

**THE CENTRAL COMPONENTS OF
STRUCTURAL SEMIOTICS.**

A CRITICAL DISCUSSION

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Contents

1) Principal Points	3
2) The Generative Model or “Unfolding”	4
3) The Syntactic Component	8
3.1) The taxonomic classification	9
3.2) The semiotic square	11
3.3) Critical review of the classification grid proposed in standard structural semiotics	14
3.4) Conclusion	16
4) The Fundamental Semantics	17
4.1) Common places and topoi	19
4.2) Cultural references	20
4.3) Thematic configurations and standards	22
5) Relationships between “fundamental” syntax and “fundamental semantics”	25
6) The semio-narrative surface level	26
7) The narrative syntax	27
7.1) The narrative utterance	28
7.2) The narrative topic	29
7.3) The narrative utterance (continued)	31
7.4) From the narrative utterance to the scenario	33
8) The narrative grammar of Greimas	37
8.1) Canonical and derived types of narrative utterances	40
8.2) A new picture of narrative grammar	44
8.3) Remarks on terminology	49
8.4) Interpretations of the status of narrative syntax	50
9) The semiotic scenario	55
10) The narrative semantics	57
10.1) Functional specification of a narrative topic	58
10.2) Scenarios and narrative topics	59
11) The Syntax of a Discourse	60
11.1) Discursive “worlds”	61
11.2) Uttering and discourse production/interpretation	63
11.3) Typical procedures in discourse staging	64
12) The discursive semantics	69
13) Textualisation	72

1) Principal Points

1) Systematic and Critical Discussion of « Standard » Structural Semiotics

2) Central References: Greimas & Courtés 1979; Greimas 1966; Greimas 1970; Greimas 1976

3) Theoretical Reference: Generative Model (Model of the Generative Unfolding of the Meaning of a Discourse)

4) Domain: « Signifié » (Content); not: « Signifiant » (Expression)

5) « Critical Discussion »:

- a) General Conception of the « Generative Model »**
- b) Some Specific, Prominent Models (Semiotic Square, Narrative Grammar, Uttering, ...)**
- c) Semiotic Terminology**

6) Objective:

Propose a Modified, New Theoretical Picture of Discourse Production and Interpretation (« Sémiotique Scénario »)

2) The Generative Model or “Unfolding”

Presentation

- the generative model (G.M.) is the model of reference that is supposed to describe (to « simulate ») the production (« constitution ») of a discourse as well as its reception (and comprehension)

the G. M. is constituted by two major components and two principal layers (cf. figure)

- the so-called syntactic and semantic components
- the so-called semio-narrative and discursive layers

the G.M. as a model for the description of the production of a discourse:

- direction « bottom up » (i.e. « ab quo »)

the G.M. as a model for the comprehension of a discourse:

- direction « top-down » (i.e. « ad quem »)
- highly different « influences » that have led to the generative model

PARCOURS GENERATIF			
	COMPOSANTE SYNTAXIQUE		COMPOSANTE SEMANTIQUE
STRUCTURES SEMIO- NARRATIVES	niveau profond	SYNTAXE FUNDAMENTALE	SÉMANTIQUE FUNDAMENTALE
	niveau de surface	SYNTAXE NARRATIVE DE SURFACE	SÉMANTIQUE NARRATIVE
STRUCTURES DISCURSIVES	SYNTAXE DISCURSIVE		SÉMANTIQUE DISCURSIVE

(figure 1: le parcours génératif; Greimas/Courtés 1979: 160)

PARCOURS GENERATIF			
	COMPOSANTE SYNTAXIQUE		COMPOSANTE SEMANTIQUE
STRUCTURES SEMIO- NARRATIVES	niveau profond	<p>SYNTAXE FUNDAMENTALE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>relations</u> (<u>configurations</u>): taxinomiques, mérénymiques (...) • <u>opérations</u> assertion/négation (...) • <u>un modèle</u> <u>possible</u> carré sémiotique 	<p>SÉMANTIQUE FUNDAMENTALE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>épistémés</u> (univers culturels, sociaux, individuels, ...) • <u>axiologies</u> (stéréotypes, doxa, « loci »...) • « common ground » <hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • « rationalités » , visions scientifiques et techniques • normes, standards au sens technique du terme

			<p>-----</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>(putatifs) universaux</u> <u>experienciels</u> (human body, perception, ethological patterns, ecological and physical stabilities, ...)
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3) The Syntactic Component

- **first of all: a classification component**
- **classifies, for instance, the characteristics (the «properties ») of situations, objects, histories, ... which are identified and qualified in a cultural episteme, a (technical) norm, an (intersubjective) commun ground, ...**
- **the classification in the « standard » version of the GM (1979) is almost exclusively a taxonomic classification**
- **taxonomic classification: 2 prominent relations**

general - specific

similar - different

3.1) The taxonomic classification

widely used family of similar procedures :

- zoology and botany, lexicology,
- thematic thesauri,
- librarian classifications (cf. classification of Dewey),
- conceptual classifications (cf. von Wartburg & Hallig),
- philological classifications,
- folk classifications,
- ..

