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Modeling the narrative viewpoint: narrative spaces and the labovian narrative structure

The article addresses the methodological challenge of studying narratives of various genres in their natural discursive environment. The proposed model combines the narrative spaces approach to narrative construction developed by Dancygier and the classic Labov & Waletzky narrative segmentation model. I undertake a modeling experiment targeting four narratives of personal experience, two oral and two written, from news, political, humorous, and oneiric reflective contexts. I accommodate the classic narrative structure model of Abstract, Orientation, Complication, Resolution, Evaluation, and Coda to tag narrative spaces rather than narrative clauses. This revised vision of the narrative structural elements combined with the cognitive narratology concept of narrative spaces aims to address the viewpoint configurations. Namely, I focus on the discussion of the elements of Abstract, Evaluation, and Coda, which position the narrative in its discursive context and essentially constitute the extra-narrative system. These elements allow embedding the narrative in the pragmatic context and account for its tellability. In turn, this discursive positioning depends on the viewpoint configuration of the narrative of personal experience. I regard viewpoint configurations as elements governed by the narrative genre. I argue that the viewpoint compression and decompression processes and narrative embedding strategies are genre-specific. Narratives of different genres demonstrate stronger or weaker extra-narrative system and varied tendencies towards multiple viewpoints and their compression.

Key words: *narrative spaces, narrative structure model, viewpoint, viewpoint compression.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article addresses the methodological challenge of modeling viewpoints in narratives of different genres. The approach I adopt unites the cognitive narratology concepts of narrative spaces and viewpoint compression [1] with narrative segmentation (abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda) [7; 8; 9; 10]. This model sheds light on the transitions of viewpoint initiative at different narrative segments. This framework allows to model the viewpoint configurations typical of the narratives of different genres, including oral and written political, comic, news media, and oneiric narratives. The **novelty** of the proposed model resides in the suggested way to tie the broader discourse context and purpose of narratives to their structural configurations and viewpoint constructions.

This qualitative study **aims** to apply the narrative spaces model of viewpoint to the narratives of different genres coming from different kinds of discourse to demonstrate the dynamic viewpoint configurations typical of these genres of narratives as well as the role of the classic narrative segmentation in understanding the viewpoint compression. With this aim in mind, I selected four narratives that feature first-person narration and are united by the theme of the war in Ukraine. These sample narratives are very different in their discursive context and rhetorical key. They include a news media article which contains a personal account of hostilities in Ukraine in February 2022 [Dracott, 2022], a narrative from President Zelensky's speech addressing the UK Parliament [The Presidential Office of Ukraine, 2023], an oneiric narrative featuring the war in Ukraine [Dream Journal, 2022], and a comic narrative of a trip to Ukraine during the hostilities [FedorComedy, 2023]. The **object** of the study is hence narratives of various genres occurring naturally in different discourses, while the **subject** is the structural configuration of these narratives conditioned by the viewpoint shifts. The **objectives** are to i) model the narratives after Dancygier [1]; ii) modify the model by marking the viewpoint shifts and tagging the narrative spaces according to Labov and Waletzky's classic narrative segmentation scheme; iii) to interpret the models in terms of the genres of the narratives and the discursive context in which they appear.

2. Viewpoint Models Using Narrative Spaces and Labovian Segmentation Tagging

The model I propose seeks to address the embeddedness of narratives in discourses in which they naturally occur and in which their tellability is grounded. The contemporary narratology approaches the narrative as a meta-genre of "the narrative reworking of experience" that can be also termed as a "discourse mode" characterized by temporally organized series of actions [2, p. 267]. Since Fludernik [2] inspired the general linguistic interest to narratives that occur in

varied social settings, the classic narratological concepts have been largely revised. Few narratives enjoy even relative independence like the elicited narratives that Labov and Waletzky studied [10; 7; 9]; in turn, most of them emerge in oral conversations, political speeches, media production, news, and other discourses. In view of the embeddedness of such narratives in the discourse they originate from, one way of approaching them is to study the viewpoint that organizes these narratives.

2.1. Labov and Waletzky's Classical Narrative Model

William Labov and Joshua Waletzky's framework of narrative structure was for a long time among the dominant narrative analysis tools. Labov and Waletzky's narrative segmentation model belongs among the most influential contributions to narratology [3; 11]. It was initially published in a 1967 and then developed by Labov for over thirty years. Labov and Waletzky built their theory by drawing from elicited oral narratives of personal experience; their primary research interest lay within the sociolinguistic query [9] in that they correlated the narrative structure with the social class and education of the speaker. To account for the narrative structure, Labov and Waletzky [10] developed the narrative segmentation model that included abstract (introducing the narrative), orientation (describing the settings and the characters), complication (promoting action and conflict), evaluation (giving the speaker's opinion), resolution (outlining the result), and coda (returning the discourse to the present).

