



Internal structure of oral narrative in Arabic

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Abstract

This qualitative study aims at exploring the internal structure of personal experience oral narrative in Arabic in terms of Woodbury (1987) rhetorical components and Labov (1972) approach of narrative structure, who claimed its presence in all well-formed narratives. Recordings of orally told narratives by five Saudi informants were elicited in informal settings, and were coded and qualitatively analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of oral narrative structure in Arabic. The findings of this study confirmed that the Labovian components of the internal structure of oral narrative were exhibited in Arabic oral narratives. The results also seemed to support the idea of the essential role of Woodbury (1987) rhetorical categories. That is, pauses and intonational contours line up to form the structure of the narrative. In addition, adverbial particles can be used as a mechanism to reinforce the internal structure of the narrative which coincide with pause phrasing and intonational contours. With regard to syntactic constituency component, the study found out that each line corresponds to at least one clause or phrase.

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1. Introduction

The concept of oral narrative as a reflection of personal life experiences has been widely investigated in different fields such as cognitive science, psychology, sociology, education and linguistics (Bruner, 1986, 1990, 2002, 2004; McQuillan, 2000; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012; Juzwick, 2014; Thornborrow, 2014; Labov 1972, Tedlock, 1983, Woodbury, 1985). It is an unconscious way through which speakers fulfill various kinds of social functions, cultural purposes, and educational principles. Along with rationality, there has been a strong tendency to use narrative and life story to comprehend the world (Johnstone, 2001). In fact, the study of narrative can be described as a vehicle by which people make sense of the world (Connely and Clandinin, 1990). Tannen (1988) describes narrative as an act of mind in which the storyteller and audience are involved and share their personal interpretations and expectations of the world. In Addition, narrative is a means of transforming experiences (Labov and Fanshel, 1977), and it can also be utilized by narrators to construct and impose their imprints in the description of their experiences (Ochs et al., 1992; Bruner, 1996).

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In the field of linguistics, narrative, in its both oral and written forms, has been a crucial arena of research. Researchers have examined narrative from different aspects stretching from the scrutiny of narrative internal structure to using narrative as a means of research in sociocultural contexts (Stapleton and Wilson, 2017, González, 2009, Özyıldırım, 2009, among others). The internal structure of narrative in light of Labovian approach of analysis has been investigated in different languages such as English, Turkish, Catalan and Spanish and others. The structural aspect of narrative is under-examined in Arabic and the applicability of Labovian narrative approach has not yet been tested in Arabic language. The chief aim of this paper is to examine the internal structure of Arabic oral narrative. In addition to Labov's (1972) narrative framework, the researcher adopts the framework of communicative components of rhetorical structure developed Woodbury (1987) to observe a holistic view of Arabic oral narrative.

1.1. Literature review

1.1.1. Definition of Narrative

As the concept of narrative has attracted the attention of many researchers in various fields, it has been defined in many different ways. Ewick and Silbey (1995, p. 198) defined narrative as “a sequence of statements connected by both temporal and moral ordering”. Statements here could mean the group of sentences in a text or an utterance. Berger (1997: 4) also describes narrative as “a story and stories telling about things that have happened or are happening to people, animals, aliens from outer space, etc.” In other words, each story is composed of events displayed in a chronological order over a period of time. The previous definitions seem to be included in the comprehensive definition of narrative proposed by Richardson (1990, p. 118) in which he describes narrative as “the primary way through which humans organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes.” Based on this definition, narrative is a tool by which people describe and understand the world. Labov, however, defines narrative as “one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred” (1972, p. 359). He adds that minimal narrative is “a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered.”

1.2. Theoretical Literature

Labov (1972) presented one of the greatest works in narrative structure. His work has focused mainly on individual experiential narrative in Native American oral narratives context. His data was elicited through recording subjects as they tell dangerous or embarrassing stories about themselves. He states that a well-formulated narrative structure of American English has six elements; abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result, and coda, and they often occur in the same order. The abstract encapsulates the point of the story through one or more clauses often situated at the very outset of the story. Orientation often provides information regarding the time, place, characters and their situation in the event. In addition, it also gives background information needed by the audience to make the sense of the story. The complicating actions are often composed of a chain of narrative clauses in the past tense form of verbs, which answers the question: then, what happened? It is the cornerstone of the story and builds up to its climax through presenting a problem, turning point or even a point of interest. Evaluation involves means that plays a role in establishing and sustaining the narrative and why the story was narrated and what the storyteller is striving to achieve. In the section of evaluation, the storyteller indicates his attitudes about the story and what is happening. Resolution is the concluding section of the story, which includes free clauses that inform the audience how the complicating actions were solved. Coda is an optional element of narrative which contains clauses that seal off the story and return the audience to the present time, and it could be a pragmatic device to reinstate the conversation mode and a sign of giving a way to the floor. Short narratives may not have all these elements. Yet, they are considered complete narratives because they give sequences of events having a beginning-middle-

end pattern. The elements of a narrative do not stand independently from each other. In many cases, there are no clear-cut boundaries that isolate these elements from each other. In some cases, the components merge together while in some other cases they overlap.

