

Article

# Approaching Hemingway's 'The Killers' in Terms of Garima's Actantial Model

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**Abstract:** This study explores the efficacy of Greimas's Actantial Model in analyzing narrative structures, with a focus on understanding character motivations, conflicts, and resolutions. Through a close examination of Hemingway's "The Killers," the narrative is dissected into key components including exposition, rising incidents, climax, falling incidents, and resolution, each analyzed using the Actantial Model. By applying this methodology, the study aims to elucidate the motivations and relationships of characters within each episode, leveraging Hemingway's distinctive writing style to uncover deeper themes and meanings. The research identifies a gap in the understanding of how the Actantial Model can be effectively applied to literary analysis. Using a qualitative approach, the study applies the Actantial Model to "The Killers" and reveals its utility in uncovering narrative complexities. The findings underscore the Actantial Model's potential as a structural framework for analyzing narratives, shedding light on character dynamics and narrative depth. This research contributes to the broader discourse on narrative analysis and offers implications for future studies in literary theory and semiotics.

**Keywords:** Subject, Object, Helper, Opponent, Sender, Receiver.

## 1. Introduction

According to my knowledge, Greimas's Actantial Model offers a framework, for analyzing the roles and relationships in a narrative aiding in understanding the motivations, conflicts and resolutions of characters or entities involved. Hemingway's writing style in "The Killers" is utilized for this approach to shed light on the motivations and connections among characters throughout the narrative.

Case study The Greimas Actantial Model is chosen to analyse and help to understand the narrative by connecting the characters' actions and motivations. I choose Hemingway's style because he focuses on actions and dialogue of descriptions or inner thoughts. Through the "show don't tell" approach, Hemingway lets readers understand emotions and meanings, through the characters' actions rather than telling them to establish a connection, with the story.

Case description The Greimas's Actantial Model is a method used to analyze stories that focus on the roles and relationships of characters. This model identifies six elements; The Subject(S), The Object (O); The Helper (H); The Opponent (O'); The Sender (S'); and The Receiver (R). This paper fulfils the results that I assumed earlier. The narrative can be analyzed and understood by the characters' actions which match Hemingway's style of story writing.

**Citation:** Lina Ali Ba'noon, Approaching Hemingway's 'The Killers' in Terms of Garima's Actantial Model. International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics 2024, 3(3), 25-32.

Received: 23<sup>th</sup> Mar 2024

Revised: 23<sup>th</sup> Apr 2024

Accepted: 30<sup>th</sup> Apr 2024

Published: 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024



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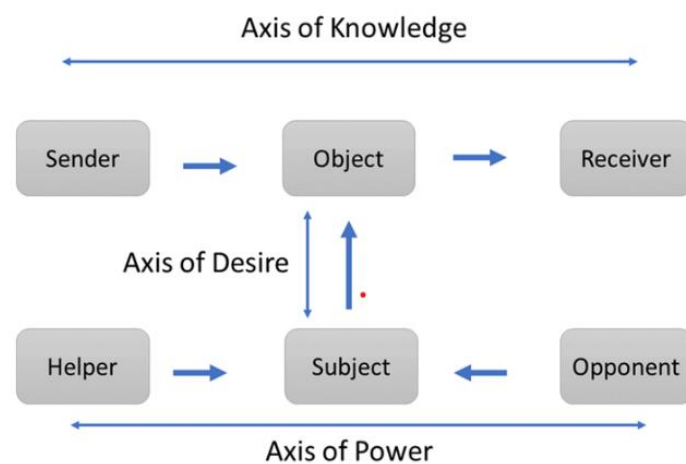
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## 2. Materials and Methods

**Actantial Model Overview** The Greimass Actantial Model is a method used to analyze narratives focusing on the roles and relationships of characters. Created by Algirdas Julien Greimas, a semiotician, from Lithuania and France this model identifies six actants :

1. Subject (S); The central. Entity in the narrative responsible for initiating actions.
2. Object (O); The objective or aim pursued by the subject representing what they strive to accomplish.
3. Helper (H); The character or element assisting the Main Character, in achieving his or her goal.
4. Opponent (O'); The opposing force challenging the Main character's objectives.
5. Sender (S); The character initiating the Main character's journey or assigning his or her task.
6. Receiver (R); The individual or entity that experiences the consequences or achievements of the subject's actions or journey. (See Figure 1) for more information.