It should be noted that initial theory of Labov and Waletzky was rather normative and aimed at describing the "normal" structure of a narrative [3, p. 117]. The researchers worked with oral elicited personal-experience narratives which may be regarded as prototypical in terms of tellability [8; 9] and stable viewpoint. They proposed to draw a functional distinction between referential and evaluative clauses, whereby referential clauses rendered the information on narrative events, characters, and setting, while evaluative clauses embed the narrative into a broader discourse. Indeed, their model of a narrative sequence is a kind of story schemata relevant to understanding of discourse [4, p. 373]. Markedly, a somewhat less popular schema of a narrative was proposed within the frame analysis which included eight types of frames: Conversation [Preface [Opening [Orientation [Beginning [Story] End] Closing] Evaluation] Coda] Conversation [3, p. 185]. This model accounts for the embeddedness of the narrative in its conversational (discursive) environment. However, in the light of the natural narratology [2] reigning the contemporary narratological landscape, I aim to flexibly extend the structural model by Labov and Waletzky to address narratives that spontaneously arise in different discursive contexts. While Labov [5] tied the external evaluation in personal-experience narratives to the

higher social class of narrators, I aim to prove that it is also governed by the rules and pragmatic requirements of the genre and type of a communicative event. I argue that structural tagging of narrative elements as Abstract, Orientation, Complication, Evaluation, and Coda allows insights into the extra-narrative components used to embed narratives in discourse.

2.2. Viewpoint and Narrative Structure Modelling with Narrative Spaces

As a narratological category, viewpoint determines what events are available to the narrator and how they interpret and evaluate them [13; 14]. In narratives of personal experience that are told from the first-person point of view, viewpoint is relatively cohesive with the general viewpoint of the context (conversation or speech), while some narratives such as media coverage may change between the author's and the narrator's viewpoints. The configuration of interchanging viewpoints is more typical of some narrative genres than others, and the configurations of this viewpoint transition appear to follow certain genre-defined regularities. Labov approaches the viewpoint as a narrower construct, that is "the spatio-temporal domain from which the information conveyed by the clause could be obtained by an observer" [6]. Labov yet argues that only literary narrative may switch viewpoints, and not oral personal experience narratives. That appears to be true for elicited narratives of personal experience, but 'natural' personal experience narratives, which belong in discourses of various types, exhibit a tendency towards a dynamic viewpoint configuration.

Dynamic shifts of viewpoints neither hamper the understanding of the narrative nor make the production of the narrative problematic, which calls into attention the concept of viewpoint compression (and decompression) proposed by Dancygier [1]. The modeling of narrative in terms of narrative spaces allows for a representation of the dynamic characteristics of the viewpoint and its transfer between narrating agencies.

The idea to bring together the classic Labovian narrative segmentation and narrative spaces modeling stems from the different functions of certain segments. Labov [9] defines the temporal characteristic of the narrative as a temporal juncture between two independent clauses proven by the impossibility to change the order of the clauses without changing the understanding of the order of events. From this perspective, narrative refers only to clauses with a temporal juncture, but Labov also regards technically extra-narrative components of Abstract and Coda as part to a narrative [3, p. 116]. Namely, Abstract, Evaluation, and Coda appear to be more discourse-related, tying the narrative to the context and expressing its tellability, justifying the purpose and function of the narrative. Abstract introduces a narrative into the context of the communicative process and Coda marks the end of the narrative and "returns the temporal setting to the

present" [7; 9] – this consideration appears important to the understanding of the viewpoint shifts under discussion. Evaluation serves to estimate the tellability of the narrative [9], that is to justify the need to draw it [3]. It summarizes why the events have been narrated and what implications the narrative bears for some particular discourse. Evaluation provides a justification for the interlocutor's time and attention consumed by the narrative and links the latter to a broader interactional context. Finally, it is Coda that returns the narration to the moment of speaking and ties the narrated temporal sequence and its overall 'so-what' meaning to the present discursive context. In turn, orientation and complication mark the fragments that lay out the temporal organization of events, with the former setting up a narrative space and the latter elaborating it.

Following in Dancygier's methodological steps, construction and comprehension of narrative may be modeled in terms of mental spaces which she calls 'narrative spaces.' Orientation opens the narrative by naming the participants, time, place, and the initial status quo [9]. Therefore, it may be regarded as a clause or clauses that set up the narrative space to be elaborated through the following complications. The viewpoint of the narrating agency introducing the narrative is not always the same as the narrating one as it often occurs in news media discourse.

