The Problem – Solution Pattern In Hemingway's Cat in the Rain

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Abstract

The 'problem – Solution' model of discourse structure, developed by Winter (1969, 1976, 1977) and extended by Hoey (1979, 1982, 1983) is one of the few models which combine surface linguistic study and local levels of text analysis with the overall structure of text. This model has been used in the analysis of non-narrative texts.

It is hypothesized that:

1.　The problem -Solution pattern is used in narrative texts.
2.　The lexical items can signal the rhetorical pattern in the text.

The study aims at investigating the validity of the above hypotheses by using Hoey's model of analysis on Hemingway's Cat in the Rain.

The analysis of the short story proved the validity of the proposed hypotheses and revealed the following:

- The writer followed a conventional order in presenting the information i.e. situation, problem, solution and evaluation.
- He communicated the rhetorical pattern to the reader through his clever use of the lexical items.
- The solution is always preceded by a pre-solution.
- The positive solution signals the end of the discourse and the negative solution signals another problem which confirms the reader's expectations.

Key Words: problem-solution , Hemingway , Cat in the Rain

نمط (المشكلة – الحل) في قصة قطة تحت المطر للكاتب هيمنغواي

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الملخص :

ان نمط هيكلية الخطاب "المشكلة – الحل" ، التي وضعها ونتر (١٩٦٩، ١٩٧٦، ١٩٧٧) والتي طورها هوي (١٩٨٣،١٩٨٢،١٩٧٩) هو واحد من النماذج القليلة التي تجمع بين الدراسة اللغوية السطحية والمستويات المحلية لتحليل النص مع الهيكل العام للنص. ولقد استخدم هذا النموذج في تحليل النصوص غير السردية.

يفترض هذا البحث بأن:

١. نمط (المشكلة - الحل) يستخدم في النصوص السردية.
٢. يمكن للمفردات المعجمية ان تؤشر النمط الاسلوبي في النص.

يهدف البحث إلى التحقق من صحة الفرضية أعلاه باستخدام نموذج هوي للتحليل على قصة الكاتب همنغواي " قطة تحت المطر"

أثبت تحليل القصة القصيرة صحة الفرضيات المقترحة وتوصل الى ما يلي:

- يتبع الكاتب ترتيبا تقليديا في تقديم المعلومات مثل الحالة ، المشكلة، الحل والتقييم
- لقد اوصل النمط الخطابي للقارىء من خلال استخدامه الذكي للمفردات المعجمية
- يكون الحل النهائي دائما مسبوقا بمقترح للحل
- يؤدي الحل الايجابي الى انهاء الخطاب ويؤدي الحل السلبي الى مشكلة اخرى مما يؤكد توقعات القارىء

Theoretical Background

1. The Rhetorical Patterns

       Using Winter's (1977) previous model of clause relations as a point of departure, Hoey (1979, 1983, 1986, 1993, 1994 and 2001) proposes a new model for discourse analysis in terms of rhetorical relations. He broadens the scope of Winter's model by showing how certain lexical items can signal the rhetorical pattern of the whole texts instead of confining the role of lexical items to the signaling of clause relations alone.

       Whatever the pattern used in a discourse, Hoey (1979: 33) identifies a way to detect the presence of a rhetorical pattern by projecting the discourse under analysis into a dialogue involving questions and answers. To demonstrate this method, Hoey (1986: 191) offers the following made-up text:

       (1) *Charles was a language teacher.* (2) *His students came to him unable to write coherently.* (3) *He taught them discourse analysis.*
(4) *Now they all write novels.*

Projecting this text into a dialogue, the result can be as follows:

       1. D (iscourse): Charles was a language teacher.
           Q(uestion): What problem arose for him?

       2. D: His students came to him unable to write coherently.
           Q: What did he do about it?

       3. D: He taught them discourse analysis.
           Q: What was the result?

       4. D: Now they all write novels.

       Such interrogative method helps establish the relationships between the sentences in the text.

