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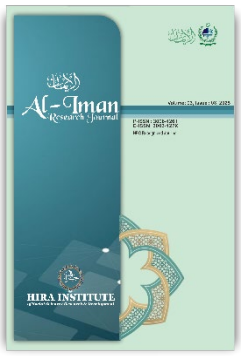

A Labovian Analysis of Macintyre's A Spy Among Friends (2014)

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Abstract

This research extends Labov's (1972) Narrative Schemas Model beyond its traditional application to oral and literary narratives by examining its relevance to biographical texts. The research analyzes Ben Macintyre's A Spy Among Friends (2014), a biography focused on Cold War double agent Kim Philby. Labov's (1972) model identifies six key schemas in a fully developed narrative: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. However, these schemas have not previously been applied to biographies. This research investigates the application of Labov's (1972) framework to biographical genre and offers new insights into biographical narrative structure. Using a qualitative approach, Labov's (1972) Narrative Schemas Model is employed as the primary analytical framework. The findings of the research revealed that the narrative structure of Macintyre's A Spy Among Friends (2014) conforms to the six schemas identified by Labov (1972). This indicates that the model is not only relevant but also valuable for the analysis of biographical text. The research suggests that the model's application can be extended to other non-fiction genres, such as memoirs and autobiographies, thereby broadening its utility in narrative analysis. Furthermore, this research highlights the significance of the abstract and coda in non-fiction narratives and calls for additional comparative studies across different media, including film and television.

Keywords:

Narrative Analysis, Labov's Narrative Schemas Model, Biographical Narrative, Narratology, Oral Narrative, A Spy Among Friends.

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Introduction

Labov and Waletzky (1967) tested the hypothesis that the language used by socially and economically marginalised groups was limited. They interviewed participants from Hispanic and African American communities in New York. They posed the question, "Were you ever in a situation where you thought you were in a serious danger of being killed" (Labov, 1972, p.354)? Followed by, "Were you ever in a fight with someone bigger than you?" (Labov, 1972, p. 354). When the subjects responded positively, they encouraged them to narrate their experiences in detail. This research led to the development of the Narrative Schema Model. The model identified five core elements: orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). However, Labov later revised this model in 1972 by adding a sixth element, the abstract (Labov, 1972). However, he noted that the abstract and coda are not always present, but fully developed narratives contain all six elements.

The model was designed to analyse oral narratives of personal experience (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). However, with the passage of time, the model's scope has expanded to include literary texts such as novels, short stories, and even religious and media narratives, but it has not yet been extended to the biographical genre. This research aims to broaden the application of Labov's model to the biography genre by investigating Macintyre's *A Spy Among Friends* (2014). By applying Labov's model to this text, the research investigates the model's suitability for biographical narratives and offers new insights into narrative structures in non-literary genres.

Research Questions

To what extent do the selected texts adhere to Labov's Narrative Schema Model?

In what sequence do the selected texts correspond to the schemas outlined in Labov's Narrative Schema Model?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ozyildirim (2009) applied Labov's model to written and oral accounts of frightening experiences. Junqueira (2010) compared American and Brazilian oral narratives and noted that Brazilians adhered more closely to Labov's structure. Channa et al. (2016) analysed a schoolteacher's oral account and found all six elements. Ebrahim (2016) compared British and Kurdish women's narratives and identified cultural differences in storytelling features like repetition and intensifiers.

Boyno et al. (2013) used the model to teach Shirley Jackson's *Charles* in an EFL classroom, and claimed it added comprehension. Jasim and Hatim (2015) found that the abstract was missing in *Guest of the Nation*. Iqbal et al. (2019) noted that the title of *The Bully*

acted as a rough abstract but lacked a coda. Sheikh et al. (2021) found an abstract in the title of *The Lottery* but no coda. Zaib et al. (2022) identified only four narrative elements in *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Sathya and Barathi (2022) found all but the coda in Lahiri's *A Choice of Accommodations*. Raza et al. (2023) observed that the title *Martin* served as an abstract, though not fully. Barany and Qaso (2023) identified all six elements in Iyezidi Chirok.