2.3. Narrative Spaces for Modelling Narrative Viewpoint & Viewpoint Compression

Dancygier proposes an elaborate and operationally convenient framework to address narrative construction using the toolkit of cognitive linguistics, namely mental spaces and blending theories [1, p. 31]. She builds schemes of narratives tracing how conceptual integration allows to make sense of the narrative as a cohesive construct. Dancygier [1] addresses the construal of narratorship in the conceptual integration model by modeling the construction of the narrative viewpoint using linguistic clues. The researcher regards blending as a crucial process for understanding the production and interpretation of narrative as blending underlies emergence of new meanings [1, p. 7]. Such process is called **viewpoint compression**, referring to coherent understanding of the narrative by the recipient even though it is told by varied narrating agencies or is construed from varied linguistic clues. Even though the author of the framework applies it to longer texts [1, p. 31], I attempt at projecting it onto shorter narratives as well, arguing that narrative spaces allow to study narrative structure of various narrative genres and particularly track the viewpoint transitions in relation to their structural organization. Analysis of narrative spaces capitalizes on the construction of viewpoint and the epistemic status of the knowledge narrated [1, p. 36, 59]. Here, 'viewpoint' is a larger concept related to narratorship than focalization [13],

which refers to the scope of information perceptually available to the narrator and their perceiving agency.

2.4. Modeling Viewpoint Configurations for Narratives of Varied Genres

First, I consider a viewpoint model underlying the media narrative posted by *Belfast Telegraph* at the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February 2022. The article includes an interview with a British-Ukrainian student (Fig.1).



Fig. 1. A scaled screenshot from *Belfast Telegraph* web-page featuring the narrative

Source: Dracott, 2022

In Figure 2, the text fragments are marked for their structural role and their narrating/viewpoint agency:

The post features direct quotations from the young woman's first-person narrative interplaying with the author's voice and remarks. The viewpoint movement between the author and the interviewee demonstrates that the primary role of the author is to introduce the narrative (Abstract) and set up the narrative space (Orientation).

The viewpoint initiative shifts between the author of the article and the interviewee, and the only linguistic means used by the author to introduce the interviewee's first-person narrative are quotation marks signaling the transfer of the narrative viewpoint and one scarce comment indicating the quote (*the 19-year-old, who has a British mother but was raised in Ukraine, told the PA news agency*). Otherwise, the article relies on the genre expectations of the readers and does not feature any other visual signals such as font or text boxes to highlight that the viewpoint initiative has gone to the interviewee. The interplay of the author's and the interviewee's viewpoints presupposes that the viewpoint compression operation is carried out unconsciously by the readers to make sense of the whole narrative, reconstructing it both from the clues of the interviewee's narrative and the remarks by the author of the media article.

Particularly, the 'extra-narrative' structural element of Abstract belongs to the author's viewpoint, introducing the personal narrative of the interviewee and equipping the reader with the basic context on the war in Ukraine. As for Orientation, the author provides one to set up the narrative space (*Russian President Vladimir Putin announced on Thursday that a military operation had begun in Ukraine, and explosions have been heard in the capital and other major cities. Valentina Butenko is studying politics at University College London, but returned to Ukraine a few weeks ago to offer help with the security crisis there*). The author then hands over the viewpoint initiative to the quotes from the interview. In turn, the first selected quote sets up the narrative space with another Orientation (*I woke up this morning to the sound of an explosion, . . . I live on the outskirts of Kyiv so I expect it must have been pretty huge for me to hear it*). This narrator-produced Orientation is more fine-grained, naming the place where it happened and the time. Complication/Elaboration of the narrative space feature viewpoint transfers between the author's and the interviewee's voices again. Yet, the interviewee's voice prevails for the Complication/Elaboration fragments of the narrative. Finally, there is an extended Evaluation from the interviewee with an interruption from the author who reinforces the same idea by indirectly quoting the interviewee.

I dedicated the second model to building the viewpoint configuration of a personal-experience narrative embedded in President Zelensky's speech addressing the UK Parliament in February 2023. President Zelensky draws from a narrative of a past personal experience to illustrate the personal significance that the present speech bears for him. On the one hand, the viewpoint remains stable as the speaker speaks about his own experience. However, I suggest distinguishing the narrator and focalizer viewpoints in modeling the viewpoint structure of any personal-experience narrative as it highlights the functioning of narrative spaces set up by Orientation as compared to the discursive role of Abstract and Coda, which belong to the narrator's viewpoint. This distinction is represented in Figure 3:

In the narrative (see Fig.3), Abstract (*I said to you I would tell a story in my address to the Parliament*) introduces the narrative as such. After that, President Zelensky sets up the narrative space with the Orientation clause that mentions time and place of the action (*A story about my feelings on my first visit to London as president in autumn 2020*). The Orientation clause is followed by Complication/Elaboration of the narrative space listing the events (*The programme was packed. Royal Highnesses William and Catherine. Buckingham Palace. The aircraft carrier of the Royal Navy. Westminster. Downing Street. And, of course, the War Rooms*). Another Orientation passage follows, setting up another narrative space with a more fine-grained focus onto the narrated experience (*There is an armchair in the*