Dell Hymes (1980) is one of the first and most influential researchers in the field of ethnopoetics and verbal art. He has taken the syntactic predication as the basis for his lines and then located larger units into global patterns of parallelism. He (1980: 8) believes that “the nature of narrative verse in American Indian languages ... depends upon a conception of narrative action as fulfilling a recurrent formal pattern [i.e., twos and fours, threes and fives and the like].” He proposes the Underlying Rhetorical Form (URF). The URF is recognized through identifying three major elements: (i) syntactic constituency (e.g. clauses), (ii) sentential particles (e.g., thus, then, so, and, etc.) and most importantly (iii) recurring form-and-content parallelisms, the aggregation of which helps identify lines, verses and stanzas as well as acts and scenes within the narrative.

Hymes’ system of narrative analysis is projected to turn prose into poetry on its own terms. Seen from this perspective, Hymes’ conception of narrative is a form of action, of performance, and the meanings it generates are the effects of performance. That is, Hymes claims that all Native American narratives are organized in accordance with culturally significant patterns of numbers: two and fours, threes and fives and so on. Though this may be true, not every language seems to demonstrate “number patterns.”

While Hyme emphasizes formal properties of oral narratives (text) as the foundation for analyzing structure, Dennis Tedlock (1977, 1983), another influential scholar in ethnopoetic research, has emphasized the role of prosody instead. Tedlock (1983) also looks at Native American narratives (e.g., Zuni, Quiche, among others). His theory of the narrative primarily focuses on the prosodic features of the text to create a performable text. He claims that oral narratives more like poetry than prose in that they are meant to be spoken and how they are performed is an important aspect of preserving them.

Tedlock highlights certain features deemed important to the construction of the oral narrative. The first element is pause phrasing. Pauses, as he points out, occur between the end of one line and the beginning of the next, which can be lengthened to if there is a dot between the lines, for example. Other constraints (e.g., space, indentation) may have a role in the length of pausing. Pausing helps create suspense or demonstrate transition. However, Tedlock does not take into account the conventions of poetry that are already established.

Intonation is another characteristic that Tedlock takes into account in the production of oral narratives. One feature of intonation is loudness, which emphasizes certain words in the text. Other features include voice quality, pitch, tone, and so on. These features greatly affect the meaning of the sentence.

Unlike Tedlock and Hymes, Woodbury (1985) has subsequently taken a more holistic approach, considering both textual and prosodic analyses and the interplay between them. Anthony Woodbury (1987: 176) whose work with Central Alaskan Yupik also deals with oral texts summarizes “five potentially independent types of recurrent, hierarchic organization on which poetic representation has been based: pause phrasing, prosodic phrasing, syntactic constituency, global form-content parallelism, and adverbial particle phrasing.” Woodbury calls these aspects the rhetorical structure of narrative. The interaction of these components determines lines and sentence boundaries. Woodbury believes that the ideas of pause phrasing and prosodic phrasing are much more complex than is demonstrated in Tedlock’s approach. Nonetheless, combining these features with other modes of analysis helps paint a more accurate picture of the narrative. Most importantly, Woodbury emphasizes the notion of global form-content parallelism, which looks at patterns and parallel structures across the narrative as whole. These features help organize the narrative independently, yet work together to create a single narrative

structure, leading to a cohesive whole of the action of the narrative. He further explains that the presence of these five elements is used strategically within the language to convey meaning and their absence may represent specific goals on the part of the teller.

For the purpose of this study and shedding light on gaining a holistic and comprehensive view of the internal structure of oral narrative, the researcher opts to use both Labov and Woodbury approaches. Labov's approach helps to gain insights into the structural and organizational parts of the oral narrative while Woodbury's approach focuses on the non-phonological aspects, which are neglected in the Labov's approach.

2. Method

2.1. *The aim of the study*

The primary aim of the present study is to explore the internal structure of the oral personal experience narrative in the context of Arabic following both Labov and Woodbury approaches. In addition, Labov claims that the components of his approach are found in all fully formed narratives. This study also tests the existence of these components in the oral narrative in Arabic context. There are two questions addressed in this work:

- 1- What are the structural characteristics of oral narrative in Arabic?
- 2- How are Labov's oral narrative components realized in Arabic oral narrative?

2.2. *Participants and materials*

The participants of this study were selected from the researcher's friends who spoke Saudi Arabic, and five informants voluntarily participated in an informal and friendly settings. They were asked to talk freely to share some personal stories from their own lives. The recorded session lasted for about one hour. The subjects were not asked to cite certain stories but they told stories they think worthy of being heard. Several narratives were elicited in the hope of finding well-structure narratives. The narratives were sorted based on the availability of the general characteristics of any story of having clear boundaries and clear point. The narratives that were heavily influenced by audiences' interruptions were excluded. In addition, very short (less than a minute) and ill-structured stories were also discarded as they do not fulfill the purpose of this study. A fifteen-minute story with another one embedded in it was selected because it has a clear beginning and end, and the listeners' intervention was quite limited to allow the narrative to flows in a natural manner.

2.3. *Coding*

The study used a qualitative method to examine the internal structure on oral narrative in Arabic. The narratives have been transcribed and translated into English. They were divided into lines, intonation groups, scenes, sections and subsections. The coding consisted of two parts: narrative structural components and the non-phonological or rhetorical structures of narrative. The six components of Labov approach were abbreviated: (A)bstract, (O)rientation, (C)omplicating (A)ction, (R)esolution, (E)valuation and finally (C)oda to the far left of the transcription. Lines were marked by Arabic numerals, and pauses were found at the end of each line and inside lines in angle brackets. Intonation groups were shown in lower-case letters in angle brackets <a>; Intonation type: at the end of each like: (/) rising, (\) falling and () level; Scenes: UPPER-CASE letters (A); Sections: UPPER-CASE roman

numerals (I.); Subsections: lower-case roman numerals (i.). Particles, discourse markers, repetition, and parallelism are colored coded along the transcribed narrative.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Analysis based on Labov's approach

The narratives seem to exhibit all the components that Labov (1972) listed in his article, i.e. abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation and finally coda. The components of the narrative were clear and listed, throughout the story, in a logical sequence although, sometimes the researcher found it difficult trying to draw a line separating those elements

Abstract

It is very common for narrators to begin their stories with one or two clauses to make the point of the story. When the story is heard, the audiences can recognize point of the story.