- classical (« Aristotelian ») procedures of definition (cf. « per genus proximum et differentiam specificam »),
- artificial intelligence (partially ordered hierarchies),

lexicology: Greimas' tradition

- 1. general term (lexeme) vs specialized term (lexeme):
hyperonym vs hyponym**
- 2. similar terms vs distinct terms: distinctiveness = gradual or
categorical (contrast/ contradiction)**

3.2) The semiotic square

- **semiotic square = classificational model based on these lexicological relationships**

1) similarity

2) gradual opposition (« contrast »)

3) categorial opposition (« contradiction »)

4) complementarity

5) generality/specificity

- **the « square » is only a representational facility**
- **another possibility to represent these relations is the use of a grid or a table**
- **moreover: new taxonomic relations can be defined**
- **example:**
 - **proximity relation between a set of gradually opposite terms**
 - **relations based on a proposition calculus**

Interpretation of Status and Function of the Semiotic Square

- **there are two different interpretations concerning the recognized relations that are represented by the so-called semiotic square:**

1st interpretation: the recognized relations constitute one type of configurations, i.e. taxonomic configurations, by the means of which one can systematize, for instance, the content of a document (or a corpus of documents)

2nd interpretation: the recognized relations are the basic relations (the canonical relations) which constitute the « ab quo » (the « bottom ») level of the discourse production.

the second interpretation is a purely dogmatic one for which there doesn't exist any empirical proof

but it is widespread in actual structural semiotics and implicitly shared by a high number of people working with the tools of structural semiotics

position of Greimas: highly ambiguous

- **sometimes: semiotic square is the «constitutive model» in the discourse production (2nd interpretation)**

- **sometimes: semiotic square is a «convenient», a «suitable» model» for the classification and categorisation of the content of a discourse, a document or a class of documents**

3.3) Critical review of the classification grid proposed in standard structural semiotics

1) the recognised relations represented by the semiotic square show the « lexicological » background of Greimas :

all recognised relations are prominent types in lexicology and lexical semantics (cf. also the former works of Greimas till “Structural Semantics” included)

2) the originally proposed set of taxonomic relations constitutes only a partial set of possible taxonomic relations (defined over, for instance, partial hierarchies and lattices)

3) given the high commitment to taxonomy, it is strange to state that there are extremely few taxonomic studies in structural semiotics

4) « classification » not only means « taxonomy », i.e. constitution of general and specialised, similar and (gradually or categorically) different topics or thematic configurations, and so.

5) There are other types of classification of the content of a document (text, discourse, ...):

- **qualitative (attributive) classification**
 - **classification by means of wholes and parts of a whole**
 - **functional classification**
 - **classification by means of spatial and temporal location**
 - **...**
- **In a qualitative classification will be specified the « attributes » that characterise positively some content (some topic).**

different types of « attributes »: perceptive ones, physical ones; emotional ones, cognitive ones and so on : an « attribute » is some « value » by the means of which a « cognitive agent » qualifies an object, a situation or some « history »

- **In a functional classification, a content is specified with respect to the roles, the agents and there doing, and so on (cf. the theory of semantic cases in linguistics, the actantial theory of Greimas)**

6) « Classification » has nothing to do with «fundamental » nor with « syntax » as defined in standard structural semiotics

3.4) Conclusion

The « fundamental syntax » Conclusion

- **priory a classification tool for the identification and classification of objects, situations, and so on of a « universe of discourse »**
- **privileges the taxonomic aspect of classification**
- **should be extended in order to cover other types of classification (qualitative, functional, spatio-temporal, ...)**
- **the semiotic square : visualisation of some prominent relations (especially in the lexicological tradition)**
- **it should be considered as a «suitable » tool for the taxonomic classification of objects, situations, ...**
- **it should not be considered as a kind of « deus ex machina » , as a « constitutive model » for the production of discourses**
- **it should not be considered as particular (« fundamental ») layer of a generative semiotic theory.**

4) The Fundamental Semantics

- in standard structural semiotics : once again a rather ambiguous status

Following Greimas, the « fundamental semantics » recovers :

sometimes: collectively shared (« cultural ») topics (« épistémés », « value systems », « codes » in the sense of Eco...)

sometimes: the supposed basic semantic categories of human language (« language ») such as « life/dead » and « nature/culture »

- first interpretation: is very similar to rather evident assumptions generally made in cultural anthropology, cognitive science, psychology or even specific fields in artificial intelligence (« artificial life ») :

the production of messages (discourses, ...) and their interpretation presupposes « knowledge » or « values » that are compatible with these messages otherwise no production nor (« good ») interpretation will be possible

- kind of « cultural competence »

- **Second interpretation: refers to actually studied problems in cognitive science (cf. the « embodiment of concepts, the pre-cognitive, experiential basis of conceptual and especially linguistic categories, ...)**
- **But in its « standard » formulation, the « fundamental semantics » of Greimas is too general, too « philosophical », doesn't really integrate the insights of other disciplines concerning the crucial semiotic problem of the constitution of a « symbolic - conceptual - level...**

Example:

Oppositions such as

 | « life/death » or
 | « nature/culture »

are only « labels or « names » but not descriptions or theories.