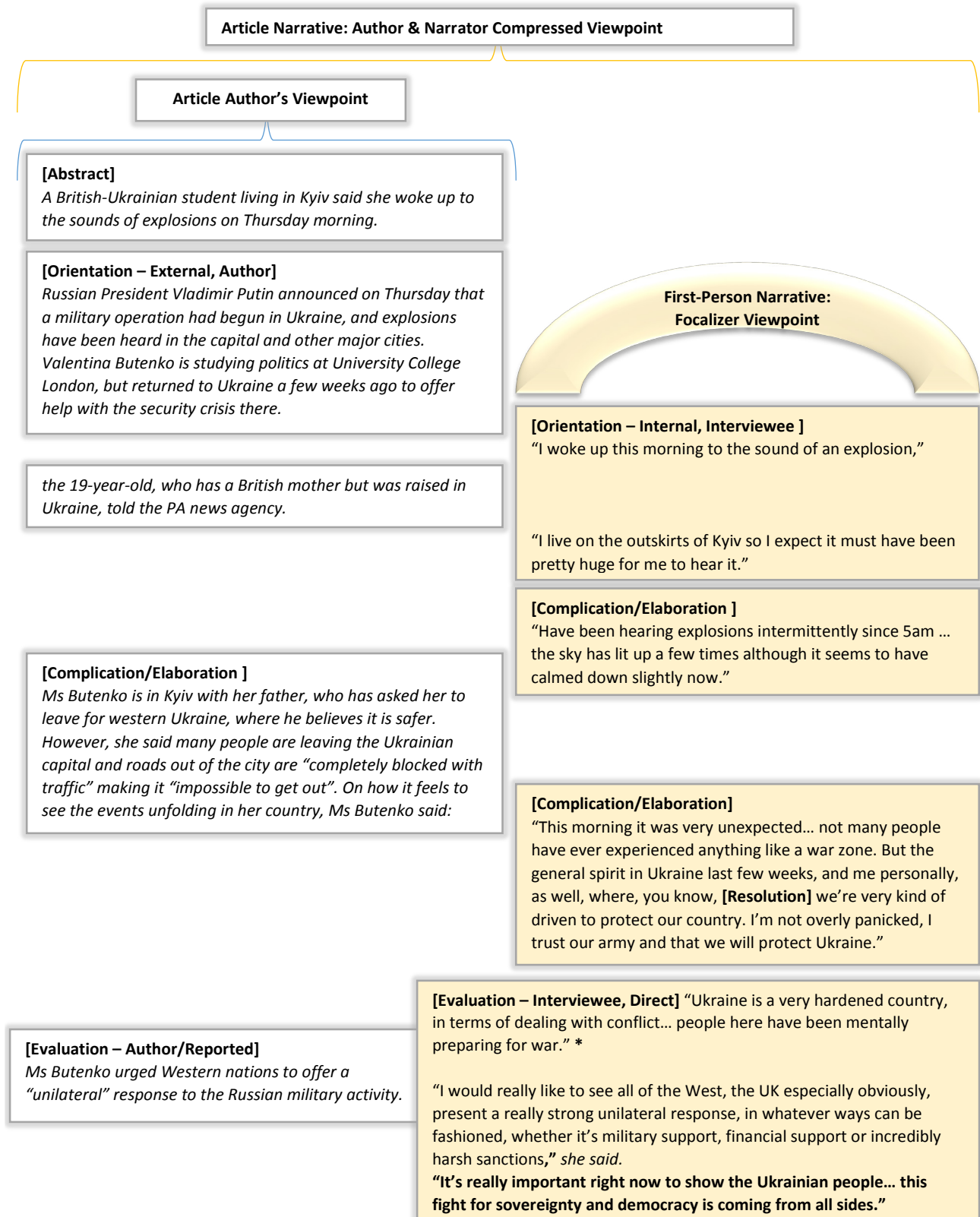


Fig. 2. News Media Article Embedding a Personal Account of the Hostilities in Ukraine

war room. **The famous Churchill's armchair**) and the subsequent Resolution (*A guide smiled and offered me to sit down on the armchair from which war orders had been given. He asked me – how did I feel? And I said that I **certainly felt something***). Here, a potential climax of the personal experience narrative is observed, marked by the implied comparison of President Zelensky with Churchill. This comparison justifies the narrative's tellability (that is its role in the broader discourse), and the President goes on to an Evaluation part, which brings the viewpoint back to the present moment (*But it is **only now** that I know what the feeling was. And all*

Ukrainians know it perfectly well, too. It is the feeling of how bravery takes-you-through the most unimaginable hardships – to finally reward you with Victory). Markedly, the previous speech of President Zelensky addressing the UK Parliament also included a reference to Churchill and rhetorically capitalized on the sense of belongingness [12]. The viewpoint dynamics is linked to the discursive role of the narrative. The relevance of the narrative is justified by Coda and Evaluation from the viewpoint of the present narrator, and the events of the past are told from the past focalizer's viewpoint. The extra-narrative role of Abstract and Evaluation is illustrated,