Extract 1

A	1.	Qissah thaniah sarat li /	Another story happen to me
O	2.	ma? Nafs ashabab tagreeban bas Gabl aw ma adrei wa allah ba?ad /	with the same guys approximately but, by God, before or after I am not sure
O	3.	Bas Surt ana sakim ma? Alajaneb haola?	But I became living with those foreigners
A	4.	allll qissah tbaien aldalakhah was su? Atasaruf end al ekhuan	The story signals our brothers stupidity and misbehavior

Here in Extract 1, the speaker gives one abstract (line 1) and follows it with two lines of orientation (line 2 &3) and he further gives one more abstract (line 4). This was followed by clauses that signals the beginning of the story. Further explanations of what happened was presented in the following lines. Abstract component occurred only three times in the whole narrative. The first two occurrences of abstract were mentioned above whereas the third was in an embedded story at the middle of the long story.

Extract 2

E	53.	Khalina hatha wa naruH ma nabgh nitwaraT ma?ah	Let's like ahh and go we don't want to be in trouble with him"
O/E	54.	Fi telk ?al athna? ?ala fikrah Fi Braitania sarat qissah lwaHid Qatari /	at that time a story told place in Britain for a Qatari guy
CA/R	55.	inTharab fi qarurah wa mat/	He was hit with a bottle and died
O	56.	Omruh 20 sanah 21 sana\	He was 20 or 21 years old

Here the speaker introduces a new story while he was narrating the original story. Notice that line 53 is part of the long story whereas line 54 introduces a similar story that the narrator has cited to justify his position in the fight. Then he follows the abstract with orientation and resolution lines.

Orientation

It seems that the narrator has told the story several times in the past. His narration is very detailed and he is successful in providing information about who was involved, where and when that happened. In Extract 1 above, he follows the first abstract with two clauses of orientation. In Line 2, he specifies

people involved in the story and the time the story took place. He further provides information about his situation at that time “*he was living with foreign roommates* in line 3.

Extract 3

O	6.	Anuh ana Tale? Ma? Al classmates Hagini\	Is that I was hanging out with my classmates
E	7.	Hathela zumala?i aqabilhum fi ayam Bas fih ayam zai ma a?rifkum al?an wa ?arif ghair\	Those are my friends I meet them sometimes And I know others as I now know you and know others
O	8.	Tali? Ma? Al classmates haqini Tab?an fihum min aljinsain wa kitha Almuhim/	I was hanging out with my classmates, off course amongst them there are from the two genders, In short
O	9.	alli sar anu eHna rayHin /	What happened was that we were going
O	10.	Fih manTigah seyaHiah wa mashhurah zai downtown in Indianapolis /	There was a famous landscape as you say downtown in Indianapolis

Notice here that the narrator adds four more lines. In line 6, he describes his situation when the story happened as he was hanging out with his classmates. In line 8, he identifies the gender of his classmates. Line 8 and 9 can also be regarded as complicated actions. The clause in line 10 provides information about the location where the speaker was at the time of the story. We can tell that orientation in this story occurs at the beginning of the narrative (e.g., line 2 and 3). Sometimes, it occurs within the narrative, which functions as a repetition of the same clauses that are uttered at the beginning of the narrative as in lines 6 and 8. Orientation occurred 24 times throughout the narrative. In fact, the speaker places them at strategic points later on. Another noteworthy point is the use of the past progressive tense in the clauses in orientation section. This can help the audiences to visualize the scene as if they were present.

Complicating actions

Complicating action means any clauses that contribute to the sequential progress of events in the story. The first complicating action in the story is in line 6 in Extract 3 above. This is followed by many instances of complicating action (e.g., lines 6, 11, 12, 13, 16, 21, 23, 24, 34, 41, 44, etc.)

Extract 4

CA	11.	Wa ahasel khweyana lina shahar aw thalath asabee? Man gabaltahum/	And I met my friends I haven't met them for a month or so.
CA	12.	Wagaft asallim aliahum	I stopped to greet them
CA	13.	Hathela wagafu jambi yantaTrun/	Those (classmates) stopped next to me waiting

Throughout the narrative, it can be observed that complicating action lines can follow each other in a set of three or four lines, such as in lines 116, 117, 118, 119. There are also instances where two complicating actions follow each other, such as lines 110 and 111 and lines 138 & 139. Syntactically speaking, simple past tense is the unmarked verb tense in complicating action clauses, as in Extract 4. Furthermore, most of the lines containing complicating action are introduced by adverbial particles such as *wa* ‘and’ in line 11, *faa* ‘and’, *shwai* ‘shortly’. More examples are highlighted in pink in the appendix. Sometimes the distinction between complicating action and embedded evaluation is not clear. In this case, the line is marked as both evaluation and complicating action as in Extract 5 below:

Extract 5

	58. al muhim/	In gist,
O	59. fi nafs al fatrah\	It was at the same period of time
CA/E	60. Fa Ashahid gultalahum ruHu la biqarorah yakhbuTha bras waHid wa illa \	The gist, I said; go away so the bottle doesn't his any of you or ..
E	61. Khalas, ruHu an aba \	Ok, go now and I will aaaa

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important element in the narrative in which the narrator indicates the point of the story and why it was worth telling and what he is getting at. The narrator seems to be skillful in that he evaluates most of the actions in the story and doesn't leave the listener with the question *so what?* He is continually warding off this question. The analysis of the story in question reveals that the narrator used both external and embedded evaluation techniques.

