



Labovian Model and Analysis of The Bully as Representation of the USA

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Abstract *While applying Labov’s model this study finds out the macro and micro features of the written text, i.e., The Bully by Roger Dean Kiser, an American fiction writer. Labov’s model of narrative analysis has proven efficacy primarily in the exploration of the macro features. However, for the analysis of microfeatures, other elements of discourse analysis such as cohesive ties, discourse markers, substitutions, ellipses, contractions, exchanges, inversions, and some other attributes were used to explore the representative aspects of the writer’s work. Macro analysis revealed that most of the different levels of Labov model, i.e., abstract, orientation, complicating actions, resolution, and evaluation were found in the story. Coda, which is the optional part of any story, remained absent. The findings establish that most stories adhere to the formulation identified by Labov. The analysis provides enough clues to establish the work as a typical way of American narration.*

Key Words: Written text, discourse analysis, story, Labov model

Introduction

Discourse analysis provides many approaches to the analysis of written texts and in fact, there are numerous studies on discourse analysis in different genres while applying different models and focusing on different levels. For example, if some researchers use news items, other researchers focused on general text; if some analyzed stories, others worked on conversations; if some did microanalysis, others worked on the macro analysis. These fields vary according to the results or outcomes they produce. So, it means that already this field is enriched with many types of research but still there are many opportunities when different approaches are combined. The present study is holistic in the sense that it aims to analyze written stories while keeping in view both the macro and micro levels of analysis. For macro-level, Labov model (1972) of narrative analysis has been used and for the micro-level of analysis, different aspects of discourse analysis such as cohesive ties, discourse markers, ellipses, and other attributes are taken.

Discourse Analysis

We often come across the word discourse in a different context and often with different connotations which make the term ambiguous and a bit difficult to understand in its real sense. One reason for its complexity is its French origin and the other reason is that it is such a vast term used in different fields by different people according to their own understanding and the particular use which they intend to get and hence, it creates confusion in the mind of the readers. For example, if we take some fields like sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, and linguistics, they use the word discourse in different ways according to the nature of a particular theme and issue in hand. Some use it in power relations as Michel Foucault concepts of discourse as power is and as what happened in the colonial era, others, such as linguists, use it in the sense of meaning and coherence of the text whether written or spoken and formal or informal. In this regard, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, cited by Sara Mills,

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1997:9) say that “discourse is an extended piece of text, which has some form of internal organization, coherence or cohesion”. So, this means that discourse is not a fixed entity with only one connotation but an amalgam of different meanings and shows its versatility and changing nature in regards to different fields.

Discourse analysis, also known as discourse studies, became known in the mid of 1960 and 1970 “as a trans-disciplinary field of study” in different discipline ranging from sociology to linguistics and many other (Lea, 2007, p.18). Discourse analysis emerged as a reaction to positivism, and it added to the interpretive turn in linguistics (Fischer and Forrester, 1993). Since then, it has become pretty influential in many fields, particularly in the analysis of the literary genre. It is very helpful in bringing different new techniques for the analysis of stories. It has provided an interdisciplinary approach for the analysis of different types of texts in different disciplines, thus bringing critical and insightful analysis to different subject matters few of which include ideology, social change, politics and many more (Manzi, 2012). In this way, discourse analysis takes into account different topics that range from the use of individual language use to the language used in an official and colloquial speech whether written or spoken. In this way, the field of discourse and discourse analysis is not limited to the field of language studies but also to philosophy, anthropology, and psychology. Apart from this, there are many academic and real-world application of academic applications of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis as a lens can be used to explore discourse used in political speeches, advertisements, television programs, and storytelling, etc. Sometimes, the use of words cannot give complete picture as what textual analysis goes for, therefore, the context gives help in the interpretation of meaning according to the different contexts. In this way, discourse analysis gives meaning in the many layers and both the social and institutional aspects, e.g., cultural background, power imbalance, and gender, etc. are considered. In this way, discourse analysis helps in bringing the inequalities in society whether gender-related, ethnicity related, or power related. In addition to academic applications, discourse analysis has many practical uses. It can help interpret the meaning that is behind whatever is communicated on a surface level (Nordquist, 2017). According to Fairclough (2000), discourse uses the social conditions where the text is born and also interprets those social conditions. In this way, discourse analysis studies the social system linguistically and the language sociologically. It helps establish a relationship between the microstructure, i.e., linguistic features and macrostructure, i.e., social structure. In this regard, Van Dijk (2004) opines that discourse is actually the tool through which ideologies are presented based on which dominance and power-based relationship are established. Discourse is meaningful as it produces the relationship between text and ideology, presenting the text in a meaningful way. Whether conscious or unconscious, text is never free from politics or at least representing ideology in one way or another way. It is discourse analysis that provides the framework and a prism passing which the text can be interpreted in a more comprehensive way showing the stance an author is having.