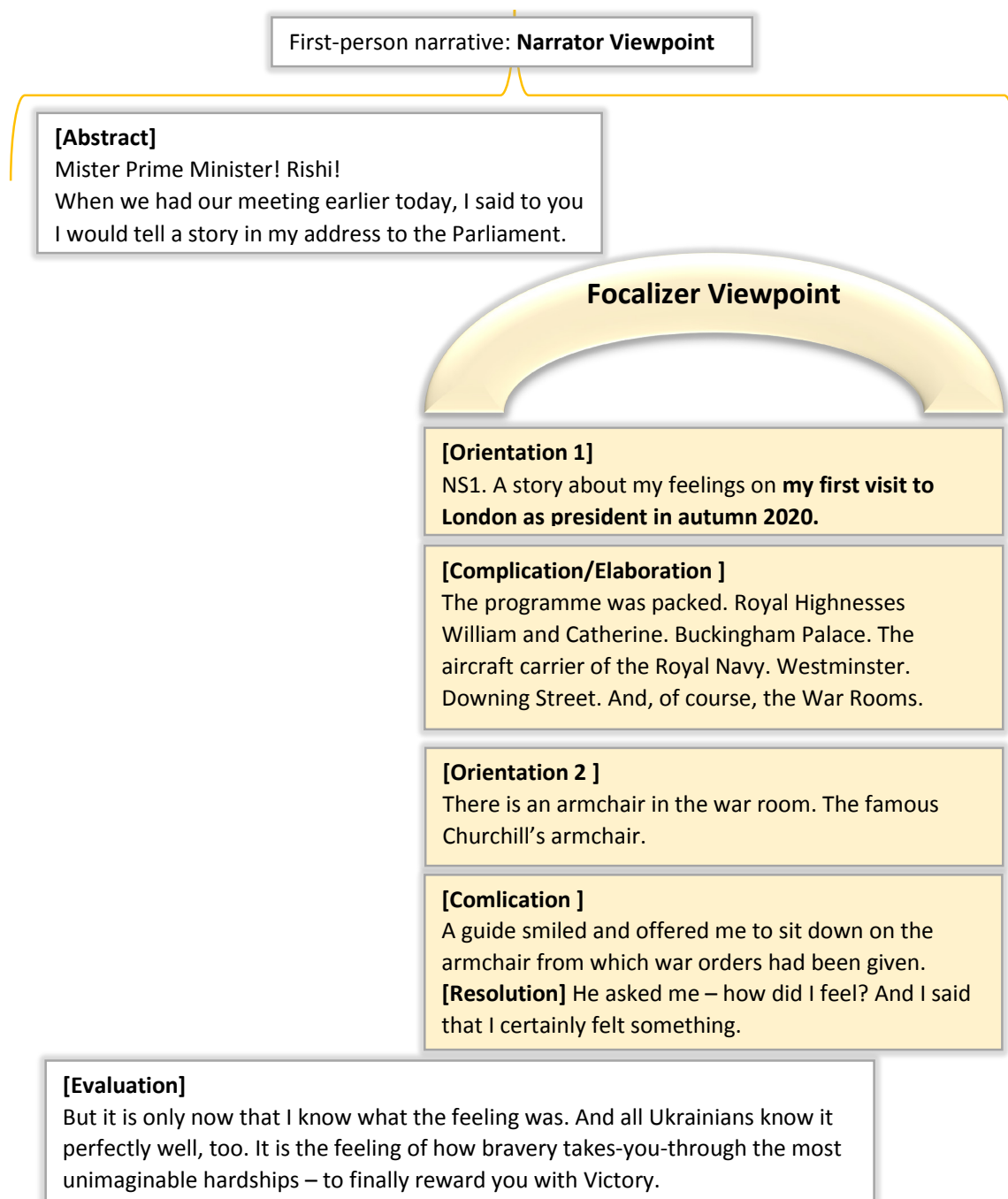


Fig. 3. Narrative from President Zelensky's Speech Addressing the UK Parliament

as they serve as connectors to embed the narrative into broader discourse and account for its tellability by tying the implied message to the gist of the speech.

The degree of narrative elaboration and the strategy of embedding it in the discourse may also be traced to the degree of the narrative spontaneity. Narratives may be pre-planned or produced spontaneously. Indeed, any narrative construct undergoes narrativization, or pre-construction [8]. However, the more prepared the narrative's script is (e.g. for a political speech or a stand-up performance), the likelier it is to include an elaborate abstract and coda to ensure a smooth transition.

The next type of the narrative (Fig. 4) is a dream report selected to represent a genre different rhetorically from media and political narratives and yet possible to model in the same viewpoint terms. The narrative exemplifies the viewpoint compression and decompression as the narrator and focalizer are not only distanced by the time between the events narrated and the moment of speech but also by the mental condition of the sleeping and waking brain. In this narrative, the narrator recalls the events that they perceived when dreaming, and imply that their dreaming agency (focalizer) was different from the regular waking perception.