Extract 6

CA	34. Fa Tha ?arajal qarrab Wa sawa kith	and that guy came closer and he did like this
O	35. li wahid min akhwiwana	to one of our friends
O	36. Hwa kan masha? Allah waseem\	He was very handsome.
E	37. alHarakah hatho taHarush	This action is considered harassment
E	38. Ma ahad yajeek Abadan Abadan yahuzallak sha?rak Bus ?ashanu sakran /	Nobody can ever ever come and touch your hair, but because he was drunk
E	39. fa yataHarah	So, he harasses
E	40. Fa ana hina daraiyt ?an ?alrajal mTayinha wa	At this point I realized that this man is drunk

Here, the speaker in line 34 adds a complicating action and follows it with two lines of orientation in which he specifies the participants and provides more details about the participants. The speaker did not stop at this point and leave action unevaluated. That is, he wasn't content to let the narrative itself convey the information to the listeners. He, instead, evaluated the situation with four consecutive lines. The speaker steps out of the narrative, turns to the listeners and tells them what the point was. Similar cases occur throughout the narrative (e.g., lines 76-82 and 143-146).

The speakers also frequently uses embedded evaluation throughout the narrative. In the following extract the speaker quotes himself as addressing someone else.

Extract 7

CA	168. reHt ana qabalt alshabab \	I went to my friend
E	169. hah antum mawjudeen qalu eiwah jitahum wa qult ya jama?at alkhair \	"hey are you there" I said. They said "yah" I said, "oh good group
E	170. Antum SaHin wella mish SaHin	are you crazy or not?"
E	171. Qalu wesh fik anat khabal kaif taruH tafra? Bain annas \	They said, "what's wrong with you? Are you stupid to separate between people?"
E	172. Qult antum fahmin wish alqissah? /	I said, "do you know what was the story?"
E	173. Qalu wesh alqissah qult sam?tuni wa ana aqul khawiyi khawiyi qalu wa Allah ma sama?nak /	They said, what's the story? I said, "did you hear me when I say my friend my

- | | | |
|---|------|---|
| | | friend?” they said, “ by God we didn’t hear you” |
| E | 174. | Qult wala seme?tu shai anni jai asslan ma? Ashabab qalu ma nidri naHsabk jai lwaHdak
I said, you didn’t even hear that I said I came with those guys” they said, “we don’t know we thought you came by your own” |
| E | 175. | Taib w laih tamsakuni ana /
“ Ok why did you hold me?/ |
| E | 176. | Qalu yajama?at alkhair ahh ya fahad /
They said, “Oh guys, sorry Oh fahad |
| E | 177. | Khwiya yataDarabu tabghana nihi tabgha tafra? Bainahim haish /
“Friend are fighting do you wanna us come and you go separate them, why? |

The narrator quotes his speech addressing his friends and quotes his friends’ speech responding to his questions. It should be emphasized that this technique is only used by highly skilled narrators. Thus, the teller of this story is considered a good storyteller because he is capable of preserving the dramatic continuity of the narrative even though he is embedding many evaluative clauses and lines. Quoting the speech of the participants in the narrative makes the events live and immediate to the listeners as if they had witnessed the event. There is an instance where evaluation line is confused with complicating action as in the example below:

- | | | |
|------|------|--|
| CA/E | 144. | Khashu kitha ma adri weshu wa dafdafah wa ma adri weshu ana ma abgha aDrab ai aHad buqs li anu ma abgha ai mushkilah
They entered like this I don’t know. It was just pushing and like I don’t want to punch anyone because I don’t want troubles |
|------|------|--|

Resolution and coda

Resolution signals the end of narrative. This component occurs in different places in the narrative. It occurs at the middle and at the end of the story. When it is at the middle, it often follows a complicating action, as in Extract 8. The speaker does so to indicate the end of a scene and prepares the listeners to a following scene.

Extract 8

- | | | |
|-----|------|---|
| E/R | 151. | Wa yamsik wa uaqul AWWWW ma adri wesh Darabni Darabi ma adri wesh kaif qult la ma bak illa al?afiah \
And he holds his face and says “AWWWW” not sure “ he hit me hit me” or something like this. “look...” I said “ nothing you are ok, |
| E | 152. | N: “Tarra bad boys”
N:They are bad boys” |
| | 153. | L” hhhhhh
L: hhhhhh |

The speaker in line 151 opts to ease the tension of the situation after the fight and places the resolution to bring a sense of relief as the story contained tense events. In another instance, the speaker uses resolution in a place toward the end of the story, as in Extract 9.

Extract 9

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| R | 203 | Qalu alHandu lillah aham shai innak salamt ant
They said, the most important thing is that you passed it safely, thanks God |
| C | 204 | Fa kanat hathi alqissha al okhra ya?ni aaaa belflashback Hagaha /
And this was the other story with its flashback. |
| C | 205 | Wa hathi qissatain \
And those are two stories |

Typically, resolution includes a code, which is a clear signal of the end of the narrative. Line 203 can be confused with embedded evaluation but the actual function of this type of expressions, which include God's thanking, are indicative of narrative end. However, lines 204 and 205 are clear ending lines in which the speaker explicitly states that *that was another story* and added the total number of the stories he told at the time of recording.

