

## ***SOCIOLINGVISTIKA / SOCIOLINGUISTICS***

### **Vernacular Narratives: A Case Study of Stylistic Analysis of Students' Written Stories**

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**Abstract.** The paper studies the applicability of Labov's narrative framework and its six categories to vernacular written narratives. The objective is to compare the narratives provided by both homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators in terms of Labov's narrative organization. The material under investigation is represented by students' stories that were created in the course *Introduction to Stylistics* in Spring, 2012. The differences between the communicative situations in which oral and written narratives are embedded are taken into consideration in order to provide a valuable comparison. The paper mainly draws upon the importance and narrative functionality that the Labovian categories are expected to have or lack in ordinary narratives provided by the medium of written language. The paper concludes with the following findings: the abstract and the coda are interdiscursive categories since they function as cohesive devices that delimit the narrative discourse within the non-narrative discourse, regardless of the narrative medium and the communicative situation. The orientation and the evaluation are as important as the complicating action and the resolution for designing a narrative, since they can increase the point of tellability. This is supported by the finding that these two categories were the most elaborated ones in the heterodiegetic versions of the students' narratives.

**Key Words:** *Labov, narrative framework, homodiegetic, heterodiegetic, written stories, vernacular.*

#### **Introduction**

Everyday life provides a number of events that are stored in our memories to be remembered and recalled, and later on to be told. Telling a story means that we are able to verbalize the events that occurred. We are also able to embed in a story the communicative value it has for us. At the moment of sharing a story, our objective is to make the addressee re-experience the events being told and infer the intended communicative value. Stories are told for personal-driven reasons. Storytelling is a device for reinforcing one's position within a particular social group, which means that narration functions as an image builder, or at least as an image fastener; to a certain extent, storytelling allows the narrator to convey an authoritative impact on the audience because the listeners are invited to interpret and evaluate a narrative in a way that is beneficial for them. According to Braid (1996, p.5), a personal experience narrative is "a particularly effective vehicle for communicating experience to others in a pragmatically useful form".

Unlike vernacular narratives, literary narratives have a tendency to be more pioneering because "literary artists tend to be more experimental than the rest of us amateur story-tellers" (Chatman, 1990, p.317). As a result, literary story-telling is more innovative. As Berger (1997, p.34) points out, one story can be varied in a number of different texts and writers are known for exploring ways of telling a story where the chronological order of events differs from the order in which those events are narrated. Therefore, the structures of literary narratives are varied. By contrast, ordinary oral narratives tend to present the events in the same order as they occurred. The temporal order of what happened and what is told are the same. In other words, the

sequence of narrative clauses corresponds to the sequence of narrative events. The disagreement between *sjuzhet* and *fabula* in literary narratives results in a more aesthetic reading experience (see Bal, 1997), while the correspondence found in oral narratives is crucial for a correct semantic interpretation (Labov, 1972, p.360). In addition to the story itself and its actual narration, another important aspect that makes a story distinctive is the point of view from which it is told. The difference between the first person narration and the third person narration lies predominantly in the psychological closeness and identification between the character of the story and its audience (Leech and Short, 2007, pp.210–215). Again, it can be claimed that literary narratives are more innovative as far as the perspective is concerned. Literature undoubtedly offers a number of permutations of narrators and/ or characters and of access to their thoughts, feelings, and emotions (Simpson, 2004, p.27). Oral narratives are usually presented from the point of view of the speaker, hence the narrator and the main character are the same. However, stories about a third person who is absent from the communicative event at which a story is told also occur. In a story about somebody else, it is, nonetheless, necessary to provide an adequate amount of information about the main protagonist in order to communicate the point of the story successfully.

