

VOICEOVER NARRATION AS FOCALIZATION ON CHARACTERISTIC OF WADE WATTS ON “READY PLAYER ONE” MOVIE

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze focalization using Wade Watts' voiceover in film “Ready Player One” (2018), understand how voiceover can shape Wade Watts' internal focalization as a means of developing Wade Watts' characteristics. The theory used is the concept of focalization explained by Peter Verstraten in his book *Film Narratology* (2009), which discusses how narrative perspective can influence the way the audience understands characters and plot. The descriptive qualitative approach was used in this research aims to analysis Wade Watts' voiceover. The results show at the beginning of the story, Wade is depicted as a passive figure who escapes from stressing reality and prefers the perfect virtual world of the OASIS as a place to find freedom and identity. As the story went by, through the Halliday puzzle, his conflict with IOI, and his connection with Art3mis and his friends, he begins to understand that the OASIS is not just an escape, but also a responsibility. With regard to Halliday, his choice to shut down the OASIS on some days shows that he has come to understand the value of reality. Based on the results of analysis internal focalization through Wade Watts' voiceover in Ready Player One, it can be concluded that the use of this technique plays an important role in shaping Wade's character and emotional development.

Keywords: *focalization, narratology, characteristic, film, voiceover*

INTRODUCTION

The film “Ready Player One” (2018) is a Hollywood science fiction film directed by Steven Spielberg. This film is adapted from the famous novel of the same name written by Ernest Cline. Spielberg's title won various awards, including being nominated for the Academy Awards or Oscars in the Best Achievement in Visual Effects category. As we all know, the Oscars are the most prestigious awards in the world of cinema. Even though this film didn't win this category, this nomination is still proof the quality of this film, especially in visual effects.

Besides being famous as a film that have stunning visuals, “Ready Player One” also presents an interesting storyline to be analyzed from a narrative perspective. This film follows the journey of the main character, Wade Watts whose struggling faces various difficult conflicts to find his identity and purpose in life. Therefore, this film is interesting for further research, especially in analyzing the main character's point of view in shaping his character using focalization theory.

Focalization refers to the point of view from which the story is told, which in this case serves to introduce and deepen Wade's character (Verstraten, 2009). Through the voiceover used in the film, the audience is given direct access to Wade's thoughts and feelings, allowing to understand the emotional and psychological dynamics underlying Wade's actions. The theoretical points of view are crucial for analyzing film narratives. The film's dramatic plot revolves around the interactions between characters and the storyteller (Prajahita, 2022).

In this film, the focalization is often internal, with Wade telling his point of views of the depressing real world and his freedom found in the virtual world named OASIS. This is so close for creating an emotional between the audience and the main character. According to Verstraten (2009) the viewer only learns what a specific character known since the story is told from that character's point of view that is exactly internal focalization is.

Furthermore, as the plot progresses, focalization adds mystery and tension by revealing more facts than Wade is aware of. Filmmakers and movie enthusiast frequently focus purely on visual aspects while producing movies, despite the fact that audio components are also crucial in assisting the portrayal of the feelings and ideas the movie wishes to get over (Kuba & Prasetya, 2021).

The voiceover used as a focalization technique in the film “Ready Player One” not only enriches the narrative but also helps develop Wade Watts character, depicting his struggle to find identity and purpose in life in a world torn between reality and the virtual world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peter Verstraten in Film Narratology (2009) explains that focalization is the point of view that determines how information in the narrative is delivered to the audience. In film, focalization is determined not only by visuals but also by other cinematic elements, such as voiceover, which allow the audience to understand a character's perspective deeper.

In “Ready Player One” (2018) by Stephen Spielberg, Wade Watts's voiceover is a crucial element in shaping his character and personal journey. From the first minutes of film, Wade introduces the virtual world of the OASIS through his narration, providing direct insight into his feelings, thoughts, and motivations. This voiceover creates internal focalization, where the audience see the world through Wade's point of view.

Through this method, the film depicts Wade's quest to who he is and the meaning of purpose in his life. At first, he just wants to escape from his stressing reality, but as the stories goes on, he begins to

realize and understand the meaning of bravery, friendship, and responsibility. Voiceover-based focalization makes him a dynamic and accessible hero by allowing the audience to experience his emotional journey in addition to following the action.