Thus, sentence (1) can be identified as the situation, sentence (2) as the problem, sentence (3) as the Solution, and sentence (4) as the positive evaluation.
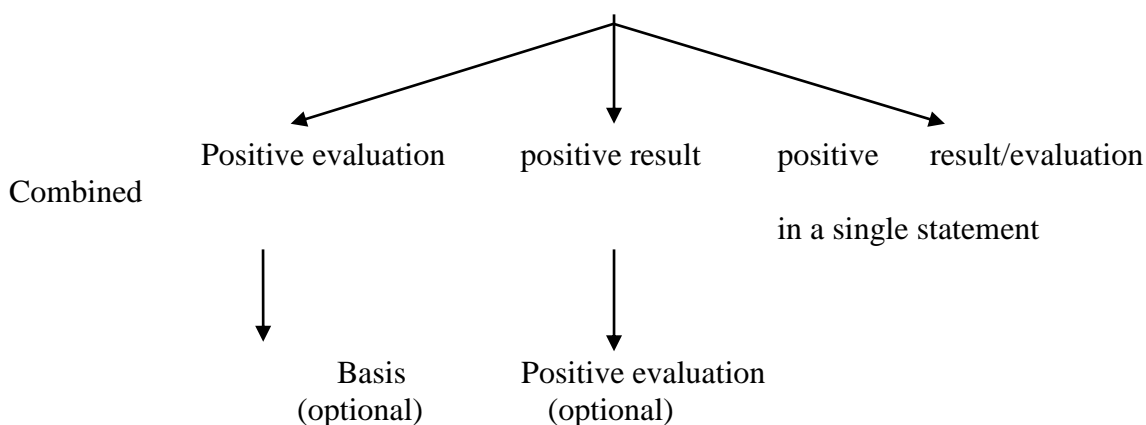
Situation (optional)

↓

Aspect of Situation Requiring a Response (i.e. problem)

↓

Responses

Combined Positive evaluation   positive result   positive   result/evaluation

in a single statement

Basis   Positive evaluation
(optional)   (optional)

Figure (1) The Basic Problem-Solution pattern
Adapted from (Hoey 1983)

However, in real discourse the case is more complicated, and Hoey's (1979) model may fall short of analyzing complex texts. Therefore, Hoey (1983) modified his earlier pattern by considering evaluation as either positive or negative. If it is positive, the same pattern given in Figure (1) would emerge; if the evaluation is negative, it signals another problem that leads to an evaluation, introducing the concept of a multi-layering. A multi-layered pattern is represented in Figure (2) herein:

Situation (optional)

Problem

Response

positive evaluation
And/or result

Negative Evaluation
and/or result
(all three options in
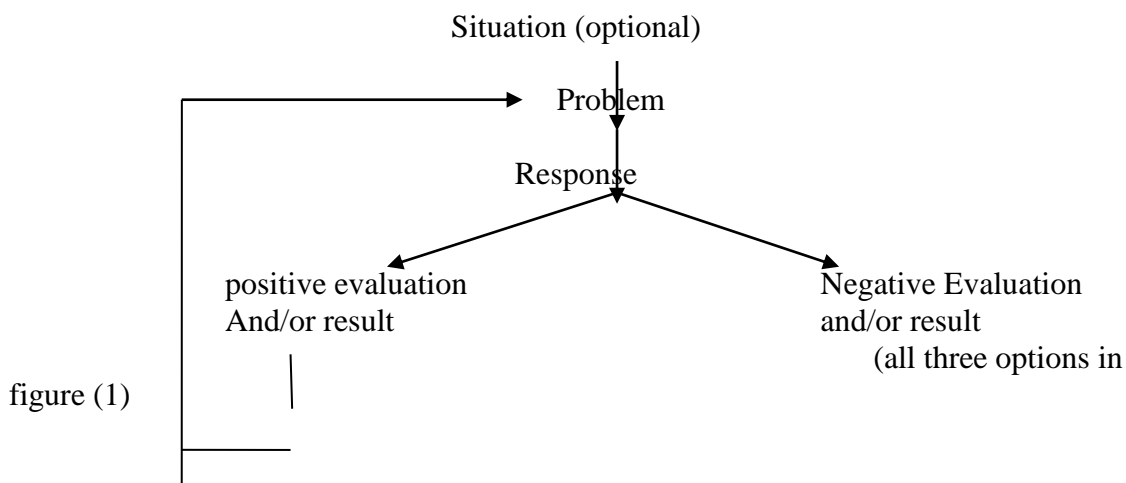
figure (1)

Figure (2) the recycling effect of negative evaluation in problem-solution patterns
Adapted from (Hoey 2001)

Intending to render his model universally applicable, Hoey (1986: 196) recommends the following more elegant and abstract presentation of his pattern.

