

Analyzing Najdi Oral Narrative: A Case Study of Alsharhan's "The GMC Girls" Using Labovian and Rhetorical Frameworks

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Abstract—This study examines a selected Saudi Arabian narrative, specifically the Najdi oral narrative (The GMC Girls), narrated by Al-Sharahan, a Saudi well-known narrator. The aim is to uncover the hierarchical structure of oral narratives by analyzing their rhetorical components and Labov's narrative framework. It also explores Saudi cultural practices and representations embedded within such narratives. The communicative elements of the rhetorical structure include prosodic phrasing, particle phrasing, pause phrasing, syntactic constituency, parallelism, repetition, and quotation marks. The interaction of these elements throughout the narrative is essential for forming lines, intonational groups, sections, and subsections. Labov's narrative structure, on the other hand, includes abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. Though this study focuses on a single narrative, it fills a gap in the study of Saudi oral narratives and contributes to the existing literature. It also highlights how Saudi cultural behaviors and customs influence these narratives, particularly in topics such as traditions and social etiquette. The analysis found that this narrative aligns with Labov's model, with all components present. The narrator employs metaphorical features, such as similes, onomatopoeia, and evaluative devices, to depict events and help listeners visualize them. The study also offers insights for translators, teachers, and future research. This study has implications for understanding the cultural representations embedded in narratives.

Index Terms—Najdi narratives, Saudi culture, Labov's Narrative Structure Model, rhetorical strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of narrative has received considerable attention from researchers across various disciplines, resulting in numerous definitions. Sarbin (1990) proposed that narrative is an organizing principle for all human action; hence, the way we comprehend the world and make moral decisions is directed by narrative structures. The element of events involving human action is emphasized, as Berger (2001) describes narrative as a recount of events or experiences involving people, animals, extraterrestrials, and other entities. In addition to the emphasis on narrative as a foundational structure influencing human behavior and cognition, academicians have also focused on the narrative's function in constructing and conveying meaningful, time-ordered stories. Gill (2016) defines narrative as the ability to produce a fictional or factual account of meaningful, chronologically sequenced occurrences and experiences. Ewick and Silbey (1995) described narrative as "a sequence of statements connected by both temporal and moral ordering". According to Labov (1972), narrative is "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred". Narrative, as represented through diverse scholarly perspectives, is viewed as a foundational construct that shapes human cognition, communication, and the interpretation of lived experiences.

The study of oral narratives serves as an essential tool for understanding a society's cultural and social structures. Oral narratives, especially in their traditional forms, preserve a community's language, social practices, and cultural heritage (Hymes, 1996). In Saudi Arabia, oral narratives serve as a vital resource for exploring social dynamics by examining the connections between language, culture, and identity (Lowry, 2020). Narratives are stories that sequence events over time and organize accounts of these events in ways that offer interpretations of the storytellers' experiences (McKibben & Breheny, 2023). Social scientists have acknowledged that narratives consist of experiences and events from within the storyteller's social world, which influences how social identities are portrayed (Bamberg, 2009). Therefore, by combining these two considerations—events and their relation to social structure—this study identifies the hierarchical and rhetorical structure of the Najdi oral narrative to explore the social identities embedded in it. To achieve these, the study aims to answer these three questions:

A. Research Questions

- 1- What is the hierarchical Labovian structure of the selected oral narrative?
- 2- What is the rhetorical structure of the narrative?
- 3- What cultural practices and representations are embedded within this narrative?

B. Brief Review of Research on Arabic Narrative Structures

Oral and written narratives have been identified as crucial domains of research. Research has shown that narratives have been examined from various perspectives, ranging from detailed studies of their internal structure to their use as a tool for sociocultural research (Stapleton & Wilson, 2017; González, 2009). Arabic narratives have also been extensively researched, covering a range of aspects from syntactic structures to sociocultural contexts (Abu Lughod, 1986; Taha, 2001; Holes, 2004; Van de Wege, 2013; Alenizi, 2020). Dating back to the 1980s, Abu-Lughod examined Bedouin poetry and oral narratives to provide insights into the narrative structures within Bedouin oral tradition. Abu Lughod (1986) emphasized the role of narratives in reflecting and constructing social identities and cultural values. Herzog (2012) uses a cultural and structural analysis framework to examine Arabic oral narratives, focusing on the cultural values and social norms embedded within narrative structures. Holes (2004) explores various aspects of narrative structure across different varieties of Arabic, employing a functional and descriptive approach and discussing the role of language in constructing identity in the Arabian Gulf region. It uses sociolinguistic and narrative analysis frameworks to examine how narrative elements function within these varieties. Van De Wege (2013) examines the rhetorical devices of repetition and parallelism in Arabic oral literature to investigate the structure and effectiveness of narratives. Concerning Najdi Arabic, while Alenizi (2020) provided valuable insights into the internal structure of Najdi oral narratives, his analysis did not engage with their sociocultural functions. The present study builds on this work by examining a corpus of oral narratives from a single Saudi narrator, integrating both structural and sociocultural perspectives to highlight how narrative practices simultaneously organize experience and construct cultural meanings. These studies demonstrate that Arabic narratives are a well-researched area with significant contributions to understanding their syntactic, rhetorical, and sociocultural aspects.

