RESEARCH TITLE

Narrative Superstructure in Selected English and Arabic Short Stories: A Contrastive Study

Prof. Qasim Abbas Dhayef , PhD.[1]   **Mawi'l Firas Abdul-Muni'm[2]**

[1] University of Babylon
Email: qasimabbas@uobabylon.edu.iq

[2] University of Babylon
Email:mawilalsalhi@gmail.com

Abstract

No previous studies have tackled the applicability of Labov's narrative superstructure as far as the researcher is concerned from a contrastive perspective. The present study aims at investigating the applicability of Labov model (1972) [abstract - orientation - complicating action-evaluation - resolution - coda] to five selected English and five selected Arabic short stories for the sake of finding out the differences and similarities between these short stories. The methodology of the study is that the selected English and Arabic short stories are going to be analyzed in the light of Labov's model of the narrative superstructure. The study is theoretically significant since it identifies the narrative superstructure of the selected English and Arabic short stories. It is also practically significance because it helps researchers who have the interest in contrastive studies make use of such kind of data in their studies if both Arabic and English short stories share the same narrative superstructure. Finally, as it has been concluded by the present study, it is obvious that the narrative superstructure of labov (1972) is applicable to these English as well as the Arabic ones, but with some exceptions concerning both of them.

Key Words: Discourse Analysis, Narrative Discourse, Short stories Superstructure, Modes of Discourse Analysis, Contrastive Analysis

عنوان البحث

البنية الفوقية السردية في قصص قصيرة إنجليزية و عربية مختارة
دراسة مقارنة

بروف: قاسم عباس ضيف[1]   موئل فراس عبد المنعم[2]

[1] جامعة بابل
بريد إلكتروني: qasimabbas@uobabylon.edu.iq
[2] جامعة بابل
البريد الإلكتروني: mawillalsalhi@gmail.com

المستخلص

لم تتناول دراسات سابقة إمكانية تطبيق البنية الفوقية السردية للابوف على حد علم الباحث على نحوٍ تقابلي. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من قابلية تطبيق نموذج البنية الفوقية السردية للابوف (1972) [الملخص – التوجه – تعقيد الاحداث – التقييم – الخاتمة – الاشارة الختامية] على خمس قصص قصيرة إنجليزية مختارة وخمسة اخرى عربية من أجل معرفة الاختلافات والتشابهات بين هذه القصص في ضوء مدى تطبيق النموذج المذكور آنفاً عليها. الاجراءات المنهجية للدراسة الحالية تشتمل على تحليل القصص القصيرة الإنجليزية والعربية المختارة في ضوء نموذج لابوف للبنية الفوقية السردية. تقتصر الدراسة الحالية على التحقق من البنية الفوقية السردية لخمس قصص قصيرة إنجليزية و خمسة اخرى عربية, كلٌّ منها لمؤلف. الدراسة الحالية ذات قيمة نظرية إذ أنها تحدد البنية الفوقية السردية للقصص القصيرة المختارة. كما و أنها ذات أهمية عملية إذ أنها تقدم المعونة للباحثين المهتمين بالدراسات المقارنة للإستفادة من هذا النوع من البيانات في دراساتهم في حال كانت القصص القصيرة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية المتناولة في هذه الدراسة تشترك في نفس البنية الفوقية السردية. و في الختام ، توصلت الدراسة الحالية إلى أن البنية الفوقية السردية للابوف (1972) تتطبق على ما اقتصرت عليه من قصص إنجليزية و كذلك عربية ، ولكن مع بعض الاستثاءات المتعلقة بكليهما.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تحليل الخطاب, الخطاب السردي, قصص قصيرة, البنية الفوقية السردية, أساليب تحليل الخطاب, التحليل التقابلي.

1. Introduction

The applicability of Labov's narrative superstructure to English and Arabic short stories has not been talked previously as far as the researcher knows. The present study is going to investigate the narrative superstructure of five selected English short stories and five selected Arabic ones by analyzing these short stories according to William Labov model (1972).