It can be concluded from this analysis the existence of Labovian structural components of oral narrative which he claims to be present in all well-formed narratives.

3.2. Analysis based on Woodbury approach

In the second section of this paper, the narrative structure is analyzed based on the oral variables (pauses, intonation, voice quality) found in the recording as well as on rhetorical components of Woodbury (syntax, lexical choice, parallelism).

Prosodic phrasing

The narratives have transcribed and organized in lines and groups. Each line represents a single intonational contour. Contours associated with the line can be either rising, level or falling. The contoured lines are grouped to form 'intonational groups'. An intonational group contains a minimum of a single intonational contour and a maximum of six intonational ones.

The most common kind of contour groups is couplets as it appeared 21 times in the text. In twelve of these, the first contour is rising and the second is falling or level in 11 instances as in Except 10. In six instances, the second contour is level. Throughout the narratives, the rising and level contours often indicate that the speaker is going to add important details.

Extract 10

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| C | 204. Fa kanat hathi alqissha al okhra ya?ni aaaa
belflashback Hagaha / | And this was the other story with its
flashback. / |
| C | 205. Wa hathi qissatain \ | And those are two stories \ |

Extract 11

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| CA | 100. Hwa lamma shaf al mauqif hatha / | When he saw this situation / |
| CA | 101. N: Wa badu yajun ?alia wa katha Hwa
khash ?alaTul Masak yemkin thnain
minahum zai kitha / | N: And they started to come over me and
like this He entered the fight right away,
and he grabbed maybe two of them / |

Extract 12

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| | 73. Almuhim / | In short, / |
| CA | 74. wa aduf yaddainih bequwa | And I strongly pushed his hands |
| CA/A | 75. Ella ?ala rab?eh atharihum warah ytal?un
wesh alharjah | His friend were behind him Watching
what is going on |
| CA | 76. Fa jaw ?alaina,\ | Then they came to us \ |
| E | 77. Alli hu jaw ?alaih ana thelak asshabab
raHu \ | I mean to me, in particular, the guys
were a way \ |

In Extract 12 above, the speaker uses rising intonation because he wants to add new information. In this example, the group begins with an adverbial particle which was the start of a new subsection. This adverbial particle ends with a rising contour which is followed by a level one. A falling contour appears in the third line (76) to indicate that the group may end since it is at that point well formed. If another contour follows, it is, in all cases, a falling one. This case occurred five times throughout the narratives.

The frequently occurring kind of intonational groups consists of four intonational contours in which the last line of a group is preceded by one or two lines with level contour and the fourth line with a rising contour as in the following example.

Extract 13

	154. Almuhim /	The gist, /
CA	155. alshahid yum jina tajama?na wa kith ma adri wishu qult khalas shabab ruHu enHalat almas?alah jaw nas fara?u min ashawari? ashari? /	The gist, when while we were gathering like this I said: “ok guys go the problem solved”. People came and separated us they came from the street /
CA	156. Fara?u qalu khalas ruHu wa mashaina ma?alaih ya Max ma adri weshu	They separated us and said: “go now” and we walked “sorry Max”
E	157. Haqat ?aliah ma adri aish	“it was my fault”

The final falling contour can be preceded by up to six rising contours to form an intonational group, as in lines 47-50 and 178-184. Furthermore, there are about six instances where the two contours have the same type (i.e., falling-falling, rising-rising, level-level) throughout the narratives.

Extract 14

E	178. Qilt aaa khwiya yataDarabu? /	I said, “friends are fighting? /
O	179. Khawiyi ana /	“This is my friend “ /
O	180. Tara hatha almani wa fazi? ma?i /	“this is German and he supported me /
O	181. Wa Darabuh ?ala shani /	They hit him because of me /
E	182. Qalu wallah eHna esh darana /	They said, “by God how could we know? /
E	183. Bellah ba ?aqI ya?ni ana esh dakhalni shuf hina alflash back haq alqssah /	By God, with little mind, I mean why do I, look this is the flashback of the story /
E	184. Ana esh dakhalni ani aroH afari? Etha humma bainahum group. \	Why do I go and separate them if they are group fighting between each other? \

In summary, there was a one-to-one correspondence between an intonational contour and a line. The analysis shows that there are three types of contours: rising, level and falling. The first two often signal that the speaker has something important to add which could also signal the speaker’s desire to maintain the floor. The falling contour indicates that the narrator is going to end the point. There are other instances where the contour group doesn’t follow this structure. The data shows that there are more marked types of grouping; a sequence of up to four contours of the same type possibly occur.

Pauses

There is no set length of pause as pauses were quite hard for timing. The researcher timed pauses at the end and middle of lines. To measure pause length, beat method was used as one beat almost equals to one second. However, the pauses that lasted for less than half a beat were not counted. Pauses ranges from <.1> to <.9> seconds.

The analysis shows that the pause phrasing corresponds to line. That is, pauses occur after each line with one exceptional case where the speaker stops at the middle of the line in a more marked way.