That is:

« behind » these labels are « hidden » cultural, historical , group specific, more or less fundamental (« anthropological ») assumptions and visions of « life » and « death », « nature » and « culture »

- **Such as, these categories can be used highly arbitrarily and they are used in a highly arbitrary sense - like the semiotic square.**

4.1) Common places and topoi

- **BACK TO THE FIRST INTERPRETATION OF “FUNDAMENTAL SEMANTICS”**

Example : « commonplaces »

- **topoi (commonplaces), in classical rhetoric, constitute kinds of « cultural » or more specialised knowledge or value system in which the speaker seeks a subset of themes which are particularly relevant for his purposes.**

- **cf. the « loci » in the Latin European Literature described and systematised by Curtius (« locus amoenus », « puer senex » « adunata » (« impossibilia »), ...)**

cultural references for the production of discourses as well as for the interpretation of messages

4.2) Cultural references

What are cultural references ?

Cultural references can be of very different kinds:

- encyclopaedic like or thematically limited references
- common references, references specific to particular groups
- specialised references (technical, scientific, political, economical, ...)
- historically ascertained references/ mythical references
- « fundamental » references which are not negociable within a cultural framework « (»human rights », « fundamental rights », ...)
- « private » vs « public « references
- ...

« Foundation » of different types of semiotics:

**cultural semiotics,
technical semiotics,
political semiotics,
semiotics of stereotypes,**

**foundational principle: what kind of reference a semiotic
is studying ...?**

4.3) Thematic configurations and standards

What are the characteristics of cultural references ?

- specific thematic configurations (topics) by the means of which a community qualifies (evaluates, describes, interprets or again compares) situations, objects, histories, but also texts and other intellectual constructions.
- « thematic configuration » is an expression of Husserl and Schütz and means, grosso modo, the creation and fixation of a frame or a framework (a « vision ») for practical or theoretical purposes
- components of a thematic configuration:
 - themes (« semes »,)
 - thematic relations (i.e. relations between themes)
 - referents (i.e. the « objects », « situations », « histories », ... to which refers a theme or thematic configuration)
 - a « contexte » (of validity)
 - finally: a theme = condensed thematic configuration (i.e. a theme can be unfolded in a configuration)

- **thematic configuration : compare with script, template, schema, « conceptual model », ...**
- **a thematic configuration is submitted to the 3 principles:**

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) classificational principle2) functional or narrative principle3) statutory or contractual principle |
|---|

1) classificational principle

- **a thematic configuration identifies and categorizes (« qualifies ») situations, objets, histories, intellectual constructions, and so on**
- **a thematic configuration itself can be classified with respect to other thematic configurations**

II) functional or narrative principle

- a thematic configuration is a strategy, a procedure, a plan for solving a set of (informational, cognitive, ...) problems or objectives
- i.e. a cultural reference is a « standardized » (more or less complex, more or less adaptable) solution for a class of problems (cognitive, practical, communicational, ...)

III) contractual or statutory principle

- it is a « standard » : « norm », « law », « convenances », « habitudes », ... which has a « contractual » (« communitarian ») value
- but is fallible, it is controverse, normally negociable, more or less valide; there are different, concurrent references, standards, « normes », ...:

5) Relationships between “fundamental” syntax and “fundamental semantics”

- **in fact fundamental syntax : a set of general classification grids or configurations which are used in order to produce specialised configurations attuned to a domain, a period, a community, cultural references (more or less specific, more or less ...)**
- **in this sense: not a distinction between syntax and semantics (this is another tradition)**

main distinction is between :

- **general configurations and specialised ones**
- **general plans, procedures, strategies and procedures, strategies attuned to a particular context, a particular type of situations, a given community of actors, ...**

this distinction is a gradual one (more or less general, more or less specialised):

example:

- **general taxonomic configurations**
- **taxonomic configurations restricted to zoological objects**
- **taxonomic configurations restricted to economical situations**
- **...**

6) The semio-narrative surface level

<p>niveau de surface</p>	<p>SYNTAXE NARRATIVE DE SURFACE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>un modèle possible</u>: grammaire narrative • <u>composants du modèle</u> types d'énoncés • <u>configurations basiques</u> (simples, canoniques, ...) • <u>configurations plus ou moins complexes</u> (formes narratives; genres) 	<p>SÉMANTIQUE NARRATIVE</p> <p>= « <u>actualisation</u> » de thèmes, topiques dans un discours, une classe de discours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>choix</u> d'un/de plusieurs épistémés (topiques, lieux, ...) disponibles • <u>selection</u> de traits thématiques pertinents
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7) The narrative syntax

Presentation

Following Greimas narrative syntax is essentially constituted by

- types of « utterances » (« énoncés ») that correspond to what has been called, in another terminology, « propositions »

(cf. van Dijk & Kintsch, de Beaugrande, the so-called « story grammars », ...)