The purpose of the element **situation** is to provide sufficient background information for the readers to enable them in comprehending the problem being

discussed however, when the situation is known or can be inferred from the general context, there is no need to provide further details about it.

It can also be said that any coherent piece of thought, analysis or discussion introduced in the situation element is intended to be as a basis that allows the reader to make his own judgment. In other words, it is the setting.

The key to the understanding of the informational structure in texts is the ability to recognize the lexical signaling of the problem. The element of the problem has been employed in its wider sense to mean any form of dissatisfaction or hazard that creates a need to improve or change a situation.

Thus, it can be included under the element of **problem** any form of unhappiness, discomfort, danger, disease, dilemma, a need to know something, an obstacle, an aim too much or not enough of something etc., in short, any adverse evaluation of a situation or a Solution can be identified as a problem.

When the problem is recognized, then an attempt might be expected, proposed or an actual **solution** to follow. In fact, the element of Solution involves all the actions taken as an effort to introduce a kind of improvement to overcome the identified problem. If these actions succeed in solving the problem, they will be considered them as a Solution, but when they fail, they are termed as attempted Solution. Actual Solutions are most frequently preceded by a pre evaluation which informs the reader that an actual Solution will follow.

The element of **evaluation** is generally used to indicate the effectiveness of the Solution in overcoming the identified problem. The concept of evaluation implies any further information presented not only about the Solution, but also about something that informs us how good or bad that thing is in respect to a class of attributes to which the thing belongs in comparison with similar things. Hence, good evaluation signals the end of discourse, while, negative evaluation signals another problem. For this reason, evaluation should include reliable data, non- controversial evidence, an assessment based on that evidence, or a combination of all these matters.

2. Lexical Signals and Text Organization

Lexical signals were first identified by Winter (1968, 1974 and 1977). He divided lexical signals into three groups: *vocabulary 1* is the first groups which combine subordinators, *vocabulary 2* is the second group for grammatical connectives and the third *vocabulary 3* are lexical items such as verbs, nouns and adjectives. For example **problem, solution, solve, evaluate,** etc. These lexical items serve as *signposts* in the text. The function of these items is to inform the readers about the type of information presented and how they are organized. The writer uses these lexical items as explicit signals for the text organization.

Winter (ibid:23) stated that what makes these items lexical is that they are selected in the same way as other lexical items, nouns, verbs and adjectives to be subjects, verbs, objects and/or a complement to the clause. Being an open-class words, they can be modified easily.

Winter (ibid: 18 – 19) suggested three connective roles for these items:

a. Certain items like situation, problem and solution can signal the organization of the whole text.
b. Some items perform an attitudinal function in discourse structure.
c. Certain items may function anaphorically i.e. talk about the preceding sentence.

3. The Analysis of the Story

The first problem Solution pattern takes a linear progression in which the basic elements of the pattern are arranged in the conventional order of situation-problem-Solution- evaluation. This means that the writer proceeds linearly in exposing the information to the reader. Therefore ,the Solution offered to the identified problem in the text will always end up with a positive evaluation which signals the end of the discourse .No reference is made to another problem This has been so powerful in confirming the reader's expectations as to the development of discourse. The situation has been established in part (1). The position of this chunk as being first in the discourse provides expectations to the context of the subsequent sentences. The situation is established through the lexical items: hotel, room, garden , and floor signal the setting of the situation ; The participants and their attitudes to each other and to the others are signaled through the following items : two Americans, people, and artists, did not know any ; the medium of communication is a written form by the writer himself.