The present study aims at identifying the narrative superstructure of English and Arabic short stories by checking the workability of Labov's (ibid) narrative superstructure in such genre to find out the differences and similarities between the English and the Arabic ones.

It is hypothesized that Labov's model (ibid) of the narrative superstructure is completely applicable for both English as well as Arabic short stories.

The methodology of the present contrastive analysis is that five selected English short stories and five selected Arabic ones are to be analyzed according to the model of Labov (ibid) to identify their narrative superstructure which is supposed to be applicable within the limits of the present study.

This investigation is limited to the narrative superstructure of five selected English and Arabic short stories of different author for each.

The present study has a theoretical significance in that it identifies the narrative superstructure of English and Arabic short stories, and a practical one in that it helps researchers who are interested in contrastive studies make use of such kind of data in their studies if both Arabic and English short stories share the same narrative superstructure.

2. Literature Review

A set of pivotal notions need to be considered Before getting into deep water.

2.1 Discourse Analysis :

Discourse analysis is a method of analyzing the structure of texts or utterances which are longer than one sentence, considering both their linguistic content and sociolinguistic context (Adolphus:2022).

Discourse analysis is considered as a level of linguistics that refers to a research method for studying written or spoken language in accordance with its social context. The aim of discourse analysis is to get a deeper understanding of how language is used in real life situations (Luo, 2019).

2.2 Modes of Discourse Analysis :

Barzilay and Kan (2017) refer to that there are four modes of discourse analysis which there is a need to shed light on them, as in 2.2.1 .

2.2.1 Narrative discourse analysis is a mode of discourse analysis in which an event or a set of events are introduced into the universe of discourse. These events are temporally related according to narrative time.

2.2.2 Expository discourse analysis is a mode of discourse analysis that has a

function of explanation or giving instruction. This mode provides background information in narrative contexts. The information presented should be general and well accepted truth.

2.2.3 Descriptive discourse analysis is a mode of discourse analysis that re-produces, invents, or clearly shows what things look like in accordance with the five senses, so that the reader can imagine what is being described.

2.2.4 Argumentative discourse analysis is a mode of discourse analysis that makes a viewpoint and proves its validity towards a topic for the sake of convincing the reader.

The present study is going to tackle the superstructure of the narrative discourse as suggested by Labov (1972).

2.3 The Superstructure :

The Superstructure is defined as the organizational plan of a given text. Benoit (1992) points out that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, for scholars to study something without studying or identifying that thing.

Each mode of discourse, except the descriptive discourse, has its own distinctive superstructure, they are :

A- Exposition : According to Tirkonen-Condit (1985) the superstructure of the expository discourse is the following order

[situation-problem-solution-evaluation]

B- Argument: According to Toulmin (1958) the superstructure of the argumentative discourse is the following order

[claim-data-warrant]

C- Narration : According to (Labov 1972) the superstructure of the narrative discourse is the following order

[abstract - orientation - complicating action- evaluation - resolution - coda]

2.4 Contrastive Linguistics and contrastive analysis

Contrastive linguistics is a branch of linguistics that is concerned with showing the differences and similarities in the structure of at least two languages or dialects (Webster:2022).

There is a differentiation between contrastive linguistics and contrastive analysis in that, CA is the systematic comparison of two or more languages, aiming at describing their similarities and differences. CA has often been done for different purposes whether practical or pedagogical . Its main concern has been to provide better descriptions and teaching materials for language learners (Johansson:2008).

Contrastive Analysis is also defined by Crystal (2003) as a general approach to the investigation of language especially as carried on particular areas of Applied Linguistics, like foreign-language teaching and translation. Crystal (ibid) also refers to that in a contrastive analysis of two languages, structural differences are specified and identified to be studied then as areas of potential difficulty in foreign language learning.".

