ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

LABOV'S NARRATIVE SCHEMA AND THE STRUCTURE OF BIOGRAPHY: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF *THE SPY AND THE TRAITOR*

Muhammad Zubair
Lecturer, Department of English, Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences & Technology, Islamabad
muhammadsyedzubair@gmail.com
Maryam Javed
Lecturer, Department of English, Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences & Technology, Islamabad
sattimaryam789@gmail.com
Sajad Ali
MS Scholar, Department of Social Sciences, University of the West of Scotland, London
sajadalibjr@gmail.com

Abstract
This research investigates the narrative structure of Ben Macintyre's The Spy and the Traitor (2018) through the framework of Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model and examines how the biography aligns with the model's six core components. The research builds on earlier applications of Labov's framework to biographical writing and tests its consistency in another of Macintyre's works. A qualitative method is used to identify and analyse each schema in the text. The findings revealed that The Spy and the Traitor adheres fully to Labov's six-part structure: exhibiting dual abstracts, detailed orientation, sequential complicating actions, layered evaluations (external, embedded, and action-based), clear resolution, and a conclusive coda. The narrative maintains chronological order and confirms the model's strength in biographical storytelling. These findings reinforced the adaptability of Labov's model across biographical narratives and highlighted its potential applicability to broader nonfiction genres. The research contributes to narrative theory by showing that biographical writing not only conforms to but also enriches Labov's schemas through complex evaluative layering and structural precision.

Keywords: Labov's Narrative Schema Model, Biographical Narrative, Narrative Analysis; Ben Macintyre, *The Spy and the Traitor*

1. Introduction

In 1967, Labov and Waletzky tested the hypothesis that the language used by socially and economically marginalised groups was limited. To investigate this, they conducted interviews with individuals from Hispanic and African American communities in New York. During these interviews, participants were asked the "danger of death" question: "Were you ever in a situation where you thought you were in a serious danger of being killed" (Labov, 1972, p. 354)? A subsequent question followed: "Were you ever in a fight with someone bigger than you?" (Labov, 1972, p. 354). Participants who responded affirmatively were encouraged to share their experiences in detail. Based on this study, Labov and Waletzky developed the Narrative Schema Model in 1967 to analyse oral narratives of personal experience.

They proposed that most narratives include five main components: orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Later, in 1972, Labov revisited the model and introduced a sixth element, the abstract (Labov, 1972). He (1972) maintained that the abstract and coda are optional elements and that not every story necessarily includes them. Nonetheless, narratives that are fully developed generally contain all six components.

Although the model was initially developed to analyse oral narratives of personal experience, its use has gradually broadened to encompass literary narratives such as novels, short stories, and even applications in media studies and creative writing.

Moreover, Zubair et al. (2025) took the application of Labov's Narrative Schema Model one step further by demonstrating its relevance to the biographical genre. They analysed Macintyre's *A Spy Among Friends* and concluded that the model is equally applicable to

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

biographies, as such narratives often share structural and thematic characteristics with personal experience stories. This research aims to advance this line of inquiry by conducting a more detailed examination of the biographical genre. Particularly, this research applies Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model to Ben Macintyre's *The Spy and the Traitor* in order to identify and analyse the narrative components within a biographical framework. Therefore, this research seeks to determine how effectively the components of Labov's model capture the structure of biographical storytelling.

1.1 Research Questions

To what extent does the selected text adhere to Labov's Narrative Schema Model?

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

2. Literature Review

Labov and Waletzky (1967) developed the Narrative Schema Model to analyse oral narratives of personal experience. However, the model's application has since extended to various genres, including literature, media, and academic writing. Beyond structural approaches, language has also been examined from pragmatic perspectives that emphasise its social and functional role in communication (Zubair et al., 2025). Such research highlighted that meaning in discourse, whether oral, written, or biographical, is shaped not only by structure but also by context and purpose.