119	Faa humma zumala?i thaila yaHsabun ?alda?wa <1> stage <1>
119	And those my friends think the issue is not real (fake)

In this instance, the line is made up of two pause phrases. The pause, in this case, occurs before the noun phrase in the predicate. The narrator, in most cases, tells a long narrative line, which may consist of up to four combined clauses, with one pause at the end of the line. The example below explains this observation:

Extract 14:

31. Wa hwa yakalimni zai kitha wa ?ana aqul llashabab esih ?khbarakum ?na bamshi whathola khwianin ma?ana

31. As he was talking to me like this I was saying to my friends, “guys how are you? I want to go, and those (his friends) came with me”

The unmarked length of the pause is one beat <1> throughout the text. However, there is a couple of instances where the length of the pause extended to two beats <2>. In these instances, the process of lengthening the pause indicates hesitation of the speaker and that he is in a process of recalling the following part of the narrative as evident in the following Extract:

Extract 15

- | | | |
|--|-----|--|
| 89. Alli saaar ennu <u>wesh esmeh</u> kan <u>emm</u> | <2> | What happened was <u>like like emm</u> |
| 90. kan aaaah dayman Hata arsalha li alla
alemail | <1> | He was lik aah He even emailed it to me |
| 91. Shuf hal ?ughniyah ana sawait labouyah li
annu kan beseer muTrib zai kitha (Not
clear) | | Listen to this song I made for my dad
because he wanted to be a singer like
this |

It is obvious that the speaker is hesitant because line 89 contains hesitation discourse markers such as *wesh esmeh* (*like*) and *emm*. The lack of the following part of the narrative causes the speaker to lengthen the pause to be able to recall.

There is one instance where the long pause (in line 167) occurred at the end of the scene and what follows is a new scene. However, since this is the only instance, it would be better to call it an exception rather than a functional pattern. In general, in these narratives the length of pauses doesn't correlate with sections and subsections breaks. In some cases, the pauses are long at the middle of the subsection, as in line (3), at the beginning of subsections as in lines 24 and 34, and at the end of the section as in line 53. Short pauses, on the other hand, are the unmarked type of pauses. Even though the analysis of pauses may not very helpful in predicting larger structural units, it facilitates the task of determining the line boundaries along with intonation contours.

Syntactic constituency

Nouns and verbs are the main word classes in Arabic and the majority of nouns are derived from verbs. Almost all lines in the narratives are composed of clauses and phrases. There are two types of phrases that the narrators frequently use; the first is a verbal phrase, and the second is nominal phrase. It can be noted that each line corresponds to at least one clause or a noun phrase. There were many instances where the line consists of several clauses. This complicated the researcher's task to define a line based on the syntactic structure. There were also instances where the clause was set off by a pause as in lines 5, 6. The narrative contains phrase and clauses of various types employed by the speakers. The following are representative examples:

Verbal sentences

12. Wagaft asallim aliahum

12. I stopped to greet them

Nominal sentence

56. Omruh 20 sanah 21 sanah

56. He was 21 or 21 years old.

Prepositional phrase

59. fi nafs al fatrag

59. at the same period of time

Noun phrase

121. Zumala?i assaudiyen

121. My Saudi friends

With regard to verb tense used in the narratives, the speakers frequently switch between the tenses: past, present and future. Present and future tenses were used only in reported speech, as in the following Extract

Extract 16

- | | |
|--|--|
| 40. Fa ana hina daraiyt ?an ?alrajal mTayinha wa | At this point I realized that this man is drunk |
| 41. Qult ya shabab imshu / | I said; guys go |
| 42. Tra Harakatu hathi mahi laegah wa shakl ?alrajal sakran wa bisawi lana bala\ | Look, what he did is inappropriate and he looks drunk and he is going to make us a trouble |
| 43. Khalas antu imshu Allah yastor ?alikum wa ?ana ba ?qabilkum | Ok guys, go now, God protects you and I will meet you |

In line 40, the narrator is telling a past event that completed in the past using simple past tense (showed in *italic*). However, in the following line, he quotes what happened in the past for the purpose of making the event present to the listener. Thus, he used the present tense in lines 41, 42, and 43. At the end of line 43 the narrator used future tense when he promised to meet his friends sometime late that night (showed in *italic*)

Particle phrasing

In addition to pauses and intonational contours, adverbial particles were helpful in determining lines. The position of the adverbial particle is preverbal and that it introduces a clause. A total of 50 lines were introduced by particles. This provides evidence for the role of the syntactic constituency in defining narrative lines. Various adverbial particle (shown in *italics*), such as *wa* (and) *fa* (and or so), *bas* (but), *awal*, *lamma*, *yum*, *?ala* (when) frequently appeared to facilitate the transition from one action to another. Throughout the text, *wa* occurred 37 times in 29 of which it introduces a line, as in line 80. Similarly, the particle *fa* occurred 19 times in 13 of which it introduces a line, as in line 34 below:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 80. <i>Wa</i> asslan Kuna ana wiyah dayman nitmazaH Annu ma tafhamun aflam bad boys / | <i>And</i> we have been always teasing each other That you don't understand bad boys movies |
| 34. <i>Fa</i> _Tha ?arajal qarrab Wa sawa kith | <i>and</i> _that guy came closer and he did like this |
| 35. li wahid min akhwiyana | to one of our friends |

There are many instances where the subsections are introduced by an adverbial particle. The particle *wa* (and) only introduced four subsections in lines 11, 31, 80, 132 (see appendices). In addition, four other subsections were introduced by the adverbial particle *fa* in lines 34, 60, 119 and 204. The adverbial

particles *?ala, yum* introduced one line each, 21, and 163. Since the number of occurrences of the adverbial particles that introduce lines is 50 out of 205 throughout the text, it seems that adverbial particles, as part of the syntactic structure, to be functioning as an indicator of the internal structure of the narrative.