METHODOLOGY

This research examines focalization in the development of Wade Watts' traits in the movie Ready Player One using qualitative methods. Research using qualitative approaches aims to comprehend social phenomena by closely examining non-numerical data (Creswell, 1998). According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), qualitative approaches generate descriptive data from the people being watched in the form of written and spoken words, enabling researchers to delve deeper into context and meaning.

The voiceover narrative by Wade Watts from the movie "Ready Player One" serves as the data analysis for this research. By giving the main character's direct perspective on the world around him and his quest to discover who he is and what his objective in life is, the voiceover serves as a type of internal focalization. Researchers can describe how Wade Watts' point of view shapes his personality, including his motives, fears, and development throughout the story, through analyzing his narrative.

Through this approach, the research aims to highlight the significance of narrative approaches in character development in films and comprehend how focalization communicated through voiceover can deepen the emotional bond between characters and audience.

DISCUSSION

Focalization is a key factor in deciding how information is expressed to the audience in film narratology research. According to Peter Verstraten's explanation in Film Narratology (2009), focalization is a narrative point of view that establishes whose viewpoint controls the film's narrative. Films employ a variety of cinematic approaches, including camera angles, lighting, and editing, to express a certain point of view, in contrast to literature, which depends on spoken narration. Aside from that, one of the main approaches for developing focalization is the use of voiceover narration, particularly in films that aim to directly portray the point of view of the characters.

There are three primary categories of focalization in films: external internal, and zero focalization. External focalization only shows events without accessing the character's thoughts, while zero focalization does not attach the narrative to a specific character's point of view. Internal focalization, on the other hand, allows the audience to comprehend the story world from the perspective of a specific character by restricting the information they are given. Voiceover is a frequently employed approach in internal focalization, in which the character describes the events they encounter directly.

Wade Watts, the protagonist in "Ready Player One", uses internal focalization through voiceover, which he provides from the early minutes, introducing the audience to the virtual world called OASIS and his personal life. By doing this, the audience is able to directly access Wade's thoughts, feelings, and motivations, building a relationship between the character and the audience and making it possible the film to more fully express Wade's journey of self-discovery and life purpose.

Wade Watts as the main character experiences significant development throughout the film. At the first he just a teenager who just wants to escape from his stressing life into the virtual world to becoming a responsible leader. Wade Watts's voiceover narration not only functions as an exposition tool, but also as a personal reflection on the conflicts and quest he faces. Through internal focalization, the film portrays how Wade sees the world around him, his social relationship, and the emotional changes he experienced.

Therefore, this discussion is going to take at how Wade Watts' narration influences his character in the film "Ready Player One". The main focus is on how this approach portrays Wade's character development as he discovers his identity and purpose in life. Analyzing the focalization in this film reveals how the narrative perspective provides to character development and the audience's emotional connection with the protagonist.

Internal Focalization

In this discussion, we will examine the data collected by researchers to determine how focalization influences Wade Watts' characteristics.

"These days, reality is a bummer. Everyone is looking for a way to escape. That's why Halliday, that's why he was such a hero to us. He showed us that we could go somewhere without going anywhere."

Focalization: Through this narrative, Wade describes the reality of the real world as bleak ("*reality is a bummer*"), as well as how society, including himself, uses the OASIS as an escape. With this voiceover, the film limits the audience's perspective to how Wade sees the world, creating a deeper emotional connection between the character and the audience.

Characteristic: Wade considers the virtual world as an escape since he sees the real world as being full of limitations. James Halliday is a hero in Wade's perspective because he made it possible for people like him to "*go somewhere without going anywhere*." This shows Wade's perception of the OASIS as a place that offers freedom and purpose rather than just a game. At this point, Wade still relies heavily on the virtual world to find happiness and meaning in his life.

"It's a place where the limits of reality are your imagination. You can do anything. Go anywhere. Like the vacation planet, Surf a 50 foot monster wave in Hawaii...You can ski down the pyramids...You can climb Mount Everest...with Batman."

Focalization: Wade builds the audience's personal connection with the characters by interpreting the virtual world as something more interesting than reality through this narration.

Characteristic: Wade uses a tone of excitement and amazement when describing the OASIS. At this scene, he still has an emotional connection to this virtual world, as evidenced by his perception of it as a place where everything is possible.