Ozyildirim (2009) compared written and oral narratives of frightening experiences, while Junqueira (2010) found that Brazilian speakers followed Labov's structure more closely than Americans. Channa et al. (2016) identified all six elements in a teacher's oral narrative, and Ebrahim (2016) noted cultural differences in British and Kurdish women's storytelling. In literary contexts, Boyno et al. (2013) showed the model enhanced comprehension of Jackson's *Charles*, and Jasim and Hatim (2015) observed a missing abstract in *Guest of the Nation*. Iqbal et al. (2019) and Sheikh et al. (2021) reported abstracts embedded in the titles of *The Bully* and *The Lottery*, though codas were absent. Zaib et al. (2022) detected four elements in Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, while Sathya and Barathi (2022) found all but the coda in Lahiri's *A Choice of Accommodations*. Raza et al. (2023) confirmed complete structures in *Martin*.

Al-Duleimi and Ghayadh (n.d.) demonstrated that the model is effective for long written narratives. Hussein and Kadhim (2021, 2022) utilised the model to analyse British and American novels. They combined it with Halliday's and Quirk's framework. Soliman (2022) applied Labov's model to Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia*, and Zahra et al. (2023) analysed Shamsie's *Home Fire* and found all six elements of Labov's model. Tanimoto (2009) studied *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* and found that each episode had different narrative elements. Qaleno et al. (2020) compared Labov's and Propp's models using mystical Persian poems. They concluded that Labov's model fit poetry better because of its flexible structure.

Zubair et al. (2025) extended the application of Labov's Narrative Schema Model to the biographical genre. They analysed Macintyre's *A Spy Among Friends* and concluded that the model is equally applicable to biographies. This research aims to advance this line of inquiry by conducting a more detailed examination of the biographical genre. This research applies Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model to Ben Macintyre's *The Spy and the Traitor* in order to identify and analyse the narrative components within a biographical framework. Therefore, this research seeks to determine how effectively the components of Labov's model capture the structure of biographical storytelling.

3. Research Methodology

This research utilises a qualitative approach to examine *The Spy and the Traitor* by Ben Macintyre through Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model. The model offers a framework for examining how the narrative is structured around six key elements.

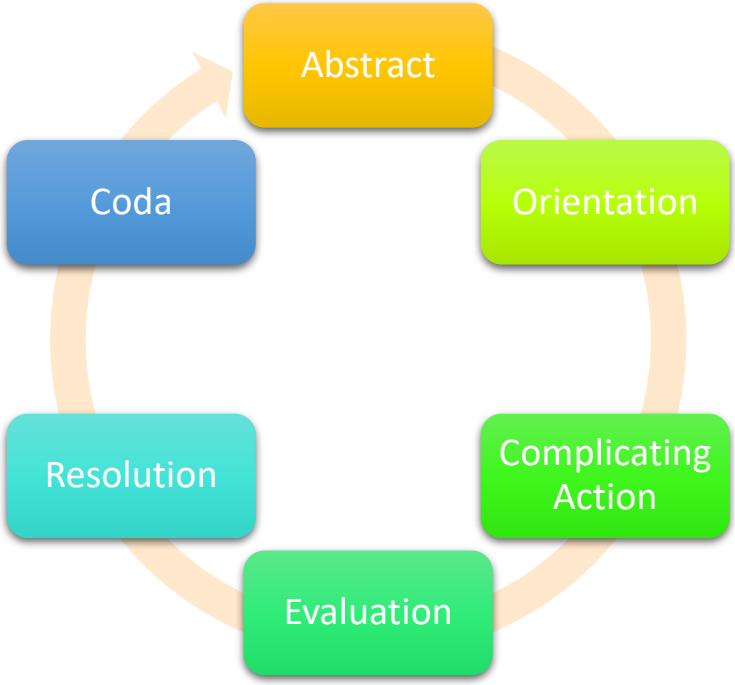
ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

3.1 Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model

This research applies Labov's (1972) model to analyse the text. The narrative is divided into units that match the model's six components. Each unit is identified based on the structural and functional features described by Labov (1972).

