

SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MAIN CHARACTER IN THE MOVIE ELEMENTAL: FORCES OF NATURE BY PETER SOHN

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Abstract

This study examines literary works in the form of films via a sociological approach. The purpose of this study is to describe the major characters' characterizations and define the different kinds of social interactions in Peter Sohn's 2023 film Elemental: Forces of Nature. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study described sources and information as research objects, such as dialogue or transcripts and movie stills. This study made use of Tischler's social interaction theory (Nonverbal Behavioral Interaction, Exchange Interaction, Cooperative Interaction, Conflict Interaction, and Competitive Interaction) as well as Petrie and Boggs' characterization theory (Appearance, Dialogue, External Actions, Reactions from Other Characters). 32 social interaction data points were gathered for this study, which showed how social interactions influenced the main character's description based on her words, actions, and behaviors. First, two data were reflected in characterization through appearance, four data were reflected in characterization through external activities, and three data were reflected in characterization through other characters' reactions in social interactions that took the form of nonverbal behavioral exchange. In addition, social contacts in the form of exchange encounters revealed that two data were represented in characterization through other characters' reactions, four data were reflected in characterization of external activities, and five data were reflected in characterization through dialogue. Subsequently, five data were represented in characterization through external actions, and one data was reflected in characterization through discussion in the form of cooperative social engagement. Lastly, social interactions in the form of conflict interaction revealed two data represented in appearance characterization, three data reflected in dialogue characterization, and one data reflected in other characters' reactions. This investigation did not find any competitive interaction. According to the study's findings, the primary character's characterization varies as a result of the social interactions in its environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The existence of literature cannot be separated from life of society. Literature requires imaginative ideas which can come from people's own personal and social experiences made as beautiful and subtle as possible. Wellek and Warren (1949, p.11) argue that the term literature will appear best when we limit it to literary art, that is, to imaginative literature. Literature is a work created from the author's imagination that is not just a collection of facts or fiction, but can be derived from events that occur in the real world (Burhamzah et al., 2022, p. 195). It can create its own world as a result of imagination that has no limits. Therefore, literature is not just a copy of reality, but it is a reflection of reality interpreted subtly and beautifully in the form of literary works.

Social life is often used as inspiration in the creation of literary works. These are created by human imaginatively. As an expression of human as author, literary work becomes an outpouring of feelings and thoughts experienced by the author or can also be a product of imagination resulting from various perceptions, thoughts, or feelings (Meirysa & Wardarita, 2021). In its creation, literary works are made from the results of creative and productive activities that have aesthetic value and reflect social reality or facts in society (Sabila, 2021, p.156).

Movies elevate social reality with a touch of storyline that has its own charm. This makes it sometimes have a strong level of reality and are used as a tool to express expressions and thoughts. Furthermore, according to Supiarza et al. (2020, p.271), movies have several functions, namely as a mass communication medium that provides a lot of information, a medium for self-potential development, and a means to develop morals.

This study contains movie analysis that can give a story that can be observed through the images of scene and conversation used. For this reason, the theory used in this study is the sociology approach to analyze literary work, namely movie. The theory is social interaction by Henry L. Tischler (2011). The theory focuses on the interactions that one individual has with other individuals in the context of a particular environment and purpose. Tischler (2011, p.110) suggests that these interactions involve behaviors related to status and role elements. Both help shape patterns of social interaction and provide predictability. So that individuals can estimate how to behave in certain situations. Therefore, this study also uses the characterization theory of Dennis W. Petrie and Joseph M. Boggs (2022). The theory focuses on the clear depiction of a unique character and helps to understand the character being developed. Petrie & Boggs (2022, pp.60-64) mention five characterizations that can be used to analyze characters in movies. There are characterization through appearance, dialogue, internal action, external action, and reactions of other characters.

The study aims to show the types of social interaction of the main character in the film *Elemental: Forces of Nature* (2023) and characterization to provide an overview how her characteristics are formed during social interaction from the beginning to the end of the movie. The existence of social interactions that are intertwined, will create a reciprocal relationship in the social structure. Social structure comes from a collection of individuals who form an order with various common characteristics of various social institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sociology is a broad social science, covering the entire spectrum of human behavior, interaction, and organization (Turner, 2014 p.6). So that it becomes a relevant science to understand the complexity of social life. Sociology is the systematic study of society and social interaction. For its application, social patterns and forces are identified and determined how they affect individuals in groups. For this reason, sociology can be used to explain social interactions in literary works. Which things related to it as part of the social life raised in it. It can be found in literary works which of course the characters in it will reflect interactions in the social environment.