The concept of problem is communicated through the direct lexical items crouched, dripping, compact, and the negative lexical item not dripped in. The Solution offered has been introduced by a pre- Solution which is an alternative Solution immediately preceding the final Solution. This is largely intended to assist the readers' expectation concerning the nature of the adopted evaluation. Thus (3 and 4) provide the writer's pre-Solution which lexically signaled by the item 'get'. The last Solution is followed by a positive evaluation which is signaled by the items 'don't get wet' which means he is convinced that his wife should get the cat. In the above type of problem Solution – pattern there is a chained progression in which each Solution or evaluation results in a different problem. Unlike the linear progression which ends with a positive evaluation, in the chained type a negative evaluation signals another problem. This accounts for the multi-layering phenomenon in discourse, or the existence of more than one problem-Solution pattern.

PATTERN (1)

The text	PSP-COM
There were only *two Americans* stopping at the *hotel.* They *did not know* any of the *people* they passed on the stairs on their way to and from their *room*. Their room was on the second *floor* facing the sea. It also faced the public *garden a*nd the war monument. There were big palms and green benches in the public *garden.* In the good weather there was always an artist with his easel. *Artists* liked the way the palms grew…The American wife *stood* at the window looking out.	situation
Outside right under their window a cat was *crouched* under one of the *dripping* green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so *compact* that she would not *dripped on.*	problem
'I'm **going down** and **get** that kitty,' the American wife said.	Pre-

	solution
'I'll **do it**.' Her husband offered from the bed.	Pre-solution
'No, I'll **get it.'** The poor kitty out trying to **keep dry** under a table	solution
The husband went on reading, **lying propped up** with the two pillows at the foot of the bed. 'Don't get wet,' he said.	P-evaluation

The situation here is presented to symbolize the problems arising from lack of understanding between spouses. These problems may affect the marriage to the point of making it miserable.

Right from the title of the story one senses the existence of a problem. Cats hate water therefore exposure to water means an unsatisfactory situation that requires avoidance so the cat seeks shelter to avoid being "dripped on"

The public garden in the opening of the story may be taken to mean the ideal state of marriage or how should an ideal marriage be, whereas the war monument refers to conflict and tragic events that may spoil the ideal state. The Paradise of the public garden is spoiled by war and thus marriage of the American Adam and Eve was spoiled by conflict which does not necessarily need to be violent.

A conflict of ideas, attitudes and lack of common vision and understanding is symbolized by the rain falling on the public garden.

The cat may be taken as resembling the American woman stuck in a hotel room with a careless and not very sympathizing husband puts the wife in a position similar to that of the cat which indicated that the situation is already problematic.

An attempt to solve the problem is shown as the wife decides to rescue the "kitty".

The husband meekly offers to help but reclines as he is engrossed with reading.

The wife takes the initiative to solve the cat's problem thus unconsciously attempts to solve her own.

The term "kitty" is childish reflecting a childish yearning in a grown up woman. The problem in Pattern one remains unsolved and the only positive remark the wife receives is that of "Don't get wet."

PATTERN (2)

The text	PSP-COM
The wife went *down stairs* and the *hotel* owner stood up and *bowed* to her as she passed the office. His *desk* was at the far end of the *office*. He was an old man and very tall	situation
'Il poive ,**[1]**' the wife said. She liked the hotel- keeper. 'Si.Si, Signora, brutto tempo.**[2]** It is very bad weather'	
He stood behind his desk in the far end of the dim room. The wife *liked* him. She *liked* the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She *liked* his dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her……… She *liked* his old , heavy and big hands	Problem
Liking him, she **opened** the door and **looked out**.	Solution
It was **raining harder**. A man in a rubber cape was	N-evaluation

crossing the empty square to the café.	
The cat would be **around** to the right	Problem
Perhaps she **could go** along under the eaves	Pre-solution
As she stood in the doorway, an umbrella **opened**	Solution
behind her. It was the maid who looked after their	
room. 'You must **not get wet**,' she smiled, speaking	
Italian. Of course, the hotel –keeper had sent her.	

[1] 'It's raining.'