Figure 3.1

Labov's Narrative Schemas Model



The abstract briefly introduces the narrative and answers, "What is the story about?" It also signals the narrative's beginning (Labov, 1972). Orientation is the schema that gives background information and answers to the questions of who, when, and where. It sets up the story's context by describing the characters and setting (Labov, 1972). Complicating action is the schema in which main events unfold. This answers the question of what happened next. Events are organised in chronological order. The clauses are often in the past tense and highlight reportable events. (Labov, 1972). According to Labov (1972), evaluation addresses the "so what" question (Labov, 1972, p.368). It disperses between the complicating action and resolution. Labov (1972) identified three types of evaluation: embedded evaluation, external evaluation, and evaluation action. External evaluation occurs when the narrator stops the narrative and comments on it. "The narrator can stop the narrative, turn to the listener, and tell him what the point is" (Labov, 1972, p.371). Embedded evaluation occurs when 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). Evaluation action occurs when the narrator shows "what people did rather than what they said" (p. 273). Resolution is the schema in which the main conflict is resolved and answers what finally happened. 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).

4. Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the text.

4.1 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 full title of the text is *The Spy and the Traitor: The*

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War (2018) by Macintyre. The title serves as a potential Labovian abstract. The term "spy" implies a narrative centred on espionage. This role as a spy is the cornerstone of the narrative as it involves secrecy, intelligence gathering, and covert operations. The term "traitor" indicates a narrative that involves betrayal and deception. The term "and" is a conjunction that connects the two main characters: the spy and the traitor. It suggests that the narrative revolves around these two figures. The phrase "the greatest espionage story" emphasises the exceptional nature of the narrative. It indicates that the story is extraordinary and noteworthy within the espionage genre. The phrase "of the Cold War" situates the narrative within a specific historical context. The historical context is the Cold War era, a period known for intense espionage between the two superpowers.

Labov (1972) remarked that there can be two abstracts in a single narrative. In this text, there are two abstracts. One is in the title, and one is in the first chapter. Labov (1972) claimed that an abstract comprised of one or two clauses. However, the second abstract of the text is composed of more than two pages. The reason for the detailed abstract is that it is a lengthy story, while Labov (1972) analysed short oral narratives.

The second abstract in the first chapter offers a detailed insight into what the story is about, gives a more comprehensive summary of the narrative, and signals the beginning of the actual story by briefly introducing the job of Directorate K of KGB at the very beginning of the story: "For the KGB's counterintelligence section, Directorate K, this was a routine bugging job… By the time they had finished, there was barely a corner in the flat where the KGB did not have eyes and ears" (Macintyre, 2018, p. 1). As the narrative proceeds, the house, which has been bugged, is owned by a KGB officer, Oleg Gordievsky. He is the "chief of the KGB station in London" (Macintyre, 2018, p. 1). However, he has been recalled to Moscow because he is a double agent for MI6. Thus, both abstracts of the text summarise the whole story. The first abstract briefly indicates that the narrative is about the lives of two figures: one is a spy and the other is a traitor. On the other hand, the second abstract summarises the narrative by solely focusing on the spy, Oleg Gordievsky, who is a double MI6 agent.

4.2 Orientation

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

4.2.1 Introduction of Characters and their Initial Behaviours

The first character introduced is Oleg Gordievsky, whose life forms the core of the narrative. From birth, he is tied to the KGB, "shaped by it, loved by it, twisted, damaged, and very nearly destroyed by it" (Macintyre, 2018, p. 7). However, he shows early non-conformist tendencies, expressing naïve but radical views on freedom and democracy: "He wrote a speech…in defense of freedom and democracy" (p. 11). Though he concealed these views, this early dissent reveals his inner conflict with Soviet ideology. From boyhood, he "saw that it was possible to live a double life…to appear one person to the world and another inside" (p. 11), a trait that foreshadows his later dual existence as both KGB officer and MI6 agent.

The orientation also reveals Gordievsky's early fascination with Western culture, which contrasted sharply with Soviet ideology. As a child, he read British Ally and secretly listened to the BBC and Voice of America despite censorship: "At the age of six, he began reading *British Ally*" and "sometimes at night he would secretly listen to the BBC World Service" (Macintyre, 2018, pp. 10–12). These acts of quiet rebellion foreshadow his ideological turn toward the West.