Al-Duleimi and Ghayadh (n.d.) affirmed the model's relevance to longer narratives. Hussein and Kadhim (2021, 2022) applied it to British and American novels by integrating Halliday's and Quirk's frameworks and found gender-based linguistic variations. Soliman (2022) analysed The *Coast of Utopia* and confirmed the model's applicability to drama. Zahra et al. (2023) identified all six elements in Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*.

Tanimoto (2009) analysed The Wife of Bath's Prologue and highlighted multiple narrative schemas. Qaleno et al. (2020) compared Labov's and Propp's models in analysing mystical poems, finding Labov's more effective. Hassoon (2018) identified all six elements in an Oprah episode. Laudisio (2018) found the model applicable to courtroom scenes in The Good Wife, Boston Legal, and Suits. Weir (2019) extended it to documentaries like Out of Control and Behind the Wall. MA et al. (2023) applied it to the film PK.

Wu (n.d.) analysed ESL students' essays on embarrassing events and found an abstract presence in one but not the other. Oktay (2010) studied narratives by 200 students and observed stronger narrative skills in students from higher social backgrounds. Wang (2019) found five out of six elements in essays by three Taiwanese students. Shuhua and Xian (2023) applied the model to continuation tasks, showing improved cohesion and coherence.

Labov's model, initially designed for oral narratives, has been effectively applied across diverse genres such as short stories, novels, poetry, media, and student writing. However, its application to biographical texts remains unexplored. This research addresses this gap and expands the model applicability to the biographical genre.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach to analyse Ben Macintyre's *A Spy Among Friends* (2014) through Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model. The model provides a structural framework for examining how the story is organised around the six elements of the model.

Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model

This research adopts Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model to analyse the text. The text is broken down into narrative units, which correspond to Labov's six components. These

units are identified based on the structural and functional characteristics outlined in Labov's (1972) model. The six elements of the model are explained below.

Abstract

The abstract briefly outlines the story, usually in one or two clauses, and answers, “What is the story about?" It signals the start of the story. (Labov, 1972).

Orientation

This schema provides background details, such as who, when, and where. It sets up the story's context by describing the characters and setting. Although orientation typically appears at the beginning, it can be found throughout the narrative. (Labov, 1972).

Complicating Action

The main events unfold in this part and answer what happened next. It follows a sequence of events. The clauses are often in the past tense and highlight reportable events. (Labov, 1972).

Evaluation

Labov (1972) viewed evaluation as crucial because it explains why the events are significant, as it addresses the "so what" question (Labov, 1972, p.368). This section reveals the narrator's involvement and is often interspersed between the complicating action and resolution. Labov (1972) identified three types of evaluation: embedded evaluation, external evaluation, and evaluation action.

External Evaluation

“The narrator can stop the narrative, turn to the listener, and tell him what the point is" (Labov, 1972, p.371). The narrator pauses the story to comment on its meaning (Labov, 1972).

Embedded Evaluation

The narrator reveals how the characters felt at the actual events (Labov, 1972). Embedded evaluation can also occur when the narrator "[quotes] himself as addressing someone else" (p. 372). It can also occur when another person "evaluates the antagonist's actions for the narrator" (p. 373). It carries more weight when the evaluation comment comes from a third person rather than the narrator himself (Labov, 1972).

Evaluation Action

In evaluation action, the listener is told "what people did rather than what they said" (Labov, 1972, p. 273). Labov (1972) identified different evaluative devices, including intensifiers (e.g., repetition, quantifiers, gestures, and expressive phonology), comparators, correlatives (suspending action with past progressive clauses), and explicatives (explaining why events occurred).

Resolution

Labov (1972) argued that the resolution concludes the narrative by resolving the central conflict and answering: what finally happened.

Coda

The coda either returns the story to its starting point or signals that it is over to ensure the listener does not wonder "And then what happened" (Labov, 1972, p.366).

ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

Abstract

Labov (1972) defined the abstract as a summary that signals the story's beginning and answers the question of what the story is about. The title serves as a potential abstract in *A Spy Among Friends* (2014). The word "spy" reveals a narrative centred around espionage, whereas the phrase "among friends" suggests betrayal within a trusted circle. Therefore, the abstract fulfils its function by summarising the narrative that the story is about a spy who is spying on his own friends and colleagues. Labov (1972) suggested that some narratives may have multiple abstracts. This narrative has two abstracts. One is in the title and the second is in the first chapter. Nevertheless, the title abstract is a typical Labovian as it is composed of one clause, whereas the second abstract spans over one page. The second abstract signals the beginning of the actual story: "Two middle-aged spies are sitting in an apartment in the Christian Quarter, sipping tea and lying courteously to one another, as evening approaches (Macintyre, 2014, p. 7). As the story proceeds, these two English spies are Kim Philby and Nicolas Elliott. Moreover, Philby is a Soviet double agent who has betrayed British intelligence for decades. Elliott's mission is to obtain a confession from Philby. The second abstract of the narrative provides a clear outline of how Philby passed secret information "to his Soviet spymaster" (Macintyre, 2014, p. 7) for decades. Now, British intelligence has sent Elliotts to Beirut on a mission to obtain a confession from his friend.

Orientation

The orientation follows the abstract and introduces characters and their initial behaviours. It also provides details about the time and place (Labov, 1972).

Introduction of Characters and Their Initial Behaviours

The first character, Nicholas Elliott, is introduced by entering MI6 unexpectedly: "One moment Nicholas Elliott was at Ascot racecourse…and the next…he was a spy" (Macintyre, 2014, p. 9). His initial behaviours are outlined as "faith in king, country, class and … friendship" (Macintyre, 2014, p. 12). Kim Philby is introduced as a master manipulator whose "charm that intoxicating, beguiling, and occasionally lethal English quality" (Macintyre, 2014,

p. 22) allowed him to influence a wide range of people. His ability to win people over was notable: "Philby could inspire and convey affection with such ease that few ever noticed they were being charmed" (Macintyre, 2014, p. 22). Hugh, another MI6 spy, dismissive of most of his colleagues, describes Philby as "an exceptional person" (p. 26). Elliott's admiration for Philby is apparent, as he starts "to dress like Philby" (Macintyre, 2014, p. 26). Minor characters like Guy Burgess, Aileen, St. John, Claude Elliott, Anthony Blunt, and Flora Solomon are also mentioned but receive less attention.

Temporal contextualization

The orientation provides a non-linear timeline to capture the narrative's historical scope. It starts with June 15, 1939, "three months before the outbreak of the deadliest conflict in history," (Macintyre, 2014, p. 9), then shifts to Elliott's earlier years in 1925 (Macintyre, 2014, p. 11). Events continue through Elliott's career, such as his arrival in the Netherlands in "November 1938" (P. 13) and significant moments during the Second World War, like "9 May 1940," when Hitler's invasion looms. The narrative frequently backtracks, for example, recounting Philby's experience during the Spanish Civil War in 1937: "As the Times correspondent …he had narrowly cheated death" (Macintyre, 2014, p. 22). These temporal shifts add depth and context by making the timeline dynamic rather than linear.

Geographical Setting

The dominant setting is England, particularly London, where most espionage activities occur: "Philby sat down to tea at St Ermin's Hotel…just a few hundred yards from MI6 headquarters" (p. 23). Significant events are linked to well-known London locations to reinforce the city's influence on the characters: "He even bought the same expensive umbrella from James Smith & Sons of Oxford Street," (p. 26). Nevertheless, not all events are limited to England. The narrative also spans several countries. Elliott's journey begins in the Netherlands, "at The Hague, in his Hillman Minx" (p. 13). Philby's work takes him to France and Germany, and his dangerous role as a war correspondent in Spain is noted: “he narrowly cheated death …when a shell landed near the car” (p. 22). Beyond Europe, British India is mentioned as part of both Elliott and Philby’s family histories.