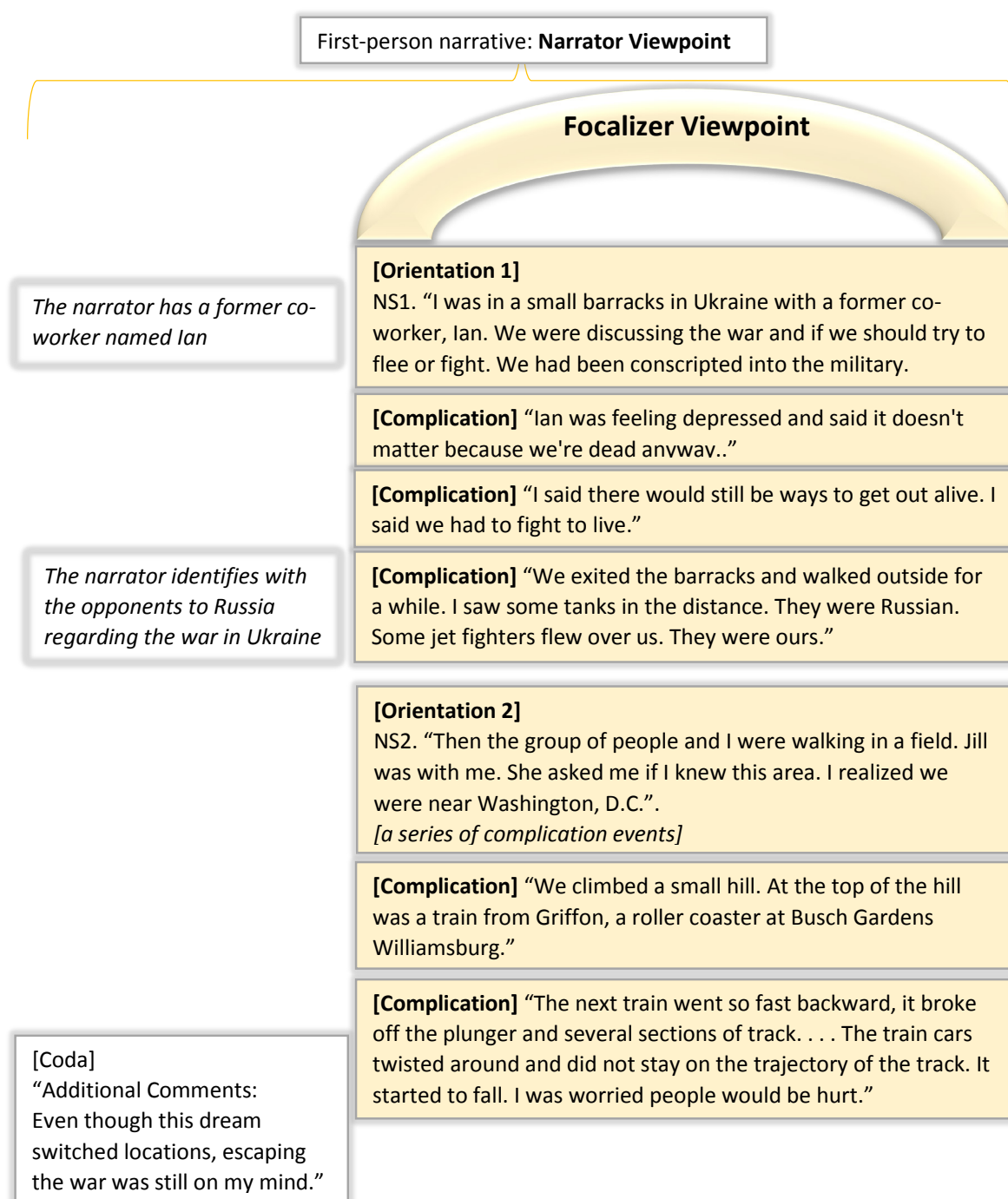


Fig. 4. A Dream Narrative

The modeled narrative represents a specific viewpoint compression mode typical of dream reports, whereby the narrative spaces tagged as dream ones give rise to reality-marked narrative spaces. In this narrative, though it is not abundant with references to reality, the recipient can inferentially deduce that *the narrator has a former co-worker named Ian* and that *the narrator identifies themselves as Russia's enemy regarding the war in Ukraine* (see Fig. 4). The narrated events in the storyworld are traditionally juxtaposed with the current discourse environment in which the narration occurs [3, p. 540]. Such reality-related narrative spaces that side-emerge from the linguistic clues narrating a dream appear to emerge in all dream narratives. They belong to the narrator viewpoint and support the narration of the dreamt events. A mechanism opposite to viewpoint compression, in Dancygier's terms [1, p. 100], is **decompression** of a viewpoint, that is when the narrator's self transforms and splits. Arguably, this happens to all dream narratives,

whereby the narrator renders their own dream self's perception, occasionally surprised at their own reactions.