The orientation also introduces Oleg Gordievsky's father, Anton Lavrentyevich, whose behaviour reflects absolute loyalty to communism. Once a teacher, he became "a dedicated, unquestioning Communist" and "a rigid enforcer of ideological orthodoxy" (Macintyre, 2018, p. 8), even aiding "the Sovietization of Kazakhstan" by enforcing food expropriation (p. 8). In

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

contrast, Oleg's mother, Olga Gordievsky, embodies quiet dissent. She "never joined the Party" and distrusted the NKVD, though she "kept her mouth shut" to survive (p. 9).

Another key figure is Oleg's elder brother, Vasili Gordievsky, who fully embodies Soviet loyalty, "working hard for Directorate S, the illegals section of the FCD" (Macintyre, 2018, p. 20). Oleg's wife, Yelena Akopian, shares his husband's yearning to escape Soviet restrictions: "Like Oleg, Yelena longed to travel abroad and imagined a life far beyond the confines of the cramped" (p. 23). Minor figures such as Stanislaw Kaplan, Stalin, Philby, and Molody are briefly introduced, but they play peripheral roles in the orientation.

4.2.2 Temporal Contextualization

Labov (1972) noted that orientation also provides temporal context. In this text, time is not fixed but fluid, to reflect the historical breadth of events. The narrative begins with Anton Lavrentyevich before "the Revolution of 1917" (Macintyre, 2018, p. 8), then moves to 1932, when he "helped enforce the Sovietization of Kazakhstan" (p. 8). It continues through "the Great Purge of 1936–8" (p. 8), situating the family's story within key moments of Soviet political upheaval.

The timeline continues with Oleg's birth, "on October 10, 1938," and his sister Marina's, "seven years after Oleg" (Macintyre, 2018, p. 9). The family's story unfolds alongside major Soviet events: Stalin's death in 1953, his denunciation at the 1956 Party Congress, and the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising (pp. 10–11). These milestones anchor the narrative in shifting political eras. The chronology then follows the brothers' careers: Vasili's recruitment into Directorate S in 1960 and Oleg's KGB interview and posting to East Berlin in 1961 (p. 14). This progression maintains a largely linear timeline. This situates Oleg's rise within the broader evolution of Soviet history.

The timeline then traces Gordievsky's steady rise within the KGB. After returning to Moscow, he "reported for duty at the KGB on July 31, 1962," and "by the summer of 1963…had been fully adopted into the KGB brotherhood" (Macintyre, 2018, pp. 16, 20). His formal career began shortly after: "On August 20, 1963, Gordievsky…reported for work at KGB headquarters" (p. 20).

Although largely chronological, the narrative includes brief flashbacks to key espionage figures, such as Molody, whose false identity was created "in 1943" (p. 21), and Kim Philby, "recruited by the NKVD in 1933" and who "defected…in 1963" (p. 21). Nevertheless, the narrative soon returns to Oleg's advancement, "Late in 1965 came the break Gordievsky had been waiting for" (p. 23), maintaining focus on his career while situating it within the wider context of Cold War intelligence.

4.2.3 Geographical Setting

Labov (1972) emphasised that orientation also addresses the question of where the events occur to establish the geographical context. The dominant setting is Moscow, where most events unfold. For example, "Anton married Olga Nikolayevna Gornova…and the couple moved into a Moscow apartment block reserved for the intelligence elite" (p. 8). Moscow is central to Gordievsky's early life: "At the age of seventeen, Oleg enrolled at the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations" (p. 11). Another important location near Moscow is School 101, described as: "The KGB's 'Red Banner' elite training academy, deep in the woods fifty miles north of Moscow, was code-named School 101" (p. 18).

However, the narrative extends beyond Moscow to East Berlin, where "the Berlin Wall was underway" (p. 15); to Hungary, where "the Soviet tanks rolled…to put down a nationwide uprising against Soviet rule" (p. 11); to Britain, where Molody was convicted of espionage by "the British court" (p. 21); and to Kazakhstan, where Anton Gordievsky helped enforce Sovietization (p. 8). These multiple settings create a transnational backdrop for Gordievsky's story and reflect the global reach of Cold War espionage.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL
JALT

4.3 Complicating Action

Labov (1972) defined the complicating action as the chronologically organised narrative clauses forming the story's main body. It begins when Oleg Gordievsky joins the KGB: "Gordievsky was told to report for duty at the KGB" (p. 14). However, he does not join the KGB as an MI6 agent, as "he swore to defend the Motherland to his last breath and his last secret" (p. 20).