Complicating Action

The complicating action is the schema where narrative clauses are arranged in a chronological sequence, and they form the core of the narrative (Labov, 1972). The complicating action begins in this narrative with Philby’s making friends at Cambridge: “He made friends on the political left, and some on the extreme left” (p. 38), including Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean. Narrative clauses recount unusual events (Labov, 1972), such as Philby

asking his Marxist supervisor Dobb, "how best he might devote his life to the communist cause" (p. 38). These actions are notable because Philby's elite background and his involvement in communist activities make these events exceptional. The most reportable event occurs when Philby is recruited as an agent for NKVD: "At their second meeting, Deutsch asked Philby if he was willing to act as an undercover agent for the communist cause" (p. 41). This decision marked the start of his double life: "His double life had begun" (p. 42). Labov's (1972) past tense and temporal sequence are maintained throughout the narrative. "Philby was instructed to spy on the Nationalists" in 1937 (p. 45). "Philby returned to London" in 1939 (p. 47), and "The Times sent its star correspondent to France" in 1940 (P. 48). These events create a coherent timeline consistent with Labov's model. According to Labov (1972), "It is theoretically possible for all free orientation clauses to be placed at the beginning of the narrative, but in practice, we find much of this material is placed at strategic points later on" (p. 365). Some orientation clauses appear strategically later. For instance, "Philby was sent to Turkey" in 1946 (P. 101), and in 1949, he became MI6 chief in Washington, DC (p. 106). These clauses align with Labov's (1972) model. The complicating action answers "what happened then" by tracking Philby's activities. He was recalled to London in 1951 but acquitted: "Philby was sent home with a friendly handshake" (p. 162). He later went to Beirut as an MI6 agent and eventually admitted to being a Soviet spy: "He said that he had been recruited into the Soviet secret service by his first wife, Litzi" (p. 223).

Evaluation

Labov (1972 identified three types of evaluation: external evaluation, embedded evaluation, and evaluation action.

External Evaluation

Labov's (1972) concept of external evaluation involves the narrator's commentary on the narrative by stopping the narrative. This is seen when the narrator explains why Philby turns to communism: "The rich had exploited the poor for too long" (p. 38), and the Soviet communism "bulwark against fascism was Soviet communism" (p. 38). Similarly, external evaluation appears when the narrator comments on Philby's question to his supervisor about communism, highlighting the depth of Marxist influence at the university. It also occurs when Otto is revealed to be Arnold Deutsch, the key recruiter for Soviet intelligence (p. 40). These instances provide important context beyond the storyline. Labov (1972) also highlighted how characters contribute their own evaluation. For instance, Philby reflects that his friends saw him as "Pro-Nazi" (p. 44) and later notes how "luck played an enormous role" in his life (p.

56). These evaluations of the characters maintain the flow of the narrative as Labov (1972) suggested.

Repetition is an evaluative tool identified by Labov (1972), used to stress the insufficient evidence against Philby. Despite strong suspicions, MI5 lacked solid proof to convict him: "MI5 would need harder evidence" (p. 137). The narrator reiterates that "the files contained nothing to incriminate Philby" (p. 140), with Philby himself convinced that MI5 had no "hard evidence" to convict him (p. 144).

Laov's (1972) framework revealed how evaluation gives significance to the narrative and prevents it from being meaningless. Philby's betrayals are highlighted by detailing the intelligence he passed to Moscow, including reports on D-Day and OSS operations (p. 84). His achievements of receiving medals from three different countries underscore the gravity of his actions (p. 94). The broader impact of his espionage is emphasized by comparing MI6 and the CIA's combined efforts with the KGB: "1944 to 1951, the entire Western intelligence effort…was what you might call minus advantage. We'd have been better off doing nothing." (p. 235).

Additionally, Labov's (1972) use of comparators is evident in the comparison between MI5 and MI6, which highlights their cultural and operational differences. MI5 is portrayed as "middle class" and practical, whereas MI6 is described as "elitist" and refined (p. 141).

Embedded Evaluation

Embedded evaluation in Labov's (1972) model is the judgment within the narrative rather than external commentary. In this narrative, third-party evaluations assess Philby's character since the narrator is not directly involved. For example, Dora Philby's remark, "He is not quite extreme yet, but may become so" (p. 39), offers insight into his political leanings. Further assessments come from those familiar with Philby. Deutsch's report to Moscow describes him as "widely and deeply knowledgeable…so serious he forgets he is only twenty-five" (p. 43). Deutsch similarly evaluates Brugess as "Very smart…but a bit superficial" (p. 44). These evaluations provide external judgments within the narrative's flow.

