

SARAHMED Éditions

Contact us by email at leseditionssarahmed@gmail.com or visit
our website at <https://sarahmed.net/>

ISBN 978-9969-589-14-6

April 2025

Narrative Texts: Structures, Functions, and Discursive Dynamics

Dr. Rabya BENRADJA

Preface

Narrative texts are foundational to human communication, encompassing how individuals and societies construct meaning, identity, and cultural memory. This volume, *Narrative Texts: Structures, Functions, and Discursive Dynamics*, offers an advanced, theoretically grounded exploration of narrative from the perspectives of textual linguistics, discourse theory, and narrative philosophy. It aims to provide university-level students, scholars, and educators with a rigorous framework for analyzing the complexity of narrative forms across genres and media.

Rooted in the scholarship of Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, Paul Ricœur, Teun A. van Dijk, Claude Brémond, and others, the book combines foundational theory with contemporary analytical tools, emphasizing macro-structural and enunciative dimensions. It further bridges theory with pedagogy by suggesting practical applications for curriculum development and classroom instruction.

The structure unfolds progressively: from textual foundations to narrativity, macro-structures, enunciation, and hybrid forms, culminating in didactic methodologies. The text integrates critical perspectives, illustrative examples, and diagrams to illuminate key concepts. This book thus responds to the interdisciplinary demand for a comprehensive academic resource on narrative texts as complex, multi-layered communicative acts.

I invite the reader to engage deeply with the discourse presented, confident that it will enrich their understanding and appreciation of narrative's enduring power and intricate architecture.

Table of Contents

PREFACE

1 FOUNDATIONS OF TEXTUALITY AND NARRATIVE

1

1.1 DEFINITION AND ETYMOLOGY OF “TEXT” 1

1.1.1 FROM *TEXTUS* TO MODERN THEORIES 1

1.1.2 CLASSICAL VS. STRUCTURALIST VIEWPOINTS 2

1.1.2.1 The Classical Conception: Rhetorical Unity and Persuasion 2

1.1.2.2 The Structuralist Reconfiguration: Text as a Semiotic System 3

1.1.2.3 Implications and Tensions Between the Paradigms 5

1.1.3 THE TEXT AS AN ORGANIZED WHOLE 5

1.1.3.1 The Text as a “Linguistic Object” 6

1.1.3.2 Criteria of Textuality: Beyond Structural Aggregation 7

1.1.3.3 Integrating Structure and Pragmatics: The Dynamic Textual Whole 9

1.1.3.4 Implications for Textual Analysis and Discourse Studies 10

1.1.4 COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT TEXT STRUCTURE 10

1.1.4.1 The Fallacy of Strictly Linear Textual Structure 11

1.1.4.2 Distinguishing Cohesion from Coherence 12

1.1.4.3 Implications for Text Analysis and Pedagogy 13

1.2 PERSPECTIVES ON TEXTUAL UNITY 14

1.2.1	RHETORICAL FOUNDATIONS	14
1.2.1.1	The Interrelation of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos in Narrative Construction	14
1.2.1.2	Dispositio and the Teleology of Narrative Unity	15
1.2.1.3	Social Contexts of Address and Reception in Rhetorical Discourse	16
1.2.2	PRAGMATIC CONFIGURATIONS AND LINGUISTIC MODELS	16
1.2.2.1	Speech Act Theory: Illocution and Performative Force	17
1.2.2.2	Cooperative Principles and Conversational Maxims	17
1.2.2.3	Deixis and Enunciation: Anchoring Texts in Context	18
1.2.2.4	Implications for Textual Coherence and Interpretation	19
1.3	INTERACTING COMPONENTS OF THE TEXT	20
1.3.1	ENUNCIATION, STRUCTURE, AND COHERENCE	20
1.3.2	SEMANTIC COHESION AND TEXT WORLDS	22
1.4	THE TEXT BEYOND SENTENCE GRAMMAR	24
1.4.1	TRANSPHRASTIC RELATIONS	24
1.4.2	TEXTUAL VS. GRAMMATICAL CORRECTNESS	25
2	NARRATIVITY AND NARRATIVE TEXT STRUCTURE	27
2.1	DEFINING NARRATIVE TEXTS	27
2.1.1	UNIVERSALITY OF NARRATIVES	28
2.1.2	SUBTYPES: MYTH, FABLE, TALE, AND NOVEL	29