[2] 'Yes, yes, Madam, awful weather'

In this part of the story the situation begins as the wife descends the stairs. The hotel owner stood up and "bowed" to the American wife. The problem arising is that of the hotel owner. He is old, very tall with heavy hands thus representing wisdom, strength and capability; all that her husband lacks.

At this moment the writer presents the second problem: the wife's liking for the hotel owner.

The problem is soon solved when the wife opens the door to go outside.

In this part readers are presented with the problem of the rain outside getting harder therefore implying subconscious comparison between husband and hotel owner on the part of the wife.

Assuming the location of the cat she sets to solve the first problem. Readers are encountered with a solution for the hard rain when an umbrella is opened right behind her.

The solution here is provided by the maid who must have been sent by the masculine hotel owner.

PATTERN (3)

The text	PSP-COM
With the maid holding the umbrella over her, she walked along the gravel *path* until she was under their *window.*	situation
The table was there, washed bright green in the rain, but the cat was *gone*. She was suddenly *disappointed* The maid looked up at her.	problem
'Ha perduto qualque cosa, Signora?'[3]	
'There was a cat,' said the American girl.	
'A cat?'	
'Si , il gatto.'	
' A cat?' The maid laughed. 'A cat in the rain?'	
'Yes, -', she said, 'under the table.' Then, 'Oh , I *wanted* it so much. I *wanted* a kitty.'	
When she talked English the maid's face tightened.	
'Come, Signora,' she said. 'We must *get back* inside. You *will be wet.'*	solution
'I *suppose so*', said the American girl.	P-evaluation

[3] 'Have you lost something, Madam?'

In this pattern the situation presented is that of a woman sheltered from rain walking along a gravel path.

Hemingway may have sought to refer to women sheltered by the umbrella of marriage while walking along the path of life or the umbrella could be taken to refer to American superiority and the inclination to be served for having superior financial status. Either way the situation leads to the problem of the missing cat. To the wife's Disappointment, the cat is no where to be seen. Knowing the creature's hatred for water the maid laughingly inquires how can a cat possibly remain under the rain?

The problem persists though the wife actually admits her need to have found the cat.

The solution presented is for the rain problem when the maid decides that they "must get back" and the wife reluctantly agrees ". I suppose

PATTERN (4)

The text	PSP-COM
They went back along the **gravel path** and passed **the door**. The maid stayed **outside** to close the umbrella. As the American girl passed the office, the padrone bowed from his desk.	situation
Something **felt** very **small** and **tight inside** the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important…….	problem
She went on **up** the stairs She **opened** the door of the room.	solution
George was **on the bed**, reading.	N-evaluation
'Did you **get** the cat?' he asked, **putting** the book **down**.	Pre-problem
'It was gone.'	problem
' **Wonder** where it went to,' he said ,resting his eyes from reading.	
She sat down on the bed.	
'I **wanted** it so much,' she said. 'I don't know why I **wanted** it so much. I **wanted** that poor kitty. It is'nt any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain.'	solution
George was **reading again**	P-evaluation

The situation is presented when the American woman goes inside and passes the Padron's office. The maid remains outside to take care of the umbrella. The problem arises when she feels "tight", "very small" and "important". The problem shown in Pattern 2 of "liking" is expanded by the above mentioned feelings. These feminine inclinations exist in one way or another in almost every female. Thus the American girl becomes an archetype. Women usually seek shelter in the arms of wise masculinity which provides an "umbrella" to protect her from life discomforts. This is similar the cat's case using a wooden table for shelter. For the American girl the hotel Padron is as solid as the wooden table. The solution is provided by going upstairs to her room.

The husband's negativity is reflected in his passive role, though there is a slight change when he puts his book down, but the original problem remains unsolved.

The wife admits wanting the cat but ignores the reasons behind this want. She subconsciously finds her as an equal and expresses concern over the "Kitty's" miserable situation. All this is met by carelessness on the husband's part.