As we are aware that discourse is language above sentence-level and analysis involves breaking down, scrutinizing and investigating, so, discourse analysis is breaking down of language not only according to grammatical structures but also according to the context and different social goals. Discourse analysis is such a broad term that covers language used for communication between people whether in written form or spoken form. Other fields of language analysis may take smaller chunks of language such as words, phrases or sentences but discourse analysis encompasses language above that the sentence level making the text more comprehensible. Discourse analysis takes conversation or text in a larger context. It sometimes also brings together both the social and cultural context while melding linguistics and sociology together. Since it helps in a better understanding of the context and aspects of communication, discourse is therefore divided into three types of theories: micro theories take discourse as a social structure and constituent, macro theories consider discourse as construct of the social world, whereas critical discourse theories take discourse both as a constructive and constituted based which a sort of dialectical relationship between social world/actions and discourse is developed (Soltani, 2005). In short, we can say that discourse and discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary field that covers and is applicable in different fields like sociology, media, politics, English studies and many other fields. In the present study discourse analysis is taken in the context of literature, where the short story *The Bully* has been analyzed.

Labov Model of Narrative Analysis

Stories, the genre of literature this study focuses on, has always entertained people. We have been listening to and reading stories ages. Listening to stories and narrating the same have been a very important characteristic of

our folk culture. We have been entertained by stories told by different people, including our parents and grandparents. In order to analyze stories/narratives, Labov gave a model of narrative analysis that focuses on macro analysis of narratives that what different parts a narrative have. Labov (2006) is of the opinion that narratives make use of temporal junctures where the order of the events matches the order of the narrative clauses. Hence, narratives add coherence to themselves by following a particular structure and also to our thoughts (Khalil, 2017). Labov after working on many narratives taken from people of different locales and background found that there are certain features that are common to all narratives. These are given as the following:

Abstract

Abstract, like any other abstract, gives information about the story in a short summary statement showing what the story is about, and in this way, while having the basic information about the story, it alerts and motivates the listeners or readers.

Orientation

Abstract, which is optional, is followed by an orientation that means to acquaint yourself with or orient with something. So, it means that the beginning gives the basic information about the story setting, characters and particular time. In other words, we can say that it gives an answer to who, when and where and in this way, the listener is directed about the foregrounding of the story. Here, usually “past progressive forms are often used to sketch the activity that was in progress” (Afsar, 2006, 34).

Complicating Action

This is the place where the main problem of the story begins and usually, it is in the past simple tense. Narrative clauses are the hallmark of this section but these narrative clauses can also have some descriptive clauses which set the place for narrative clauses and helps in bringing live descriptions.

Resolution

In complicated action, the actions are made so complicated that naturally, it tends towards some escape in the shape of the resolution, which is basically the result of complicated actions. Here, the things are made easier and the tension is released from the audience as the final result of the story comes out.

Evaluation

It is that part of a story that tells something about the importance or significance of the story that why the story was worth telling. This part is introduced by intensifiers, evaluative statements, and modals, etc. It is, in fact, an answer to the question “so what”. It is the particular attitude of the writer which is brought into the story.

Coda

It is considered as the optional part of the story where the audiences are brought back to the point of entering into the story. Here, at this point, the end of the story is signaled.

These ideas can be summarized as, the story starts with an abstract and hence, participants are made aware about the nature of the story, then the story setting is made clear in the orientation which leads to the complicating actions and lastly, resolution occurs which is the last part of the complicating actions. Afterward, the evaluative statement comes and the story is ended in the coda.