Drawing upon these general characteristics of oral vernacular narratives and literary narratives, and upon the differences in narrative perspectives, the present paper studies whether ordinary written narratives follow the same pattern of narrating as ordinary oral narratives do. In terms of Labov's (1972) identification of vernacular oral narratives, the objective of the paper is to analyze the

extent to which the Labovian categories, that is the categories of abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda, are applicable to vernacular written narratives. By the term ‘vernacular written narrative’ the paper understands spontaneous stories that narrate events of everyday life, using the medium of informal written language. The material for the analysis is represented by 48 student texts that were created during a course in stylistics. The paper also investigates whether the individual categories are somehow modified if the perspective is shifted from the I-narrator to the she/ he-narrator perspective. In other words, there are two aims: to explore the applicability of the Labovian narrative framework to vernacular written narratives and to discover which categories differ when the very same story is presented with the first-person narration and then with the third-person narration and how these categories are approached by the narrator. The question whether a story presents the same narrative if once told by an I-narrator and then retold by a she/ he-narrator is not considered here, since for the purpose of the analysis, the paper treats the different perspectives as two versions of the same story.

Even though the analyzed material can have a low communicative value as far as the tellability is concerned (cf. Chatman, 1990; Pratt, 1977), because the narratives lack what might be identified as the main point of why the story is told, they are still approached as narratives, because they represent a sequence of events that “are relayed in the order in which they presumably occurred” (Schiffrin, 1981, p.47) and thus constitute a narrative whole. Moreover, the aim of this student writing was not for them to present a series of fictional events but to make them realize that they are able to narrativize their ordinary experiences via the medium of written language. They were also supposed to learn the differences between first-person and third-person narration.

### Labovian Framework of Ordinary Oral Narratives

According to Labov (1972), a story told within the context of face-to-face interaction contains six categories that contribute to the successful development and the successful delivery and interpretation of a narrative. Regardless of the topic and the socio-demographic aspects of the narrator, it can be claimed that oral narratives share the same pattern in which the story is revealed to the listener. Each category is distinguished for the narrative function it performs in the actual narration. The individual categories address the narrative questions that might be raised by the listener. Furthermore, each category is marked for its use of distinctive linguistic forms. Their functional aspects are reflected in their use of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and syntactic relations. The Table 1 illustrates the Labovian oral narratives framework as adapted by Simpson (2004, p.115).

Labov (1972, p.363) himself points out that only a “fully-formed narrative” contains all the categories. The way the categories are ordered is parallel with the arrangement of Table 1, except for the category of evaluation. This category indicates why the story is worth telling and worth paying attention to. Unlike the rest of the categories, its function is not time-related; its presence does not contribute towards the temporal development of a story,

but rather towards the appraisal of the story itself as well as of the narrator and other participants. In other words, the narrator expects his or her emotional involvement both in the story and in the narrating to be approved of by the listener. This is the reason that this specific category “can be inserted at virtually any stage during a narrative” (Simpson, 2004, p.116) while the rest of the categories are more or less bound to the arrangement described by Labov (1972) and presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Labovian Narrative Framework Adapted by Simpson (2004, p.115).

| Narrative Category  | Narrative Question  | Narrative Function  | Linguistic Form  |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| Abstract            | <i>What was this about?</i>   | Signals beginning, draws attention from the listener                      | A short summarizing statement, provided before the narrative begins            |
| Orientation         | <i>Who or what are involved in the story, and when and where did it take place?</i> | Identifies time, place, characters, activities and situation of the story | Past continuous verbs, adverbials of time, place, and manner                   |
| Complicating Action | <i>Then what happened?</i>  | Core narrative that provides the “what happened?” element                 | Temporally ordered narrative clauses with a verb in the present or simple past |
| Resolution          | <i>What finally happened?</i>   | Tells the final key event of the story                                    | Last of the narrative clauses that began the Action                            |
| Evaluation          | <i>So what?</i>   | Shows how the story is interesting, stresses the most peculiar elements   | Intensifiers, modal verbs, repetition, embedded speech, evaluative commentary  |
| Coda                | <i>How does it all end?</i>   | Signals end, links back to present situation                              | A generalized statement  |

A vernacular narrative occurs within the discourse of ordinary face-to-face interaction, and its initial and final stages are signaled by the categories of abstract and of coda. These borderline categories can be seen as optional because it is not always necessary to indicate that a story is about to begin or end. The abstract outlines what type of story the narrator intends to share, and the coda summarizes some general observation derivable from the story. At the same time, the coda links the interlocutors “back to the point at which they entered the narrative” (Labov, 1972, p.365).