Social interaction that proposed by Tischler can be seen in a movie entitled *Elemental: Forces of Nature*. It is an American romantic-comedy computer-animated movie. It was then shown in the United States on June 16 and in Indonesia on June 21, 2023. The movie is a production of a movie company and a computer animation studio, namely Walt Disney Pictures and Pixar Animation Studios. The movie was directed by Peter Sohn and produced by Denise Ream. It was written by John Hoberg, Kat Likkell, Brenda Hsueh, and Peter Sohn (who doubles as the director). This is one of the movie that shows how a woman who was born into an immigrant family tries to fulfill the expectations of those around her, especially her parents. The movie depicts a young fire woman, Ember Lumen, who lives with her parents, Bernie and Cinder, on the suburbs of Element City.

Tischler (2011, pp. 107-109) outlines several types of social interaction in line with these two elements such as nonverbal behavior interaction, exchange interaction, cooperation interaction, conflict interaction, and competition interaction.

1. Nonverbal behavior interaction

Nonverbal behavior refers to the way people communicate with each other using their gestures. These can include head nods, yawns, shifts in body position, and other gestures. It happens intentionally as well as spontaneously, which affects communication. However, conducting this type of interaction can play out differently by adjusting the cultural attitudes that guide people to express a certain way. Therefore, the most important thing to do is to make sure the recipient of the nonverbal behavior is well-versed in the norms of the interaction.

2. Exchange interaction

Every form of social interaction will always involve an act of exchange, where individuals, groups, or communities interact in an effort to receive a reward for their actions. Exchange interactions occur when people do things for each other with the intention of receiving something in return. All exchanges will be related to mutual dependency, where each actor is interdependent to receive the desired outcome.

3. Cooperative Interaction

In carrying out social interactions, people have various intentions as a trigger for carrying out these actions. One of the intentions is to achieve certain goals together between people who have the same interests. Such interaction occurs when people act together to offer common interests so that the goals they want can be achieved. So that these goals are expected to benefit each other.

4. Conflict Interaction

In conflict interaction, people will struggle with each other to achieve some object or value that is valued together. Most conflict relationships benefit only one party at the expense of others. Conflict arises when individuals or groups have incompatible values or when the rewards or resources available to a society or its members are limited. Thus, conflict will always involve attempts to gain or use power in achieving goals.

5. Competitive interaction

The general definition of competition is a situation created so that at least two people who are struggling with each other achieve their goals. Tischler in this case mentions that competition is another form of conflict in which individuals or groups limit their conflict within a defined set of rules. It is a common form of interaction in the modern world, such as in sports fields, markets, education systems, and political systems.

Therefore, this study also uses the characterization theory of Dennis W. Petrie and Joseph M. Boggs (2022). The theory focuses on the clear depiction of a unique character and helps to understand the character being developed. Petrie & Boggs (2022. pp.60-64) mention four characterizations that can be used to analyze characters in movies. There are characterization through appearance, dialogue, external action, and reactions of other characters.

The study focuses on main character, Ember Lumen in *Elemental: Forces of Nature*. The study aims to show the types of social interaction of the main character in the movie *Elemental: Forces of Nature* (2023) and characterization to provide an overview how her characteristics are formed during social interaction from the beginning to the end of the movie.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study used is descriptive qualitative. It is an approach that allows researchers to examine the details of people's experiences using a certain set of research methods such as in content analysis. Therefore, in presenting the data, the researcher used content analysis and contextual situation narration. This study explains the types of social interactions of the main characters and characterization to describe the characteristics reflected from the interactions in the movie *Elemental: Forces of Nature* which is used as the data source. Social interaction and characterization are obtained from the scenes of the main character in the movie. This research uses transcripts and every scene of the main character of the film that involves the characterization of the main character as data. In addition, the narration and dialog in the film are also used in order to add evidence to the data.