According to Labov (1972), narrative clauses convey significant or unusual events. Joining the elite and secretive KGB is such a remarkable event. Gordievsky trains at "the KGB's Red Banner elite training academy…School 101" (p. 18), works in Moscow, and later "a slot opened up for a post running illegal in Denmark" (p. 23). These sequential events, joining, training, working, and relocating, illustrate Labov's (1972) view that narrative clauses follow the actual order of events.

The description of Gordievsky's arrival in Denmark, "Oleg and Yelena Gordievsky landed in Copenhagen on a glittering frosty day in January 1966 and entered a fairy tale" (p. 25), illustrates temporal and spatial orientation within the complicating action. The year 1966 provides temporal orientation and maintains chronological order. On the other hand, Copenhagen establishes spatial orientation. As Labov (1972) noted, orientation clauses often appear "at strategic points later on" (p. 365). Therefore, the shift from Moscow to Denmark justifies their placement within the complicating action.

The most reportable event occurs when Oleg is recruited by MI6 in 1974: "Major Gordievsky of the KGB was now working with MI6" (p. 58). Spying on one's own country and revealing state secrets makes this event particularly significant. His codename, "SUNBEAN" (p. 58), highlights the duality of his life: "From now on Oleg Gordievsky would live two distinct and parallel lives, both secret and at war with each other" (p. 58).

Labov (1972) claimed that narrative clauses use the past tense and are linked by temporal junctures. This is evident as the narrative consistently employs the past tense: Gordievsky was recalled to Moscow in 1970, "The Soviet Union he returned to…was even more repressive" (p. 36); reposted to Denmark in 1972, "Oleg and Yelena Gordievsky arrived in Copenhagen on 11 October 1972" (p. 44); remarried in 1979, "Gordievsky's remarriage was as swift and efficient as his divorce" (p. 101); and posted to London in 1982, "he boarded the Aeroflot flight to London, with Leila and their daughters" (p. 122). These dates act as temporal markers and ensure narrative coherence and progression.

The complicating action, according to Labov (1972), answers the question "what happened then?" This is achieved as the narrative details Gordievsky's collaboration with MI6: "Gordievsky leaned forward and started to unload four years of accumulated secrets…names, dates, places, plans, agents, and illegals" (p. 136). His ongoing sharing of intelligence until his 1985 recall drives the narrative forward.

The complicating action continues as Gordievsky is monitored upon his return to Moscow, where he is drugged and interrogated: "Gordievsky's brandy had been spiked with…SP-117…a chemical cocktail designed to erode the inhibitions and loosen the tongue" (p. 233). Despite the pressure, he never admits to being an MI6 agent, even when the KGB reveals its suspicions. This sequence illustrates the ongoing nature of the complicating action forming the narrative's core (Labov, 1972) and culminates in Gordievsky's decision to activate the PIMLICO plan.

4.4 Evaluation

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

4.4.1 External Evaluation

Labov (1972) explained external evaluation as a pause in the narrative where the narrator offers commentary or interpretation. The first instance occurs when the narrator explains Gordievsky's motivations for becoming a double agent. The narrator reveals that he was both

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

"political and ideological" (p. 64). Influenced by "the building of the Berlin Wall and the crushing of the Prague Spring" and exposure to "Western literature…his nation's real history…democratic freedoms" (p. 64), Gordievsky rejected Communist propaganda. This pause interrupts the narrative flow to reveal his ideological shift.

Another instance appears when the narrator reflects on the KGB's decline: "The KGB of the 1970s was clearly not what it had been a generation earlier…The KGB was still a dangerous antagonist, but its vulnerabilities and deficiencies were now exposed" (pp. 140–141). This commentary contextualises the organisation's weakening power beyond mere events. A similar comparison occurs with Leila, whose love is weighed against her political loyalty: "Gordievsky could not be sure whether his wife's love was stronger than her communism, or vice versa" (p. 252). It exposes the tension between affection and ideology.