Through recognizing these characters and their connections the Actantial Model offers a structure, for comprehending the flow of a story. It aids in uncovering the framework of a narrative highlighting the roles and relationships, among characters rather than just concentrating on the storyline events [1].



**Figure 1. The Schema of Actantial Model**

The diagram, above displays three axes. The desire axis represents the connection between a subject and an object, known as a junction based on whether they're linked or not. The power axis signifies the role of helper and opponent in achieving that desire. The helper aids in reaching the desire while the opponent creates obstacles to its fulfillment. Lastly, the knowledge axis involves the sender and receiver relationship, where the sender initiates the desired establishment and the receiver benefits, from its attainment [2].

## 3. Results

Ernest Hemingway's distinctive writing style, a known author is famous, for his unique writing style known for its simplicity, directness and brevity [3]. His use of short straightforward sentences avoids details and aims for an approach to storytelling. This concise and efficient use of language enhances the impact and strength of his narratives. Hemingway also follows the iceberg theory of writing leaving unsaid but implied through

meanings [4]. Additionally, he prioritizes action and dialogue over descriptions or internal reflections. By utilizing a "show don't tell" technique Hemingway allows readers to interpret emotions and significance through characters' actions rather than explicitly stating them creating a connection, with the story [5].

Plot Summary of Hemingway's Story "The Killers" storyline follows two hitmen who come to a town to target a man named Ole Andreson. The narrative unfolds in a diner, where the hitmen, Max and Al await Ole Andreson's arrival. The Key events show the following incidents:

1. In the Introduction of the Hitmen; Max and Al make their entrance into Henry's lunchroom, a quaint diner in the town. They are assassins with a mission to execute a contract.
2. The Waiting for Ole Andreson; The hitmen take control of the diner as they anticipate Ole Andreson's appearance. Tension fills the air as they interact with patrons and staff.
3. The Absence of Ole Andreson; Unexpectedly Ole Andreson, their target fails to show up at the time leaving the hitmen surprised and irritated.
4. The Conversations in the Diner; The hitmen converse with George, the owner and Nick Adams an employee there. Through their discussions, we gain insights, into Ole Andreson and the threat looming over him.
5. Into Ole Anderson's Insight; Ole Andreson used to be a boxer involved in dealings. Now he is leading a life after retiring. The hitmen disclose that they've been commissioned to take out Andreson.
6. Hitmen Departure; whom he hired to eliminate him expressed frustration over his absence and decided to depart after settling their bill signalling their intention not to pursue the contract further.
7. George grows concerned for Ole's well well-being and Dispatches; Nick to forewarn him. Upon reaching Anderson's residence Nick discloses details about the hired killers. Urges Ole to consider leaving town [5].

This narrative raises questions, about Ole's past and the motives driving the contract in his life embodying Hemingway's storytelling style [4].

### **The Functional Analysis of Hemingway's "The Killers"**

This analysis of Hemingway's "The Killers" " the storyline is broken down into Exposition, Rising Incidents, Climax, Falling Incidents, and Resolution:

1. Exposition: The narrative kicks off in a diner managed by George. Two hired killers, Max and Al walk in with a plan to eliminate a man named Ole Andreson. The atmosphere in the diner becomes tense as the hitmen take charge.
2. Rising Incidents: The hitmen patiently await Ole Anderson's arrival at the diner indicating their purpose there. Tension mounts as customers and staff sense the danger brewing.
3. Ole Andreson fails to show up at the expected time leading to increased frustration for the hitmen. Curiosity grows among characters about Ole's absence
4. Climax: The turning point arrives when Ole Andreson still doesn't appear, prompting the hitmen to depart without executing their task. This decision marks a moment in the tale.
5. Falling Incidents: Post their departure George grows anxious, about Ole Andreson's safety. The decreasing intensity revolves around George's concern and his choice to send Nick Adams to caution Ole about the peril.
6. Resolution: Nick visits Ole Andreson. Advises him to leave town to avoid danger, from the hitmen. The resolution focuses on Ole's escape from the threat he faced.

The narrative, in "The Killers" raises questions about Ole's life and his past connections to crime without providing answers. This ending approach adds complexity and depth to the story inviting readers to interpret and ponder the characters' actions. The simplicity of the writing style in the story encourages readers to read between the lines and reflect on the layers of meaning, beneath the surface events.

### Data Analysis

The Actantial and Functional Structure Analysis of Hemingway's "The Killers"

Analyzing Hemingway's "The Killers" through the Actantial Model of Greimas reveals elements in each part :

#### Episode 1: Introduction of the Hitmen (Initial Scene)

Subject (S): Max and Al who're the hitmen. They assert their dominance at the diner clearly showing their intentions.

Object (O): Ole Andreson, their target is nowhere to be found. The mission is to fulfill a contract and kill him.

Helper (H): Max and Al handle everything (their mission) themselves without any assistance.

Opponent (O'): Ole Andreson is the adversary he remains out of sight for now (See Figure 2).

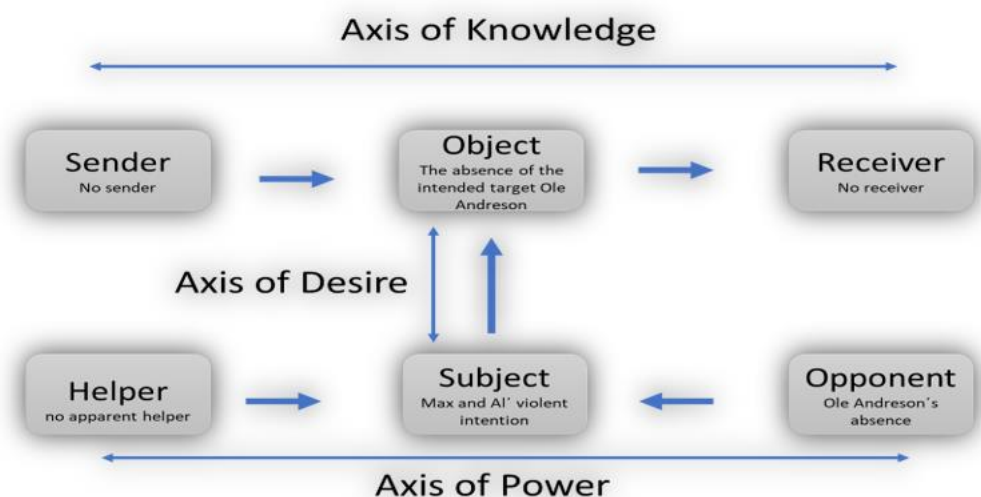


Figure 2 The Representation of the Model in the Exposition

#### Episode 2: Ole Andreson Arrival (Rising events)

Subject (S): Max and Al continue to be the main characters, still eagerly waiting for Ole.

Object (O): Their main goal continues to be waiting for Ole Andreson's appearance.

Helper (H): No new significant characters are introduced in this part of the story to support.

Opponent (O'): Ole Andreson is not there; still, he is the intended target of an attack See Figure 3).