The category of orientation defines the participants involved in the story as well as where and when a story

took place. Moreover, other circumstances, e.g. the conditions of the participants, can be also outlined. This category helps the listener to imagine the characters and to locate a story into an appropriate temporal and spatial setting. It manifests the departure point of the actual story. It could be argued that the category of orientation can carry a lower degree of narrative value since, from the point of view of tellability, the events are appreciated more than the participants. If the listener is familiar with the characters involved as well as with the temporal and spatial setting, the narrator invests fewer linguistic forms in their identification than if the characters, place, and time are unknown to the listener. For the scope of this paper, and due to the fact that the analysis also focuses on the difference between the I- and she/ he-narrator, the author puts this argument aside and approaches this category as being of the same importance as the categories whose function is to mediate the actual events. The narrator's perspective has an impact on the category of orientation.

The category that provides the story itself is the complicating action. Its significance is underlined by the highest occurrence of narrative clauses. For this reason, Toolan (1988, p.153) sees this category as "the obligatory nucleus". Chatman (1978), however, thinks that both the complicating action and the resolution, which is the category that presents the key moment of a story, constitute the kernels which are "narrative moments that give rise to cruxes in the direction taken by events" (Chatman, 1978, p.53).

According to Berger (1997, p.36), the category of evaluation is meant to "embellish kernels, add details to them, and flesh them out". As a result, it is up to the narrator whether to evaluate a story or not. Like the abstract and coda, this category can be seen as optional. On the other hand, if evaluative remarks are excluded, a story might be considered less worth reporting (Labov, 1972, p.371). Even though the Labovian categories are derived from oral vernacular narratives, the paper is written with the assumption that these categories are functional in written vernacular narratives as well. The paper argues that the skeleton of a story is conveyed by the categories of orientation, complicating action, and resolution, with the potential of the category of orientation being driven by the narrator's perspective and by the narrator-narratee relationship. The categories of abstract and coda are optional since their function is to delimit a narrative. Evaluation is optional as well, even though it contributes towards the tell-ability of a story.

### **Narrators**

Regardless of the medium through which a story is told, story-telling is always provided by a narrator. Following Wales' definition, "[a] narrator is a person or agent who narrates, who tells a story, whether factual or fictional" (Wales, 2011, p.286). In the analyzed texts, each narrator was a student who was asked to present the events of the preceding afternoon in the form of a narrative. The task was thus to narrativize a very short period in their lives, a factual narrative. The students were instructed to narrativize the events from two different perspectives, in the first-person and then in the third-person narrator. In terms of

Genette (1980, p.245), the former perspective is known as homodiegetic and is more likely to include autobiographical features; the latter, the heterodiegetic narrator, tends to be omniscient. The key distinction lies in their detachment and involvement in the story being told.

The I-narrator is internal to a narrative and "brings us psychologically much closer to the central character" (Simpson, 2004, p.28). Besides, from the point of view of pragmatics, the use of the first person singular implies the personal pronoun *you*. This deictic dichotomy thus clearly establishes the roles of I, the narrator, and you, the addressee, to whom the story is told and for whom it is designed. The heterodiegetic narrator, on the other hand, is believed to be external to the story. As a result, there is much more space between who narrates and who the story is about, which allows the narrator to provide certain information about the character while not revealing other facts (Leech and Short, 2007; Simpson, 2004).

### **Hypotheses**

Considering the theoretical background outlined above, three hypotheses are offered. The first tackles the discourses in which oral narratives in general and the written ones under investigation exist. Due to the differences between the communicative situations, the hypothesis is that the written narratives will tend to omit the categories of abstract and coda. The second hypothesis focuses on the evaluation. Since the students were encouraged to narrativize an ordinary day in their lives, this lower degree of interestingness, hence tellability, will result in the absence of this particular category. The third hypothesis concerns the transition from I-narrator to she/ he-narrator in terms of Labov's narrative framework. This hypothesis anticipates that more emphasis will be put on the category of orientation in the stories narrated from the point of view of a heterodiegetic narrator due to the higher degree of detachability between the narrator and the character. The increased emphasis in this category means providing more information and details about the characters and about the temporal and spatial setting of the story.

