Urban Media Storytelling Based on Narrative Schema

Jeong-Hee Kim and Jong-Youl Hong

SunMoon University, GalSanRi 100, TangJungMyun, Asan, Korea
HanKuk University of Foreign Studies, ImunRo 107, Seoul, Korea
savie11@sunmoon.ac.kr,
herr_hong@hufs.ac.kr

Abstract. This study sets up an Urban Media Storytelling Model based on "narrative schema". Narrative schema is known as the universal model of story structure and has been widely utilized in the storytelling of cultural content. Individual content, represented through urban media, can also be utilized in the structure of storytelling. Likewise, it can set up storytelling for an entire city. This study attempts to connect the phases within a narrative schema and thus lead to recognition of the city's image as a narrative schema, through people entering the city, being provided with information and entertainment, and exploring the city.

Keywords: Narrative Schema, Storytelling, Urban Media, Greimas, Narrative Semiology.

1   Narrative Schema

In this section, a method to plan Urban Storytelling, based on narrative schema, is investigated. First, the narrative schema, which can be utilized as a useful tool for content storytelling planning, is suggested. In narrative semiology, the narrativity is defined as the "transformation" from the first situation to the final situation. It is formulated as follows:

$$(S \cup O) \rightarrow (S \cap O)$$
(S: Subject, O: Object, U: Disjunction, ∩: Conjunction)

Greimas determined that the integrated unit of a story has three forms of *épreuves*: 1) *épreuves qualifiante* is the phase in which the subject achieves the required competences; 2) *épreuves principale* is the phase in which the subject duels and wins in order to possess the object; and 3) *épreuves glorifiante* is the phase in which the subject is confirmed as the final hero (or heroine). Greimas suggested the relationship between these elements and the narrative grammar through one narrative schema[1].

Contract / manipulation → competence → performance → sanction

First is the phase in which the subject manipulates or makes a certain contract in order to seek the object. The second phase is when the subject achieves the required competences in order to take the object. In the third phase, the subject acquires the

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[1] A. J. Greimas, *Sémiotique et sciences sociales,* Paris: Seuil, 1976.

object while the last phase is when the subject receives a prize or sanction according to his/her performance.

For example, the structure of the story of Cinderella shows Cinderella as the subject of the story. However, she lacks the value called "love" due to the absence of her mother, and this is recovered at the end of the story. That is, the story encompasses the process in which the subject achieves the object called "love," which she seeks. The heroine acquires "competence" in order to tempt the prince through the godmother's "manipulation." She meets the prince at a ball and "performs" so that she can achieve love. She is then rewarded with marriage, i.e., a prize or sanction is executed. This flow of the narrative schema described above can be found not only in folktales but also a number of modern stories.

2   Storytelling Based on Narrative Schema

It is suggested that Greimas' narrative schema comprises the most universal of systems and can be applied to all kinds of narrative texts. This paper therefore seeks to determine whether or not this schema can be applied to a variety of current cultural content storytelling as represented in the image and digital media of today. The most representative plots of all stories are the romantic and heroic plots. [2] *Titanic* falls into the romantic plot category, and it maintained succeeded in breaking records as the world's greatest box office hit for over 10 years. *Harry Potter*, however, falls into the heroic plot category and was produced as a series, which caused a sensation. These two stories could be analyzed through narrative schema as follows:

In *Titanic*, the story begins with Rose's (heroine) suicide attempt due to the pressure brought about by her impending marriage to Cal, a young aristocrat. The heroine's condition, in which she wishes to lead her life according to her own will, indicates a kind of "lacking." This story overcomes the imbalanced phase and returns the heroine to a balanced condition, i.e., Rose comes to lead the life she really wants in the end by denying the false consciousness of high society. This transformation coincides with her process of achieving "love."