2.2	THE CORE DIMENSIONS OF NARRATIVITY	30
2.2.1	TEMPORAL PROGRESSION	31
2.2.2	THEMATIC UNITY AND SUBJECTIVITY	31
2.2.3	ACTOR-SUBJECTS AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM	32
2.2.4	PREDICATE TRANSFORMATIONS AND COHERENCE	34
3	MACRO-STRUCTURE AND MISE EN INTRIGUE	36
3.1	FIVE MACRO-PROPOSITIONAL PHASES	36
3.1.1	ORIENTATION (PN1) AND SITUATION SETUP	36
3.1.1.1	Spatiotemporal Framing and Diegetic Environment	38
3.1.1.2	Introduction of Actantial Roles and Narrative Functionality	39
3.1.1.3	Establishing Equilibrium and Narrative Baseline	40
3.1.2	TRIGGERING EVENTS AND DISRUPTION (PN2)	40
3.1.2.1	The Role of Surprise and Conflict	41
3.1.2.2	The Triggering Event as Narrative Catalyst	41
3.1.3	ACTION DEVELOPMENT AND COMPLICATION (PN3)	43
3.2	TENSION, REVERSAL, AND RESOLUTION	44
3.2.1	NARRATIVE KNOT AND PERIPETIES	44
3.2.2	FINAL RESOLUTION (PN4)	45
3.2.3	EQUILIBRIUM (PN5)	46
3.3	PLOT VS. CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER	47
3.3.1	REARRANGING NARRATIVE EVENTS	47
3.3.2	SEMANTIC OVER CHRONOLOGICAL LOGIC	48
3.4	VISUALIZING NARRATIVE STRUCTURE	50
3.4.1	DIAGRAMS OF MACRO-PROPOSITIONS	50

3.4.2	EDUCATIONAL EXAMPLES	52
3.4.3	NARRATIVE TEMPLATES	53
3.4.4	CASE STUDY: ANALYZING A FABLE STEP BY STEP	54
3.4.4.1	Macro-Propositional Structure	55
3.4.4.2	Actantial Roles and Their Functions	55
3.4.4.3	Interplay of Structure and Function	56
3.4.4.4	Implications for Narrative Analysis	56
4	ENUNCIATION AND COMMUNICATION IN NARRATIVE	58
4.1	TPOLOGY OF ENUNCIATIVE MODES	58
4.1.1	DEICTIC MARKERS AND DISCOURSE PRESENCE	58
4.1.1.1	Genette's Typology of Narrative Levels and Deixis	59
4.1.1.2	Implications for Narrative Interpretation	59
4.1.2	NARRATIVE DISTANCE AND FICTIONALITY	62
4.1.2.1	Dimensions of Narrative Distance: Spatial, Temporal, and Psychological Proximities	63
4.1.2.2	Narrative Distance and the Modulation of Narrative Authority	64
4.1.2.3	Narrative Distance as a Marker of Fictionality and Reader Engagement	64
4.2	ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTS	65
4.2.1	NARRATIVE AS SPEECH ACTION	66
4.2.1.1	Micro-acts vs. Macro-acts of Discourse	66
4.2.1.2	Performative Enunciation and Narrative Authority	67