As for the structure, the narrative (Fig. 4) does not have an Abstract because it is posted on a specialized web-site hosting dream journals, so it does not need Abstract to identify it as a dream. Resolution and Evaluation are also omitted, following the canons of the dream report narrative: since dreams are not perceived as real events, the evaluation of the events as such is impossible. However at the same time, a Coda is present, as dream reports often include it, which represents the narrators' attempt to address the dream significance, meaning, or the real events that triggered a dream. Therefore, this type of narrative demonstrates weak extra narrative system (the omitted Abstract) due to its discourse context and genre.

The forth type of the narrative is an oral narrative embedded in a stand-up show of Dutch stand-up comedian Fedor (Fig. 5). It presents a short personal

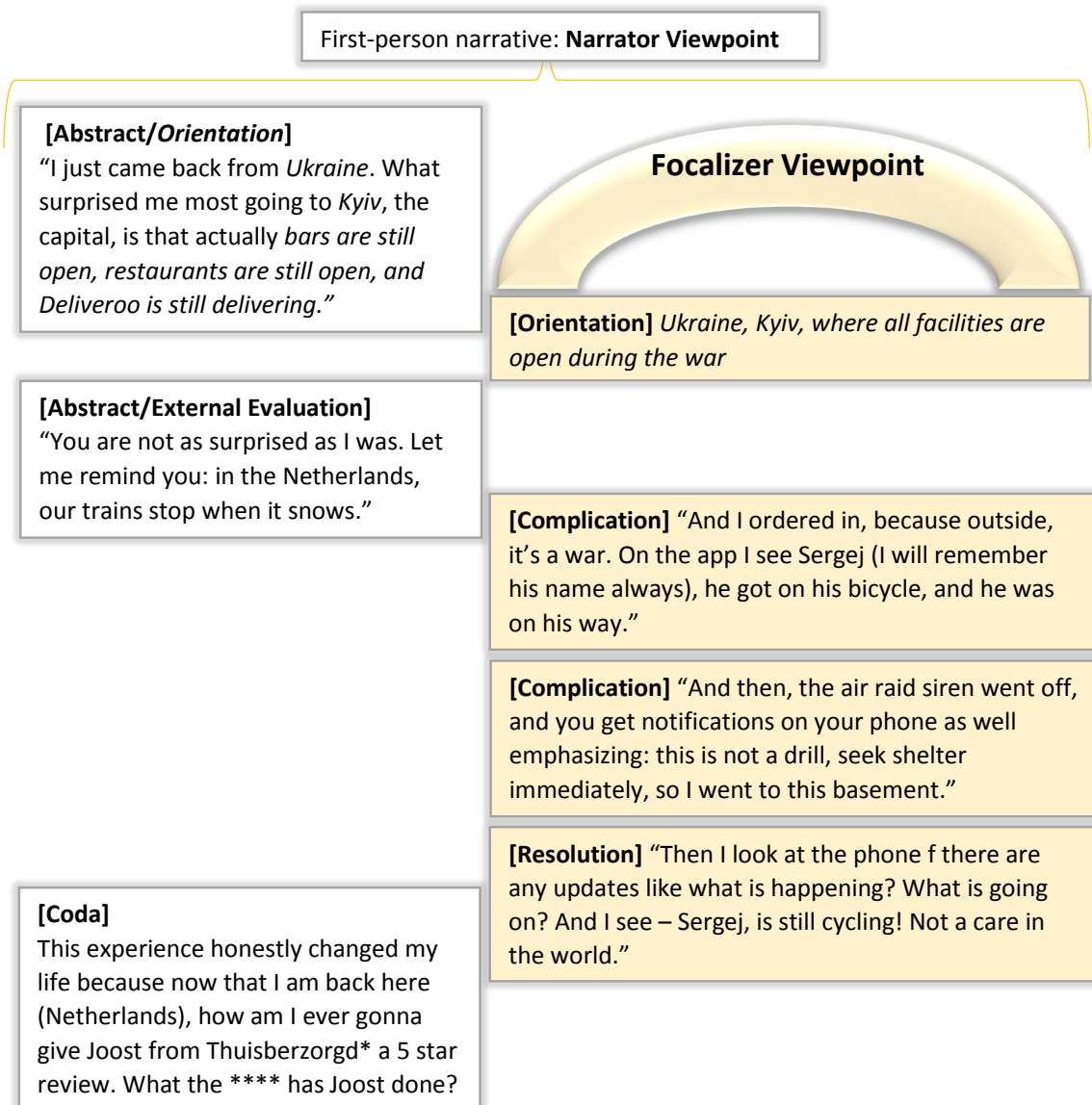


Fig. 5. Comic Narrative of a Trip to Ukraine during the Hostilities

experience of the comic who went to Ukraine during the war, discovered that all bars are open and the delivery services continue operating, and was particularly struck by the nonchalance and bravery of Ukrainian delivery workers.

