

Genre Analysis of Newsgroup Movie Reviews on www.imdb.com

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Abstract

The main objectives of the present study are 1) to analytically examine particular aspects of moves, sub-moves, and steps seen in the rhetorical pattern of movie review genre on the website www.imdb.com, the Internet movie database; and 2) to examine some aspects of the use of thematic discourse markers that can be typically found in the investigated movie reviews.

The results derived from the application of the move analysis, one of the qualitative methods used to analyse text—genres, reveal that movie reviews on the IMDB domain have five main moves: 'Move 1: Introducing the Movie'; 'Move 2: Describing the Movie's Storyline'; 'Move 3: Providing Comments'; 'Move 4: Concluding the Review'; and 'Move 5: Offering Other Information'. Though there are five main prototypical moves found in the examined movie reviews, the results revealed that the positions of moves are interchangeable; the most frequently found pattern of move order is move 1 → move 3 → move 4 → move 5, which is seen as 28% of the reviews.

The present study would yield advantages to students of English and of ESP who are interested in writing movie reviews since they can use the offered description of the rhetorical pattern of movie reviews as a model of how professional movie reviewers write reviews.

บทคัดย่อ

จุดประสงค์หลักของงานวิจัยนี้คือ 1) มุ่งศึกษาเกี่ยวกับลักษณะการนำเสนอและขั้นตอนของรูปแบบการเขียนบทวิจารณ์ภาพยนตร์ซึ่งพบได้ในเว็บไซต์ www.imdb.com 2) ศึกษาลักษณะการใช้กลุ่มคำที่ใช้ในการนำเสนอแก่นสารซึ่งพบได้ทั่วไปในบทวิจารณ์ภาพยนตร์ที่เลือกมาศึกษา

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ในการเขียนบทวิจารณ์ภาพยนตร์มีการนำเสนอหลักอยู่ 5 ขั้นตอน ได้แก่ ขั้นที่ 1 แนะนำภาพยนตร์ ขั้นที่ 2 เล่าโครงเรื่องของภาพยนตร์ ขั้นที่ 3 วิเคราะห์ภาพยนตร์ ขั้นที่ 4 สรุปบทวิจารณ์ภาพยนตร์ และขั้นที่ 5 ให้ข้อมูลอื่นๆ ขั้นตอนการนำเสนอไม่มีตำแหน่งตายตัว สามารถวางสลับที่กันได้ และรูปแบบการนำเสนอขั้นตอนการเขียนที่พบมากที่สุด คือ ขั้นที่ 1 → ขั้นที่ 3 → ขั้นที่ 4 → ขั้นที่ 5 ซึ่งคิดเป็น 28%

งานวิจัยนี้น่าจะมีประโยชน์แก่ผู้สนใจศึกษารายการภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อวัตถุประสงค์เฉพาะ ซึ่งจะสามารถนำผลของการศึกษานี้ไปใช้เป็นแนวทางในการเขียนบทวิจารณ์ภาพยนตร์อย่างมืออาชีพได้

Rationale of the Study

Movie reviews are considered one of the written discourses that contain essential information aiming to provide critical analysis of movies that are currently played. Movie reviews are widely read by readers who are interested in knowing whether the films that will be played in theatres are worth watching or not. In point of fact, most movie reviews that are published in movie magazines are written by well-known or professional critics. However, nowadays, because of the influential evolution of the cyber world, it is common that there are many movie reviews and other types of product reviews on many commercial websites, for example, www.amazon.com, www.dpreview.com, www.cnet.com, and www.zdnet.com. Since film industries increasingly become important to many countries, especially the American film industry that can sell its movies to other countries and can make huge profits, movie reviews are very important in terms of being one of the essential factors that can affect customers' decisions when purchasing movie tickets. Therefore, it is not surprising to know that movie reviews possess a specific purpose that tends to offer a major source of critical analytic evaluation, which is rhetorically organised by means of linguistic construction.

