

CHAPTER 4

PLOT STRUCTURE

Chapter three studied the surface or formal division of the four texts analyzed for the thesis. In this chapter, overall plot structure of all the four texts analyzed are discussed by using the features suggested by Longacre (1996:34-35). He suggests the following plot structure features of a climatic narrative discourse with informal phrases to summarize the concepts:

1. Exposition, 'Lay it out',
2. Inciting Moment, 'Get something going',
3. Developing Conflict, 'Keep the heat on',
4. Climax, 'Knot it all up proper',
5. Denouement, 'Loosen it',
6. Final Suspense, 'Keep untangling', and
7. Conclusion, 'Wrap it up'.

The notional structure is the underlying construct of a text. It has more to do with meaning than the form of a text. The notional structure of a narrative is a template found across languages whereas the surface structure is language specific. Longacre (1996:34) suggests "plot to be used for the notional structure of narrative in general." (See Table 14 in the summary of this chapter for the plot structures of the four texts

analyzed.) Furthermore, there can be skewing between the notional and surface structures within a language.

Speaking of 'skewing of notional and surface discourse features', Longacre (1996:13-14) says,

It is a fact of language that whenever surface structure becomes well crystallized and marked, it may be thrown out of phase with the notional structure. We must, therefore, face the fact that a given notional structure type may encode in the form of a differing surface structure type.

Following Longacre's idea of skewing, the Jirel texts analyzed for the thesis are of three types: 1) hortatory presented as narrative, 2) expository presented as narrative and 3) narrative presented as narrative. The "KALE" and the "DEER" texts fall into the first category because of the moral of these stories. The "CAT" text falls into the second category because it explains why cats eat mice. Finally, the "JACKAL" text can be placed into the third category because it does not contain any explicit moral or explanation at the end of the story. (See section 3.7 for more discussion of closure.)

4.1 The plot structure of Jirel folk narratives

Each of the four texts analyzed for this study have all the plot structure features suggested by Longacre (1996:34-35) except for the final suspense. A typical Jirel narrative builds up towards the climax, states the climax, resolves the conflict, and then abruptly stops; similar features are described by Walrod (1979:17) for Ga'dang, a

Philippine language. Through the means of certain formal characteristics each feature is recognizable as discussed below.

4.1.1 Exposition

Longacre (1996:34) states, “The story, as regards its notional structure, gets underway with exposition, ‘Lay it out’. Here, the crucial information of time, place, local color, and participants is given.” The exposition provides a general introduction of and information about the main participant(s) and orientation to the location and time. In this slot, a statement of the existence of the main participant(s) of the text, usually the victim and the villain, if there is one, are introduced. Exposition also provides the audience/reader with information about the situation before the series of events actually take place. Plot structure exposition correlates to the stage of the surface structure. The plot structure features may not necessarily be in one-to-one correspondence with the surface structure features. Note that the title is only a surface structure feature. (See section 3.1 for the discussion on the title.) The surface structure aperture and stage correspond to exposition in the plot structure. (See sections 3.2 and 3.3 for the discussion on the aperture and the stage.) Expositions of the “KALE” and the “CAT” texts are indicated by S#1-7 and S#1-2 respectively. Similarly, S#1-3 and S#1-14 mark the expositions of the “JACKAL” and the “DEER” texts.

The general time and place references are often indicated by formulaic words or phrases like *thangbo⁴ thangbo-ka⁴ chyangma-jyik-tu⁴* ‘long, long ago, in a certain forest’, *thangbo⁴ bajyi-i⁴ yul-jyik-tu⁴* ‘once long ago, in a certain village’ or *thangbo⁴ bajyi-i⁴ ThouN-jyik-tu³* ‘once long ago, in a certain place’, etc. Clauses in the exposition usually contain existential verbs like *wot-akwa-lo⁴* ‘(there) was’ or ‘(there) were’ or a stative verbs like *det-cyakwa-lo⁴* ‘(there) lived’.

4.1.2 Inciting moment

According to Longacre (ibid.) with the inciting moment the plan and predictable events are broken up in some manner. In the Jirel texts, the inciting moment begins at the first paragraph of the first episode in the prepeak episodes. It correlates to the first episode of the prepeak episodes in the surface structure and may have one or more paragraphs. The inciting moments of the “CAT” and the “DEER” texts fall in a single paragraph, while the inciting moments of “KALE” and the “JACKAL” are spread over two and three paragraphs respectively.