This study uses the movie *Elemental: Forces of Nature* by Peter Sohn as object. The movie is a romantic comedy animation film released in 2023 that lasts 1 hour and 49 minutes. The movie stars Leah Lewis and Mamoudou Athie as the voice cast. The main character of the movie is Leah Lewis (Ember Lumen). *Elemental: Forces of Nature* tells the life of four anthropomorphic element of nature, namely the element of water, fire, air, earth. The four elements coexist in a city called Element City. This study focuses on the analysis of social interaction and characterization of the main character. Which can be seen from how much the influence of social interaction makes her behavior and characteristics develop.

These procedures include setting the boundaries of the study, collecting information through visual materials, and then establishing a protocol for recording the information. The data collection procedure of this study consists of:

1. Downloading the movie on Disney+ Hotstar and its original transcript on the internet.
2. Watching the movie Elemental: Forces of Nature by Peter Sohn And then take crucial notes from the transcript and scenes that focus on the main character of the movie. Other characters are also required to support analysis.
3. Reading the entire movie transcript to validate crucial notes to check for potential errors.
4. Identifying the data, rechecking the validity of the notes, and separating the classified notes were classified as data. The selected data identified notes that showed the interaction social and characterization of the main character in the movie.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents an analysis of the movie Elemental: Forces of Nature by Peter Sohn. the discussion of the analysis in this chapter begins with an analysis of social interactions in the main character. The social interaction uses the theory of Henry L. Tischler (2011). This theory is used to explain and identify the types of social interactions performed by the main character. Then, the characteristics of the main character were analyzed using Boggs and Petrie's characterization theory (2022). There are 32 data in the movie Elemental: Forces of Nature These types of interactions then reflect the characteristics of the main character that can be observed through interactions between characters both verbally and in action. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the main character's conversations and scenes with other characters.

1. Nonverbal Behavior Interaction

Nonverbal behavior interaction is a form of interaction that is communication without words. These interactions use body language, facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and other nonverbal elements. This interaction will work if the recipient of the message can understand it well. Although unspoken, the messages conveyed through these interactions are more powerful and honest than words.

A. Characterization through the Appearance



Scene at 00:29:48

Ember avoids a high five from Wade.

Datum one shows Ember distancing herself because Wade wants to high-five her. They are at an air stadium to meet Wade's boss. Gale Cumulus is the boss they want to meet to cancel the Ember's family shop sanction. The match ended in victory. This made Wade so happy that he wanted to high-five Ember. However, Ember immediately avoided because the fire element could make the water element evaporate and the water element could extinguish the fire. Seeing this, Wade immediately understood it and high-fived himself instead.

From this scene, Ember shows that she is trying to accept the situation between herself and Wade. This is a nonverbal behavioral interaction because it shows a body gesture that looks away from Wade and with a panicked expression. Ember does not want Wade to get into trouble if he comes into contact with her. This reflects that Ember is an open-minded person.

B. Characterization the External Action



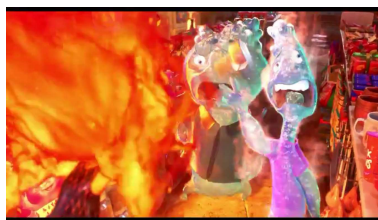
Scene at 00:14:06

Ember and her father hugging.

Datum four depicts Ember hugging her father, Bernie. Her father is amazed by her speed in delivering packages. So he trusted Ember to handle the Red Dot Sale. After hearing this, Ember happily agreed to her father's order. She also promised to do her best for the Red Dot Sale tomorrow.

From this scene, Ember and her father seem to have a close relationship. It can be seen that they hug each other. This includes nonverbal behavioral interactions that can be seen from body gestures. Therefore, her father's affection makes Ember always do her best and prioritize Fireplace for her father. Therefore, this interaction shows that Ember is a humble child because she prioritizes the interests of her loved ones over herself.

C. Characterization the Other Characters' Reactions



Scene at 00:06:39

Two water men are scared because they see Ember and their bodies are boiling.

Datum seven depicts two watermen who have entered the Ember family shop, the Fireplace. They were trying to create chaos inside. This has been watched by Ember since their arrival. Their movements made Ember and her father wary. Her father told his son to follow them secretly. After approaching and seeing what they were doing, Ember firmly stated that if they wanted to get wet then they had to buy the item. This made those who were initially happy because of their actions turn into fear. That's because the Ember flared up, producing a hot temperature that made them boil. They screamed in pain and immediately ran away from that place.