Labov (1972) also identifies comparators as evaluative tools that contrast events or characters. Here, the narrator compares Ames and Gordievsky: "Ames spied for money; Gordievsky was driven by ideological conviction…. Gordievsky risked his life for a cause; Ames wanted a bigger car…. Gordievsky was on the side of the good, and Ames was on his own side" (p. 334). This comparison serves as an external evaluation by allowing the narrator to make a moral judgment on both spies.

Finally, evaluation answers Labov's (1972) question of "so what?" (p. 368). When recounting Ames's betrayal, "On June 13, 1985, Aldrich Ames committed one of the most spectacular acts of treason…he named no fewer than twenty-five individuals" (p. 247). The narrator emphasises its devastating impact: "At least ten spies…would perish…and more than one hundred intelligence operations were compromised" (p. 248). This evaluation clarifies the scale and significance of Ames's treachery.

4.4.2 Embedded Evaluation

Labov (1972) defined embedded evaluation as the revelation of characters' emotions during events rather than commentary from outside the narrative. This is evident when the narrator conveys Gordievsky's feelings after his MI6 recruitment: "I felt relief and euphoria that I was no longer a dishonest man working for a totalitarian regime" (p. 86). His fear is shown when Grushko announces a mole in the KGB: "Gordievsky felt a jolt of fear, and pinched his leg…through his trouser pocket" (p. 103), followed by "He felt the nausea rise in his throat…he wondered what else he had told MI6" (p. 103). These details vividly depict his terror and vulnerability.

Further embedded evaluations appear when Gordievsky panics at Moscow Central, "I was paralysed" (p. 231), and when he learns the KGB knows his identity: "Gordievsky was stunned and momentarily speechless" (p. 238). These immediate emotional reactions immerse readers in his psychological state. As a result, they make the evaluation integral to the narrative.

Labov (1972) noted that third parties can also provide embedded evaluations to assess the narrator's actions. In this text, since the narrator is not personally involved in the events, third-party evaluations are used to assess Gordievsky. Mikhail Lyubimov's 1978 report describes him as a "thorough, politically right-thinking officer…a good linguist, and a competent writer of reports" (p. 95), while MI6 officer James Spooner calls him "completely reliable, honest, and driven by the right motivations" (p. 137). These firsthand assessments lend credibility and depth to Gordievsky's characterisation.

Labov (1972) also identifies repetition as an evaluative device. The repeated doubts surrounding the PIMLICO escape plan highlight its perceived futility. Gordievsky's despair is shown in his reflection: "The plan is unreliable anyway… I should forget about it, and just look forward to the bullet in the back of the neck" (p. 231). Similar scepticism is expressed by MI6 officers, who noted that "there was deep pessimism and a widespread assumption that the case was over" (p. 241), as well as by senior officials who were "extremely dubious about the escape plan" (p. 267). One officer concedes, "We all knew how flimsy the whole thing was… I put the

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

chances at twenty percent or lower" (p. 274). This repetition of doubt functions as an embedded evaluation and emphasises the shared pessimism surrounding the plan's success.

4.4.3 Evaluation Action

Labov (1972) defined evaluation action as moments when the narrator shows "what people did rather than what they said" (p. 273). This appears when Treholt, confronted with a photo of himself and Titov, "vomited violently and then said: What can I say" (p. 189), revealing guilt through action rather than words. Similarly, Gordievsky's anxiety after being recalled to Moscow is shown through behaviour: he "began drinking Cuban rum…[and] took up smoking, trying to calm his raging nerves" (p. 245). Later, "Gordievsky seemed inconsolable, drinking glass after glass of vodka" (p. 246), his actions reflecting emotional collapse.

Another example occurs when a CIA officer grabbed an MI6 officer in frustration, "grabbed me and pinned me up against the wall and said: Can you tell me more about this source" (p. 203)? His physical aggression conveys the urgency and tension more powerfully than narration alone.

4.5 Resolution

Labov (1972) argued that resolution is the schema where complex events are resolved. In this narrative, the resolution begins when Gordievsky signals to activate the PIMLICO plan, which leads to the resolution of previous tensions. The pace of the resolution accelerated as Gordievsky and the PIMLICO team successfully crossed the Russian border and reached Finland.