While significant research on Arabic narratives has explored a wide range of perspectives, a notable gap remains in the specific study of Saudi Najdi oral folktales. This gap is significant because these narratives provide profound insights into Saudi society's cultural practices, social norms, and historical developments. The explicit emphasis on Najdi oral narratives, particularly in terms of their hierarchical structure and the interaction of rhetorical components such as prosodic phrasing, particle phrasing, pause phrasing, syntactic constituency, parallelism, repetition, and quotation marks, remains underexplored. The study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed analysis of a selected Saudi Najdi oral narrative, examining its hierarchical structure and alignment with Labov's Narrative Structure. Additionally, it aims to explore how these narratives reflect cultural practices and representations, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of Saudi cultural behaviors and traditions as they are manifested in oral storytelling. The outcomes of the study will not only enrich the documentation of Saudi oral narratives but also offer valuable insights into the use of narrative features for clearly depicting events and cultural values.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Theoretical Frameworks in the Analysis of Saudi Narratives

In studying narratives, researchers have employed various theoretical frameworks to uncover their deeper meanings and cultural implications. One prominent approach is Labov's narrative structure, which emphasizes the sequential organization of events and the linguistic strategies used to build narratives (Labov, 1972). Labov's narrative structure has been particularly instrumental in depicting the way Saudi storytellers structure their narratives to convey cultural values and social norms. In addition, rhetorical analysis (Woodbury, 1985) has been applied to examine the persuasive and stylistic elements embedded within Saudi oral narratives, focusing on the speakers' use of language to shape perceptions and reinforce cultural ideologies. Key contributors to the rhetorical analysis include Johnstone (2005), who highlights the role of rhetorical strategies in narrative, and Tannen (2007), who focuses on conversational narratives and the significance of repetition, parallelism, and other rhetorical devices. Discourse analysis is another prevalent framework for exploring the functions of language within broader social contexts. Discourse analysis of narratives reveals how identity and community cohesion are constructed (Holes, 2004).

Therefore, the current research study employs a dual framework approach, utilizing Labov's Narrative Structure Components and rhetorical structure components to analyze Saudi oral narratives, specifically the Najdi Narrative. Labov's framework provides a systematic methodology for examining narrative elements, including orientation, complicating actions, evaluation, resolution, and coda. At the same time, rhetorical analysis offers insights into the rhetorical strategies employed within Najdi narratives. This combined framework facilitates a comprehensive analysis of how these narratives' structure events, convey meaning, and reinforce cultural norms, thereby contributing to a significant understanding of Najdi oral traditions and their societal implications.

B. Sample and Coding

The current research employs a qualitative case study approach, focusing on a single narrative from a single narrator, because this method offers conceptual insights and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and helps identify key elements, processes, and relationships rather than making broad generalizations (Crowe et al., 2011). The narrator, Muhammad Ali Al-Sharhan, was chosen for this study for several reasons: he is a Saudi storyteller who speaks the colloquial dialect of Saudi Arabic, specifically the Najdi dialect, known for pronouncing /dz/ instead of /q/ and /ts/ instead of /k/, he is one of the most popular narrators in the Arabian Peninsula, with a program broadcast across audio and video media in Gulf countries, he is recognized for his engaging and captivating storytelling style and holds cultural prominence

through participation in various literary gatherings in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Kuwait, as well as the Voice of the Arabs in Libya and Algeria (Wikipedia, 2010).