3. The Model

To uncover the superstructure of narrative discourse, e.g., story-telling, there is need for a model to analyze such narration. William Labov (1972) suggests a model by which narrative discourse, e.g., stories are analyzed for the sake of identifying their own narrative superstructure. Labov (ibid) identifies the narrative superstructure as the following :

- **Abstract :** indicates that the speaker is trying to attract the listener's attention. Such attraction may be direct, like "Listen to my story!" or indirect "May I tell you a story?". The general theme of the story is also indicated.
- **Orientation :** demonstrates the tendency of the narrators to set the scene. In other words, orientating a listener by providing background information that are considered as important for the narrator to the story and plot, so the listener is orientated, for example by, the *who, where, why,* and *how.*
- **Complicating action :** is the principal part of the narrative discourse that is also called *the body* of the story.
- **Evaluation** : is the points, or reasons for which the narrative discourse is being told. "Evaluations" may be implicit (within the text) or explicit (after finishing the story)
- **Resolution :** indicates the resolution or conclusion to the narrative discourse (the story), to close the story and to tie up the loose ends.
- **Coda :** represents the final indication that the story has closed right now. It may be present or absent.
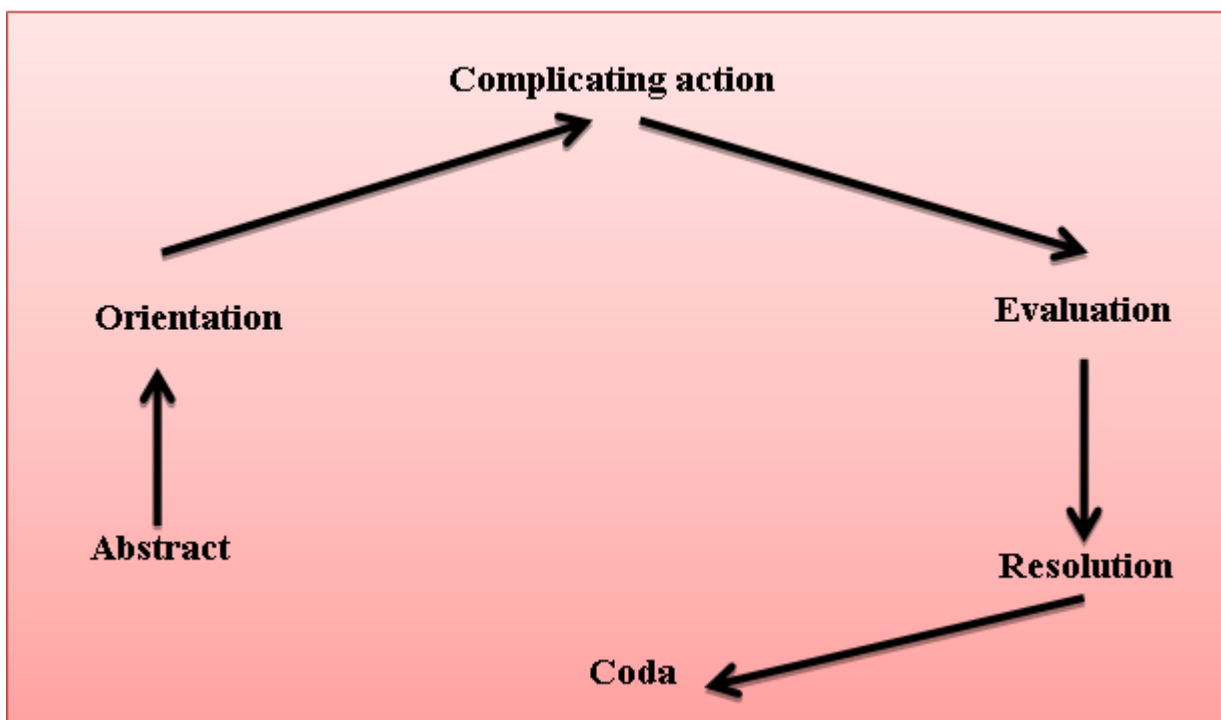
(UK Essays, 2018)

Figure 1 : Labove's (1972) Model of Narrative Superstructure

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

In this section, five selected English and Arabic short stories are going to be analyzed according to Labov (1972) model for identifying their narrative superstructure and checking the applicability of the model of Labov to these short stories.