Repetition and Parallelism

Repetition and parallelism appeared many times in the text. They often occur in evaluative and complicating components of the narrative. Repetition occurred 31 times throughout the narrative. There were instances where the speaker repeats a whole clause or sentence in the same line with one pause and intonational contour. In Extract 17, the bold-face items parallel each other in the same intonational contour, as in lines 44, 46 and 50.

Extract 17

44	Hatha ?athani ja yaqul ish taqul ish taqul!	The guy came and said what do you say, what do you say
45	Gult wala shai wala shai hhhh have a good night Qa?ed aqul leh have a good night\	I said nothing nothing have a good night I was saying to him have a good night
46	Masak finin biyaddainih kulaha masak finin biyadainih ma? Jakaiti wa aljakait kan msakar	He held me by his both hands He held me by his both hands with my jacket , and the jacket was buttoned
47	Fa ?ana qult aaah kahaik wish esmuh /	And I said aaah wait like like
48	Wa masaky yadainuh hata ?ana nafs ashai Wa aqul leshabab beshwaish/	And the same thing I hold his hands and I say guys chill out
49	Nafs alqroup/	The same group
50	Nafs thalathah minhum thalathah minhum thak alwaqt thalatha bas\	The same group or only three of them three of them at that time

In this extract, it appears that the parallelism occurred at the syntactic level. In other cases, the narrator uses parallelism at lexical level, as in lines 69, 46 and five other cases on the whole text. The following is a representative example.

Extract 18

68.	Fa qultaluh khalas fukani /	Then I said; enough leave me
69.	Aqulu Aqulu “ khalas khalas let me go”	I say I say “ enough enough , let me go”.
70.	Zai kitha wa aqulu khalas	Like this and I say enough

The above example contains a parallelism pattern of four in three different lines. The lexical item “*khalas*” ‘enough’ was repeated four times. Another interesting parallelism in this extract is that the narrator used in line 68 the verb phrase ‘fukani’ ‘leave me or let me go’ when he describes the past event to the listener. In the following line, however, he quotes the speech (i.e., *let me go*) and used English as it was the language he spoke at the moment of the event. This alternation of codes may have the function of emphasizing the evaluative part of narrative. In general, it seems that in most of parallelism cases, the numerical pattern of twos (24 occurrences) and in one instance the numerical pattern of fours. In most cases, parallelism and repetition occur at the same line although there were some exceptions of this pattern, as in Extract 18 in lines 44, 45 and 46.

Other observations

The use of discourse markers was a distinguishing feature for the narrator's speech. The narrator used various discourse makers, which serve functions but differ from the functions they originally coined for. Most of these discourse markers used for approximation, uncertainty or clarification. One of the most frequently used discourse marker is 'almuhim' which translated into English as 'in gist, in short'. This marker, in particular, was important in determining lines. It occurred six times throughout the text. It introduced a line five times in four of which it introduced a new subsection, as in lines 73, 143, 154, 200, as in extract 19. In one case it introduced intonational group, as in line 166, extract 20.

Extract 19

<p>ii <i>The British guy's friends came closer</i></p> <p>73. Almuhim /</p> <p>74. wa aduf yaddainih bequwa</p> <p>75. Ella ?ala rab?eh atharimum warah ytal?un wesh alharjah</p> <p>76. Fa jaw ?alaina,\</p> <p>77. Alli hu jaw ?alaih ana thelak asshabab raHu \</p>	<p><i>The British guy's friends came closer</i></p> <p>In short, /</p> <p>And I strongly pushed his hands</p> <p>His friend were behind him Watching what is going on</p> <p>Then they came to us \</p> <p>I mean to me, in particular, the guys were a way</p>
---	--

Extract 20

<p>166. Almuhim /</p> <p>167. Khalas almawDus? Wa qa?din Tab?an jalsin nashar ma?ahum wa kith wa sawalif wa ba?dain riHna /</p>	<p>In short, /</p> <p>The issue was solved and we were sitting chatting like this and then we left /</p>
--	---

There are other frequently used phrases (markers) that were repeated throughout the texts. Although these markers displayed certain functions in the text, they were not helpful in determining the line. The following table compiles discourse markers and their frequency of use in the speech.

Table 1. Discourse markers and their frequency rates

Discourse Marker	Meaning	Function	Frequency
Zai kitha	Like this	Filler	21
Medri wishu	Not sure/ I don't know	Uncertainty	15
alhasel	In gist	Add a new point	2
Al muhim	In gist, in short	Add a new point	6
Wesh esmah	What is its name	Remembering tool	3
Ya?ni	Like (it means)	Marker of reformation	6
yemkin	May be	Marker of approximation	4
Tab?an	sure	Certainty	5
aaah		hesitation marker	24
emm		hesitation marker	1

A remarkable observation in the analyzed data is related to code-switching. The matrix language of the narrator was Arabic and he, in certain cases, inserted some English words, phrases and clauses as needed. The narrator alternated codes 14 times throughout the analyzed portion of the session. There were eight intra-sentential code-switching and six inter-sentential code-switching. In what follows, one representative example of each is provided.

