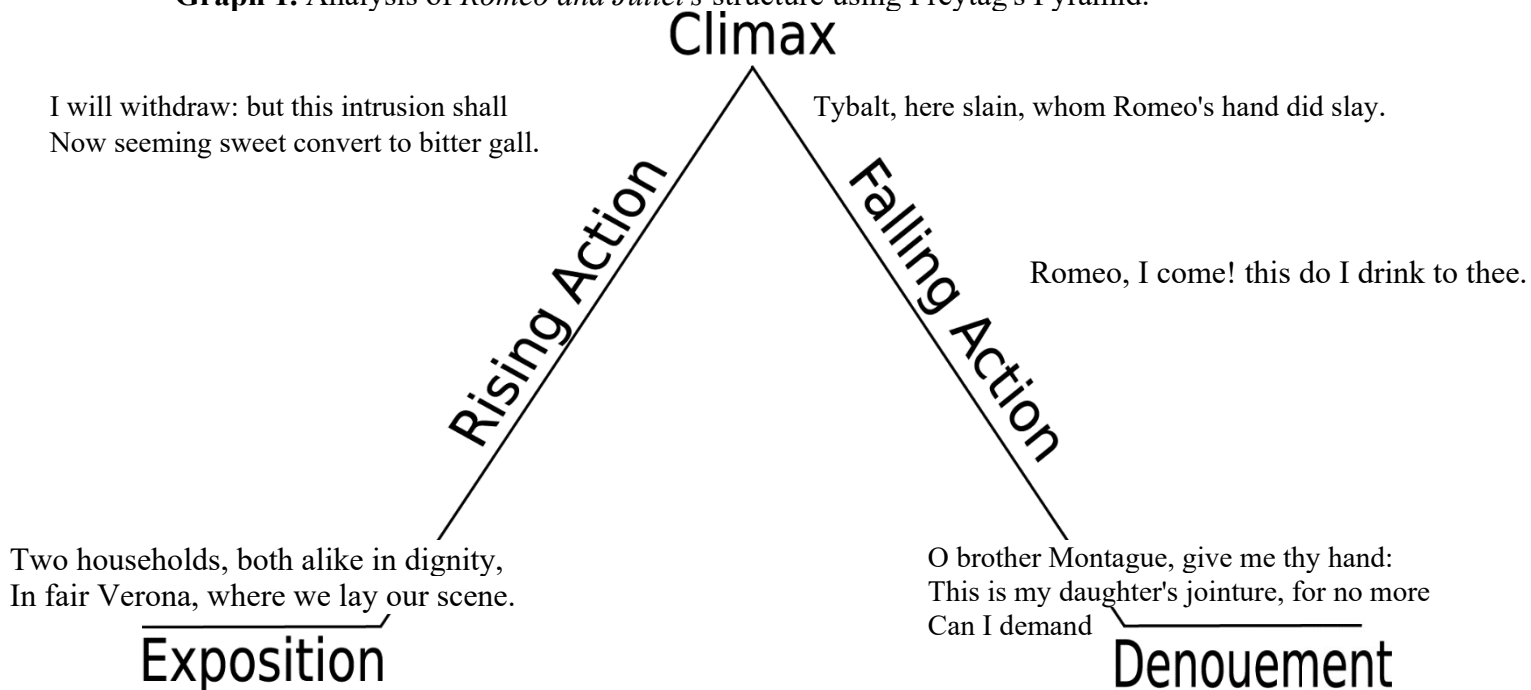
In the 19th century, Gustav Freytag created a Pyramid model that still is relevant and useful in the analysis of the plot and the narrative dynamics of a story [5]. This model carefully outlines five major steps that together construct an arch shape of the narrative curve which include *exposition*, *rising action*, *climax*, *falling action* and *resolution*. Each phase has a significant effect on the way the narrative's main conflict is handled and eventually resolved, thus providing a framework that can be used to study the plot in detailed.

In the case of the play *Romeo and Juliet*, Freytag's Pyramid offers a straightforward structure within which the play can be analyzed [11]. **The exposition** reveals the background of the main problem by portraying the ongoing conflict between the Montague's family and Capulet family which introduces the whole plot. It gives important contextual information relevant to the characters and their reasons for their subsequent actions that are crucial in comprehension of the events that follow. The events chronologically following the first meeting between Romeo and Juliet form part of **the rising action**. This stage encompasses their covert romantic relationship, including their wedding, which complicates the situation even further as the couple's romance is set against the growing family feud. The lovebirds are also driven apart through increasing pressure from society and lack of effective communication. The central point of the play is reached during the death of Mercutio and then Tybalt. This point is crucial in the events of the narrative as the struggle reaches **the climax**. It was an unfortunate series of events which culminated in Romeo being banished and that increased the tension seeking towards the resolution of the story.