- operations and relations of « concatenation » between utterances in order to form a particular narrative type (a generic, more or less specialised type of narrative discourses such as, for instance,:

- the type « fairy tale »,
- the type « soap opera »,
- the type « western »,
- the type « legend »
- the type « biography »
- ...)

7.1) The narrative utterance

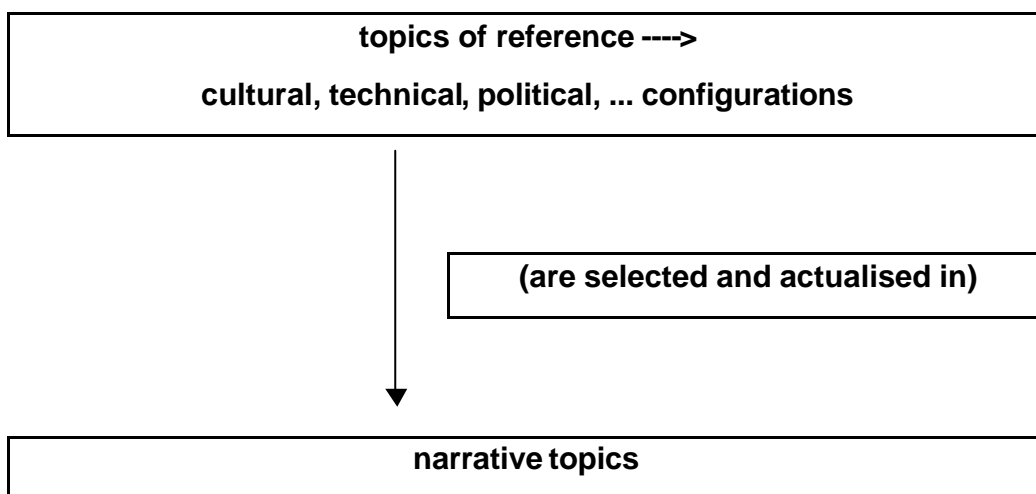
An utterance is composed by :

- **a topic (a « content ») which can be more or less specific or, contrarily, more or less general**
- **a contexte of validity (a context of utterance »)**
- **A topic is a thematic configuration, called sometimes, in structural semantics, a « semem .**
- **As already shown, a thematic configuration is composed by themes, thematic relations, referents and, recursively, other thematic configurations.**

7.2) The narrative topic

Difference between :

- a « narrative topic » and
- a cultural, stereotypical , technical, .. configuration that constitutes the reference of a narrative topic
- the narrative topic is selected and actualised in a (class of) discourse(s)
- the cultural reference constitutes the « vision » or again the « value system » out of (« behind ») the aforementioned discourses



Example:

- a fairy tale, a (science fiction) story, a legend or again a fable (with animals)
- develop narrative micro- and macro-propositions (utterances)
- that are framed by cultural references or stereotypes (« maximes ») by the means of which the « rationality » and the behaviour of all protagonists can be described and explained - not only of the human protagonists, but also of animals, mythical beings, and so on.

7.3) The narrative utterance (continued)

The narrative utterance (short characterisation) continued)

Types of narrative utterances

notion « narrative » in a general sense (in the sense of « relating » a history, ...)

- **narrative utterances as rhetoric acts »**

qualification

the description

the narration

the interpretation

the comparision

the explanation

the prescription

the discussion

- **narrative utterances as a genre**

simple narrative forms

literary forms (novel, biography, account, testimony, portrait, ...)

journalistic forms (éditorial, report, investigation, feature, ...)

new media forms (television news, soap opera, cult movies, action movies, detective film, ...)

genre: « complexe utterance » (or again, an « unfolded utterance »)

7.4) From the narrative utterance to the scenario

From the Narrative Utterance to the Scenario

- **utterance: status and function in a «scenario » (cf. a scenario in the dramatic arts or for the specification of a film)**

1) functional composition of a scenario

cf. typical narrative scenarios (fairy tales, western, sitcom, ...)

preparation
exposition (development)/complication
plot
resolution
moral
(digression, secondary plots, ...)

2) structural/classificational composition of a scenario

(example) : the function « preparation » is composed by

U1: « the arrival of the bad men in a little middle-class city far from other cities»

U2 « the murder of some brave citizens (a boy, a girl, ...) by the bad men »

U3 « the hold-up of a bank »

U4...

3) simplification/complexification of a narrative utterance

- the structure of narrative utterance can be more less simplified or, contrarily, more or less complex:
- the narrative utterance « hold up of a bank » :

1. either: a simple succession of principal actions

2. or: the principal actions mixed with secondary actions, secondary plots, accounts, asides, ...)