The inciting moment reports the introduction of a problem. The inciting moment for the “KALE” and the “CAT” texts are indicated by S#8-10, and S#3-8 respectively. In the “JACKAL” and the “DEER” texts, inciting moments are marked by S#4-14 and S#15-24 respectively. The inciting moment in the “KALE” text begins as one of Kale’s friends gets angry at Kale. (See in detail under the section “overall plot

structure of four Jirel texts” in section 4.2.) In the “CAT” text, the inciting moment begins with the arrival of a cat to an old deserted house and its eating mice at that house. The inciting moment of the “JACKAL” text starts as the jackal arrives at a village searching for food to eat. Similarly, the inciting moment of the “DEER” text begins when the jackal starts plotting to trap the deer in order to eat it.

4.1.3 Developing conflict

The developing conflict tells of the problem worsening or the situation intensifying. In this same period or phase, attempts are made to solve the problem or to improve the situation. Longacre (1996:35) states, “With developing conflict, ‘Keep the heat on,’ the situation intensifies—or deteriorates—depending on one’s view point.” After the inciting moment, the developing conflict correlates to later prepeak episodes of the surface structure. Describing overall plot structure and profile for Thai narratives, Somsong (1991:40) states, “Developing conflict has to do with a conflict between two participants, an attempt to fulfill a need, or physical and emotional tension.” These features are similar to the features that mark the developing conflicts in the Jirel texts.

In the Jirel texts, the developing conflict slot consists of an episode(s), in which a problem or the situation worsens to which a solution is sought. The intensification of a problem may include heightening anger, breaking of a promise, suffering from a

loss and facing a threat to life. Similarly, seeking a solution includes making plans or playing tricks to achieve the goals intended. The developing conflicts for the “KALE” and the “CAT” texts are indicated by S#11-30, and S#9-36 respectively. In the “JACKAL” and the “DEER” texts, developing conflicts are marked by S#15-62 and S#25-51 respectively.

For instance, when Kale’s friends found out that he was telling a lie to them, they all got very angry at him and made a plan to prove him to be a liar. In short, S#11-30 show a gradual development or intensification of the situation from getting angry to coming to a conclusion to playing a trick on Kale, the villain, to finally proving him to be a liar.

A similar kind of situation is also seen in the developing conflict of the “CAT” text (S#9-36). These sentences tell of how the group of mice found out that the cat was catching and eating them, reducing them in number day by day, how they requested the cat to live in harmony and not to harm them anymore, and how the cat promised not to hurt them, but could not keep its promise for long. These sentences also show a gradual development of situation intensification as the cat breaks its promise and the mice decide to attach a bell around the cat’s neck in order to escape from its attack.

Similarly, the developing conflict of the “JACKAL” text (S#15-62), reports how the villagers suffer loss as the old jackal kept on catching and eating their chickens, how, through the help of an educated man, they were able to catch the jackal to punish him,

but how the jackal escaped by fooling a bear. The problem worsens here as the jackal escapes from his first capture creating the added problem of catching him again. Finally, the developing conflict of the “DEER” text (S#25-51), describes how the jackal led the deer to the paddy field, where the latter gets caught in a snare and almost loses its life. The intensification of the situation is seen working as the jackal suggests that the deer go and graze on paddy, and leads it to the paddy field where the deer gets caught in a snare.

4.1.4 Climax

The climax is the point of most tension where the problem gets so dark that it seems there is no remedy for it. This is the place where it makes the audience/reader think, “Will the problem get solved?” According to Longacre (1996:35), climax, “Knot it all up proper,” is where everything comes to a head. Here is where the author gets untidy, brings in contradictions, and adds all sorts of tangles until confrontation is inevitable.

The climax correlates to the peak episode(s) of the surface structure in Jirel. The climax of a text may involve both physical and emotional tension to its maximum degree. It is at this point that an emotional and perhaps even physical confrontation between the participants takes place to solve the problem that existed between them. In the “KALE” and the “CAT” texts, S#31-42 and S#37-40 mark climax. In the same

way, climax of the “JACKAL” and the “DEER” texts are indicated by S#63-81 and S#52-75 respectively.