While there are three previous genre—based studies which attempt to analyse rhetorical organization of scholarly book reviews (Motta-Roth, 1995; Nicolaisen, 2002; Wararak Khunkitti, 2005), there are a few previous studies that aim to analyse other types of reviews like movie reviews, music reviews, and book reviews in other fields. Moreover, especially,

written reviews in online environments are still overlooked areas to examine. Though movie reviews are generally thought to contain some criticisms and storylines that may be expected to occur, there are no models or guidelines regarding how to conduct professional movie reviews. For this reason, this present study aims to offer an applicable model of how to write movie reviews that is specifically outlined according to particular rhetorical organization.

Objectives of the Study

1) To investigate and to identify the regular rhetorical patterns of movie reviews, and to analyse the functions and frequencies of moves, sub—moves, and steps that can be commonly found in the investigated movie reviews.

2) To examine the use of lexical features that can be typically found in the investigated movie reviews.

Research Questions

1) How could the rhetorical patterns typically seen in movie reviews be described schematically?

2) What are commonly found thematic discourse markers that are used to refer to writers, to movies, to comments and judgments?

Review of Literature

1. Concepts of Genre Analysis

1.1 Analysing Unfamiliar Genres

Since there can be several types of genre that are not familiar and are still untouched by researchers, the procedures strengthening the important seven steps used in analysis are proposed. Though genres are quite complicated to analyse since one genre may be a combination of multiple linguistic elements, Bhatia (1993) presented seven steps to analyse structural forms of genres.

Table 1 Bhatia's Seven Steps to Analyse Unfamiliar Genres

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Placing the given genre text in a situational context.2. Surveying existing literature.3. Refining the situational/ contextual analysis.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genres must be interacted.• Genres best suit the environments, cultures, and history of communities.4. Selecting and analysing corpus.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genres have some attributes that distinguish them from other genres.• Criteria used to analyse genres according to a corpus are different.5. Studying the institutional context.6. Levels of linguistic analysis<ul style="list-style-type: none">Level 1—the quantitative analyses of lexico—grammatical features.Level 2—the analyses of text—patterning or textualisation.Level 3—the analyses of structural interpretation of genres.7. Specialist information genre analysis.

Source: Bhatia (1993: 22—36)

The main focus of this study is to find out the particular move order of the examined movie reviews. In the table 1, there is, in the sixth stage, the third level of linguistic analysis used to find out how the specific overall written messages of a genre can be organized is then emphasized in the following part.

2. Rhetorical Pattern of Language Genre

Mann and Thompson (1988) explain that rhetorical pattern or structure provide solid organizational account of texts. Rhetorical structure theory is about understanding the relational connection of linguistic devices that manipulate the coherence of discourse.

3. Genre-Based Studies Associatively Related to Genres of Reviews

Motta-Roth (1995) examines the rhetorical pattern of book reviews in the academic fields related to linguistics, economics, and chemistry. Furthermore, there is recent research conducted by Wararak Khunkitti (2005) to analyse the rhetorical patterns of book reviews in English fields. She investigates 59 book reviews extracted from three English journals: ESP journal, ELT journal, and Applied Linguistics.

Methodology

1. Data Collection

In selecting samples, the selected samples are movie reviews that are newly written by newsgroup members in the IMDB domain. The twenty-five selected movie reviews are recently written within the period of the year 2006. Each movie review has a range of 800—1,500 words. Also, the selected movies in the year 2006 appear in and are chosen from the list of the Yearly US Box Office Top 180 (**Extra Entertain Magazine**, 2007). However, according to the report of US Box Office Top 180, between 12th April and 4th December 2006, there were only 55 movies shown in Thailand. The researcher listed names of selected movies that were shown in Thailand during that time and entered in the IMDB domain in order to search reviews of the selected movies.

This study aims to examine the holistic phenomenon of the general process or the schematic structure of writing movie reviews, not focusing on examining any specially preferable types of movies in order to avoid biases in picking up the data.

2. Data Analysis

There are 3 main stages in analysing data. In the first stage, the rhetorical pattern of move order and the criteria in identifying functions of moves, sub-moves, and steps are presented. In the second stage, the frequency of occurrence of the patterns of the move order in the corpus of movie reviews, the patterns of moves, sub-moves, and steps contained in each movie review, and the frequencies of occurrence of moves, sub-moves, and steps in all 25 movie reviews are presented and discussed respectively. Finally, in the third stage, the three specific key concepts used to explore thematic discourse markers are investigated.