Philby's actions and motivations are also highlighted through embedded evaluations. His handler during the Spanish Civil War notes, "He never asks for money" (p. 46). On the other hand, Angleton reflects on Philby's impact, stating, "Once I met Philby, the world of intelligence consumed me" (p. 67). Another remark by Hugh Trevor states, "he alone was real…destined to head the service" (p. 94).

Labov (1972) also discussed embedded evaluation as revealing characters' emotions during the actual events. Philby's feelings are shown at key moments, such as his excitement

after recruitment, "My future looked romantic" (p. 42), and his ideological uncertainty following the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, "What's going to happen to the single-front struggle?" (p. 48). His anxiety surfaces during the missing file incident, where he was in "simmering panic" (p. 56), and later when facing the threat of the treachery Act's death penalty: "Philby was close to panic" (p. 90). Similarly, Vermehren's relief upon meeting Elliot is captured: "I felt almost as if my feet rested already on English soil" (p. 74).

Comparisons also serve as embedded evaluation tools (Labov, 1972). Philby's London life appears "drab" compared to Elliott's dynamic espionage work (p. 64). The differing attitudes within British intelligence are highlighted: "MI5 officers convinced of his guilt but lacked proof; MI6 colleagues believed in his innocence but couldn't exonerate him" (p. 150). Reactions to Philby's defection further illustrate this divide: "MI6 defenders were stunned; MI5 detractors were enraged" (p. 233).

Evaluation Action

In evaluation action, the listener is told "what people did rather than what they said" (Labov, 1972, p. 273). Philby's efforts to evade surveillance and his subsequent psychological decline are depicted through his actions. Philby's evasion tactics exemplify his fear and systematic approach. He drives to Tonbridge, boards a train to London, and disguises himself with a coat and hat. He wanders the streets for hours and constantly checks for followers (pp. 158-159). These actions suggest his anxiety without explicitly stating it.

His worsening mental state becomes evident following Blake's arrest. His disheveled appearance and chaotic home reflect his inner turmoil: "Kim was looking terrible…nursing a hangover" (p. 205). His heavy drinking exacerbates his instability and leads to "insulting, abusive" behavior and physical confrontations (p. 205).

Philby's escalating alcohol dependence is portrayed through his actions. Once sociable, he now drinks himself into unconsciousness and is often found "slumped insensible" during parties (pp. 205-206). His isolation grows, as he withdraws from social events and prefers "gloomy silence" with Eleanor (p. 216).

His decline culminates in near-death experiences caused by excessive drinking. A doctor warns that "one more ounce of alcohol…would have been fatal" (p. 216). The instances of Philby being found unconscious from drinking further illustrate his vulnerability and self-destructive behavior (p. 224). Philby's actions effectively convey his psychological struggle without direct commentary.

Resolution

In Labov's (1972) framework, resolution is the stage where the narrative complexities are resolved. In this text, the resolution begins when Moscow authorizes Philby's extraction. The instruction is clear: "Philby should be extracted from Beirut as soon as possible" (p. 229). Petukhov, Philby's handler, signals on 23 January 1963 that the defection plan is active. As described, "A figure carrying a book walked slowly past…Philby grabbed his raincoat and scarf, and announced he was going to meet a contract" (p. 230). This marks the resolution's onset, as Philby takes action toward his defection. Petukhov reassures him, "Everything is fine, everything is going the way it should be" (p. 231). Philby is then escorted to the ship bound for Odessa, with a new identity (p. 231).

Labov's (1972) concept of resolution addresses how the events conclude. Philby's successful defection culminates in his receiving Soviet citizenship in March 1963: "Philby was granted Soviet citizenship" (p. 235). The narrative describes his integration into Soviet life and highlights his reception by the KGB, his accommodation, and the financial support provided for his family (p. 237). The resolution also encompasses his wife Eleanor joining in Moscow: "Eleanor flew to Moscow on 26 September 1963" (p. 238). This unites Philby's personal and political life. The story concludes by recounting Philby's later life, including his remarriage and his death in 1988, where he was honored with the KGB guard at his funeral (p. 249). These details provide full closure to Philby's story.