In the “KALE” text (S#31-42), the text reaches its maximum tension as Kale experiences the physical as well as emotional tension of shame and defeat as he vomits and his friends see what he has vomited. Vomiting involves the physical tension and shame and feeling of defeat. In the “CAT” text (S#37-40), the mice make an unsuccessful attempt to attach a bell around the cat’s neck. This was also a combination of both physical and emotional confrontation with the cat. It was both a physical and emotional confrontation because the mice use their physical strength to catch the cat, and at the same time they were very much afraid when they risked their lives to catch the cat and attach a bell around its neck.

S#63-81 mark the climax in the “JACKAL” text. These sentences tell how the old jackal, the villain, experienced both physical as well as emotional tensions. The jackal experienced this kind of situation twice, once as he reached the point of death because of the suffocation (in the belly of the dead elephant) and another time when he got stuck to a resin-child and fell helplessly to the ground. Both situations describe an uncomfortable physical situation and a situation where danger is felt emotionally.

In the “DEER” text, S#52-75 mark the climax. These sentences tell of the deer’s physical and emotional suffering. It suffers physically from an uncomfortable situation because it is caught in the snare. At the same time, it reaches a maximal

emotional tension because to be caught in the snare was a dangerous situation where it might be killed by the owner of the paddy field. Furthermore, these sentences also talk about how the crow had a predicament when it saw the deer caught in the snare and how the jackal was killed by blows from the spade. Getting into a predicament indicates emotional tension and being killed involves both emotional and physical tensions.

4.1.5 Denouement

The denouement answers the question that was raised in the climax. In other words, something happens to make the solution possible or to tell what happened. According to Longacre (1996:35), with denouement, “Loosen it,” a crucial event happens which makes resolution possible. Tension begins to subside.

The denouement correlates to the postpeak episodes(s) of the surface structure. The denouement of the “KALE” text is indicated by S#42-45. These sentences tell how Kale was proved to be a liar and left his friends instantly full of shame as his friends saw the mash and dried vegetables (ordinary food) come out of his stomach when he vomited. Similarly, the denouement of the “CAT” text is marked by S#41-43. These sentences tell of how, because of the fear or lack of courage, the group of mice were unable to attach a bell around the neck of the cat and as a result of that how the cat devoured all the mice at the old house.

The denouement of the “JACKAL” text is denoted by S#82-89. These sentences tell how with the help of the god Mahadeva and goddess Parvati, the villagers were able to catch the cunning old jackal for the second time and beat him to death after they saw him get stuck to the resin-child and fall helplessly to the ground. Finally, the denouement of the “DEER” text is signaled by S#76-78. This portion of the text tells of how, because of its evil nature, the jackal was killed instead of the deer and how the deer and the crow lived once again as true friends without any fear.

4.1.6 Conclusion

The conclusion correlates to the closure of the surface structure. Longacre (1996:35) says, “Conclusion, ‘Wrap it up,’ brings the story to some sort of decent—or indecent—end.” Among the four texts analyzed, the “JACKAL” text does not have a conclusion—which is not an unusual feature in Jirel narratives. In some stories the conclusions are not explicitly spelled out, but the audience/reader may deduce them. Somsong (1991:40) found a similar feature in Thai narratives. Rather, the “JACKAL” text merely concludes with villagers killing the jackal.

The other three texts have as their conclusions either a moral or an explanation of why certain things happen. (See section 3.7 above for discussion of a closure.) The “KALE” and “DEER” texts have morals, which admonish people not to tell a lie and

not to betray one's fellow man respectively. The "CAT" text has an explanation of why cats eat mice.

4.2 Overall plot structure of four Jirel texts

In this section, the overall plot structure of four Jirel texts is briefly summarized. The plot structure of the four texts are as follows:

(1) Plot structure of "KALE"

Exposition (S#1-7): Once long ago, there was a very cunning boy called Kale in a certain village. Upon meeting his friends Kale tells them that he is from a noble family and enjoys sumptuous food everyday. This makes his friends wonder how he is able to eat sumptuous food everyday. He even walks around applying butter on his lips to make them smooth or tender.

Inciting Moment (S#8-10): Seeing Kale boasting everyday in that way, one of his friends gets angry at him. This friend starts thinking that it is impossible for Kale to eat sumptuous food everyday. He thinks Kale is certainly telling a lie to him and his other friends. So, this same friend goes to Kale's house to check on Kale. There he sees Kale eating dried vegetables and mash (ordinary food), confirming that Kale has been making empty boasts and telling them lies.

Developing Conflict (S#11-30): Observing this fact, the friend comes back to his fellows and reports to them what he had seen. On hearing that, the other friends also get angry, and together they make a plan to prove Kale to be a liar.