Extract 21

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| 104. | Awal ma misik hathak yaqul lih hey where did you come from / | When he grabbed the guy the guy said, “ where did you come from? ” |
| 105. | Ls: hhhhhhhhhhh | Ls: Hhhhhhhhhhh |
| 106. | N: Hata qalu qalu its not your business / | N: he even said said its not your business |
| 107. | L: hhhhhhhhhhh | L: hhhhhhhhhhh |

Extract 22

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 204. | Fa kawat hathi alqissha al okhra ya?ni aaaa belflashback Hagaha / | And this was the other story with its flashback. |
| 205. | Wa hathi qissatain \ | And those are two stories |

Notice in Extract 21, the speaker switches from Arabic to English between different sentences. Bold-face in the above examples shows the code that the speaker switched to. In lines 104 and 106 the speaker utters complete English sentences within the Arabic stream of speech. This switching is likely to have the function of making the event immediate and live for the listeners as if they were present at the time of the event. In Extract 22, the narrator switches between Arabic and English within the sentence. The matrix language in 204 is Arabic because the syntactic structure is Arabic. The English word was modified to fit the Arabic morpho-syntax rules. The word *flashback* is English, but there are two Arabic prefixes attached to it. The first is the preposition *b’with’* and second is the determiner (i.e., indefinite article) *el* ‘the’.

4. Conclusions

This qualitative study investigated the internal structure of personal experience oral narrative in Arabic context in light of Woodbury (1987) approach and Labov (1972) structural components, which he claimed exist in all well-formed narratives. For the purpose of this study, recordings of Saudi speakers were elicited in a natural and informal setting to contribute to the understanding of cultural similarities with regards to the internal structure of the oral narrative.

The findings revealed that Labovian six components of narrative were observed in the Arabic oral narrative. It can be suggested that Labovian approach is likely to exist in non-western language and this may be used as evidence in favor of the universality of this approach.

This study has also looked at the existence and function of intonational contours, pause phrasing, syntactic structures, adverbial particle phrasing and parallelism for that sake of gaining better understanding of the structure of the oral narrative. The findings seem to support the idea of the crucial role of these rhetorical categories in defining lines of narrative, and how they interplay to form the structure of the narrative. That is, pauses and intonational contours line up to form the structure of the narrative. In addition, adverbial particles can be used as a mechanism to reinforce the internal structure of the narrative which coincide with pause phrasing and intonational contours.

Furthermore, it was not surprising, that narrators, in some instances, switched codes given that participants were all bilinguals and the context of the stories was about travel and studying abroad. It can be observed that code switching may have been used in the narratives to emphasize or quote what exactly happened in the past for accuracy purposes and to make the event live for audiences as if they were present.

This study provided a step toward enhancing our understanding of the internal structure of oral narrative in Arabic context in terms of Labov's oral narrative approach. However, the findings of this study were limited to Saudi dialect and culture and should not be overgeneralized to all Arabic dialects because it has its own limitations. The findings of this study were drawn from a small size of narratives; hence, it would be better for future work to collect a larger number of narratives from different Arabic dialects to gain a more comprehensive view of narrative structure. The study of the sociocultural functions of narrative was beyond the scope of the present study. Therefore, further research needs to shift from the structure to the social functions of narrative. Finally, since narrative, in general, may follow a universal structure as claimed by Labov (1972), it is worthwhile to examine whether there would be differences between oral and written narratives.

5. Ethics Committee Approval

The author(s) confirm(s) that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in their country (Date of Confirmation: December 11, 2020).

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Appendix A. Coding conventions

- Lines –Arabic numerals (1);
- Intonational groups: lower-case letters in angle brackets <a>;
- Intonation type: at the end of each like: (/) rising, (\) falling and () level;
- Scenes: UPPER-CASE letters (A);
- Sections: UPPER-CASE roman numerals (I.);
- Subsections: lower-case roman numerals (i.);
- Pauses: at the right of line in angle brackets <1>;
- Labov’s components abbreviated at the left of the line;
- A: Abstract
- O: Orientation
- CA: Complicating Actions
- E: Evaluation
- R: Resolution and Cods

Arapça sözlü anlatının iç yapısı

Öz

Bu nitel araştırma, kişisel deneyim sözlü anlatımın iç yapısını, Woodbury (1987) retorik bileşenleri ve tüm iyi biçimlendirilmiş anlatılarda varlığını iddia eden anlatı yapısının Labov (1972) yaklaşımı açısından incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Beş Suudi muhbir tarafından sözlü anlatılan anlatıların kayıtları gayri resmi ortamlarda ortaya çıkarıldı ve Arapça sözlü anlatı yapısının kapsamlı bir şekilde anlaşılmasını sağlamak için kodlandı ve niteliksel olarak analiz edildi. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, sözlü anlatımın iç yapısının Labovya bileşenlerinin Arapça sözlü anlatılarda sergilendiğini doğruladı. Sonuçlar ayrıca Woodbury (1987) retorik kategorilerinin temel rolü fikrini destekliyor gibi görünüyordu. Yani, duraklamalar ve tonlama konturları anlatımın yapısını oluşturmak için sıralanır. Ek olarak, zarf parçacıkları, duraklama cümleleri ve tonlama konturları ile örtüşen anlatımın iç yapısını güçlendirmek için bir mekanizma olarak kullanılabilir. Sözdizimsel seçmen bileşeniyle ilgili olarak, çalışma her satırın en az bir cümle veya cümleye karşılık geldiğini ortaya çıkardı.

Anahtar Sözcükler: iç yapı; Arapça anlatım; sözlü anlatım; retorik işlevler; Labov'un yaklaşımı

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