Results and Discussions

In this section, we have analyzed the written story while focusing on both the macro as well as the micro-level of analysis. For the macro level of analysis, as said earlier, Labov model (1972) has been used. On the other hand, in order to present the overall picture of microanalysis, the focus is made on a blend of different approaches

ranging from conversational analysis to other linguistic approaches. In the section below, we will start from the macro level of analysis.

Macroanalysis

Abstract

According to Labov model of narrative analysis, the first category, which is optional in stories, is abstract. Abstract, as the name suggests, gives an idea about the nature of the story and rather about the happenings of the story. This is helpful in directing the readers about the theme that leads the story. After analyzing the written story, it was found that the story has an abstract. It is obvious that the abstract in the form of the title “The Bully” is not a proper abstract but rather a heading but still like abstract it gives a glimpse that what the story is going to be about and hence, it is dealt as an abstract of the story.

Orientation

The second category of the Labovian model of narrative analysis is orientation. Orientation usually gives an answer about who, what and when. In other words, it says something about the setting where the actions take place, the character(s) who are involved in actions and the particular time when the actions are taking place. In the present story, the sentences “I walked into the Huddle House restaurant in Brunswick, Georgia and sat down at the counter as all of the booths were taken. I picked up a menu and began to look at the various items trying to decide if I wanted to order breakfast or just go ahead and eat lunch.”, the present orientation of the given story. In a systematic manner, the above sentences show that the story has a clear orientation which gives knowledge about the character “I”, which is the narrator, the place “Huddle House restaurant in Brunswick, Georgia”, which is the particular setting of the happenings and also about the action of the character “sat down at the counter” and “picked up a menu”.

Complicating Action

Complicating action is the third category of the Labov model of narrative analysis. It is that part of the story where the real story begins with narrative clauses. The clauses create tension and the listener gets busy listening (Johnstone, 2001). In the given story, complicating action starts from “Excuse me” said someone, as they touched me on the shoulder”. Here, the verb of the narrative clause is simple past and continues until the evaluation of the stories.

Resolution

As everything tries to move towards its peak and then quite naturally its downfall starts. The same is the case with the present story wherein complicating action the climax is touched, then the unwinding process starts and things are made simplified. This stage of a story is known as resolution. In this story, the complicating action comes to an end when the writer says “I stood there watching as they drove toward the interstate and finally disappeared into the southbound ramp.”, which indicates the resolution of the story when the things are resolved and the Bully with his wife drove back.

Coda

Coda as an optional part of the story indicates the end of the story while bringing the readers back to the point where they were entered. As far as the story in hand is concerned, there is no proper coda, which has the above quality of bringing the readers back to the starting point.

Evaluation

Evaluation is actually the purpose of storytelling that shows that the story is worth telling. In other words, this makes the point of the story clear that this was the purpose behind this story. It is clear that the present story has

some purpose or evaluative judgment. The written story got this evaluation in the line “He will be the only friend that I have from my high school days.”

Microanalysis

While doing microanalysis, we did not focus on any specific approach or model as we did in the case of macro analysis where the Labov model was followed. Rather, we have taken different aspects from different approaches quite randomly and applied to the story. The reason for doing this is that this type of analysis encompasses all the important aspects from the different approaches which make the analysis more divergent and multifaceted. The points taken for microanalysis are discussed in detail in the following section.

Cohesive Devices

Cohesive devices are used to bring a connection between different pieces of text which otherwise might have been scattered chunks without proper comprehensibility of the text.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976) quoted by Evelyn Hatch (1992), there are five key cohesive ties: references, conjunction, substitution, ellipses, and lexical ties.