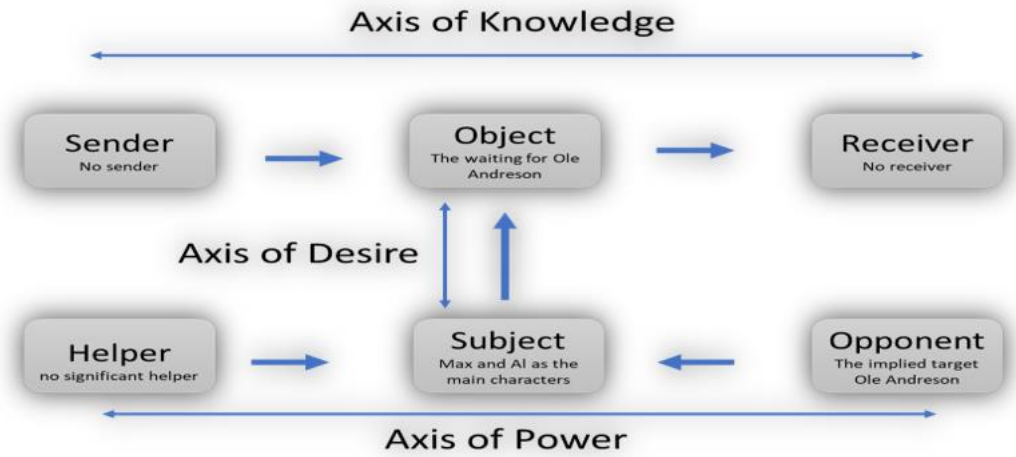


Figure 3 The Representation of the Model in Rising Incidents

**Episode 3: The Vanishing of Ole Andreson (Rising Events)**

Subject (S): Max and Al grow more frustrated as Ole fails to show up.

Object (O): The goal continues to be carrying out the planned hit, on Ole Andreson.

Helper (H): No support is offered in this episode.

Opponent(O'): Ole Andreson indirectly becomes an opponent by his absence(See figure 4).

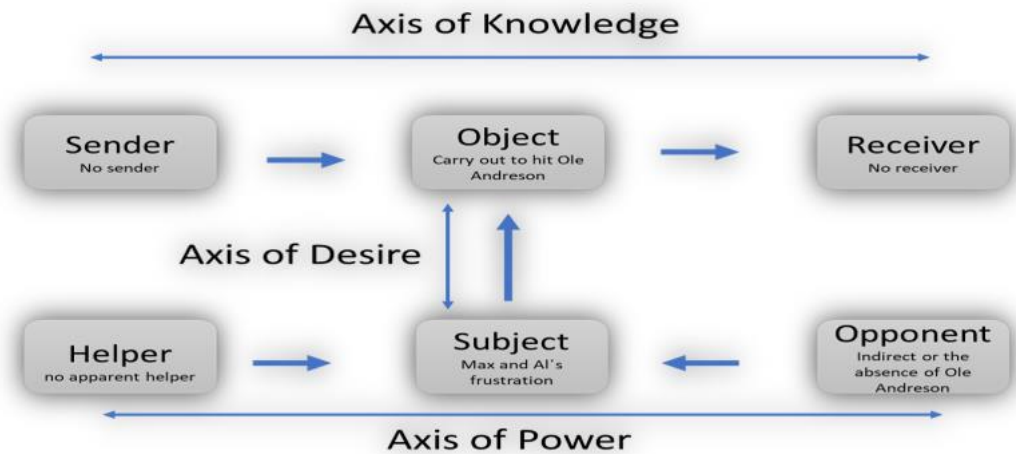


Figure 4 The representation of the Model in the second Rising Incidents

**Episode 4: Diner Conversations (Rising Events)**

Subject (S); The attention alternates, among Max, Al and George the owner of the diner.

Object (O): The main goal continues unchanged. but the hitman's growing impatience becomes apparent.

Helper (H): No prominent supporting figure comes into play during this episode.

Opponent (O'): Ole Anderson's troubled history is explored, adding depth to his persona (See Figure 5).