As Labov (1972) explained, the resolution also contains narrative clauses. The narrator reports their continued journey: "At Tromso, they spent the night in an airport hotel" (p. 306), before flying from Tromso to Oslo and then to London.

By fulfilling Labov's (1972) function of answering what finally happened, the narrative recounts Britain's attempt to negotiate Gordievsky's family's release. However, Moscow refused: "Gordievsky was a traitor; his family would remain in Russia; there would be no deal" (p. 321). This prompted Britain to publicise his defection: "Dramatic headlines splashed across every newspaper: 'The Biggest Fish Ever Netted,' 'Our Man in the KGB'" (p. 321). Eventually, under KGB chief Vadim Bakatin, Gordievsky's family was freed: "Leila Aliyeva Gordievsky and her daughters…landed at Heathrow on September 6, 1991…where Gordievsky was waiting to take them home" (pp. 329–330).

Labov (1972) described that resolution paves the way for the closure of the narrative. The resolution transitions to closure as the narrative reveals Gordievsky and Leila's separation in 1993. Gordievsky remains alive in Britain, living reclusively at an undisclosed location, visited only by former MI5 and MI6 colleagues.

4.6 Coda

Labov (1972) claimed that the coda is the final schema of a narrative. It either returns a speaker to the beginning of the narrative or signals that the story has ended. In the text, the coda signals that the narrative has ended:

In July 2015, on the thirtieth anniversary of his escape, all those involved in running the case and exfiltrating him from Russia gathered to celebrate the seventy-six-year-old Russian spy. The original cheap imitation leather suitcase, with which he escaped to Finland, is now in the MI6 Museum. At the anniversary celebration, he was presented, as a souvenir, with a new travel bag. It contained the following: a Mars bar, a plastic Harrods bag, a map of western Russia, pills "for the relief of worry, irritability, insomnia and stress," mosquito repellent, two bottles of chilled beer, and two cassette tapes: Dr. Hook's Greatest Hits and Sibelius's Finlandia. The final items in the bag were a packet of cheese and onion crisps and a baby's nappy. (p. 337)

The final sentence serves as the coda of this narrative. However, its meaning becomes clear only in context. Labov (1972) stated that the function of the code is to prevent the question: "And then what happened" (P. 366). In this case, the coda fulfils its role by preventing further

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

questions about the story's end. Furthermore, Labov (1972) also noted that the coda consists of free clauses, which is also evident here, as the narrative coda is composed of free clauses and provides a sense of finality without needing further explanation.

4.7 Discussion

This research applied Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model to Ben Macintyre's *The Spy and the Traitor* (2018) and examined how effectively its structure aligns with Labov's six narrative components. The findings showed that the text fully adheres to the model. Therefore, this answers the first research question affirmatively. The second research question, regarding the sequence of schemas, is also supported, as the narrative follows Labov's chronological and functional order from abstract to coda.

These findings parallel Zubair et al. (2025), who found Labov's model equally applicable to biographical narratives in *A Spy Among Friends*. Similarly, Boyno et al. (2013) and Ebrahim (2016) confirmed that Labovian sequencing strengthens coherence and comprehension in literary narratives. The dual abstracts identified in Macintyre's text extend Labov's idea that a narrative may contain more than one abstract, echoing Iqbal et al. (2019) and Sheikh et al. (2021), who observed that titles can function as abstracts.

5. Conclusion

This research concluded that Ben Macintyre's *The Spy and the Traitor* (2018) fully conforms to Labov's (1972) Narrative Schema Model, incorporating all six components, abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda, in an organised and sequential manner. The findings demonstrated that Labov's model effectively captures the narrative coherence and structural unity of biographical storytelling. The presence of dual abstracts and a comprehensive evaluation stage highlighted the model's flexibility when applied to longer written forms, extending its scope beyond oral or fictional narratives.

The findings correspond with earlier research by Zubair et al. (2025), Ebrahim (2016), and Sathya and Barathi (2022), who also observed Labovian consistency across varied genres. Therefore, this research reinforced the model's cross-genre validity. Future researchers may build on this work by applying Labov's framework to other biographical or historical texts to further test its universality and narrative adaptability.