When Rose tries to jump into the sea from the bow, Jack (hero) rescues her dramatically. He makes her lead her life without giving up on herself. Although Jack is so poor that he has to travel tourist-class, he is a man with a free spirit. Cal and Jack find themselves in an antagonistic relationship with each other, but the meeting with Jack could be considered as a "manipulation" to make Rose find her true love. Jack is invited to dinner with the aristocrats but tactfully deals with the situation and then takes Rose to a tourist-class party. Once there, Rose dances as much as she likes and has a good time. Furthermore, Jack is an excellent painter and Rose invites him to draw her naked body. This episode provides an opportunity for them to fall in love with each other. In other words, Rose runs away from the normative and hypocritical life of the aristocrats and bravely selects romance with Jack. As a result, she acquires "competence" in order to achieve true love.

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[2] Patrick Colm Hogan, *The Mind and Its Stories: Narrative Universals and Human Emotion*, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2003.

As the ship, the Titanic, dramatically starts to sink when it hits an iceberg, their love takes a dramatic turn. Rose does not get into a lifeboat like the other first-class passengers. She looks for Jack who is locked in a tourist-class room. They cling to the end of the ship together but ultimately, Jack drowns. Before this, however, Jack finds a piece of floating debris and puts Rose on it. He is dying but asks her not to give up on her life. In order to keep her promise to him, Rose blows a whistle and is rescued. Therefore, although Jack is dead, Rose "performs" by having achieved true love. She transforms herself as a result of finding true love and subsequently acts according to her own will. Rose survives but does not return to Cal, Instead, she lives a fruitful life of her own, as she wants. This could be considered the "prize or sanction" part of the performance.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone can also be examined through narrative schema. The main character, Harry Potter, loses his parents when he is young and goes to live with his aunt and her family. The closet under the stairs is his room, and he is ill-treated by his aunt's family (uncle and cousin). This covers the "transformation" in that Harry Potter, who lives a sad life with no sense of who he is, finds his identity as a sorcerer and thereafter lives happily.

Harry has his 11th birthday ahead, and a few days before this, he receives a letter. It is an admission invitation from the legendary Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. A giant called Hagrid, who visits to take Harry there, relays the fact that Harry is a sorcerer with the greatest power. This is considered to be "manipulation" by the principal (Dumbledore). The process of his learning about various mysterious sorceries at Hogwarts School is the phase of "competence" acquisition. Quidditch games and adventures with amazing animals unfold. Meanwhile, Harry comes to know the "sorcerer's stone," which is hidden in the basement of Hogwarts school, but it is also wanted by Voldemort, who had killed Harry's parents. Harry's action to find and protect the stone from Voldemort is the "performance," which is the core point of the story. In doing so, Harry saves Hogwarts from danger and makes it peaceful. Moreover, Harry then happily leads the life of a sorcerer.

Table 1. Narrative schema of Film Storytelling

Narrative Schema	*Titanic*	*Harry Potter*
Manipulation	Jack's dramatic saving of Rose.	Dumbledore's invitation for Harry to go to Hogwarts.
Competence	Participation in the free party with the tourist-class people. Jack's drawing of Rose's naked body.	Harry's learning of mysterious sorceries in Hogwarts.
Performance	Jack and Rose's efforts to keep their love alive in spite of the ship's sinking.	Successfully defending the sorcerer's stone from Voldemort.
Prize and Sanction	Rose keeping her promise to Jack by leading her life according to her will until the end.	Peace at Hogwarts.

Narrative schema is shown together with the genres that are applied to storytelling. In the case of a computer game, it has an open storytelling structure based on the characteristics of its interaction with the user. That is, the user plays a role as the hero (or heroine) and intervenes in the storytelling. At the moment when the user understands the game's principles and presses the start button, a "contract" is made. The success of the most important mission in the game is the "performance." Achieving the necessary items and/or powers prior to this is the "competence" phase. The "prize and sanction" are provided according to the game's result. Narrative schema can be applied to offline content, such as theme parks or festivals, as well. Therefore, narrative schema will now be applied to urban media storytelling.

3   Application to Urban Media Storytelling

Urban media is commonly defined as the methodology in which data is transformed for use in urban spaces and represented in a visible way. That is, it primarily aims to deliver urban information to the public in an effective way. For this, the city requires users who are able to travel into the city. They live in the city or travel with the help of urban media. Fundamentally, users come to acquire knowledge of the city or gain a particular impression through these experiences. The series of such processes could be assumed to be storytelling. Hence this paper seeks to analyze urban media storytelling's phases through narrative schema.

