Research Article

Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis of Text and Picture in Graphic *Novel Batman: The Killing Joke*

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ABSTRACT

Until these days, it is rare to find a systemic functional linguistics analysis on comic media. The combination of both is really interesting. Comic is a media to tell messages using the mix of picture and text. With that context, comics have its way to tell a message. Thus, the researcher adopted Spradley's qualitative analysis to analyze text and picture in the graphic novel Batman: The Killing Joke. The researcher analyzes the metafunctions on both text and picture using Halliday's systemic functional linguistics theory as the base and followed by Martin & Rose's multimodal discourse analysis theory. What the researcher wants to find is divided into three: how comic tells a message through an image, text, and text-image relation. First, the researcher found that through the image, comic tends to distribute the information in a panel in a centralized way. Then, it has an identical pattern in delivering interpersonal messages. In text analysis, verbal process and verbal behavioral processes are so rare to appear. Last, there is no notable indication in the relation to text and image. What the researcher analyzes is the dialogue and monologue coming from the characters which are mostly found in balloon speech and obviously refers to images.

1. Introduction

Fictional sets of characters and backgrounds are an exciting area to study. In the world of fictional fantasy, mostly, logic can be twisted and something nonsense can make sense. There are mythical dragons or people with supernatural power. We never really meet this kind of character in the real world. In a story based on real-life events, we can still guess what people can do, like doctors or police, and how we should behave around them. We have background knowledge about them so we can relate with the story at that surface level. How about fictional fantasy-based characters? We can still relate to them mostly because the author relates his character to the real world. The author uses real-life things to explain his fantasy. In the end, it is a mix of real-world and fictional worlds.

Now, there is comic, a media to tell a message through a paneled set of pictures. There is comic with and without text but what we are talking about here is the one with text, mixed with pictures. What the author implies is that both topics are similar to each other, about the mix of both aspects: fantasy world is a mix of the real-world and fictional world while comic is a mix of text and picture. So, a comic author has his/ her own abstract fantasy thought and uses real-world knowledge to realize it, the mix of both, the middle. Similarly, the author combines text and pictures to create *something in the middle.*

What I am talking about is the unique way of telling messages using two things. This unique way is the thing that I want to try to find. To do that, I think Halliday's systemic functional linguistic (2014) is helpful since it approaches language through social function (Santosa, 2018). Also, Martin and Rose's *multimodal discourse analysis* (2007) to study the pictures.

Most of the research about systemic functional linguistic I found commonly about all-text subjects like speech, biography, editorial script, novel, etc. (Intanniza, 2013; Nurkholis, 2015; Arum, 2015; Pertiwi, 2015). Similarly, research about comics is rarely, if not none, using sfl as its approach, especially in my country. Comic commonly is used as media and instrument of research (Ratista, 2010; Zainur, 2011; Wafa, 2013). By crossing both of those topics, I find it a fresh area to be studied.

In line with the function of language in a society which about what is written, spoken, listen, or read and what other people expect from the language used (Santosa, 2003), I want to find how comic tries to tell its story to me as a reader through metafunction analysis.

Metafunction analysis in media can result in various things based on what is analyzed. The core of systemic functional linguistic which is context (Santosa, 2018). For example, newspaper as news media, the result of textual analysis can be considered as a criterion of journalist's agreement of disagreement toward an issue (Rosa, 2007). Considering that comic is a collaboration between text and pictures to tell a story for entertainment purpose, there will be some metafunction which appears more and some appear less. This thing is based from that 1) picture is comprehended with visually through eyes and I assume that the transitivity analysis will show that there is some process that will appear more often than the other, which: relational (relate picture with text), existential (about pictures of characters or background), and material (physical activity or event); 2) mental, some of it, and verbal process, including behavioral, in comic, are expressed, through the shape of speech balloon; 3) speech balloon tends to be ignored at the first interaction (with the reader) from the entire panel/picture.

2. Methodology

This qualitative research focuses on graphic novel *Batman: The Killing Joke* by Alan Moore in 1988, strictly on the 46 pages of the main story. The participants are all the characters who appear in the book. Their thoughts and speeches restudies in this research. This research is also descriptive in nature. According to Nazir (1988), a descriptive method is a method that can be used for a group of humans, an object, a set of conditions, a system of reasoning, or a recent event. The objective of descriptive research is to make a description, systematic picture, factual, and accurate regarding the fact, nature, and connection between the phenomenon studied.

The data is based on three metafunctions: textual, ideational, interpersonal from the pictures, using multimodal discourse analysis, and in text analysis (MOOD system, transitivity, and theme. The researcher observes the language use and records the relevant data in correspondence to the research objective (Subroto, 1992). The data is divided into *act* and *scene. Act* is the big chunk of the entire story and *scene* is the smaller one. Act and scene are determined through Halliday's theory of field of discourse, tenor of discourse, and mode of discourse. The researcher determined the story consisting of 13 acts with various amount of scenes.

Then, the collected data is analyzed inductively. Content analysis was applied; content analysis is the stages of data collecting, grouping, and analyzing based on the approach of research (Spradley, 2006) which consists of analysis of domain, taxonomy, componential, and thematic.