4.1 The Five Selected English Short Stories

4.1.1 The Lion and the Mouse

Abstract : A lion was once sleeping in the jungle when a mouse started running up and down his body just for fun.

Orientation : This disturbed the lion's sleep, and he woke up quite angry. He was about to eat the mouse when the mouse desperately requested the lion to set him free. "I promise you, I will be of great help to you someday if you save me." The lion laughed at the mouse's confidence and let him go.

Complicating action : One day, a few hunters came into the forest and took the lion with them. They tied him up against a tree. The lion was struggling to get out and started to whimper.

Resolution : Soon, the mouse walked past and noticed the lion in trouble. Quickly, he ran and gnawed on the ropes to set the lion free.

Coda : Both of them sped off into the jungle.

Evaluation: Moral of the Story

A small act of kindness can go a long way.

4.1.2 Count Wisely

Abstract : One day, king Akbar asked a question in his court that left everyone in the courtroom puzzled.

Orientation : As they all tried to figure out the answer, Birbal walked in and asked what the matter was. They repeated the question to him. The question was, "How many crows are there in the city?"

Complicating action : Birbal immediately smiled and went up to Akbar. He announced the answer; he said there were twenty-one thousand, five hundred and twenty-three crows in the city.

Resolution : When asked how he knew the answer, Birbal replied, "Ask your men to count the number of crows. If there are more, then the relatives of the crows must be visiting them from nearby cities. If there are fewer, then the crows from our city must be visiting their relatives who live outside the city."

Coda : Pleased with the answer, Akbar presented Birbal with a ruby and pearl chain.

Evaluation : Moral of the Story

Having an explanation for your answer is just as important as having an answer.

4.1.3 The Fox and the Stork

Abstract : One day, a selfish fox invited a stork for dinner.

Orientation : Stork was very happy with the invitation – she reached the fox's home on time and knocked at the door with her long beak. The fox took her to the dinner table and served some soup in shallow bowls for both of them. As the bowl was too shallow for the stork, she couldn't have soup at all. But, the fox licked up his soup quickly.

Complicating action : The stork was angry and upset, but she didn't show her anger and behaved politely. To teach a lesson to the fox, she then invited him for dinner the next day. She too served soup, but this time the soup was served in two tall narrow vases. The stork devoured the soup from her vase, but the fox couldn't drink any of it because of his narrow neck.

Resolution : The fox realised his mistake and went home famished.

Evaluation : Moral of the Story

A selfish act backfires sooner or later!

4.1.4 The Golden Touch

Abstract : Once there lived a greedy man in a small town.

Orientation : He was very rich, and he loved gold and all things fancy. But he loved his daughter more than anything. One day, he chanced upon a fairy. The fairy's hair was caught in a few tree branches. He helped her out, but as his greediness took over, he realised that he had an opportunity to become richer by asking for a wish in return (by helping her out). The fairy granted him a wish. He said, "All that I touch should turn to gold." And his wish was granted by the grateful fairy.

Complicating action : The greedy man rushed home to tell his wife and daughter about his wish, all the while touching stones and pebbles and watching them convert into gold. Once he got home, his daughter rushed to greet him. As soon as he bent down to scoop her up in his arms, she turned into a gold statue.

Resolution : He was devastated and started crying and trying to bring his daughter back to life.

Coda : He realised his folly and spent the rest of his days searching for the fairy to take away his wish.

Evaluation : Moral of the Story

Greed will always lead to downfall.

4.1.5 The Proud Rose

Abstract : Once upon a time, there was a beautiful rose plant in a garden.

Orientation : One rose flower on the plant was proud of its beauty. However, it was disappointed that it was growing next to an ugly cactus. Every day, the rose would insult the cactus about its looks, but the cactus stayed quiet. All the other plants in the garden tried to stop the rose from bullying the cactus, but the rose was too swayed by its own beauty to listen to anyone.

Complicating action : One summer, a well in the garden dried up and there was no water for the plants. The rose slowly began to wilt. The rose saw a sparrow dip its beak into the cactus for some water.