4) condensation/amplification

- **the expression of a narrative utterance can often be condensed in a single phrase or amplified (« expanded ») in a whole story**

5) Terminological questions:

utterance = scene, script, documentary unit

6) The scenario as a narrative utterance

Specification of a narrative utterance:

- **structural specification**

- thematic (topics)

- expression

- document model

- support

- **functional specification**

- principal purpose ?

- secondary purpose ?

- ...

- **statutory « contractual specification**

- controversal/concurrent

- negociable/ »fundamental »

- default/specified

- ...

8) The narrative grammar of Greimas

? the central notion :

narrative utterance (cf. our explications given above)

? at least two stages in the construction of the narrative grammar:

- 1st stage: based on a re-analysis of Propp's study of Russian fairy-tales

constitution of :

1. a « library » of basic functionally and thematically defined utterances,
2. classification of these utterances
3. identification of the principal types of actors

« library » of utterances :

- « violation of a contract »,
- « hero's travelling »,
- « struggle »,
- « abduction of the young maid », ...

classification of the identified utterances:

taxonomic classification (similarity, opposition, complementarity, ...)

identification of the principal types of actors (roles, actants)

participating in the actions represented by the different utterances:

subject (hero), false subject, object, false object, helper, ...

? by the means of this grammar: analysis and description of different types of narrative discourses belonging :

- **not only to the traditional (« oral ») literature**
- **but also to the heritage of modern western literature**
- **as well as to the « socio-literature » (i.e. trivial literature)**

? tentative description of non-narrative discourses:

- **juridical discourses,**
- **scientific, discourses,**
- **pedagogical discourses,**
- **non-verbal discourses,**

...

2nd stage: abstraction and generalization of the first version of narrative grammar

? different « influences »: discourse analysis and lexical semantics, logical analysis of language (logic of change and action, modal logic, ...), generative semantics, ...

Identification of :

- 1. canonical types of utterances and classification**
- 2. canonical combinaisons (« syntagmas ») of utterances**
- 3. canonical roles thematized in the identified types of utterances**

8.1) Canonical and derived types of narrative utterances

1. Three canonical types of utterances:

1. utterances of doing (« dynamic utterances »)
2. utterances of being (« static utterances »)
3. modal utterances (prescriptive utterances, intentional utterances, cognitive and potestive utterances)

? classification by taxonomic means (the semiotic square)

Note:

? radical generalization that tries to join narratological problems with lexico-semantical and logical ones

2. Canonical Combinaisons

EXAMPLES:

1) Narrative programme:

the being is the result of one or several doings (actions)

2) Performance

the doing (or being) presupposes a competence (cognitive or potestive utterances)

3) Competence

the ability or competence to do something or to be something presupposes an intention (a « desire », an « internal motivation ») or an obligation (an « external motivation »)

4) Intention

the desire or obligation to do or to be something presupposes a lack or a need (an « initial disequilibrium »)

5) Consensus

the intention to do something by one actor is compatible (not contradictory) with the intention to something by another actor

6) Controversy

the inverse of (5)

7) Exchange

the transferring of an object O1 from actor 1 to actor 2 is correlated to the transferring of an object O2 from actor 2 to actor1

8) Manipulation

the doing D of an actor 1 is the consequence of a previous (cognitive or other) doing of an actor 2 who wants that actor 1 does D

9) Sanction

the doing of of an actor 1 is evaluated (interpreted,...) by an actor 2

10) etc.

1 - 9:

general and generic « bricks » of which, as structural semiotics supposes, are made the scenarios of all types of narrative (and non-narrative) discourses

? cf. « meaning postulates » in generative semantics and general « scripts » or « frames » in artificial intelligence;

? cf. also « collective intelligence », « artificial social systems » (Castelfranchi et al)

? generalization beyond the universe of discourses :

interpretation of social practices, collective and institutional activities, historical changes, ... (interpreted as non-verbal discourses).

? this « new » and much more general narrative grammar sticks to a more ambitious interpretation of «narrativity » (i.e. narrativity as a principle underlying discourse production and interpretation, cf. below).

8.2) A new picture of narrative grammar

New picture:

1. general narrative grammar (to which belong bricks 1 to 9) :
scenario of narrativity
2. specific narrative grammars: narrative scenarios (western, soap opera, legend, fairy tell, ...), non-narrative scenarios (instructions, portraits, inquiries, reports, ...), mixed scenarios, ...
3. classes of narrative and non-narrative, verbal and non-verbal discourses

Important:

? there doesn't exist any direct descriptive relationship between a concrete (class of discourse(s) and the general narrative grammar,

? the object of the general narrative grammar (scenario) : specific narrative grammars (scenarios)

? frequent confusion of these levels in actual structural semiotic works and studies (i.e. the « direct » application of notions such as « competence », « narrative programme », « sanction », to concrete discourses, ...doesn't work)

Problem: the specification of the generic and general « bricks » in order to obtain, for instance, the narrative utterances of a scenario of a particular class of narrative (or non-narrative) discourses.