"But they stay because of all the things they can be. Tall, beautiful, scary, and different sex... a different species, live action, cartoon. It's all your call."

Focalization: Wade's interpretation of this narration allows the viewer to witness how he views the OASIS as an infinite realm where anyone can be anything.

Characteristic: Wade highlights that the virtual world allows a person to create an ideal version of himself by noting numerous forms of identification in the OASIS, such as tall, attractive, terrifying, different genders, and even different species, expressing his openness to the idea of diversity.

"Those were key. Halliday made sure the OASIS was littered with enough randomly powerful stuff... that anyone could win it if they had the skills."

Focalization: Through this voiceover, the audience sees that Wade believes in Halliday's concept of justice—that anyone has a chance to win if they are skilled enough.

Characteristic: Wade expressed confidence in his ability to win the game. This indicates that he has a spirit of competition and thinks skill and hard work are more significant than status or luck.

*"They (IOI) have a support team made up of Halliday's scholars. Like me, they spend all their time studying pop culture... that Halliday was obsessed with. Trying to find clues to solve the contest. They were just following the orders of the head of the IOI... this d*ck we named Nolan Sorrento."*

Focalization: In this voiceover, Wade Watts expresses his honest perspective on IOI and how they carry out their strategy in the OASIS. Through this narrative, the audience sees the world from Wade's perspective, including how he compares himself to the IOI researchers and his attitude towards Nolan Sorrento.

Characteristic: By referring to Sorrento as *"this d*ck,"* Wade expresses his skepticism and hatred toward IOI, whom he believes is not being fair. This reflects his rebellious attitude toward the ruling authorities' attempts to control the OASIS.

"Why is that line sticking in my head? Maybe because Art3mis said it, and she's hot. Maybe it's because she called me out. Sitting in here my tiny corner of nowhere... protecting my small slice of nothing. Or maybe... Maybe it's because that line means something. And I missed it."

Focalization: The narrative displays Wade's reflective thought. He thought about what Art3mis had said, trying to figure out why those statements had affected him so much.

Characteristic: Wade starts to question his own thinking, showing that he is developing as a more reflective character. He realized that there was something deeper than just games and competitions that Halliday's words had a deeper meaning. Also in this scene, the voiceover narration leads audience knows that Wade shows interest in Art3mis, both intellectually and romantically.

"The HIGH FIVE took over the OASIS... and the first thing we did was... sign Ogden Morrow to a non-exclusive consultancy. The salary per his demand... was 25 cents, and one quarter."

"With his guidance, our second move was to...ban any Loyalty Centers from accessing the OASIS. IOI had no choice. They shut 'em all down."

"The third thing we did wasn't as popular. We close the OASIS on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I know it sounds like a weird move, but...People need to spend more time in the real world. Because like Halliday said: Reality is the only thing...that's real."

Focalization: Wade Watts clearly reveals the decisions made by the “High Five” after they took over the OASIS. This focalization allows the audience to understand their thoughts, values, and how they see the changes they make to the virtual world.

Characteristic: Through the three narrations above, now Wade is no longer just a player or clue seeker (Gunter), but he is now a leader in shaping the future of the OASIS. His decision to contract Ogden Morrow as a consultant shows that he understands the importance of guidance from someone whose experience and values align with Halliday's. Also at this point, after his decision to close the OASIS on Tuesday and Thursday shows character development Wade finally understands Halliday's main message that reality is the only thing that real in this world.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the analysis of internal focalization through Wade Watts' voiceover in Ready Player One, it can be concluded that the use of this technique plays an important role in shaping Wade's character and emotional development. At the beginning of the story, Wade is depicted as a figure who escapes reality and prefers the virtual world of the OASIS as a place to find freedom and identity. However, as the story went by, his perspective began to change. He begins to understand that the OASIS is not just an escape, but also a responsibility.

Wade's transformation from a passive individual to a responsible leader is demonstrated by his path through the Halliday puzzle, his conflict with IOI, and his connection with Art3mis and his friends. With regard to Halliday, his choice to shut down the OASIS on some days shows that he has come to understand the value of reality.

The focalization analysis can be expanded by exploring how other cinematic elements, such as lighting, music, and camera angles, support changes in Wade Watts' character. Apart from that, research can also compare the use of voiceover in other film adaptations based on novels to see its effectiveness in building character.

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