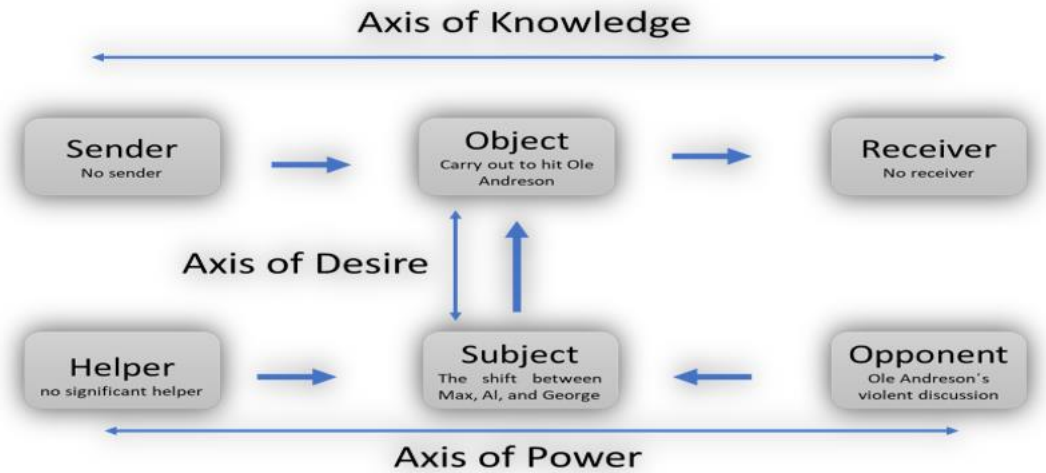


Figure 5 The Representation of the Model in the Third Rising Incidents

#### Episode 5: The Hitmen's Departure (Climax)

Subject (S): Max and Al opt to depart without completing the assigned task.

Object (O): The goal stays unchanged. The turning point is their choice to not go through with the job.

Helper (H): There is no support influencing this decision.

Opponent (O'): The absence of Ole Anderson poses a challenge playing a role, in shaping the pivotal moment (See Figure 6).

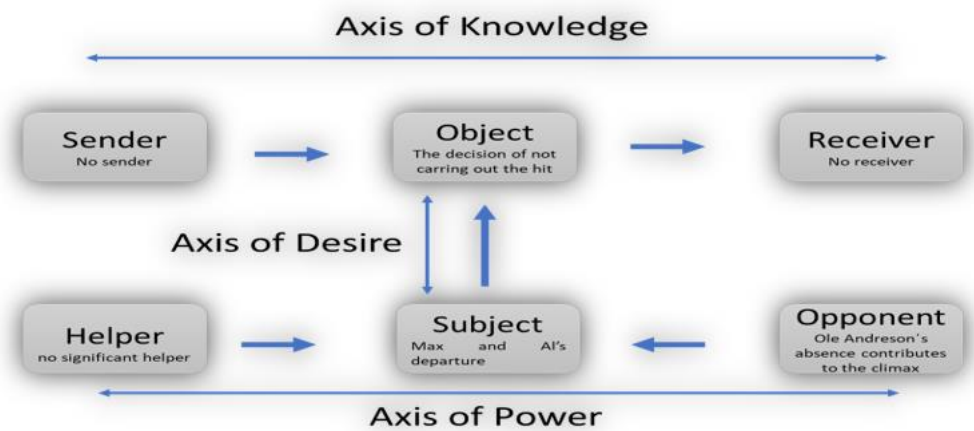


Figure 6 The Representation of the Model in the climax

#### Episode 6: George's Worry for Ole (Falling Incidents)

Subject (S): George becomes the central character as he expresses concern for Ole Anderson.

Object (O): The objective is now shifted toward ensuring Ole's well-being.

Helper (H): George acts as a potential helper by sending Nick to warn Ole.

Opponent (O'): Although the hitmen are gone, the potential danger to Ole's life is still present (See Figure 7).