The narrative, "The GMC Girls," was specifically chosen because it has the potential for cultural representations, as it primarily focuses on a man who retired from ARAMCO (Arabian American Oil Company). This man was known for his love of cars and had limited knowledge of English vocabulary. The narrator narrates what happened to that man one day after retirement when he stopped by a vehicle to check it while girls were inside. The moral of the story is that curiosity can sometimes put someone in trouble. This narrative was taken from a 10-minute episode of a televised program. The program's background often features a tent in the desert and a camel, reflecting the story's historical setting. Typically, the program lasts about 20 minutes and centers around themes of traditions and bravery during that period. Although Alsharhan has published three books containing around 200 narratives, the researcher selected the televised version for analysis, as it is an oral form that engages the audience and allows for examination of pauses and other oral components. Regarding ethical considerations, all data used in the study were publicly available, and no personal user information was accessed or reported, which adheres to ethical guidelines for research on digital communication (National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, 2019).

To analyze this narrative, it was first transcribed and then translated into English. The narrative structure is organized into a hierarchy of lines, which are numbered with Arabic numerals (1). Sections are indicated by uppercase Roman numerals (I.), subsections by lowercase Roman numerals (i.), and scenes are labeled with uppercase letters (A.). A rising intonation is marked by a slash (/), a falling intonation by a backslash (\), and a level intonation by the tilde (~), following the standard coding system used in Alenizi (2020). Labov's structural elements are also positioned to the left of the lines: an abstract with an uppercase letter (A), the orientation with an uppercase letter (O), the complicated action with an uppercase letter (C), the resolution with an uppercase letter (R), the evaluation with an uppercase letter (E), and the coda with a combination of these letters (CO). Regarding the cultural interpretations, they were validated by the researcher's interpretative role as a native speaker of the Najdi dialect. Such reflexivity can act as a strategy to enhance rigour (Darawsheh, 2014).

III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. Labov's Narrative Structure for Studying Najdi Narrative

Labov's narrative structure framework provides a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing Najdi narratives, particularly its systematic approach to examining narrative components. Labov's model has been used to study various cultural narratives, highlighting both universal patterns and distinct cultural differences (Norrick, 2005). His work mainly focused on individual experiential narratives within the Native American oral tradition. He collected data by recording subjects who shared personal stories of danger or embarrassment. For analyzing Saudi Najdi narratives, Labov's narrative structure is vital for understanding how storytellers organize their tales and for highlighting culturally significant practices. According to De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012), the evaluation component in Labov's model often uncovers cultural beliefs and moral lessons embedded in narratives, which will be an essential factor when examining Najdi oral stories.

Labov's model of Narrative Structure is based on six elements: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. These components provide a theoretical framework for examining the narrative elements and interpreting their functions within a cultural context (Labov, 1972). As Johnstone (2016) points out, many narratives are partial or fragmented yet are still regarded as complete narratives because they present sequences of events with a clear beginning, middle, and end pattern. Moreover, the components of a narrative are interconnected and rarely exist in isolation; they often merge or overlap depending on the narrative structure.

(a). Abstract

According to Labov (1972), the abstract summarizes the essence of the story with one or more clauses situated at the beginning of the narrative. In this narrative, the narrator begins with the Islamic greeting "*Assalamu alaykum wa Rahmat Allah wa barakatu*" (peace and mercy of Allah be upon you), then welcomes the audience (TV viewers). He then presents several key clauses that summarize the story and the main character. This abstract begins at lines 1 to 7 and includes a greeting to the audience, followed by clauses that indicate the story is about a person who worked at Aramco, was fond of cars, knowledgeable about their details, spoke English, and what happened to him one day after his retirement. The abstract covered what was going to be in the story; however, it was meant to grab the listeners' attention to find out what happened to that man after his retirement. The last line of the abstract was in lines 22 and 23 and included *yom men alayam*, "one day," which is an equivalent of "once upon a time" in English. The use of the Islamic greeting reflects the narrator's influence of religion and the importance of using a greeting that is both acceptable and desirable to the audience. The rest depicts what Labov considered to be in the abstract.

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| A | 1. | السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته
Peace and mercy of Allah be upon you |
| A | 2. | أهلا وسهلا بكم اعزائي المشاهدين
Welcome Dear viewers |
| A | 3. | في هذه الحلقة الجديدة من برنامج مجلس الراوي
In a new episode of the program of the Council of the narrator |

A	4.	في هذه الحلقة In this episode
A	5.	أتكلم عن أحد الشعراء I talk about a poet
A	6.	الذين يجيدون الوصف who is proficient in a description
A	7.	وخاصة في موضوع الحوار Especially dialogue
AO	22.	بعد ما تقاعد After he retired
AO	23.	يوم من الأيام One day