### **Methodology**

The materials for the analysis were collected in a bachelor-course class called Introduction to Stylistics. The topic of the class was narrative stylistics; the main focus was on the Labovian narrative framework and on the distinction between the I- and the she/ he-narrator. The concept of the class was based on a practical approach towards the topic. Simply speaking, the students were asked to write two texts in which they were encouraged to use the techniques under discussion, i.e. the first- and third-person narrator. Prior to their writing, the students were not told about Labov's framework, nor about the distinction between the perspectives of homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators. The objective was to make the students discover and understand story organization and its structure as well as the differences between the narrator types. Creative writing techniques were employed in order to support and examine students' practical ability of narrating a real-life story. The instructions for the individual texts were revealed gradually. The students were first given instructions for

text A, in which their task was to narrate a story in the first person. After finishing the text, they were instructed to recontextualize the A version into a new text, text B, in which the perspective changed to a she/ he-narrator. They were given 10–15 minutes for each text. The instructions were as follows:

1. **Text A** – describe what you did yesterday after you left school. Use the first person narration (I-narrator) in order to tell what you experienced between the moment when you left school and when you went to bed.
2. **Text B** – rewrite text A using the third person narration (she/ he-narrator). Name the character. Feel free to make any changes that you think are important/necessary (for whatever reason).

Even though the seminar was taught in English, the students were allowed to choose the language of narration. The choice was offered in order to make them feel comfortable and thus enable them to focus on narrating and not be disturbed by a language barrier. The students' levels of English ranged between upper intermediate (B2) and advanced (C1) users according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Given the choice, 83 % of students narrativized the events in English, 17 % chose their mother tongue, i.e. Czech or Slovak. After finishing text B, they were also asked to provide feedback. The feedback instructions were as follows:

**From A to B** – try to articulate all the changes you have made. Besides changing pronouns, did you make any other changes, e.g. providing some additional information about the character, etc.? If yes, why have you made those changes?

The main idea of the class was that the students would learn and practice the main topics of narrative stylistics via their own narrating. The texts were evaluated in the next class when the Labovian narrative framework was introduced and the differences between the homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators were discussed. The students were encouraged to comment on the experience of writing their texts. The students were not familiar with the narrative framework when writing their stories. Considering their feedback, however, some of them were aware of the distinction between the narrators as far as detachability is concerned.

### Results of Investigation

After excluding the illegible texts, the total number of students whose narratives were included in the analysis was 48. This means that there were 48 A texts and 48 B texts. For the simplicity of the analysis, text A and text B are two varieties of one narrative – A has a homodiegetic narrator, while B has a heterodiegetic narrator. There were 27 narratives in which texts A and B were more or less identical as far as the Labovian categories are concerned: when the students rewrote their stories to the third person narration, they followed the same narrative pattern as in the variety of the I-narrator, employing the same categories in text A and text B and arranging them in an identical order. Of course, the change that could still be observed here was the shift from the use of the first personal and

possessive pronouns to the use of the third person pronouns. These grammatical changes were simply not accompanied by stylistic changes. On the other hand, there were 21 narratives in which certain changes between text A and text B in terms of Labov's narrative categories occurred. In these narratives, the she/ he-narrator texts differed from the I-narrator texts in the categories of evaluation and orientation. The following chapters present an overview of the individual results.

### Applicability of Labov's Narrative Framework

Table 2 demonstrates how students included or excluded Labov's categories in their written narratives. The individual categories are abbreviated: abstract is ABST, coda is CD, complicating action is CMPL, orientation is ORNT, resolution is RSL, and evaluation is EVL. The “+” symbol stands for the presence of a category, while the “-“ symbol refers to its absence.

**Table 2.** Use of Labov's Categories in Students' Written Narratives (Both versions A and B together).

| Labov's Categories  | No. of Texts | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------------|------------|
| + all categories    | 8            | 17 %       |
| - ABST              | 7            | 15 %       |
| - CD                | 5            | 10 %       |
| - ABST, - CD        | 27           | 56 %       |
| - ABST, - CD, - EVL | 1            | 2 %        |
| Total               | 48           | 100 %      |

It is important to add that even if one or more categories were omitted, the rest of the categories were included. In all cases, the categories were arranged in the same order as in oral vernacular stories (Labov, 1972). If the category of evaluation was present, it appeared throughout the texts. Furthermore, as written above, versions A and B are treated as two varieties of one text in Table 2. Therefore, the total number is 48, not 96. The significant changes in the B version in terms of Labov's categories are indicated in Table 3 and explained in the text that follows that table.