In this scene, Ember shows her character through other characters' reactions and nonverbal behavioral interactions. The interaction is in the facial expressions of the two watermen who are scared because their bodies are boiling due to the flames from Ember. As the main character, she tries to protect the Fireplace from being disturbed by anyone. Despite being a child, Ember does not hesitate to warn the watermen without thinking about who they are. Her personality has stood out in her and made her a brave child.

2. Exchange Interaction

This type of social interaction carries out exchange activities that lead to relationships between individuals. exchange interactions occur when people do things for each other with the aim of receiving something in return. Exchange interactions will be related to mutual dependence, where everyone depends on each other to receive the desired results. The emergence of exchanges is based on the interests of each other by forming a relationship.

A. Characterization through the Dialog

Mrs. Ripple : This was really great.

Ember : Yeah, it was.

Mrs. Ripple : And I mean what I said about your talent. I have a friend who runs the best glassmaking firm in the world. During dinner, I slipped out and I made a call and I told her about you.



*Scene at 00:58:19-00:58:30
After Ember fixed the drink holder,
Mrs. Ripple praised her talent.*

Datum twelve shows Mrs. Ripple talking to Ember. Before Ember went home, she told her that she liked the drink holder she had made. Which was accidentally broken by Alan, Wade's brother. Because of this, Ember took the initiative to fix it. That made Mrs. Ripple admire and promote Ember to her friend.

This scene shows that Ember's character performs an exchange interaction. Ember has shown her talent in front of Mrs. Ripple and her family. Mrs. Ripple appreciates her and even offers Ember an apprenticeship at her friend's glassworks. Therefore, this scene shows that Ember is a creative person.

B. Characterization through the External Action

Ember : Grab this!



Scene at 00:36:25-00:36:31

Wade was helped by Ember who gave him a piece of iron to get him out of the rushing water.

Datum fifteen depicts when Wade is helped by Ember to get out of the water rushing from the canal. The water came from the overflow of water produced when a large ship passed through the canal. Because the canal gate was broken, the water could not be contained and flowed towards Firetown, which had not been flooded for years. This would have a devastating effect on the town.

In this scene, it can be observed that Ember took a piece of iron to pull Wade. She cuts the iron from the broken door frame using her body heat. This action allowed her to save Wade from the rushing water. This proves that Ember's personality as the main character is reflected in the exchange interaction. She provides help for Wade because she has helped him before. Even though it may endanger her, she shows that she is a helpful person because of her heroic action.

C. Characterization through the Other Characters' Reactions



Scene at 00:12:16 - 00:12:17

Customers give gifts to Ember because they are satisfied with her services.

Datum nineteen gives a picture of Ember delivering packages. She goes from place to place and meets many people. She did it quickly because she wanted to prove to her father that she could be the fastest in delivering packages. At one of her customers' places, she was given a gift by the customer. This made Ember happy and excited.

From the scene, it shows that she is doing an exchange interaction. He as a seller tries to do her best for her customers. Which was appreciated by her customers and gave her a gift. This shows that Ember uses her services to fulfill the customer's request. The customer also rewarded Ember's services. The interaction reflects that Ember is a responsible person.

3. Cooperative Interaction

In carrying out social interactions, people have various intentions as a trigger for taking these actions. One of the intentions is to achieve certain goals together between people who have the same interests. The interaction occurs when people act together to offer common interests so that the goals they want can be achieved. So that these goals are expected to benefit each other.

A. Characterization through the Dialog

[Ember's father] : *Water us down? Where's camera? We will never*
[Ember] : *be watered down by you. Get out!*
Alright, sir, you gotta go. Dad, don't worry. I've got this.



Scene at 00:46:34-00:46:43

Ember tries to break up her father and Wade.

Datum twenty one shows Ember trying to calm the situation at the Fireplace shop. At that time, her father was angry with what Wade was doing because he was mixing *kol-nut*, which is a hot food, with water. He did this to neutralize the heat of the food he was eating. Wade's actions made Ember's father angry and sent him away. Later, Ember dealt with the problem. She drove the waterman out of the shop and told her father to calm down.

From this scene, what Ember did as the main character is a cooperative interaction as seen from her dialog. Calmly, she tried to overcome the tense situation and reduce the conflict. She faces it with her patient nature so as not to be provoked. Her way of speaking also tends to be firm so that her father can listen to her words and Wade is not too afraid.

B. Characterization through the External Action



Scene at 00:07:03

Deftly, Ember helps her father make kol-nut.