3. Result and Discussion

Through the componential table analysis, the researcher found an evenly spread of appearances in some metafunction analysis throughout the whole story. This spread appears only in some aspects of metafunction, text, and image. What the research means by spread is the steady appearances of the metafunction aspect and not concentrated. Also, there is an identical appearance pattern appears in interpersonal picture analysis. These can be grouped into some topics: *comic information distribution, identical pattern of interpersonal in picture analysis, text projection, and transitivity in the context of comic.*

In reality, when we read comic, the reader will confront about page. What I mean, the information is presented through page per page format. It is the surface level. In this level, the common information distribution is polarized, vertical and horizontal; practically, the information in a page started from the most left-top panel then go to the right-end, then goes to next line of the panel below, and keep going until we reach the most right-bottom panel, the end of the page, then we go to the next page, repeat. It is the common distribution in western comic, or let's just say *comic.*

Then, in the next level, the distribution is about from panel to panel. If a page is a sentence then panels are the clauses. The result shows that the distribution leans to *central* distribution rather than polarized by an extremely big margin. The size of each panel in a comic book page majorly appears in a small size where the reader can see the entire panel at the first glance.

At that first glance, the reader can't think about where the reader has to start. The eyes will lock into, subjectively, the most stand salient of pictures in the panel.

The *centralized* distribution is divided into two: central and marginal. The distribution of central appears more than marginal with ratio of 9 to 2. If I have to elaborate it with Halliday's textual analysis theory, then this *centralized* distribution is the topical theme, whereas marginal is the marked topical theme and central is the unmarked topical theme. What I implied is that *central: central* is a common topic while *central: marginal* appears in some context.

Polarized distribution information appears too, but it is a rare appearance. In my opinion, there is a condition which can make a panel have polarized distribution information: 1) there is no part of pictures which is salient enough and then makes the reader unable to find where to start comprehending the information; 2) the shape and size of the panel; 3) the panel location and the reader reading direction.

Next, the result shows that the analysis of attitude and engagement from picture interpersonal analysis have identical patterns. This is not by any chance. If we compare it with interpersonal analysis in text level, or MOOD system analysis, then it can make more sense.

Basically, we can divide a clause into two: offer and demand information and service. It can be identified based on the constituent appeared and then we can group the clause into imperative or indicative--declarative or interrogative. Here, attitude and engagement are a pair where the pattern appears on both analyses representing the intention of the writer. Just like how in the text level it shows *offer* or *demand*, here we can group the pattern into *sentiment* and *appreciation*.

Next, talking about the relation between text and image, most of the text appear, while excluding sound effect, etc., about 69% of it is the projection of the picture while 31% of it is the expansion. The relation between projection and expansion here is like the relation between marked topical theme and unmarked topical theme mentioned before. Projection is more common while expansion appears in some context. Here, the researcher studies the book as a reader and reads it linearly. What I mean by linear is that the researcher didn't record the text like the ones which refer to pictures and contexts coming from the previous pages. The researcher do counts pictures and contexts like foreshadow and symbols outside the story.

Last, transitivity analysis shows two processes which appear often: material and relational. With this, the researcher proves one of his hypotheses where material process becomes one of the most dominant in appearance in the context of comic. Both material and relational processes appear evenly throughout the story. But, talking about even appearance, we need to look at it from a different perspective. Material process and relational process appeared evenly and it is clear. Then, when we put mental and mental behavioral as one, a process that deals with cognitive and feeling, they appear evenly too and also have a comparable total appearance with the two processes previously mentioned. Existential process has a low total appearance but it is evenly spread. Then, which one doesn't evenly spread and have a high total appearance? The answer is verbal and verbal behavioral or the process which deals with 'talking'.

Even when both verbal and verbal behavioral processes are combined, it still cannot beat the existential process appearance. So, what makes this process 'special' here?

In an entertainment media which purely uses text to tell messages, we will easily find those two verbal processes. For example, "*Good morning,*" *he said.* We can find the projection of what is said. But it is hard to appear in comics. The way it conveys "'*good morning,*' *he said*", like the example, can be different, big time. Projection from verbal process will be placed in a speech balloon and that balloon itself is the way on how the message is relayed: yelling, whispering, etc. It is harder to find "*he said…*", "*he asks…*", "*... he thought*", etc. in a comic.

4. Conclusion

The componential analysis shows some even appearance metafunction aspects throughout the story and these aspects are the ones which mainly analyzed using the context of comic. The objective of this research is to find how comic try to tell its story to the reader through metafunction analysis and I found that 1) the information distribution in comic is more into centralized distribution but it is not absolute; 2) there are patterns in how comic tells an interpersonal message through the picture to its reader; 3) text in speech balloon is mostly used to show projection but in many occasion, it expands the context of the message and it tries to tell by relating it with pictures; and 4) in transitivity, the process which deals with verbal activity is compromised. There are a lot of findings. But there are similarities in how a message relayed through a combination of text and picture with how a message relayed through pure text.

But the researcher thinks that the lack of research reference with an identical method and object is something that limited this research. Also, the subjective nature of pictures as an art can make the analysis result vary from time to time. Because of that, I repeat the analysis four times until I meet some consistency in the data obtained and creating my own guide to analyze the object. The researcher can only lean to theories and other references. But, the researcher assumes his research is still valid and feasible to be used as a reference if there is another researcher who wants to study a similar method and object

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