At the moment of inflow into the city, regardless of the mechanisms, e.g., house-moving or sightseeing, a "contract" is made. Image promotion about the city plays an important role in this: it could appeal to the inflow into the city through urban advantages, such as natural environments, cultural resources, and cultural programs. Also, it is important in order to draw out initial motivation and curiosity. Urban information and images are imperative as well and are provided at gateways, such as airports, train stations, or terminals. A city "manipulates" people into experiencing it in various ways. It is advantageous for regional development for people to stay in the city for as long as possible, and therefore the city attempts to provide maximum activities for people to pursue. At the same time, in a sense, it establishes a positive image of the city.

If a user comes into the city, it is essential to acquire a level of "competence," which helps them to explore the city and/or live there. For this, various urban media are utilized. In general, urban media visualizes and delivers information about urban spaces. Information is important for the user. Greimas suggested four aspects of competence. [3] They are *pouvoir* (power: able to do), *savoir* (knowledge: knows how to do), *devoir* (obligation: obliged to do), and *vouloir* (will: want to do), respectively. In this context, information about the city refers to knowledge. However, another competence that is important is vouloir (want). That is, besides the delivery of information about the city, entertainment content should be added to the entertaining elements.

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[3] Anne Hénault, *Nrratologie, Sémiotique générale*, Paris: P.U.F., 1983.

Some people have a different view, which purports that urban media does not convey simple information. A scholar might look at the city as a public space and a media environment in which the public can freely participate and express themselves. [4] In other words, the giant media called a city is not planned by an expert, but it is a space for the public to immerse and enjoy themselves. Urban media is more likely to be developed as entertainment that is enjoyed by the public, over and above the actual information that it delivers. Entertainment content based on storytelling could utilize the storytelling method. It could also be developed as infotainment content, which reflects the shape of games, although its main objective is to deliver information. Therefore, narrative schema could be utilized not only at a macroscopic level but also in individual media content.

If the phase of competence is accomplished effectively, the user's "performance" could be undertaken in a much smoother way. For sightseeing or settling in a city to live, competence could be a great help. In the performance phase, users experience and enjoy both hardware and software elements: hardware elements involve buildings and cultural artifacts while software elements include various cultural programs, such as exhibitions and festivals. As a result, the additional value of the city comes into play. "Prize and sanction" are the evaluation of the performance. It depends on how users recognize the city. In the case of positive evaluation, satisfaction with life and the overall urban experience increases. Furthermore, users establish the intention to revisit the city. Fundamentally, such an effect leads to regional development.

4   Conclusion

Based on discussions in this study, the model of urban media storytelling could be demonstrated as follows:

Table 2. Urban Media Storytelling Model

Narrative Schema	Urban Media Storytelling	Content
Manipulation	Entering the city	Promoting urban images: in advance or at a city's gateways
Competence	Acquiring information about urban spaces	Infotainment: Information element Entertainment: Story element
Performance	Exploring the city (sightseeing/residence)	Hardware: Buildings, cultural artifacts Software: Exhibitions, festivals, cultural programs
Prize and Sanction	Recognizing the urban image	Increase of amenity, intention of re-visit

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[4] Hyun-Jin Lee, "Expanding Urban Media Screen Experiences: the City as a Big Canvas"*, Design Studies* Vol.24, No.1, pp.5-14, Seoul: Korean Society of Design Science, 2011.

From a macroscopic perspective, urban media storytelling could be understood as a narrative schema to assimilate the urban image by entering and exploring city. That is, it could be understood from the perspective that the city itself is an urban media as well as, like games, it has an open narrative structure derived from users' interaction. In general, urban media is closest to the competence phase if you focus on its information delivery function. For this, more effects could be produced if the simple information is developed into game or story content. However, enjoying urban media might be considered as the performance itself from a macroscopic perspective. In any case, the narrative schema could be utilized to represent the universal structure of the story for both individual content and recognition of the urban image overall.

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