Example:

1) Problem

groups of specific narrative utterances constitute a functional and thematic sequence (a narrative « macro-utterance »):

the chase of the bad men by the good ones

the (direct) confrontation of the bad men by the good ones

the fight between the two parties

the killing of one good man

the slaughter of the bad men by the good men

2) Question

how to reconstruct them via a general narrative grammar ?

3) Possible Solution

1) chose one (or several generic « bricks »):

chose brick « controversy »

2) chose one or several classification relationships in order to unfold the brick (the bricks)

unfolding of « controversy » with the help of the succession of several action phases

3) select from the cultural reference topics (from the « library » of pre-existing specialised thematic configurations) these topics that should be thematised in the group of narrative utterances

4) construct the above mentioned narrative utterances

This example shows clearly the « tasks » of the following components and layers in the production of a discourse (a class of discourses):

- **fundamental layer (classification component + thematic standard component)**
- **narrative layer (narrative grammar component + actualised topic component)**

A given narrative utterance (a given narrative scenario) is characterised :

? a set of classificational features

? a set of presupposed, (culturally, historically, technically, ...) fixed themes

? a subset of selected and actualised themes (the « narrative topic »)

? a specific set of (« cognitive ») tasks that is has to fulfil with respect to a given information objective

8.3) Remarks on terminology

The Semiotic Terminology

- **The terminology used in structural semiotics is highly metaphoric and not really clear:**

? no « **generativity** » at all »

? no « **syntax** » and no « **semantics** »

? no various levels of « **depth** »

- **This is the epistemological baggage of Greimas (glossematics, generative grammar, logical positivism, ...) which is, moreover, not really consistent (logical positivism + phenomenology, narratology + generative grammar + phenomenology, ...)**

- **The terminology has to be changed. In any way, it is not really used and if, it is used, generally, with other meanings ...**

8.4) Interpretations of the status of narrative syntax

Interpretation: once more, ambiguous status of the so-called « narrative syntax »

1st interpretation:

The narrative syntax refers to a specific class of discourses - narrative discourses - of which it is supposed to produce several scenarios - several generic and more or less specialised types of narratives (cf. « myth », « fairy tale », « science fiction story », historical narrative », « legend », « saga », « biography », « life story », « soap opera », « sitcom » ...)

- **Typical narrative structures :**

studies of Propp, Meletinski, ...

studies of Jolles (« simple narrative forms »: legend, saga, myth, ...)

2nd interpretation:

The narrative syntax constitutes - with the narrative semantics - a more general principle (« narrative principle », « narrativity ») that underlies the production and interpretation of all sorts of discourses and not only of narrative ones, such as, for instance, persuasive discourses, didactic or pedagogical discourses, scientific discourses, philosophical discourses and so on.

- « Narrativity » = « problem solving »:

The « reason » of a discourse is, basically, to give an answer to a (presupposed) question.

- « question » = problem (« information objectif »)
- « discourse » = supposed solution (more or less adequate, more or less convincing, ...)
- structure of narrative discourses (fairy tales, histories, soap operas, ...) = particular structure of the more general structure of narrativity

- **(Tentative) characterization of the structure of narrativity**

initial qualification: problem (initial disequilibrium) -

choice of plans/construction of plans -

execution of plans («actions ») -

confrontation with obstacles -

intermediate qualification -

(correction, abandon, continuation)

final qualification : solution of the problem (final equilibrium)

Model of the « narrative schema » of Greimas

1. semiotics of manipulation (--> initial qualification)

2. semiotics of sanction (--> final qualification)

3. semiotics of action (↔ sequences between the initial and final qualification)

? The model of the narrative schema constitutes the principal configuration in which the generic and general « bricks » of the « new » narrative grammar are positioned.

3rd Interpretation:

- **The generative model describes the « emergence » of meaning in general:**

- **the fundamental syntax and semantics is to be considered**

either as a kind of a logico-mathematical « axiomatics » of the elementary structures of meaning

(--> glossematics; tradition of formal and symbolic logics)

or as a kind of pre-symbolic, pre-semiotic level on which the conditions of the production or emergence of meaning are (biologically, emotionally or otherwise) determined

(--> genetic tradition)

- **The narrative syntax constitutes, with narrative semantics, the « anthropomorphic level » of the generative model of discourse production and/or interpretation.**

- **This third interpretation concerns totally different problems as the first and the second one.**

9) The semiotic scenario

Summary

- **structure of a type of documents (= generic document)**
- **culturally highly salient scenarios (cf. supra: soap opera, western, legend, saga, ...)**
- **but: scenario : necessary for all types of documents, no matter the physical support**
- **pre-existing scenarios vs scenarios that are newly constructed out of parts of already existing scenarios**
- **scenario (like the concrete document): outer and inner side**

classification specification
functional specification,
statutory specification

- **scenario - inner complexity: local scenarios and global scenario**

the « inner side » of a scenario:

- 1. what kinds of topics, which codes and languages of expression, what kind of « document model » (or storyboard), on which support**

- 2. which function and task in the scenario (cf. the narrative forms discussed before)**

- 3. which status: « default topics », « default codes and models », « specialised topics », « fundamental topics », « controverse topics », ...**

10) The narrative semantics

- **Concerns especially the selection and actualisation of specific thematic configurations in a discourse (text) or in a class of discourses (« texts »)**
- **Another term : « narrative topic » or again « semem » in the sens of U. Eco**

Types of narrative topics

- * **culturally highly significant (« motives » that are shared by narratives in different cultures in periods)**
- * **less significant topics (which are nevertheless important for the preparation, development and solution of a narrative plot, cf. Barthes)**
- * **highly general but culturally significant topics (« morals », « moral maxims »)**
- * **traditional topics vs « modern » topics**
- * **historically implanted topics vs legendary topics**

10.1) Functional specification of a narrative topic

place of a selected and actualised topic in a narrative utterance or scenario

- **preparatory topic**
- **qualifying topic**
- **decisive topic**
- **glorifying topic**
- **digressive topic**
- **secondary topic**

10.2) Scenarios and narrative topics

- 1. distinction between topics and scenarios is a relative one:**
- 2. highly specialised scenarios that works only for few topics**
- 3. a topic itself possess a structure that is compatible only with these scenarios that possess the same or a similar structure**
- 4. presence of the three principles**
- 5. - « division of labour »: scenario (narrative form) : general plan that can be adapted to a more or less important variety of problems (a kind auf « (Satz-)Bauplan »; a kind of a programme in the sense of Greimas but also in the sense of biologists like Lorenz)**
- 6. topic : accomodation of a general plan to particular situations, objects, events, histories, ...**

11) The Syntax of a Discourse

Presentation of the « standard » form of discursive syntax

Following Greimas & Courtés : the discursive syntax -

- **uttering: production of an utterance (or, more generally, a discourse) by an instance called « subject of utterance »**
- **subject of utterance: role that takes in charge the produced utterance (is responsible of ...)**
- **process of uttering: different important types of strategies such as the following ones:**

11.1) Discursive “worlds”

creation of an « intersubjective space » between the subject of utterance and the destinee

(cf. the notion of « proximity »)

creation of a doxastic, collective space (« opinion ») by the means of the quotation of different sources (different other subjects that are responsible of what is communicated by the utterance or discourse), the introduction of (eye-)witnesses, arbitrators, and the public

(cf. the notion of « stasis » in ancient rhetoric)

creation of a pretence of objectivity (or, contrarily, subjectivity) of what is expressed and communicated in the utterance,

creation of discursive « worlds » (actors, periods, regions, ..) which can be considered to be real, potential, possible, contrafactual, desired, feared, and so on

etc.

EXAMPLE: the principal plot of a take over (« OPA ») of some company by another one :

can be uttered

**by the subject of utterance (i.e. the author of the article) itself,
by some other subject that is quoted by the subject of
utterance**

**—> thematic type of the subject: anonymous, « good informed
source », « specialist », ...**

**—> relation of « consultation » (Grunig & Grunig): neutral
quotation, distance, suspicion, credulity, ...**

the process of utterance can produce:

**a « neutral » distance between the subject of the utterance (the
« journalist ») and the destinee (« the reader »): the take over is
related**

**an « intimacy » between the quoted subjects: the journalist and
the reader are in a kind of « confidentiality »**

**an « objectivity »: the take over is presented in all details which
are taken in charge by specialists or of which are quoted different
testimonies, and so on**

**a « feared possible world »: the take over is related with all
details but its realisation is evaluated negatively**

etc.

11.2) Uttering and discourse production/interpretation

- In the sense of Greimas, the uttering creates the « bridge » between the narrative structures and the discursive structures

The production of a text (latu sensu) is based on:

- 1) the selection of a (narrative) scenario (« narrative » latu sensu)
 - 2) the actualisation of one or more topics
 - 3) the staging of the actualised topics with respect to the selected scenario
-
- In Greimas' sense, the uttering is the operation of « staging » of an actualised topics which leads to the realisation of a text (latu sensu, including non-verbal texts).

Preference for the notion of « stage » (« mise en scène » in French) or again « composition »

Refers to the poetical tradition of the « fabrication » of a discourse that presupposes different types of operations

Refers also to the theatre and the cinema which constitute maybe a better reference than linguistics ...