2.1 Move Analysis

The move analysis is important to genre analysis since each move specifies its specific duty and contains the communicative functions known as sub-moves.

2.2 Lexical Units Used as Thematic Discourse Markers

Thematic structure, as defined by Rashidi (1992), is the grammatical lexical items used as discourse markers mostly used at the beginning of the point where the writers aim to emphasise and show how writers regard themselves in the discourse communities. There are three main key concepts that are set by the researcher to examine as follows:

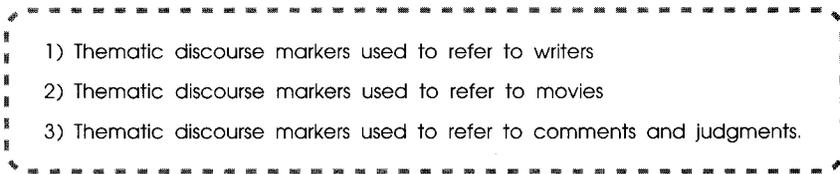
- 
- 1) Thematic discourse markers used to refer to writers
 - 2) Thematic discourse markers used to refer to movies
 - 3) Thematic discourse markers used to refer to comments and judgments.

Figure 1 Three Groups of Key Concepts Used to Find Thematic Discourse Markers

Data Presentation and Interpretation

1. The Schematic Description of Rhetorical Pattern in Movie Reviews in the IMDB Domain

Since the main core of this study is to find out the particular moves and steps discovered in the investigated movie reviews, the rhetorical pattern of move order could be then presented as follows:

Table 2 The Schematic Description of Rhetorical Pattern of Movie Reviews

Move 1	Introducing the Movie
Sub-Move 1	Specifying the Subject
Step 1	Stating the Title of the Movie and/or
Step 2	Providing the Subject's General Description and Information and/or
Step 3	Presenting General Background Knowledge Related to the Movie and/or
Step 4	Initially Summarizing Plot or Showing Outstanding Parts and/or
Step 5	Initially Expressing a Major or Minor Critique about the Movie
Sub-Move 2	Generalizing the Subject
Step 1	Offering Broad Statements about the Subject
Sub-Move 3	Providing Reviewer's Personal Account
Step 1	Giving Reviewer's Previous Experience

Table 2 (continued) The Schematic Description of Rhetorical Pattern of Movie Reviews

Move 2 Step 1	Emphasizing on Describing the Movie's Storyline Describing Events in the Movie
Move 3 Step 1 Step 2	Providing Comments Providing Negative Criticism and/or Providing Positive Criticism
Move 4 Step 1 Step 2	Concluding the Review Making an Entire Judgment or Evaluation of the Subject and/or Concluding by Stating the Movie's Overall Description
Move 5 Step 1 Step 2 Step 3	Offering Other Information Providing Other Online Sources for More Reviews and/or Providing Available Contact Information of the Reviewer and/or Providing Other Special Information

2. The Criteria in Identifying Moves, Sub-Moves, and Steps

The explanation of criteria in identifying moves, sub-moves, and steps is described in this part.

Move 1: Introducing the Movie

In a general sense, this move centrally focuses on giving a general account, information, or background of the movie to the readers. Though this move does not aim to exaggerate the critiques or to tell the plot, some of the reviewers still talk about the scenes in the movie or present a brief statement of critique or evaluation of the movie before they will strongly overstate the spotlight story or events of the movie and will focus on criticizing the movie in the next moves. In total, this move consists of three main sub-moves that are specifying the subject, generalizing the subject, and providing reviewer's personal accounts.

Move 2: Emphasising on Describing the Movie's Storyline

This move particularly aims to focus on explaining detailed events, scenes, or situations in films. There is only one step found in this move, which is "Describing Events in the Movie". Though the plot or some parts of the movies are revealed in the introduction part, the move 2 step 1 is designed to give more examples of storylines or of events that occur in the films and to give more details of the movie.

Move 3: Providing Comments

Move 3 emphasises reviewers' personal points of view, evaluation, or judgments on the subjects to readers whether the movies are good enough to watch or not. This move may seem like move 1 sub-move 1 step 5, but one thing that makes this move different is that this move gives more details of comments or critiques that support the critiques in move 1 formerly provided by film critics.