Climax (S#31-42): With Kale's friends having made a plan to prove Kale to be a liar, Kale arrives to greet them. On arriving, he says that he was late because he had been eating sumptuous food on that day too and that there was a lot of butter in the meat. This makes his friends very angry, especially the one who had gone to check on Kale. Although he gets very angry, he does not show it. Rather, he and the other friends take Kale to a shop. At the shop, this same friend asks the shopkeeper to give Kale a very good betelnut. As they have already planned, after Kale has eaten and swallowed the betelnut¹⁷, one of Kale's friends tells Kale to spit out the betelnut because he had seen a dead fly in it. Hearing this, Kale feels nauseous and vomits repeatedly. As he vomits, dried vegetables and mash, the food he has eaten that morning, comes out.

Denouement (S#43-45): After his friends see what has come out of his stomach Kale cannot say anything to defend himself. Seeing the contents of Kale's vomit, his friends ridicule him. He cannot say anything. Finally, feeling very ashamed and saying nothing he leaves his friends. In this way, at the initiative of one of them, Kale's friends succeed to prove him to be a liar.

¹⁷ Those familiar with betelnut know that it is not to be swallowed. Since betelnut is not traditionally used in Jirel culture, the narrator might have been confused on this point. Alternatively, Kale's ignorance of betelnut technique, despite his boasts of social superiority, might be part of the humor here.

Conclusion: S#46-47 conclude the text with a moral that says, “This is what happens to the one who boasts or tells a lie. The truth will be revealed one day.”

(2) Plot structure of “CAT”

Exposition (S#1-2): Long ago, there was an old deserted house in a certain village. A group of mice were living in that old house.

Inciting Moment (S#3-8): One day, suddenly a cat arrived at the house and started to eat the mice one by one. The group of mice wondered why they were decreasing in number day after day, but none of them knew the reason.

Developing Conflict (S#9-36): One day, the group of mice saw the cat catching one of them and so found out the reason they were decreasing day by day. Then the group of mice requested the cat to live in harmony, not harming them anymore. The cat responded to their request positively, but it did not keep its promise after a long period of time. It again started to catch and eat the mice secretly. As the mice saw the cat was not keeping its promise, they decided to attach a bell around its neck in order to escape from it. They attempted to catch the cat and attach the bell around its neck. But because of their fear, they could not do that immediately.

Climax (S#37-40): After many unsuccessful attempts, the mice gathered together and risked their lives one day, catching the cat in order to attach the bell around its neck.

When they caught it, some of them caught its tail. Some caught its front leg. Some caught its ear and still others caught its hind leg.

Denouement (S#41-43): During the time they caught the cat, the group of mice caught different parts of its body, but none of them dared to catch its mouth. Each one of them thought that the cat would eat up the one that tried to catch its mouth. So because of their fear, they were unsuccessful in attaching a bell around its neck. Since the group of mice were unable to attach a bell around the cat's neck, it continued catching and eating all the mice in that house until there were none left.

Conclusion: S#44 ends the text with a saying or explanation, "Because the mice could not find any solution to escape from the cat in the past, cats catch and eat mice in this manner."

(3) Plot structure of "JACKAL"

Exposition (S#1-3): Once long ago, there was an old jackal in a certain place. Because he had become old, he was unable to go around searching for food to eat. So he started to become more and more thin.

Inciting Moment (S#4-14): One day, he arrived at a village. There early in the morning, he saw many chickens around a corner of a wheat field, and he started thinking about which one he should catch and eat. As he was thinking and looking at those chickens, a drum hanging on a tree made sound as the wind blew. At this noise

all the chicken ran away from the corner of the wheat field. Since he could not catch a chicken to eat, he left, but he desired very much to eat those chickens.

Developing Conflict (S#15-62): Then in the evening he returned to that very village. On arriving, he made the villagers to look up into the sky by saying that there was an eagle flying in the sky. As the villagers were looking up, he seized the chance and ran away with a chicken. He often caught and ate chickens in this way. He became strong, too. He kept on doing the same thing until the day when an educated man arrived at the village.

When the educated man arrived, the villagers told him about the old jackal and how their chickens were decreasing in number day by day. The educated man indicated that the jackal might be the one who had been eating their chickens and taught them a trick to deal with that jackal. The villagers found the evidence of the jackal's misdeeds as the educated man had mentioned. Later on they caught the jackal to punish him, but he escaped from his first capture by fooling a bear.