PATTERN (5)

The text	PSP-COM
She went over and sat **in front of** the mirror of the **dressing table** looking at herself with the hand glass. She **studied her profile**, first one side and then the other. Then she studied the back of her head and of her neck.	situation
'Don't you think it would be a good idea if I **let** my hair **grow out**?' She asked, looking at her profile again.	problem
George **looked up** and saw the back of her neck, clipped close like a boy's.	Pre-solution
'I **like** it the way it is.'	solution
'I **get** so **tired** of it.' she said, 'I get so tired of looking like a boy.'	N-evaluation
George shifted his position in the bed. He hadn't looked away from her since she started to speak.'	
'You look pretty darn nice,' he said.	
She **laid** down the mirror **down** on the dresser and went over to the window and **looked out**. It was **getting dark**.	N-evaluation
'I want to **pull** my hair back **tight** and smooth and make a big **knot** at the back that I can feel,' she said.'	problem
'I **want** to **have** a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I **stroke** her.'	
'Yeah?' George said from the bed.	N -evaluation
And I **want** to eat at a table with my own silver and I **want** candles. And I **want** it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I **want** a kitty and I want some clothes	problem
Oh, **shut up** and get something to read,' George said	solution
He was reading again. His wife was **looking out** of the **window**. It was quiet **dark** now and still **raining** in the palm trees.	N-evaluation
'Anyway , I **want** a **cat**,'she said,	problem
I want a cat now. If cannot have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat.	
George was **not listening**. He was **reading** his book.	solution
His wife **looked** out of the **window** where the light had come on in the **square**.	N-evaluation
Someone **Knocked** at the door.	problem
'Avanti, George said.	

He looked up from his book.
In the doorway stood the maid.
She held a big tortoise-shell cat pressed tight against
her and swung down against her body

'Excuse me,' she said, 'the padron asked me to **bring**   solution
this for the Signora'

The final situation is presented when the wife sits in front of the mirror. The hand glass she uses to see her profile is like self analysis as she moves it from one side to the other. The major problem brewing inside is expressed through the simple question; "Don't you think it is a good idea if I let my hair grow out?" When the husband, now called "George" replies, a solution for the superficial problem is provided.

The widely used name "George" is used here to resemble the majority of American men and the husband becomes an archetype.

George is "Adam" who ignores "Eve".

The wife's concise evaluation of her problem is fully expressed when she admits to "getting tired" of it meaning tired of such life.

She manages to draw her husband's attention for a short while but his evaluation is once more negative. "George" does not realize the depth of the problem he is only interested in the apparent meaning of his wife's complaint not realizing the problem brimming inside.

Readers realize the existence of a major problem when the wife cites the minor problems one after the other. She wants to wear her hair "long" to pull it back in a "tight" knot. This hairdo resembles the sheltered calm female of nobility often portrayed with a cat on her lap. This is supported by her desire to have silverware and candles. The American woman is tired of practicality and equality with men represented by "short hair". She longs for being taken care of and seeks some romance through wanting it to be "spring". Thus her apparently childish needs carry a much deeper meaning. All her efforts are curbed when George tells her to "shut up" and "get something to read" thus emphasizing the idea of equality, yet killing all her aspirations. His negative evaluation for the point she tries to make sends her back to the window. The unsolved problem is more persistent as it gets dark and the rain continues. The wife ceases to follow reason "Anyway I need a cat", "I want a cat now", "If I cannot have long hair or "any fun", I can have a cat."

The husband solves the problem by ignoring it and going back to his book.

The lights come on outside foretelling a solution. This is provided through a knock on the door and the appearance of the maid holding a big cat.

Though the cat may not have been the same and probably a substitute for the original, the wife had seen from her window, but it solves the problem. A substitute solution is provided by the "Padron" assuming George's protective role.

Conclusions

The analysis of the story has shown the following results:

1. Hemingway followed a conventional order in presenting the information i.e. situation, problem, solution and evaluation. This proves the first hypothesis that the problem-solution pattern works with literary texts.
2. He communicated the rhetorical pattern to the reader through his clever use of the lexical items. This proves the second hypothesis in which the lexical items marked in bold signal the structure of the text.
3. The solution is always preceded by a pre-solution.
4. The positive solution signals the end of the discourse and the negative solution signals another problem which confirms the expectations of the reader.

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