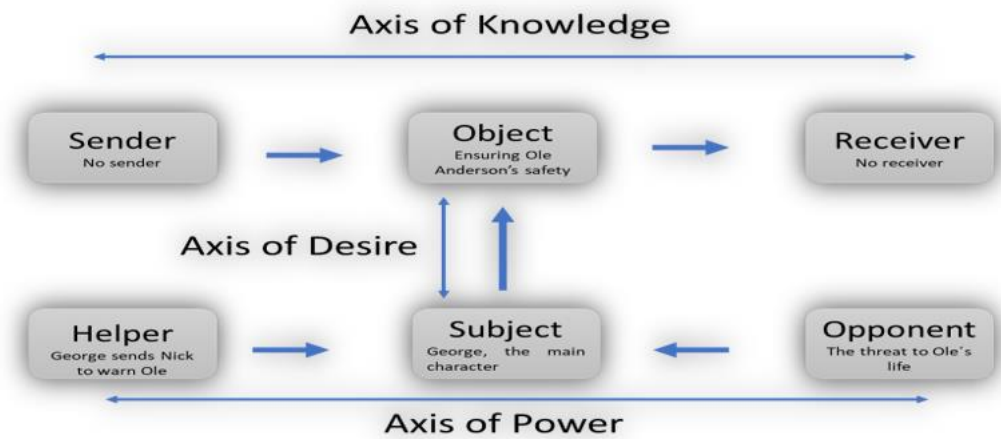


Figure 7 The representation of the Model in the Falling Incidents

#### Episode 7: Nick's Warning to Ole (Resolution)

Subject (S): Nick takes on a more significant role in this episode.

Object (O): The objective shifts to warning Ole about the danger.

Helper (H): Nick becomes a helper in this resolution, aiding Ole.

Opponent (O'): The hitmen and the potential threat continue, adding tension to the resolution (See Figure 8).

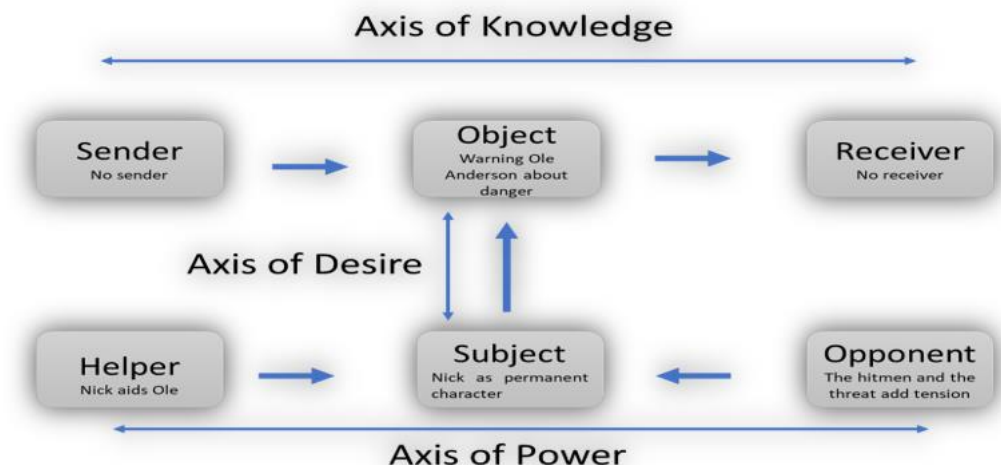


Figure 8 The Representation of the Model in the Resolution

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

In Hemingway's "The Killers" the language used is known for concealing much of the story's significance beneath the surface. The Actantial Model helps in identifying the characters and their roles emphasizing the tension, suspense and complex layers of the narrative. It's crucial to note that the components of this model can represent either concepts or tangible objects.

Accordingly, this paper provides a full description and interpretation of the narrative depending on the relations, and motivations between the characters. The Actantial Model components gave this perfect shoot to analyze and interpret the narrative.

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