Resolution : The rose then felt ashamed for having made fun of the cactus all this time. But because it was in need of water, it went to ask the cactus if it could have some water.

Coda : The kind cactus agreed, and they both got through summer as friends.

Evaluation : Moral of the Story

Never judge someone by the way they look.

As a consequence of what has been analyzed above, the superstructures of these five very short stories are going to be further illustrated in the following table,

Table (1) : Superstructures of The Selected English Short Stories

Text no.	Abstract		Orientation		Complicating Action		Evaluation		Resolution		Coda	
1	**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**	
2	**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**	
3	**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**0**	
4	**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**	
5	**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**	
Total	**5**	**100%**	**5**	**100%**	**5**	**100%**	**5**	**100%**	**5**	**100%**	**4**	**80%**

After analyzing the selected five English short stories, it becomes clear that all of these stories has the same superstructure including an *abstract* in which the writer attracts the reader's or listener's attention, *orientation* in which the writer gives information that he considers them as important, *complicating action* in which the body of the whole story is concentrated on, *evaluation* in which the points or reasons behind the story is declared whether implicitly or explicitly, *resolution* in which the writer shifts to the final part of the story to reach the final point to indicate that the story has been closed

because each story-telling is a cycle of events that needs to be closed, and *coda* which represents the part in which the narrator tells the reader how the story is relevant to his/her daily life, except the 3rd English short story tackled in the present study since Labov considers the coda as an optional element, i.e., it can be omitted.

4.2 The Five Selected Arabic Short stories

4.2.1 الحمامتان والسلحفاة

Abstract :

يُحكى أن حمامتين جميلتين قررتا السفر والابتعاد عن الغدير الذي عاشتا إلى جانبه طويلاً بسبب شح الماء فيه،

Orientation :

فحزنت صديقتهما السلحفاة وطلبت منهما أن تأخذاها معهما، فأجابتها الحمامتان بأنها لا تستطيع الطيران، بكت السلحفاة كثيراً وتوسلتهما بأن تجدا طريقة لنقلها معهما،

Complicating action :

فكرت الحمامتان كثيراً وقررتا حملها معهما، فأحضرتا عوداً قوياً أمسكت كل واحدة منهما به من طرف وطلبتا من السلحفاة أن تعض على هذا العود حتى تطيرا بها، وحذرتاها من أن تفتح فمها مهما كلّف الأمر لأن ذلك سيؤدي إلى سقوطها، وافقت السلحفاة على ذلك ووعدتهما بأن تنفذ ما طلبتاه منها،

Resolution :

وطارت الحمامتان فوق الغابة، إلى أن رأى بعض الناس الحمامتين والسلحفاة فقالوا: يا للعجب حمامتان تحملان سلحفاة وتطيران بها!!!

Coda :

لم تستطع السلحفاة تمالك نفسها فقالت: فقأ الله أعينكم ما دخلكم انتم! فسقطت بعد أن أفلتت العود من فمها وتكسرت أضلعها

Evaluation :

و قالت باكية: هذه هي نتيجة كثرة الكلام وعدم الوفاء بالوعد

4.2.2 كما تدين تُدان

Abstract :

قرر رجل التخلص من أبيه العجوز المسن بوضعه في بيت لرعاية المسنين،

Orientation :

بعد أن ضاق ذرعاً من كثرة استياء زوجته منه، وتذمّرها من تلبية حاجاته، وحرجها من المواقف التي يسببها لها أمام صديقاتها بسبب ما يعانيه من نسيان، فأخذ الرجل يُلملم حاجيات أبيه باكياً لما سيؤول إليه حاله، ناسياً ما قدّمه له هذا الأب له من حب وتضحية عندما كان في صحته وقوّته، لكنّ إلحاح الزوجة في كل حين أجبره على ما سيقوم عليه،

Complicating action :

تناول الرجل بعض الطعام والملابس و دسّها في حقيبة، وحمل معه قطعة كبيرة من الإسفنج لينام عليها والده هناك، وأخذ بيد أبيه متوجهاً إلى بيت الرعاية، إلّا أنّ إصرار ابنه الصغير عليه ليترك جزءاً من قطعة الفراش التي يحملها معه أثار عجبه، ودفعه للتوقف وسؤاله متذمراً: وماذا تريد بهذا الجزء من الفراش أنت؟!