(b). Orientation

Orientation involves details about the time, place, characters, and their situation, along with providing essential background information that the audience needs to understand the story (Labov, 1972). In the narrative, the orientation is composed of several clauses that identify the time, place, or setting, characters, and situation. It occurred immediately after the abstract, as Labov states that it usually appears “in the course of the first several narrative clauses”. In this narrative, the clause that sets the time alaser “afternoon” was repeated three times, as in lines 25, 37, and 38. The clause that sets the place *fa ja end ahad almojamat atejaria* “he arrived at one of the commercial stores” was also repeated, as in lines 26 and 29. The repetition was apparent in this section as the narrator stimulates the audience to imagine the place and time and visualize the situation or setting.

The orientation was not limited to the beginning; there were also sections of orientation scattered throughout the narrative, where the narrator introduced the parking lot, the boy, the bag, and the girls.

O	24.	ذهب الى أحد خارج المدينة يعني He went outside the city
O	25.	طلع يوم مثل ما تقول العصر يتمشى I mean he out, around afternoon, walking
O	26.	فجا عند أحد المجمعات التجارية Then he arrived at one of the commercial stores

(c). Complication Actions

The complicating actions in narratives include a series of past-tense clauses that address the question: “What happened next?” This segment serves as the narrative cornerstone, heading up to the story’s climax by presenting a problem, turning point, or significant development. The complicating action consists of the main body of the narrative clauses, which comprise the main events of the narrative that sequentially lead to the climax and then resolve. In this narrative, the complicating actions were divided into different sections based on the theme, and some of these lines overlapped with the orientation section or lines. These sections were characterized by the past tense, as with the verb *rja* “went back”, the particles *yom* “when”, and *laken* “but”, as in line 44, where the main events started. They also included most of the descriptions, which were rich in adjectives and similes, from line 43 until line 181, where the climax is presented.

43.	لكن يوم جا بيبي يشغل سيارته يمشى But when he was about to start his car to leave
181.	يوم جا عند الفزارة القدامية يم السواق When he reached the front window on the driver’s side
182.	حط يديه كذا بيبي يناظر القير هو تحت ولا فوق When he placed his hands on the window to see whether the gear was up or down
183.	يوم حط يده بيبي يناظر When he placed his hands to see
184.	ولا والله ان هاك البنات الثلاث He was surprised with the three girls inside the car

(d). Evaluation

In the evaluation section, the storyteller uses various techniques to establish and maintain the narrative, focusing on perspectives such as why the story was told and what the storyteller hopes to achieve. In this way, the storyteller expresses attitudes about the events unfolding in the narrative. The evaluation clauses, which Labov (1972) refers to as “free clauses,” state what is interesting or unusual about the story; they justify why the person is telling the story and why the listener should pay attention. Labov (1972) regarded evaluation as the most important element in a narrative, alongside the narrative events that involve the narrative clauses. In this narrative, the evaluation devices are spread throughout the story. Labov discusses various types of evaluations at some length. Here, I will identify only the type of evaluation that appears in the presented narrative: the “external evaluation,” in which the narrator pauses the story, addresses the audience, and explains the point or shares his opinion, as in the following lines from 229-231. Before concluding, the narrator turns

to the listeners and discusses the man, stating that he did not intend to engage in such behavior (flirting with the girls). Such behavior reflects the sensitivity of the topic in Saudi culture at that time, as it is a segregated community where such actions are unacceptable. Therefore, the narrator here justifies the man's behavior.

- E 229. وهو مهوب راعي هالأمورا
And he is not that kind of person
- E 230. رجل أجودي لحية غانمة ديناً
He is a good, generous and conservative man
- E 231. بس انه يعرف السيارات الله الله
But he is an expert of cars, certainly

There are four additional evaluative sections, and these sections typically pause the action to assess the event before the narrator resumes the narration. These sections are also marked by evaluative devices distributed throughout the narrative. The first evaluative section appears in lines 60-63, where the narrator uses the adverb *khasatan* "especially", justifying the man's astonishment at the car. We notice here the tense shifts to the present tense as the narrator addresses the audience, as shown in the examples below. The second evaluative section is characterized by interrogative words such as *wesh* "what" and *laish* "why," as in lines 94 and 95, explaining that the man did not know who was in the car and why it was working. The third evaluative section begins with the phrase *Halheen ba3lmcom*, "now I am telling you", as in line 103, where the narrator answers the question he had posed in the second evaluative section. The fourth evaluative section, which appears in lines 196 - 202, includes the phrase *alhaqiqa* "in fact" and negative words such as *ma* "not" and *la* "no", clarifying that the man's behavior was good and that he did not intend to act this way. In sum, the evaluation section was mainly devoted to justifying behaviors considered rude at that time because of segregation, such as staring at girls.