Move 4: Concluding the Review

It is clear that this move is designed to encapsulate the holistic judgment of the review. Besides, the concluding parts of reviews mark a summary of the general account or information of the movie such as showing the film's classification, duration, target audience, and overall negative or positive comments. This move will appear at the end of reviews after reviewers have given comments in move 3.

Move 5: Offering Other Information

This move aims to offer additional information. This move is the real ending of the movie review. Before closing the review, most writers provide other valuable sources of reviews, give personal accounts of contact information, and give other information such as where the film is currently playing in the United States

The most popular pattern is "move 1 → move 3 → move 4 → move 5", which occurs in 7 movie reviews out of 25 movie reviews, it can be pointed out to some extent that reviewers like to begin with move 1 aiming to introduce the movie. After that, they give comments about the movie and conclude the reviews. It should be noted that all film critics provide some other information to review readers.

3. Analysis of Lexical Units Used as Thematic Discourse Markers

As mentioned earlier, there are three categories of thematic discourse markers that are 1) thematic discourse markers used to refer to writers; 2) thematic discourse markers used to refer to movies; and 3) thematic discourse markers used to refer to comments and judgments. These three categories are critically described respectively.

3.1 Thematic Discourse Markers Used to Refer to Writers

Thematic discourse markers are often used to introduce the pattern of thoughts of message senders by using lexical chunks to show their communicative intention before sentences or new paragraphs. In this part, thematic discourse markers used to refer to film critics are presented. There are instances of thematic discourse markers that are asserted together with “I” and “my”.

*He said that it hurt his ears. **Personally**, I wished that they had been even louder still be heard laughing. **Just before the film started**, I mistimed my restroom break and admittedly missed exude badass to his greatest potential. **In my humble but hugely partial opinion**, Jackson is only Final Destination 3, for goodness sake. **So** my negativity isn't borne out of film elitism or any so what's the point? **Plus**, a lot of my readers are guys who are only interested in movie*

3.2 Thematic Discourse Markers Used to Refer to Movie

It is generally known that “it” and “film” are the most popularly used words that refer to movies. The following are examples of sentences where thematic discourse markers used to make reference to movies are found

***Suffice to say**, it would be hard for anyone to top Reeve's performance **Put simply**, it's the moving picture version of the book we read, **No matter what I say**, it's going to make approximately \$1 billion on opening it has those elements down pat. **In this movie**, the humanity has been peeled from the Man **in the movie are made from cars**, and the most surprising of the*

3.3 Thematic Discourse Markers Used to Refer to Comments and Judgments

Examples of thematic discourse markers used to refer to comments and judgments can be mostly found in moves that contain subjective comments and evaluation of reviewers like move 1 sub—move 1 step 5, move 3, and move 4.

Any movie, including a Superman movie, that is filled with special-effects needs something more. In fact, old Supe baby had more dialogue in the regrettably uncinematic "Superman IV: The Quest Again, no real personality and her brown curly hair is a gross injustice for a blonde This is, of course, not necessarily a bad thing, as Donner's film That said, the jury is still out as to if he'll be a star or any good outside of these films

As can be seen, thematic discourse markers that are employed when writers want to show their comments are inherent at the beginning of sentences or in the middle of sentences which are beginning points of phrases that move to offer criticisms.

Conclusion

1. Conclusions of Issues from the Analysis of Schematic Description of Rhetorical Pattern of Movie Reviews on www.imdb.com

There are, totally, five moves in the corpus of movie reviews in the IMDB domain that indicate the contributed overall communicative purposes that are cognitively realized. (See Table 2)

2. Significance of Patterns of Move Order of the Investigated Movie Reviews

Moves of the investigated genre do not always have to be arranged in order from move 1 to move 2 due to the fact that there can be the phenomenon of cyclicity of the move order (Swales, 1990).

In conclusion, it can be understood that particular purposes of reviewers are significantly and semantically inherent in each move that aims to structure and to organize texts. The purposes operated within the moves can be identified according to reviewers' communicative intentions.

3. Suggestion for Further Study

There are other types of reviews of other products that are interesting to be explored. Also, further studies can study more about the applications of words in the corpus of review genres. For example, analysis of lexical features may be concerned with registers, stylistic variations, cohesion, and coherence in genres.

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