References

Al-Duleimi, A. F., & Ghayadh, N. H. (n.d.). *Application of Labov's narrative model to long written narratives.*

Boyno, M., Akil, E., & Dolaş, F. (2013). The application of the Labovian narrative analysis to a short story in an EFL class. *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 37*, 1–10.

Channa, L. A., & Abdul, S. (2016). Labovian narrative analysis of a Pakistani schoolteacher's experience of teaching English. *BUITEMS Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 2*(1), 38–51.

Ebrahim, H. R. (2016). *Narrative analysis of the oral stories of personal experience told by Iraqi Kurdish and white British English-speaking women*.

Hussein, H. T., & Kadhim, H. M. (2021). The effect of gender on language use in British novels: A sociolinguistic study. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 17*(4), 2098–2110.

Hussein, H. T., & Kadhim, H. M. (2022). The effect of gender on language use in American novels: A sociolinguistic study. *Al-Bahith Journal, 14*(2), 101–115.

Iqbal, L., Ullah, I., & Shah, F. (2019). Labovian model and analysis of *The Bully* as representation of the USA. *Global Regional Review, 4*(2), 78–84.

Jasim, M. H. (2015). Investigating narrative techniques in Frank O'Connor's *Guests of the Nation* in terms of Labov's natural narrative model: A socio-stylistic study. *Journal of Basra Researches for Human Sciences, 40*(2), 1–20.

ISSN E: 2709-8273
ISSN P:2709-8265
JOURNAL OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND TESOL

Junqueira, L. D. G. (2010). *Narrative analysis of oral personal experience across two languages and cultures: Brazilian Portuguese and American English*.

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English vernacular* (Vol. 3). University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (pp. 12–44). University of Washington Press.

Macintyre, B. (2018). *The spy and the traitor: The greatest espionage story of the Cold War.* Crown Publishing.

Özyıldırım, I. (2009). Narrative analysis: An analysis of oral and written strategies in personal experience narratives. *Journal of Pragmatics, 41*(6), 1209–1222.

Qaleno, Z. T., Aghahosaini, H., & Mirbagherifard, S. A. (2020). A review of the textual structure of a story of Attar and Rumi focused on Bayazid. *Literary Arts, 12*(2), 1–15.

Raza, N., Ahmad, S., & Naseem, S. (2023). Narrative analysis of short story *Martand* by Nayantara Sahgal through Labov model. *Harf-o-Sukhan, 7*(3), 471–476.

Sathya, G., & Barathi, S. (2022). An application of Labov's narrative structure in Jhumpa Lahiri's *A Choice of Accommodations. Journal of Positive School Psychology, 6*(2), 1753–1758.

Sheikh, A. R., Awan, N. A., & Sheikh, F. R. (2021). The application of Labov's sociolinguistic model of narrative analysis to a short story *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson. *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language, 8*(1), 1–15.

Soliman, H. (2022). Searching for the ideal: Variety of representations in selected extracts from Tom Stoppard's trilogy *The Coast of Utopia (2002). 23*(3), 167–191.

Tanimoto, C. (2009). Labovian interpretation of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue. Studies in Language and Culture, 31*, 97–106.

Zaib, K., Anwar, M., Asmat, K., & Shakir, R. (2022). A narrative analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Tell-Tale Heart. PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology, 19*(3), 1841–1850.

Zahra, A., Ali, S., & Ilyas, M. (2023). A Labovian analysis of Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire. International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 8*(1), 103–111.

Zubair, M., Javed, M., & Wahid, M. A. (2025). A Labovian Analysis of Macintyre's A Spy Among Friends (2014). *AL-ĪMĀN Research Journal*, *3*(03), 79-92. https://doi.org/10.63283/IRJ.03.03/09

Zubair, M., Zahid, M., & Aleem, N. (2025). Language as a Resource for Survival: A Pragmatic Analysis of Beggars' Discourse in Islamabad. *Journal of Arts and Linguistics Studies*, *3*(3), 5085-5103. https://doi.org/10.71281/jals.v3i3.457