Evaluation :

فقال له الطفل ببراءة: أريد أن أبقيه لك حتى تجد ما تنام عليه عندما أصطحبك إلى دار الرعاية في كبرك يا أبي!

Resolution :

وقف الرجل صَعِقاً لما سمعه من طفله الصغير، وبكى بكاء ابتلت منه لحيته، واستذكر ما قام به أبوه لأجله في طفولته وما قدمه له،

Coda :

فرمى الحاجيات أرضاً وعانق أباه عناقاً طويلاً وتعهّد أمام الله ثم أمام ابنه برعايته بنفسه ما دام على قيد الحياة.

4.2.3 حكاية النسر

Abstract :

في أعلى قمة شجرة كان هناك نسر أنثى تعيش بها واضعة عشها وبيوضها الأربعة تحميهم وتعتني بهم،

Orientation :

وفي يوم من الأيام أصاب الشجرة زلزال قوي مما جعل أحد البيضات تسقط من العش على الأرض وظلت في التدحرج إلى أن استقرت بقن دجاج، فقامت الدجاجة باحتضانها حتى فقست وخرج النسر الصغير منها.

Complicating action :

ظلت الدجاجة تربي النسر مع دجاجاتها وتعتني به حيث بدأ يكبر ويتعلم منها ما تعلمه لدجاجاتها حيث كان يعتقد كل ذلك الوقت أنه دجاجة مثل من حوله حتى خرج مع الدجاج لكي يلعبوا سوياً فرأى بالسماء مجموعة من النسور المحلقة فحاول أن يقوم بالطيران مثلهم ولكن الدجاجات سخروا منه وقالوا له أنت دجاجة ولن تتمكن من الطيران،

Resolution :

مما أصابه بالحزن واستسلم اليأس ولم يحاول الطيران ثانيةً وعاش باقي عمره مثل الدجاج،

Coda :

ولو أنه كان قد استمر في المحاولة لكان أثبت أنه نسر مكانه التحليق في أعالي السماء

4.2.4 قصة الرجل المتشائم

Abstract :

يحكى انه كان هناك رجل كبير في السن يعيش في احدى القرى البعيدة ،

Orientation :

و كان هذا الرجل المسن يعتبر اكثر الاشخاص تعاسة على وجه الارض فقد كان سكان القرية يخافون منه بسبب تشاؤمه الدائم ، فهو لا يعلم معنى التفاؤل ولا يمكن ان يتخيل حدوث الخير ابدا ، و كان الجميع يرونه كل يوم في مزاج سيء حتى سئموا منه و ابتعدوا عنه نهائيا.

Complicating action :

و مع تقدم هذا الرجل في السن ازداد كلامه سلبية و سوءا و كان سكان القرية يخافون من ان يسمعه ابنائهم فيصبحون سلبيين و متشائمين و بالتالي سوف يؤثر ذلك بصورة مباشرة على حياتهم ، وفي يوم من الايام وعندما بلغ هذا الرجل سن الثمانين عاما حدث شيئ عجيب في القرية ، شيء لم يكن يتوقع احد حدوثه ابدا. الرجل العجوز صاحب الثمانين عاما سعيد ولا يتذمر من شيء و هناك ابتسامة كبيرة تعلو وجهه ،

Resolution :

و على الرغم من ان سكان القرية كانوا سعيدين بذلك الا انهم توجهوا اليه وسألوه عن سبب هذه الابتسامة خصوصا و ان الرجل العجوز قضى جميع اعوامه في حالة من التشاؤم و الحزن ، فأجاب الرجل العجوز قائلا : لقد قضيت من عمري 80 عام وانا ابحث عن السعادة ولكني لم اجدها لذلك قررت ان اعيش حياتي بدونها وان استمتع بحياتي ،

Coda :

و تفاجئت بان ذلك جعلني اشعر بسعادة عارمة.