The tragic conclusion of the falling action is driven by Romeo's banishment from Verona and Juliet's frantic efforts to reunite with him. Juliet's scheme to feign her death, aimed at escaping her imposed marriage to Paris and reuniting with Romeo, leads to the final resolution. Ultimately, the denouement of the play perhaps summarizes the story most eloquently as the tragic romance of Romeo and Juliet brings a bitter end. As with any story in which a conflict is presented, there will be a resolution, and subsequently, an end. Through the death of Romeo and Juliet, the two families that have been at war for the longest time, are united with the last image of disdain that has plagued warfare since its inception.

Graph 1 illustrates the analysis of the structure of *Romeo and Juliet* as mapped onto Freytag's Pyramid providing a visual representation of the play's narrative arc, from exposition to resolution.

Graph 1. Analysis of *Romeo and Juliet's* structure using Freytag's Pyramid.



Freytag's Pyramid complements the analysis of any storyline as it complements the examination of each phase of the story in detail. In this paradigm, tension is created by the introduction, escalation and the resolution of conflicts, and hence students can develop a greater understanding of the complexities of narrative construction. This sort of strategy helps in understanding how an author is able to create and maintain suspense throughout the text, as

well as deepens the readers' appreciation of and engagement with the literary piece. Thus, when this viewpoint is applied, the relationships among various story elements become more evident to the reader, enriching their perception of the storytelling process.

Types of Conflict in Narratives

It is important to understand the nature and classification of conflict in any given narrative, in order to grasp how the different events and actions of characters that form the storyline come together. There are several types of conflicts, and each of them is accompanied by multiple obstacles and opportunities for the protagonist [2].

Protagonists vs. Self: This internal conflict involves a character grappling with their own emotions, wishes, or beliefs.

In "Hamlet", the protagonist's struggle with doubt and regret drives the plot and leads to a devastating conclusion [12].

Protagonist vs. Antagonist: This is a classic conflict whereby the protagonist faces an alien force. This is a classic conflict where the protagonist faces an external antagonist. Harry Potter's ongoing battle with Voldemort is the primary conflict of the series, propelling the narrative forward [10].

Protagonist vs. Society: The storyline embodies the character that works against a prevailing cultural society or customs. One instance of such a conflict is found in "To Kill a Mockingbird", where Atticus Finch fights against racial discrimination [8].

Protagonist vs. Nature: The main character is put under the strain of different elements of the ecosystem. As seen in the book "Moby Dick", Captain Ahab epitomizes humankind's struggle against an overpowering and ever so changing environment through his futile search for the great whale [9].

Protagonist vs. Machine: This fight consists of the battle against technological advances and excessive automation. "Deep Thinking" explains how there were chess matches between Garry Kasparov, a world chess champion, and Deep Blue, an IBM-developed computer chess program [7].

Protagonist vs. Fate: The characters in this universe defy their fate. In the case of "Oedipus Rex", everything Oedipus did to run away from his preordained fate, he only ended up forcing it into a more absolute state, thus highlighting the aspect of fate [13].

Students can acquire understanding of the fundamental themes and motivations that propel the narrative forward through the identification and analysis of these conflicts. This comprehension is essential for gaining a more profound understanding of the text and its wider consequences. Educators can use a range of approaches to effectively teach these concepts. Motivating students to explore the causes and progression of events, rather than just the events themselves, can enhance their grasp of narrative structure. Classroom discussions and assignments may emphasize recognizing and examining narrative techniques connected to time and action. For instance, students might analyze how the use of **in media res** impacts their engagement with a text or examine the role of **foreshadowing** in building suspense and thematic coherence. Furthermore, by implementing these ideas in a wide variety of texts, students can better understand their ubiquity and significance in the art of storytelling.

Conclusion

Teaching reading at the university level requires a thorough knowledge of narrative structures and techniques to improve students' literary understanding and critical thinking abilities. Educators can help students analyze texts more deeply by looking at how time and action are manipulated in narratives, going beyond just summarizing the plot. Employing theoretical frameworks such as Genette's narrative techniques and Freytag's Pyramid offers systematic approaches to explore the intricate dynamics of storytelling. These structures assist students in grasping the importance of narrative components, such as exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and denouement, providing understanding of story construction and message delivery. In addition, understanding different forms of conflict, such as protagonist against themselves, society or destiny, allows students to delve into character growth and

thematic complexity. Practical techniques, such as comparing texts and incorporating critical essays, enhance students' analytical abilities by showing them the universality and significance of narrative techniques in various literary genres and time periods. On balance, this method enhances students' understanding of literature and provides them with the tools needed for advanced literary analysis. By focusing on how time and action interact, teachers can help students develop a more profound literary awareness, getting them ready for more challenging academic tasks and nurturing a lasting love for storytelling. This comprehensive method makes sure that students do not just consume stories but also become critical thinkers who value the intricate art of creating narratives.

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