As the table above illustrates, all the Labovian categories were identified in 17 % of the narratives under investigation. This means that in 8 narratives, students used the core categories of orientation, complicating action, and resolution, as well as the categories of abstract and coda and the category of evaluation. The example below illustrates how one of the students framed her narrative. The original was in Czech, so a more or less literal translation into English is provided for better text comprehension:

#### 1a) Abstract:

*Včera jsem měla narozeniny. Tudiž jsem plánovala strávit své odpoledne nějakým skvělým způsobem, což se mi také povedlo.*

*Yesterday, it was my birthday. That's why I planned to spend the afternoon in a great way, which I managed to do [Author's translation].*

#### 1b) Coda

*Celkově to byl super den, přesně takový, jaký by si člověk představoval, když má narozeniny.*

*All in all, it was a great day, exactly as one would imagine when it's his birthday [Author's translation].*

The first sentence of the abstract signals what kind of a day the narrator and the character in one person experienced. It indicates the salience of the situation and sets the reader's expectations. The following sentence then summarizes the success of the narrator's birthday afternoon. The coda underlines that everything went well, plus it adds a general comment on how ideal birthdays should be spent.

Even though the students' written narratives were not embedded within another written discourse, 17 % of the texts were both initiated and terminated by the abstract and the coda, respectively. A further 12 narratives (25 %) either lacked the abstract but included the coda (15 %) or they lacked the coda but had the abstract (10 %). In other words, almost 42 % of the analyzed narratives include either both or at least one of the borderline categories. This might be considered rather a higher number than expected. The students themselves explained in the next class that they felt that they had had to express that the story was about to begin and/ or to end.

On the other hand, both the abstract and coda were excluded in 56 % of the texts, which represents the highest ratio of the analyzed narratives. There was one narrative that lacked the categories of abstract and coda, as well as that of evaluation. In this particular narrative, the student used no stylistic devices that would specify or underline the peculiarity or interestingness of the story. Grammatically, the narrative contained only nominal phrases such as *I, my mother*, and *she*, verb phrases that consisted predominantly of active verbs, and a couple of adverbial phrases referring to time and location. There were no verbs of sensual perception, nor any adverbials reflecting the narrator's emotional conditions. Simply speaking, the student based the narrative on a series of events without any evaluative comments.

If the results provided in Table 1 are to be interpreted in terms of the presence of the Labovian categories, it can be said that 81 % of the narratives included the core categories of orientation, complicating action, and resolution, as well as the optional category of evaluation. This finding is in contrast with the author's expectations, since it was assumed that due to the ordinariness of the stories, the students would omit evaluative remarks and comments. The evaluation category is one that students elaborated on in their third-person narration versions. There were 21 texts in which students made some stylistic changes when shifting their stories from the I-narrator to the she/ he-narrator. In the she/ he-narrator texts, the students provided more information about the characters and the setting, as well as more evaluative remarks. Table 3 summarizes the ratio of those categories.

The category of evaluation reached the highest ratio. At 48 %, it suggests the need for evaluation in a heterodiegetic narrative. The category of orientation was reinforced in 33 %. The combination of both evaluation and orientation occurred in 19 % of the analyzed stories.

**Table 3.** Elaborated Categories in Students' B Versions.

| Categories Elaborated in Text B | No. of Texts | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|--------------|------------|
| + EVL                           | 10           | 48 %       |
| + ORNT                          | 7            | 33 %       |
| + EVL and ORNT                  | 4            | 19 %       |
| Total                           | 21           | 100 %      |

Considering the student feedback, the stories told in the she/ he-narrator were approached as distant. The students themselves expressed their internal need to provide more details about the characters as well as about the narrators' emotional involvement in the story. The example below represents one of the analyzed narratives in which the categories of evaluation and orientation were more developed in the B version of the narrative. The narrative is provided in its original version without any changes at the levels of lexis, grammar, or spelling. The underlined phrases in 2B reflect the elaboration in the category of orientation and evaluation.