4.2.2	ILLOCUTIONARY STRATEGIES AND READER ENGAGEMENT	67
4.3	4.3 DIALOGIC ORIENTATION OF NARRATIVE	68
4.3.1	READER INVOLVEMENT AND INTERPRETATION	69
4.3.2	NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE AND EVALUATION	70
4.4	ARGUMENTATIVE LAYERS IN NARRATIVE	72
4.4.1	MORAL FUNCTION AS PERSUASION	72
4.4.2	NARRATIVE VS. ARGUMENTATIVE TEXTS	73
4.4.2.1	Overlapping Structures	73
4.4.2.2	Narratives as Implicit Arguments	74
5	HYBRID FORMS AND PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS	76
5.1	NARRATIVE INTERACTING WITH OTHER TEXTUAL TYPES	76
5.1.1	ARGUMENTATION THROUGH STORYTELLING	76
5.1.1.1	Narrativity and the Embedding of Argumentative Content	76
5.1.1.2	Actantial Roles and the Construction of Persuasive Identities	77
5.1.1.3	Focalization and the Mediation of Interpretative Perspective	78
5.1.2	EXPOSITION WITHIN NARRATIVE STRUCTURES	79
5.1.2.1	The Role of Narrative Syntax in Expository Texts	80
5.1.2.2	Temporal Structure and Causal Scaffolding in Exposition	81

5.1.2.3 Focalization and Point of View in Expository Narratives	82
5.1.3 MULTIMODAL HYBRID TEXTS: NARRATIVE AND VISUAL INTEGRATION	83
5.1.3.1 The Semiotic Convergence of Verbal and Visual Narrativity	83
5.1.3.2 Temporal and Spatial Structuring in Multimodal Narratives	84
5.1.3.3 Pedagogical Implications for Multimodal Literacy Development	85
5.2 INSTRUCTIONAL USE OF NARRATIVE TEXTS	86
5.2.1 TEXTBOOKS, FABLES, AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES	86
5.2.2 DIDACTIC FUNCTIONS AND MORAL INSTRUCTION	87
5.2.3 CROSS-CULTURAL NARRATIVE PEDAGOGY	88
5.3 ANALYTICAL TOOLS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS	90
5.3.1 MACRO-STRUCTURE TEMPLATES	90
5.3.2 QUESTION FRAMEWORKS FOR EVALUATION	91
5.3.3 MULTIMODAL TEXT ANALYSIS TOOLS	92
5.4 DESIGNING ACTIVITIES FROM THEORY	93
5.4.1 CLASSROOM EXERCISES BASED ON NARRATIVE MODELS	93
5.4.2 FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS	95
5.4.3 ASSESSMENT OF MULTIMODAL NARRATIVE PROJECTS	96
5.5 DIGITAL NARRATIVES AND NEW MEDIA	97
5.5.1 INTERACTIVE STORYTELLING AND HYPERTEXT NARRATIVES	97
5.5.2 NARRATIVITY IN SOCIAL MEDIA AND TRANSMEDIA	98

5.6	NARRATIVE COMPETENCE AND CRITICAL MEDIA	
	LITERACY	99
5.6.1	CRITICAL READING OF NARRATIVE IDEOLOGIES	99
5.6.2	PROMOTING ETHICAL NARRATION AND STORYTELLING	101
	CONCLUSION	103
	REFERENCES	105

1 Foundations of Textuality and Narrative

1.1 Definition and Etymology of “Text”

1.1.1 From *Textus* to Modern Theories

The term *text* derives from the Latin *textus*, which originally means "woven" or "woven fabric." This metaphor captures the essence of text as an interlaced, organized unity composed of smaller elements—words, sentences, phrases—woven together to form a coherent whole. Historically, *textus* referred to something tangible, a fabric, underscoring the metaphor of interconnectivity and structure that remains central to modern textual theory.

The evolution of *textus* into the contemporary concept of text has been shaped by a succession of intellectual paradigms, each reframing the nature and function of textuality. From the classical era's emphasis on rhetoric and persuasion, through structuralism's focus on underlying systems of signs, to post-structuralism's interrogation of meaning and intertextuality, the notion of text has progressively expanded beyond a mere linguistic artifact to a complex semiotic and discursive phenomenon.

The shift from classical rhetoric to structuralism marks a pivotal moment in this evolution. Classical theory centered on the *dispositio*—the orderly arrangement of arguments and figures for