Datum twenty three shows Ember and her father making *kol-nut* for stock while waiting for customers. Ember is so excited that she can make it as many as possible in a short time. On the other side, her father has to work hard to make one *kol-nut* because he is old and not as strong as when he was young. He is often exhausted because his body has become vulnerable. At his age, he should rest and retire from managing the shop.

In this scene, it can be seen that Ember as the main character performs cooperative interactions. She helps her father make *kol-nuts* deftly. This interaction illustrates her personality from her external actions. She always tries to do her best so that her father will be proud of her and allow her to take over the shop he started when they moved to Element City. This shows that Ember has the attitude of a helpful.

4. Conflict Interaction

In conflict interactions, people will struggle with each other to achieve some valued object or value. Most conflict relationships benefit only one party at the expense of others. Hence, conflict will always involve attempts to gain or use power in achieving goals.

A. Characterization through the Appearance

[Ember] : *You splash it, you buy it.*



Scene at 00:06:35-00:06:37

Little Ember reprimands two watermen who are misbehaving in the Fireplace.

Datum twentyseven depicts Ember warning two watermen who wanted to damage her family's shop goods. Their arrival had been watched by her. This is because Bernie, Ember's father told her to follow them. When they performed the action, they received a stern warning from Ember.

In this scene, Ember is seen staring at the watermen with an angry gaze. The fire that burns her body also flares up as if following her emotions. She uses the fire to scare them. In addition, she also loudly says "*You splashed it, you bought it*" to them and makes them surprised. In this scene, Ember as the main character shows conflict interaction which is reflected in terms of her appearance, namely the expression when she faces things she doesn't like. This shows that she is brave to people who disturb their shop.

B. Characterization through the Dialog

[Customer] : *But the customer is always right.*
[Ember] : *Not in this case. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope.*
[Customer] : *Just give me one for free!*
[Ember] : *That's not how this works!*



Scene at 00:07:27-00:07:44

Ember and customer fight over fireworks

The twenty-nine datum is shown when Ember and the customer fight over the fireworks. She did so because the customer was only taking free fireworks and he thought it was the right thing to do. Ember does not accept this excuse; she insists that she will not allow the customer to take the fireworks until he buys them.

The scene shows that the interaction is a conflict interaction. Ember as the main character shows that she defends what she thinks is right and does not want to give in. This shows that she is short-fuse in dealing with complicated problems, which can be reflected in the dialog. Initially, Ember is still trying to refrain from getting angry. However, this did not last long and she maintained her opinion despite the dispute.

C. Characterization through the Other Characters' Reactions

- Ember : Yeah. Okay, so, the 30 citations.
Gale : Do you mind? There's a game going on. Fireball.
Ember : Fireball? Actually, I do mind. This is my life we're talking about. Not just some game.
Gale : Some game? This is the playoffs. So, forgive me if I don't want to hear a sob story about the problems of some little shop.



Scene at 00:27:46 – 00:28:02
Gale feels disturbed by Ember's presence.

Datum thirty two depicts Ember trying to settle the matter to cancel the fine at the Fireplace store. She met Gale at a water soccer match. She is accompanied by Wade, who is Gale's coworker. Ember makes her plea for the store's fine to be canceled. However, Gale responded indifferently. This made Ember unhappy with her treatment.

This scene shows that what Ember did included conflict interaction. She felt that Gale's response made her dissatisfied. This is because she did not get the opportunity to appeal. She did not accept Gale's treatment because it was not in accordance with her wishes. Ember's behavior illustrates that Ember is a brave person to defend her rights.

5. CONCLUSION

This study identifies various types of social interaction used in the movie *Elemental: Forces of Nature* by Peter Sohn using the theory of Henry L. Tischler. His theory states that forms of social interaction can be observed through nonverbal behavior interaction, exchange interaction, cooperative interaction, conflict interaction, and competitive interaction. However, competitive interaction was not found in this study. Each form is used in this study to show the data accompanied by the characterization method. The character portrayal of the main character is seen from the behavior shown from social interaction. So that the characteristics of the main character can be observed through appearance, dialogue, external actions, and reactions from

other characters which is the theory of characterization by Petrie and Boggs. The purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the main character to show the forms of social interaction that reflect the character's characteristics. The results showed that Ember as the central character experienced significant development. This character development is influenced by social interactions between the main character and other characters.

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