References

Usually, pronouns are used for reference. These pronouns can either be personal, reflexive, relative, interrogative or demonstrative and can either refer back to or forward and that is why references can have different forms as anaphoric or cataphoric references. There are many references in the story but we have taken the leading references which can represent the particular reference group e.g., anaphoric and cataphoric references or personal and demonstrative references, etc. If we take the very first reference from the sentence “My name is Barbara and my husband is Tony,” *she* said, it is personal reference with personal pronoun *she*. It is an anaphoric reference because *she* refers back to Barbara. Similarly, if the second example (How many times *this* big bully slammed me up against the lockers in the hallway) from the story is taken, it is quite clear that *this*, which is a demonstrative pronoun, refers forward to the *big bully* and it is a cataphoric reference. It is another issue that “the bully” in the story refers back to Tony and that is why in this case, it comes in the category of anaphoric references. The third example (I did not recognize the man *who* was sitting, alone at the table.) in the story shows the presence of relative pronouns *who* refers back to the man. Likewise, if the fourth example (I sat *there* continually racking my brain trying to remember who this Tony guy was.) in the given story is considered, it is understood that “there” is a demonstrative pronoun. This is also known as spatial deixis.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are used for creating a link in different parts of a sentence. This link or relationship may be in the form of coordination or addition as happens in the case of the conjunction “and”. This relation can also take the form of comparison, result and cause and effect relationship as is the case with “but” and “so” and “because”, respectively. These relations are further elaborated with examples from the story. The first example (I picked up ... *and* ... to decide *if* I ... *or* just go ahead) in the story has the conjunctions “and”, “if” and “or”. Here “and” and “or” are coordinating conjunctions because both take some part in coordinating parts of a sentence but conversely, “if” shows cause relationship. Similarly, for example (“Excuse me,” said someone, *as* they touched me on the shoulder.) has the conjunction “as”, which gives a description.

Substitution

This is Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) third grammatical cohesive ties which means a class of things is substituted by another and specifically an entity (Evelyn Hatch, 1992). In the selected story, there is no such substitution that substitutes the whole class. Though here are words which are substituted by other words but that are more nearer to references.

Ellipses

This is the fourth category of a cohesive tie where words or phrases or clauses are omitted from a sentence but still, the full meaning is conveyed. When this tie was tried to observe with reference to the given story, it was found that this happens rarely. Only one example in the story was found when Tony asks Roger “how I feel in this wheelchair how you felt way back then when you lived in the orphan home?” he asked me. And Roger replies “Almost”, Tony. It means that Roger means to say that I have felt the same by bringing the word “almost”.

Lexical Ties

This is the fifth type of cohesive tie which strengthens the cohesion within the text by either repeating the word or by presenting synonyms and general words (Evelyn Hatch, 1992). In order to create cohesion in the text, the story in hand has also applied the same strategy of using different types of lexical ties. If we take the example, the use of more general words e.g. *woman* and *guys* are more noticeable. Similarly, in the story Tony is first referred to as *Tony* then *guy*, then *Tony guy*, then *the bully* and finally *sorry son-of-a-gun*.

Repetition

Repetition usually happens when stressing some point or can also be just a false start as what by and large happens in spoken language. One of the characters says “*I’m sorry. I’m, ah. I’m ah, confused.*” The type of repetition which was found is not that of stressing and focusing some points but rather just indicate some false starts and slip of tongue.

Contractions

Contraction is when for ease and fluency in pronunciation the original phrase is made short by bringing words together and thus deleting some parts of the second word and thus making a single word instead of word phrase, though it still remains the phrase in a sense e.g., *can’t* instead of *cannot*, *couldn’t* instead of *could not* and *I’m* instead of *I am* etc. The contractions found in the story are *I’m*, *don’t*, *he’s*, *you’re* and *we’ll*.

Contextualization Signals (stress, adverbials, and modality)

Terry Locke (2004) while bringing Gee’s (1996) system of text analysis presents contextualization signals and says that it is used as an intensifying object usually by the use of intensifying adverbials, e.g., *actually*, *finally* and *absolutely*, etc. and high pitched/stressed words. The intensifying adverbials, e.g., *really*, *finally* and *all of a sudden* and stressed words as *TONY THE BULL* used in the story and *actually* do nothing but capture the listener and readers’ attention to the particular point and thus shows the importance of particular situation or utterance. The intensifying adverbials also represent modality within the text because they communicate the speaker/writer’s message (Michael McCarthy and Ronald Carter, 1994).

Inversions

Inversion, like fronting, is a linguistic device where the normal Subject Verb relation is changed from SV to VS e.g., in the story instead of “the doctor said”, “said the doctor” has been used.

Conclusion

Although, it is considered that spoken language, which is often more informal than written language, has more hesitations, slip of tongue and contractions than written language. But after the analysis, it was found that the written form of the story also has these features to some extent. One reason for this can be that the written story, which was analyzed, had more dialogues which are the spoken form of language and that is why it shared the spoken language characteristics of the American style.

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