4.2.5 عمدة القرية

Abstract :

يحكي أن عمدة القرية رأي في المنام نهر يتحول الي صحراء قاحلة ،

Orientation :

والغريب في المر أنه ظل يشاهد ذلك المنام لمده شهر كامل ، فاتي بالعرافين و طلب منهم تفسير رؤياه ، فعجز الجميع عن ذلك إلا رجلان أخبروه بأنه سوف يموت بعد شهر من الان فأمر العمدة بسجنهم لحين انتهاء الشهر و التأكد من التفسير ،

Complicating action :

و بعد شهر مات العمدة فرجع ابنه من السفر و أفرج عن الرجلين بعد أن علم بما حدث

Resolution :

وقال فيهم للجميع أنهم يتوقعون الغيب ،

Coda :

فقاطعه شيخ الغفر: وقال لا والله ، أن العمدة انقطع عن الطعام و الشراب و ساءت حالته النفسية و مات خوفاً ،

Evaluation :

فالأفكار السيئة التي تؤمن بها تقتلنا.

Table (2) : Superstructures of The Selected Five Arabic Short Stories

Text no.	Abstract		Orientation		Complicating Action		Evaluation		Resolution		Coda	
1	**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**	
2	**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**	
3	**1**		**1**		**1**		**0**		**1**		**1**	
4	**1**		**1**		**1**		**0**		**1**		**1**	
5	**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**		**1**	
Total	5	**100%**	5	**100%**	5	**100%**	3	**60%**	5	**100%**	5	**100%**

After what has been analyzed in the analysis and illustrated in the table above, it is evident that the five selected Arabic short stories has the same superstructure of the five English ones with some exceptions. These exceptions lie under the umbrella of *evaluation* in that it is absent in two of the Arabic short stories under study while it is present in all of the English ones. The 3rd and the 4th Arabic short stories in the table above

have no evaluation. The evaluation element is obligatory in Labov (ibid) narrative

superstructure. So, the absence of evaluation in two of the Arabic short stories under discussion is a major difference between English and Arabic short stories as far as the present study is limited.

Concerning *coda*, only one of the English short stories under study lacks its coda. Even though it is something ordinary once Labov refers to the optionality of the coda element in the narrative superstructure, but it is a difference between the English and Arabic short stories under discussion.

Finally, a full comparative analysis of the selected English and Arabic short stories is going to be illustrated in the following total table to show the comparison between the narrative superstructure of the short stories under study.

Table (3) : The Total Comparison Between The Short Stories Under Study

	English		Arabic	
Abstract	5	100 %	5	100 %
Orientation	5	100 %	5	100 %
Complicating Action	5	100 %	5	100 %
Evaluation	5	100 %	3	60 %
Resolution	5	100 %	5	100 %
Coda	4	80 %	5	100 %

Concerning the five selected English short stories as shown in table (3), all of the *abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution* are present *100%* while only the *coda* is present *80%,* and it is possible for a narrative discourse not to have a coda as suggested by Labov (ibid).

Moving to the Arabic short stories discussed in the present study, it is obvious as in the table above that all of the *abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution* and coda are present *100%* while the evaluation's presence is *60%*. In other words, the narrative superstructure is mostly applicable but with suggesting that the *evaluation* element which is an obligatory one in labove's (ibid) narrative superstructure, is optional in the 3rd and 4th Arabic short stories under discussion as is proved in the present study.

5. Conclusion

Depending on the analysis and discussion of the present study, it has been concluded that the narrative superstructure of labov (1972) is applicable to the selected English and Arabic short stories with some exceptions concerning both the English and the Arabic ones. For the selected Arabic short stories, the exceptions are pivotal in that one of the obligatory elements in labov's narrative superstructure becomes an optional one. Meanwhile, in the selected English short stories, the exception is permissible since omitting that element (*coda*) is allowed by Labov's model (ibid).

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