#### 2A) I-narrator

*Upon leaving school, I found myself thinking about my bachelor's thesis all the way home. When I arrived, I immediately proceeded to my room, turned on my computer, logged into IS and downloaded the bachelor's thesis pointed out to me by my (hopefully) supervisor. I read it with disgust. The said thesis was totally unimaginative and it lacked any analytical thought. The whole exercise was a regurgitation of known facts. I left the flat disappointedly, determined to get drunk.*

#### 2B) she/ he-narrator

*Süleyman left the school anxiously, contemplating his bachelor's thesis all through the bus ride, until finally, he got home. With undistracted mind and full of energy, he acquired the thesis his would-be supervisor talked about. This was actually the first BA thesis Süleyman has ever read, and it felt very sloppy. There was practically no author's contribution, only reiteration of facts painstakingly collected by other researchers. Süleyman felt cheated and disregarding moslem faith, he decided to get drunk.*

Version 2A lacks both the abstract and the coda, but even without these categories, it is obvious that it represents a narrative since it provides a sequence of temporally ordered events which happened to the I-narrator who is at the same time the main character of the narrative. No further details about this character are provided, unlike in the retold version of the she/ he-narrator. The category of orientation focuses on where the actions took place, namely in the non-school environment, which is derivable from *upon leaving the school*, and in the character's dwelling, which is indicated by *to my room*. However, an explicit temporal reference is not provided; it can only be derived from *upon leaving the school*, which means when the narrator's school day was over. The complicating action concerns the narrator's leaving the school, thinking about the recommended thesis, searching and downloading the thesis, and reading it. The resolution represents the character's disappointment and decision to get drunk. The whole narrative is embellished with a few evaluative remarks. These are structured as adverbials of intensity or

degree, e.g. *totally unimaginative, with disgust, disappointedly*, or they are embedded in the semantic aspect of the verbs used, e.g. *I found myself thinking, I proceeded*. As in version 2A, neither an abstract nor a coda frames version 2B. On the other hand, more circumstantial details are provided. The orientation is enriched with the information about the vehicle that transported the character from school to home – *all through the bus ride*. Even though this information does not have an impact on the story development, it adds something about the main character in terms of his use of public transportation. Not only does the reader learn about the character's socio-economic background, but *contemplating his bachelor's thesis all through the bus ride* enables the reader to see Süleyman as a thoughtful and studious person who cares about his education even outside of school. The author also shows more of the character's identity. His ethnic background is implied by the choice of the name *Süleyman*, indicating an Arabic origin, and his religious orientation is stressed towards the end of the story by the words *disregarding moslem [sic] faith*.

As stated above, this particular narrative is enhanced by evaluative devices. They help to identify the character's personal feelings about all the activities he engaged in in the narrative. For example, in the she/ he-narrator version, the reader is told that [*r*]his was actually the first BA thesis Süleyman has ever read. This piece of information is not provided in the original I-narrator version, nor are there any implicit allusions to the character's first encounter with a bachelor thesis. This enables the narrator to present an evaluation of the character's background of gained knowledge as far as his education is concerned. Regarding the quality of the recommended thesis, the narrator evaluated it as *very sloppy with facts painstakingly collected*. Besides evaluating the character's expertise and the suggested thesis, the narrator also elaborates on the evaluation of the character's internal state. While in the 2A text, the reader is not told what the character felt before and after reading the thesis, the 2B text communicates that the character approached the thesis *with undistracted mind and full of energy* and when he finished it, he *felt cheated*. The use of the verb of perception and the expression *cheated* in 2B reflects his actual state of mind more definitely than the adverbial of manner in 2A *disappointedly*, which just describes how he left the flat. The she/ he-narrator version takes advantage of stylistic devices that enable the reader to experience the whole story not just by making the setting more vivid, but also by reflecting the character's and narrator's attitudes towards the events and conditions in question.