Coda

Labov (1972) describes the coda as the final schema of the narrative. It either marks the end of the story or returns the narrator to the start of the story. In this text, the coda indicates closure: "When Elliott died in 1994, he left behind a short memoir…title: *Never Judge a Man by His Umbrella*. It was a joke that only two people could have fully appreciated: Nicholas Elliott, and Kim Philby" (p 249-250). This closing sentence signals the end of the narrative, as Labov (1972) suggested that the coda prevents the question, "And then what happened?" (p. 366). The personal reflection on Elliott and Philby's bond reinforces the finality of the story, with the coda consisting of free clauses that do not advance the plot but instead confirm its conclusion.

Discussion

This research applies Labov's (1972) Narrative Schemas Model to Ben Macintyre's *A Spy Among Friends* (2014) in order to extend the model's applicability to biographical narratives. The first research question asked to what extent the selected text adheres to Labov's model. The findings demonstrated that the text follows all six schemas of the model: abstract,

orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. This finding supports earlier research in diverse genres, which has also confirmed the robustness of the model. For example, Özyıldırım (2009) found that both oral and written accounts of frightening experiences contained the six schemas. On the other Junqueira (2010) showed similar adherence in Brazilian and American oral narratives. Likewise, Channa and Abdul (2016) and Ebrahim (2016) demonstrated that Labov's model captures cross-cultural and gender-based storytelling practices. Therefore, it reinforces the claim that the framework is flexible across contexts.

The present research also revealed that the abstract and coda are particularly salient in Macintyre's biography. This resonates with Iqbal et al. (2019), who observed that the title of *The Bully* functioned as an abstract, and Sheikh et al. (2021), who noted a similar role in Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*. Nevertheless, some research, such as Jasim (2015) and Zaib et al. (2022), found that some elements were missing, like the abstract or coda in certain literary narratives. The presence of both abstract and coda in A *Spy Among Friends* suggests that biographical texts may preserve a fuller schema cycle. Zahra et al. (2023) similarly found all six elements in Shamsie's *Home Fire*, showing that longer, complex narratives are especially conducive to containing every component.

The second research question explored the sequence in which the narrative corresponds to Labov's schemas. The findings demonstrated that the biography not only contains all six schemas but also presents them in the sequence outlined by Labov (1972). This close structural alignment parallels the findings of Barany and Qaso (2023), who identified a complete Labovian sequence in the *Iyezidi Chirok*, and Sathya and Barathi (2022), who reported the same in Lahiri's *A Choice of Accommodations*. By contrast, other scholars such as Raza et al. (2023) and Zaib et al. (2022) reported truncated schema sequences in shorter texts, underscoring that length and genre may influence the completeness of Labovian structures. Therefore, the findings of this research extend the discussion by showing that the biography genre naturally supports the full sequential schemas.

Furthermore, the findings highlighted how evaluation operates richly in Macintyre's text, incorporating external commentary, embedded judgments, and evaluative actions. This aligns with Labov's (1972) claim that evaluation prevents narratives from being meaningless, and is consistent with Hussein and Kadhim's (2021, 2022) studies on British and American novels, which revealed evaluative patterns tied to gendered language use. Similarly, Soliman (2022) found Labov's evaluative structures functional in drama, while Weir (2019) extended their application to documentary film. These parallels demonstrate that evaluation is not limited to oral or fictional contexts but is a cross-genre narrative necessity.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research reveals that Labov's (1972) model works for biographical texts, but further research could expand its use. Applying the model to other non-literary narratives like autobiographies, memoirs, and historical accounts could reinforce the applicability of the model to different genres. Future research could also examine how the coda functions in biographies, especially since these narratives often end with the subject's death. Additionally, a deeper study of the abstract in complex narratives could reveal more about how biographies summarize and introduce their stories. Finally, comparing narrative structures in different media, such as film or television, could explore if Labov's model applies to visual storytelling.

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