11.3) Typical procedures in discourse staging

1) Topical Framing

- use of a scope in order to develop an actualised topics
- analogy to the cinema and television

Example:

1. the chase of the bad men can be shown « plein cadre » and/or
2. the tack over of a company can be developed as a « whole » or only with respect to some particularly important parts of the operation
3. the biography of some personality can put in its scope a particular life phase (the « adolescence », ...) or the social relationships (but leave out other, characteristic features of a biography)

2) Topical Orchestration

- from which viewpoint an actualised topic will be developed ?
- qualification (interpretation, comparision, evaluation, ...) of a topic by an « orchestra » of actors

Exemple:

1. the chase of the bad men can be seen from the point of view of the hunter, of the person that is hunted, of a third person of the spectator of the film, ...
2. the take over of a company can be « viewed » from the point of view of the shareholders of the company, from the point of view of the staff of the company, from the point of view of an financial expert, from the point of view of the consumer, ...
3. the biography of a personality can describe and evaluate his/her public life from the point of view of intimate friends, of the family, of the supporters, of the opponents, of the journalist, ...

- Each point of view can be evaluated by the subject of uttering who becomes a real « conductor » of an orchestra of roles by the means of which an actualised topic is staged.

3) Topical Composition (« Montage »)

- **combination of a given topic with another (other) one(s)**

- **technics of combination (in analogy with the cinema): alternation, progressive introduction, dissemination, ...**

Example:

- 1. the chase of the bad man can be composed with another topics that motivates more particularly the chase: the good man remember the harms that the ba men has caused his family; the bad man hopes to reach in time an old farm where he could take the farmers in hostage, ...**

- 2. the take over of a company can be composed with the topics of the evolution of the economic sector; it can be composed with the raise of unemployment; it can be composed with the international evolution of financial markets, ...**

- 3. the public life of a personality can be composed, in a biography, with his personal ambitions, with the public life of other personalities, with the life of « normal » people, ...**

4) Topical Amplification

- some selected theme is developed in a more detailed way than another theme
- a selected theme will be repeated such as or with some thematic variations
- a selected theme will be repeatedly treated with variations in tone

Example:

1. the repeated showing of a chase with the progressive reduction of the distance between the hunter and the persons that are hunted
2. the repeated mention of the amount of the shares of the company to be taken over with its viewing from different point of views where every new point of view emphasises the substantial profit for some few people ...
3. the repeated mention of some particular (« problematic ») relationship between a personality an another (« critical ») one and a progressive and more and more explicit moralisation of this relationship by the « author ».

5) Topical Sequencing

- the progressive introduction of the selected and staged themes and topics in the form of sequences (of thematically motivated sequences)
- what comes first, what follows and what concludes a discourse ?
- sequencing following specific « maxims » or « plans »

maxim of relevance (the most important first)

maxim of spatial proximity (the nearest first ...)

maxim of eye/camera travelling (the left first ...)

maxim of temporal succession (the most ancient first ...)

maxim of the cognitive effort (the easiest first ...)

etc.

- cf. in rhetoric the notion « ordo naturalis » vs « ordo artificialis »

Example:

- develop the chase of the bad men in starting with the happy end, followed by a chronological relation in showing the « golden fire » at the end
- develop the take over of a company in starting with the most relevant informations concerning your destinee, followed by a chronological relation of this action

12) The discursive semantics

- in the sense of Greimas: thematisation and figurativisation

« generative » conception of meaning production:

- 1) fundamental categories
- 2) narrative topics
- 3) thematisation of a narrative topic
- 4) figurativisation of a thematised narrative topic.

Example:

- fundamental category:

« survival » of a species

- narrative topic :

narrative programme of « capture » (a subject S1 captures another subject S2)

- thematization of the narrative topic: fishing

S1 : fisherman

S2 : fish

programme (action): fishing

- figurativization : a villager catches with his hands a trout in the river

S1 : villager

S2 : trout

programme: catching with the hand

localisation: river

- **This conception doesn't work.**
- **Hypothetically, the survival can be considered as a general and fundamental value of all species (= fundamental reference value)**
- **The capture is one general strategy, one general plan for preserving the value survival (there are other plans, ...)**
- **The fishing is a specialisation of the capture plan**
- **The catching of a trout is again a specialisation of the fishing plan.**

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• So, the only relation between these examples (in neglecting the « survival » value): taxonomic relation of specialisation (specification).

- **But there doesn't exist any operation of selection and actualisation (as far as the narrative topic is concerned) nor of staging (as far as the discursive topics are concerned ...)**
- **cf. the criticism of Rastier**

- **Discursive Semantics: configurations (« figures ») as a result of the staging operation: discursive configurations**

- **sequencing :**

- **discursive memory, discursive expectation;**
- **anaphore and cataphore**

- **composition (« montage »):**

- **metaphor, metonymie, emphase, « allegory », « exemplum »...**

- **orchestration:**

- **quotation, copy, plagiarism,**
- **discursive polyphony (« polylogues »)**

- **amplification:**

- **quasi-musical figures such as « crescendo », « diminuendo », « piano », « forte », ...**
- **discursive rythme and tempo**
- **« dramatisation »**

13) Textualisation

1) Realisation of a (linear) storyboard (a set of linear storyboards) that is conform to the scenario

2) Adaptation/Modification of the expression code types and of the document model type in order to produce a concrete version of a generic document