## Conclusion

The present paper studies the applicability of Labov's categories of naturally occurring oral narratives to written vernacular narratives. The material under analysis is represented by 48 students' narratives created spontaneously in the author's course Introduction to Stylistics. The hypothesis that the category of abstract and coda would be ignored was confirmed. The omission of these two categories is undoubtedly caused by the whole communicative situation in which the narratives occurred. The

students were asked to talk about what had happened to them on the previous day at a particular time, regardless of whether the story was worth narrating or not. Unlike in a number of naturally occurring oral narratives, it was not the students' spontaneous decision to share their stories. To put it differently, the discourse of written narratives was intentionally embedded within the discourse of oral classroom teaching. Since the students were instructed to narrate an ordinary story conveying their personal experience, there was no need to signal that the story was about to begin, nor to link it back to the present situation, i.e. to class. Nonetheless, almost one quarter of the narratives did include at least one of the borderline categories. Consequently, the categories of abstract and coda can be understood as cohesive devices that function interdiscursively. They relate the discourse of a narrative to the discourse within which a narrative is embedded.

All the narratives included the category of orientation, complicating action, and resolution, with the students further elaborating the category of orientation in the texts retold in the she/ he-narrator technique. Surprisingly, the category of evaluation appeared in all except one of the analyzed texts; thus, the second hypothesis was not confirmed. Concerning the hypothesis dealing with the differences between the I- and she/ he-narrator in terms of Labov's categories, the analysis shows that the students tended to provide more information about the protagonists, the setting, and the surrounding circumstances, as well as about both the character's and the narrator's attitudes towards the events in question. In other words, the categories of orientation and evaluation were more elaborated in the texts written from the perspective of a heterodiegetic narrator. The students themselves felt the need to say more in the she/ he-narrator version because, as one of the students wrote, *the story was no longer about me so I felt I had to tell more about the character*.

Drawing upon the results described above, it can be concluded that the complicating action and the resolution are definitely the core categories (cf. Toolan, 1988 and Chatman, 1978) regardless of the narrator. Considering the role of the narrator, however, the heterodiegetic vernacular narratives tend to have the categories of orientation and evaluation elaborated more than the homodiegetic narratives. Since these two categories enable the she/ he-narrator to provide more information about the temporal, spatial, and circumstantial settings as well as to enhance the point of tellability, they must be considered as crucial, thus equal to the complicating action and resolution, within the discourse of a vernacular third person narration. Further research might focus on whether the results would correspond with the ones presented in this paper or whether they would differ if the students were familiar with Labov's theory before writing their vernacular narratives.

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### **Naratyvai gimtąja kalba. Studentų rašinių stiliaus analizė: atvejo tyrimas**

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojamas W. Labovo naratyvo sandaros ir jo šešių kategorijų taikymas rašytiniams naratyvams gimtąja (etnine) kalba. Tikslas yra palyginti naratyvus pateiktus tiek pirmuoju asmeniu (homodiegetiniu variantu), tiek ir kitais asmenimis (heterodiegetiniu variantu) pagal W. Labovo naratyvo struktūrinę sandarą. Tiriamoji medžiaga – studentų pasakojamos istorijos, sukurtos 2012 m. stilistikos įvado programoje. Atsižvelgiama į skirtumus tarp komunikatyvinių situacijų, kuriose įterpti žodinis ir rašytinis naratyvai, siekiant, kad šis palyginimas būtų konstruktyvus. Straipsnyje daugiausia akcentuojama naratyvo funkcionalumo, kurį turi W. Labovo kategorijos arba neturi, svarba paprastuose rašytiniuose naratyvuose. Pagal tyrimo rezultatus daroma išvada, kad santrauka ir epilogas yra tarpdiskursinės kategorijos, nes jos funkcionuoja kaip jungiamieji elementai, atribojantys naratyvo diskursą nenaratyvine diskurse, nepaisant naratyvo aplinkos ir komunikatyvinės situacijos. Įvadinė dalis ir atomazga konstruojant naratyvą yra svarbūs ir sudėtingi veiksmi, nes jie gali padidinti jo vertę. Šią išvadą patvirtina tyrimo rezultatai, rodantys, kad šios dvi kategorijos studentų naratyvų heterodiegetiniame variante buvo labiausiai išplėtotos, kai pasakojama ne pirmuoju, o kitais asmenimis.

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