The humorous rhetorical context of the narrative in Fig. 5 conditions a strong extra-narrative system of an Abstract (*I just came back from Ukraine. What surprised me most going to Kyiv...*) that introduces the narration and sets a narrative space for it with the elements of Orientation (*Kyiv, the capital, is that actually bars are still open, restaurants are still open, and Deliveroo is still delivering*). There are also extra-narrative comments in the exchanges with the audience (*You are not as surprised as I was. Let me remind you: in the Netherlands, our trains stop when it snows*). After a series of complication clauses, the speaker provides clear Evaluation and Coda, justifying the narrative and highlighting its humorous worth in the performance with a joke (*This experience honestly changed my life because now that I am back here (Netherlands), how am I ever gonna give Joost from Thuisberzorgd* a 5 star review. What the **** has Joost done?*). The identified Abstract, Evaluation, and Coda are in the accord with the genre requirements of a stand-up performance, where the personal stories are expected to be funny and focused on a clear idea.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The narrative modelling experiment undertaken on four narratives of varied genres illustrates that the concept of viewpoint compression is applicable in modeling the viewpoint configurations of narratives that occur in different contexts. Analyzing the narratives in their natural discourse environment allows to extend the theory of viewpoint beyond the fiction narratives and account for the mechanisms that allow narrative comprehension as well as sustaining genre regularities

of viewpoint dynamics. Approaching the narrative construction from the point of view of the traditional segmentation model by Labov and Waletzky allows to distinguish the extra-narrative system (Abstract, Evaluation, and Coda) and the narrative space itself construed by the Orientation. This model highlights the viewpoint transfer and the function of narrating voices in positioning the narrative in the broader discursive context. The model ties together the dynamic viewpoint configurations and the functional segments of the narrative. Specifically, the roles of the narrating voices are determined by the genre and coincide with the functions of certain narrative segments. For instance, it may be the author's role to set up a narrative space in order to embed a narrative in the discourse situation, or provide Coda to return the viewpoint initiative, which accounts for the extra-narrative system. Also, the model allows to single out and study structural properties of narratives occurring naturally in different discourses. The Labovian tagging of narrative spaces allows to make their modeling less arbitrary and clearer as well as demonstrates the extra-narrative, primarily discursive status of certain elements. Finally, I suggest distinguishing the narrator and focalizer viewpoints in modeling the viewpoint structure of any personal-experience narrative. This allows expounding the discourse-oriented embedding devices that correspond to the narrator's viewpoint and the shifts of the focalizer's viewpoint and evaluations.

The prospected application of the proposed model should make it possible to address the structural characteristics of narratives across different genres; functionally describe the strategies employed by the authors and narrators in embedding the narratives into broader contexts; and finally, account for the genre-specific tendencies of the narrative viewpoint configurations.

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Ніколаєнко Валерія Олегівна – викладач кафедри англійської філології та методики викладання іноземної мови Харківського національного університету імені В. Н. Каразіна, e-mail: v.o.nikolaienko@karazin.ua; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5056-271X>; Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=ODVvSyIAAAA&hl>; RESEARCH GATE: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Valeriia_Nikolaienko2.

МОДЕЛЮВАННЯ НАРАТИВНОЇ ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ: НАРАТИВНІ ПРОСТОРИ ТА МОДЕЛЬ СЕГМЕНТАЦІЇ НАРАТИВУ У. ЛАБОВА

Стаття присвячена методологічній проблемі вивчення наративів різних жанрів у їхньому природному дискурсивному середовищі. Запропонована модель інтегрує концепцію наративних просторів для пояснення конструювання та розуміння наративів, розроблену Б. Дансіджер, та класичну сегментацію наративів У. Лабова та Дж. Валетські. Проведено моделювання двох усних і двох письмових наративів особистого досвіду: з медійного, політичного, гумористичного та оніричного контекстів. На відміну від класичної моделі наративної структури, резюме, орієнтацію, ускладнення, рішення, оцінку та підсумок ідентифіковано як маркування наративних просторів, а не клауз. Запропонований підхід до наративної структури з точки зору когнітивної концепції наративних просторів має на меті описати конфігурації точок зору. Увага фокусується на резюме, оцінці та підсумку, які позиціонують наратив у його дискурсивному контексті і становлять так звану позанаративну систему. Під нею розуміються засоби, що не належать до власне наративного простору, а дозволяють вписати наратив у прагматичний контекст і зумовлюють його подієвість. Дискурсивне позиціонування характеризує конфігурацію точки зору наративу особистого досвіду. Зокрема, конфігурації точок зору розглянуто як характеристику наративу, що регулюється наративним жанром. У статті доведено, що процеси компресії та декомпресії точок зору (терміни Б. Дансіджер) та стратегії дискурсивного позиціонування наративу є жанрово специфічними. Наративи різних жанрів демонструють сильнішу або слабшу позанаративну систему і різні тенденції до множинності точок зору та їхньої компресії.

Ключові слова: компресія точки зору, модель сегментації наративу, наративні простори, точка зору.

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