- E 60. خاصة مثل السيارة الصالون الجسم
Especially a car such as GMC when you see it from the side
- E 61. يعجبك
You will like it
- E 62. يعجب صاحب الذوق
It attracts people with good taste
- E 63. ويعجب اللي له هواية ونظر في السيارات
And it attracts those who have good understanding of cars

(e). Resolution

Resolution is the final part of the story. It consists of independent clauses that show how the complicating actions were resolved to the audience (Labov, 1972). The resolution explains what happened next; it appears after the climax of the narrative and usually leads to the story's conclusion before the narrator finishes with the coda. In this narrative, the resolution section begins in lines 227 and 228 with the verb *Araf* "he knew," indicating the resolution. The man's knowledge of English reflects a higher level of education among those who worked at Aramco at that time than among others.

- R 227. لكن يوم شاف "هاو ار يو"
But when he saw "how are you?"
- R 228. عرف ان المسالة فيها نوع من المغازل
He understood it as a kind of flirting

(f). Coda

According to Labov (1972), the coda is an optional part of narratives that often includes clauses concluding the story and bringing the audience back to the present. It serves as a pragmatic device to transition out of storytelling mode, signaling the return to regular dialogue or the passing of the conversational floor. Since this narrative is not a traditional folk tale or fairy tale, it is expected not to have fixed formulas indicating the end, such as "in the end" or "happily ever after." The coda can offer a summary of what happened and connect the story to the setting where it is told. It can also repeat the most important event of the story, bringing the listener back to the present. In this narrative, the coda wraps up the sequence of complicating actions. It shows the effects of the events, especially in the final part, when he realizes what the girls have done, leaving the listener with the outcome of putting himself in such an embarrassing situation. All of this occurs in lines 232-235, where all the phrases start with particles *fa* "then" and *wa* "and", as in the examples below.

- CO 232. فركب السيارة
So he got into his car
- CO 233. وشغل
And he started it
- CO 234. وتركهم
And he left them
- CO 235. وراح
And he drove away

B. Rhetorical Strategies for Analyzing Narrative

Woodbury (1985) defined a rhetorical structure component as “any well-defined recurrent, hierarchical organization that is present in a stretch of discourse and distinct from other such organizations” (p. 178). Five independent communicative components have been identified in this narrative. Each of these features distinctly organizes the narrative. In this narrative, the lines were identified in this way because I found that intonation, pausing, and particles tended to align. The sections and subsections are generally characterized by themes: introduction, the participants (the man, the boy, the girls, and the girl), and the main events, including the car and the trip. There are also six sections and twenty-three subsections in the narrative.

By analyzing the rhetorical strategies used in the narratives, more profound insights into Najdi speakers’ portrayal of meaning, reinforcement of cultural norms, and construction of social identities will be identified (Johnstone, 2005; Tannen, 2007). The rhetorical structure of oral narratives includes various communicative elements that contribute to their overall coherence and impression. Key features such as prosodic phrasing, particle phrasing, and pause phrasing are crucial in establishing narrative segments. Additionally, syntactic constituency, parallelism, repetition, and the use of quotation marks play important roles in shaping the listener’s experience and understanding of the narrative (Tannen, 2007).

(a). Prosodic and Particle Phrasing

Prosodic features such as intonation, stress, and rhythm are crucial in oral narratives because they help distinguish different narrative segments and convey the emotional tone of the story (Chafe, 1985). Particle phrasing involves using discourse markers and particles, which assist in structuring the narrative and keeping the listener engaged (Schiffrin, 1987). In Najdi narratives, prosodic features mainly emphasize culturally important moments and transitions within the story. In Arabic storytelling, intonation patterns indicate shifts between descriptive sections and key events, guiding the audience’s emotional and cognitive responses (Holes, 2004).

The unmarked case of line intonational contour in this narrative is the falling contour. The narrative features an intonation structure of the Raising Falling **R*F**. There is a rising boundary tone at the beginning of each sentence (phrase), a rising pitch accent on every phrase-stressed syllable, and a falling phrase tone at the end of each phrase. Another distinctive prosodic feature is the lengthening of vowels at the end of discourse markers such as *waa* “and” as in line 11, *faa* “so”, and *laa* “no”. The word *la* literally means “No,” but here it functions as “Moreover,” as seen in line 191.