Climax (S#63-81): When the villagers found the jackal had escaped from his first capture, they started to think how to capture him again. They could not do it themselves, but when the jackal fooled the god Mahadeva as well, the latter erected a resin-child to capture the jackal again. Goddess Parbati (the Mahadeva's wife) put a piece of bread in a hand of the resin-child to entice the jackal. Sure enough, the intrigue of the Mahadeva and his wife prevailed.

Denouement (S#82-89): The jackal sees the piece of the bread in a hand of the resin-child (though the jackal does not know the boy is simply a prop) as he passes by the child. He asks the child to give that piece of bread to him, but the child does not respond to his request. Getting angry at him the jackal strikes at the child's cheek and finds his paw stuck. When the jackal tries to strike the child again getting even more angry, he gets stuck to the resin-child completely and falls helplessly to the ground to be found and killed by the villagers. When the villagers found the jackal in this helpless situation they took him away and beat him to death. With the help of the god Mahadeva and goddess Parvati, the villagers finally succeeded in capturing and killing the cunning old jackal.

Conclusion: S#90 ends the text with a clause *sin-sung*⁴ 'Finished.' This text ends without any moral or an explanation.

(4) Plot structure of "DEER"

Exposition (S#1-14): Long, long ago, a jackal, deer, and a crow lived in a certain forest. While the crow lived on a tree, the deer and the jackal lived in the forest nearby. As they were living this way, they made a plan to become friends and help each other to escape from dangers or to protect each other. Becoming friends they enjoyed each others' help and lived normal lives until the day the jackal planned to betray the deer.

Inciting Moment (S#15-24): One day, because of its cunningness, the jackal shared an idea with the deer that the deer should go to graze on a paddy field nearby instead of going greater distances to find grass for itself. The deer liked its friend's idea and went with the jackal to find the paddy field.

Developing Conflict (S#25-51): Following the jackal's suggestion, the deer went with the jackal to find the paddy field. The deer found a very lush paddy field and developed the habit of grazing in the paddy. It kept on doing this until the day the owner of the paddy saw it grazing in his paddy. The owner of the paddy wanted to shoot the deer but the latter, with the help of its friend crow, was able to escape before the owner shot it. When he was unsuccessful in shooting the deer, he became rather irritated and one day left a snare set where the deer entered the field. The deer got caught in the snare. The jackal knew about it but did not tell it to the crow as they talked about not seeing the deer returning that evening.

Climax (S#52-75): The crow set out to search for the deer. It saw the deer caught in the snare and gave it an idea how to escape from that danger. The deer acted as instructed by the crow and ran away during the time the owner of the paddy field was collecting the snare. The owner of the paddy field, in its anger, threw a spade to hit the deer. This situation is really tense and makes the audience/reader ask if the deer was hit by the spade and killed and if the jackal's dream of eating the deer came true. But the spade, instead strikes the jackal's head, killing it instantly instead of the deer.

Denouement (S#76-78): This section of the story answers the questions that were raised at end of the climax. These sentences make clear that the jackal's dream did not come to be fulfilled. Rather, it got killed by the spade while the deer ran away to meet the crow. With the help of its true friend, the crow, the deer was able to rescue its life from the hand of the owner. The deer and the crow then lived as friends.

Conclusion: S#79-80 concludes the story with a moral, "The fate of a person will be like this (like the jackal's) if someone tries to betray the person trusting in him."

4.3 Summary

This chapter discussed the plot structure of Jirel folk narratives. All four texts analyzed for this study have all the plot or notional structure features suggested by Longacre (1996:34-35), except for the final suspense. The absence of the final suspense was because the usual Jirel folk narrative builds up towards the climax, states the climax, resolves the conflict, and then abruptly stops.

Table 12 gives the summary of the plot structure of the four texts analyzed.

Texts	Exposition	Inciting Moment	Developing Conflict	Climax	Denouement	Conclusion
KALE	S#1-7	S#8-10	S#11-30	S#31-42	S#43-45	S#46-47
CAT	S#1-2	S#3-8	S#9-36	S#37-40	S#41-43	S#44
JACKAL	S#1-3	S#4-14	S#15-62	S#63-81	S#82-89	S#90
DEER	S#1-14	S#15-24	S#25-51	S#52-75	S#76-78	S#79-80

Table 12. Plot structures of the texts analyzed