- | | | | |
|---|-----|---|---|
| O | 11. | وَ طَوَالَ عَمَلَهُ فِي الشَّرْكَهْ \ | And throughout his work in the company |
| C | 201 | لَا وَمَعَاهُمْ عَصِيرٌ فِي كُوبَاتٍ صَغَارٍ وَمَزَارَاتٍ | Moreover, they had juice in small glasses with straws |

Therefore, most of these markers were pronounced with a higher pitch. Since intonation aligns with pauses and particles, it helps to define the lines more than the subsections and sections. It appears that leveling and falling are equivalent or identical. Also, a prosodically defined line corresponds to a noun phrase or a clause. There are some exceptions to the unmarked case in which the intonational line ends with a falling contour. For example, lines 108 and 109 end with rising contours. This indicates that the narrator has more or different information to deliver. It seems that he wants to highlight and emphasize specific details, as in lines 108 and 109, where the narrator stresses that this man is an expert on cars and their specific features. As observed, these sentences end with a lengthening of the vowel at the end, as in *almosaadat* and *flewarat*.

- | | | | |
|---|------|---|---|
| C | 108. | تَحْتَ السَّيَّارَةِ يَطَّالِعُ الْمَسَاعِدَاتِ / | down the car looking at the axles |
| C | 109. | وَ يَطَّالِعُ الْفَلَيْبُورَاتِ / | and looking at the flywheels |
| C | 110. | وَ يَطَّالِعُ أَجْزَاءَ السَّيَّارَةِ الْخَلْفِيَّةِ الَّتِي تَحْتَ \ | and looking at the parts of the car from the rear |

Particle phrasing is a key component used to organize the narrative structure. The nine particles present in the narrative are: *wa* “and”, *fa* “so”, *ya3ni* “I mean”, *laken* and *bas* “but”, *mathalan* “like”, *yom* “when”, *hata* “even”, and *la* “no”. The most common particle is the discourse marker *wa* “and”, which occurs 108 times throughout the narrative. Often, these particles, although not always, are syntactically limited to preverbal positions and typically introduce clauses. Particles in the narrative help establish lines, subsections, and sections. They appeared 158 times, mainly at the beginning of lines—125 times—to determine lines, and only 5 times at the end of lines to mark the conclusion and start a new line with a clarification. The particle appearing at the end is *ya3ni* (I mean). The discourse marker *ya3ni* appeared six times in lines 20, 24, 51, 56, 140, and 179. Its function is always to introduce the idea of the next line, making the following line a clarification of the previous one, as seen in lines 20 and 21, which confirms the functions of *ya3ni* in Almossa (2023).

- | | | | |
|---|-----|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| O | 20. | وَصَارَ مَوْلِعٌ فِيهَا يَعْنِي \ | and he became fond of it |
| O | 21. | وَ هُوَ أَيُّهُ الشَّيْءِ هَذَا | I mean, this is his hobby |

Almost every section and subsection is introduced by a particle. The particle “wa” (and) introduced five subsections, “fa” (so) introduced four subsections, the particle “laken” (but), and “yom” (when) introduced two subsections. There were also several examples where double particles function as one discourse marker, as in “w la” (and then), which was repeated seven times, as in line 43.

- C 43. ولا قد خف الموقف هذا من السيارات
and when he then noticed that the parking lot had become less crowded

TABLE 1
FREQUENCIES OF PARTICLES APPEARANCE IN THE NARRATIVE

Particles	Frequency of Appearance in the Narrative
wa (and) و	108
fa (so) ف	9
Ya3ni (I mean) يعني	6
“laken” (but) لكن	6
“bas” (but) بس	3
la (no) لا	3
mathal (as-like) مثل	6
“yom” (when) يوم	15
“hata” (even) حتى	2
Total	158

(b). *Pause Phrasing and Syntactic Constituency*

Pauses in oral narratives perform several functions. They provide the narrator with a moment to shape thoughts, create suspense, and even emphasize a point. The strategic use of pauses can significantly enhance the narrative’s effectiveness (Gee, 1986). Syntactic constituency refers to the arrangement of words and phrases within sentences to convey meaning and structure. The clarity and coherence of oral narratives contribute to achieving effective syntactic constituency in sentences (Suyanu et al., 2017). The study of Arabic oral narratives shows how pauses and syntactic structures reflect traditional rhetorical patterns deeply rooted in Arabic literary and oral traditions.

Pauses can be presented by line breaks as in written prose (Tedlock, 1983). In this narrative, pauses were found after each line, which helped in determining lines. Thus, pauses were lined up with falling intonation. However, most of the pauses were very short, with some as brief as a breath. The length of the pauses varies from line to line, yet most are one second or shorter. Generally, pauses range from 0.1 to 0.3 seconds. What I noticed was that the pauses that were at the end of a section or subsection were longer than other pauses inside the sections and the subsection; they usually were either (0.2) or (0.3) as in lines 21, 43, 82, 104, 131, 159, 166, 204, 218, 223, 227, and 232. So that was like an indication of the end of the thought or the subsection, and that the narrator is moving to another subsection, as in the following example:

- C 81. هذي مقلط كامل يمشي \
- This is a complete mobile living room
- i. The back of the car**
- C 82. رجع وري للخلف \
- He went back

(c). *Syntactic Constituency*

In the narrative, each line corresponds to either a clause, a noun phrase (NP), or a verb phrase (VP). Some of these noun phrases are definite, while others are indefinite. The NP forms a separate line with an intonational contour as in the verb phrase. They were also indicators of lines, and the particles helped define the lines and subsections. For example, the verb phrases that started with the verb *rja* “went back” introduced about three subsections, as in lines 82 and 90, and the ones that started with *dzarb* “got closer” introduced two subsections, as in lines 104 and 178. Consequently, syntactic constituency corresponds with prosodic signals, pauses, and particles that define the lines, which helps maintain the narrative’s harmony.

- i. The side of the car**
- C 94. رجع مع الجنب الثاني يناظرها \
- turned back to the other side
- I. The girls**
- i. What they looked like**
- C 178. قرب قرب عند الموتر \
- got closer to the car

(d). *Parallelism, Repetition, and Quotation Marks*

Parallelism and repetition are common rhetorical devices in oral narratives used to reinforce key points and themes and influence the narrative’s rhythm and flow (Tannen, 2007). Repetition often serves as a mnemonic device, helping both the storyteller and the audience retain key elements of the story. Van De Wege (2013) finds that the role of repetition and parallelism in Arabic oral poetry and storytelling is to reinforce cultural values and collective memory. Quotation marks,

or the oral equivalent through changes in voice or prosody, are used to distinguish between different speakers or to highlight direct speech within the narrative (Bauman, 1986).

1. Parallelism and Repetition

Parallelism can be identified through the interaction of prosodic phrasing, particle phrasing, pause phrasing, and syntactic repetition (Woodbury, 1985). In this narrative, the narrator uses numerous parallel lexical items and structures, creating coherence and rhythm within the story. This parallelism appears either at the beginning, as in lines 3-4, 61-62-63, 78-79-80-81, or at the end, as in lines 10-11, 29-31, 34-35-36, 41-42, 43-44, 47-50, 82-83, 215-216. It is especially evident in lines 78 to 81, where the lines start with the demonstrative *hath* “this” as the narrator describes the GMC, a vehicle not common at that time. This repetition highlights the man's surprise at the car, reflecting the simplicity of life during that time. In lines 10 and 11, where repetition occurs at the end, the purpose here is to confirm the location or setting where the man worked. Additionally, the data showed the repetition of *MashaAllah*, which literally means “what god has willed it” but functions as “God bless you”. It appeared after compliments, as seen in lines 52, 138, 161, 173, and 194, when the narrator complimented the car, the boy, and the girls.

- C 78. هذي هي السيارة العجيبة صدق
This is the really incredible car
- C 79. هذي هي السيارة تاخذ الشوي والواجد والعائلة الكبيرة و الصغيرة
This is a car that fits small and big families
- C 80. هذي مهيب سيارة
This is not a car
- C 81. هذي مقلط كامل بمشي
This a walking dining room (simile)
- O 10. لكنه عمل في الشركة
But he worked in the company
- O 11. و طول عمله في الشركة
And throughout his work in the company

2. Quotative Marks

Quotation marks are linguistic signs that indicate reported speech. In English, common verbs used for reported speech are “say” and “tell” because they refer to an utterance. Similarly, in Arabic, the verbs *ygol* “say” and *yxber* “tell” serve the same purpose. In this narrative, quotation marks are seen as a key part of the communication that structures the story, often used to show lines within the narrative. The Arabic quotation marks appearing in the story are three types: *gal* “He said,” *galt* “she said,” and *ygonon* “they say.” They appear seven times, with five indicating the start of lines, such as in lines 77, 92, 128, 172, and 210. Occasionally, a particle like *wa* “and” is used before the quotation marks to signal addition, as in *w galt* “and she said” in line 210.

- R 210. وقالت "يا بنت" لأختها الثانية
And she said “you girl” for her other sister

(e). Use of Metaphorical Features

The use of metaphorical features such as similes, onomatopoeia, and evaluative devices is a hallmark of oral narratives. These features enhance the narrative’s vividness and appeal, enabling listeners to visualize the events and engage more deeply with the story. Metaphors and other figurative language elements play a crucial role in conveying cultural values and experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Al-Khatib's (2003) analysis of metaphors in Arabic proverbs and narratives expresses societal attitudes toward life, morality, and interpersonal relationships. In Najdi storytelling, metaphorical language is frequently employed to convey complex cultural concepts and emotions.

In this narrative, the narrator employs numerous similes, primarily when describing the car, its tires, the boy, and the girls. The first simile appears in lines 67 and 68, where he describes the tires. Then, in lines 78-81, he compares the car to the living room to show its size. The other similes are found in lines 173, 184, 189, 190, and 194. Such detailed descriptions and extensive use of metaphors reveal the lifestyle of that period, when large cars were uncommon, and reflect the interests of the people at that time, such as the leisure time retired individuals have to notice details. From the boy's description, we can imagine wealthy people of that time, as shown in lines 136-143. From the indirect description of the girls in lines 184-195, we can infer that the narrator, out of politeness, preferred to use metaphorical images rather than say ‘beautiful’ directly. The other metaphorical language that was used in the narrative is the onomatopoeia, where the narrator imitates the sound of the engine, as in line 75:

- C 67. حتى الكفرات جديدة بزرعها واقف
Even the tires were new with good treads
- C 68. زرع الكفرات ابد كنه عودان شعيرية
The treads looked like raw noodles
- C 75. عجيبه شغل المكينه تبتنت /
The engine sound was wonderful ttttt

IV. CONCLUSION

The study analyzed a specific oral Najdi Narrative to answer the research questions by uncovering the rhetorical and Labovian structure within a cultural and linguistic context. This study distinguishes itself by focusing primarily on televised colloquial oral narrated folktales, rather than on classical literature or on informative, friendly speech. The analysis confirmed that, as Alenzi (2020) and Qasim and Abdul-Muni (2022) have found, this Saudi narrative follows Labov's structure, with all components present. Additionally, the study revealed that the narrator employed metaphorical features, including similes, onomatopoeia, detailed descriptions, and evaluative devices, to illustrate the scene and convey the message effectively. These features help listeners visualize the events. The analysis also revealed that, although these narrative features often operate below conscious awareness, the narrator skillfully manipulated them. Therefore, we see how cultural norms influence narratives and how the media conveys ideologies through storytelling.

Similar to Bin Towairesh (2024), this study shows that studying narratives reveals individual and social identities within societies, emphasizing the importance of documenting folktales to preserve cultures and dialects, especially in Najd, where people now interact with individuals from around the world. Most people tend to speak the plain or white dialect, which makes translating such work more challenging. Furthermore, the analysis has implications for translators and teachers. For translators, understanding these cultural norms is crucial for conveying the text effectively. This work also explores the feasibility of translating such work and identifies the challenges translators may face, as well as the strategies they will employ. For teachers, teaching literary texts, such as narratives, will undoubtedly help students improve their reading and speaking skills. It will also keep them aware of their culture and heritage. Yousif et al. (2023) suggested including translated Arabic folktales in teaching materials, as they observed that this helps keep students motivated and engaged when they read and discuss their Arabic culture in English.

In conclusion, although this study is limited to a single televised episode from a male perspective, analyzing this narrative has yielded valuable implications for future studies. It contributes to the work of the Najdi dialect and culture; it also features many metaphorical images and cultural components that have yet to be studied. Additionally, studying narratives from other Saudi dialects, such as the Hijazi dialect, could produce different insights. The narrator in this study is male, so narratives from female narrators might offer a different perspective. Nowadays, with the rise of social media, narratives from younger generations are more prevalent, and understanding how they differ in their linguistic choices and the morals they convey can help us better comprehend how people represent themselves and their experiences to themselves and others. Therefore, to deepen our understanding of linguistic features, identities, and cultural norms in narratives, further research on comparative analysis across dialects, gendered perspectives, and digital narratives is suggested.

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