Article

An Alternative Approach for Personal Narrative Interpretation: The Semiotics of Roland Barthes

קריאה אחרת של נרטיב, כתיבה אחרת של פרשנות:
ניתוח הסיפור האישי באמצעות הסמיוטיקה של רולאן בארת
ורד טוהר, ענת קינן, מירב אסף, רקפת שחר

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Abstract

In this paper the authors propose Roland Barthes's analytical method, which appears in his classic work *S/Z* (1974), as a new way of analyzing personal stories. The five codes that are described in the book are linked to the domains of poetics, language, and culture, and expose facets that are embedded in the deep structure of narratives. These codes are helpful in revealing findings with regard to the development of the professional careers of teacher educators.

תקציר

ככלי לניתוח נרטיבים. S/Z במאמר זה אני מציעות את שיטת הניתוח של רולאן בארת כפי שמופיעה בספרו הקלאסי חמשת הקודים המתוארים בספר קשורים לתחומי הפואטיקה, השפה והתרבות, ואלה חושפים היבטים המצויים במבנה העומק של הנרטיבים. במחקר זה הקודים שימשו להבנת ההתפתחות המקצועית של מורי מורים.

Keywords: narrative analysis, semiotics, hermeneutics, Ronald Barthes, teacher educators, teacher development

Our aim in this paper is to present Roland Barthes's (1915-1980) literary analysis in his classic work *S/Z* (1974) as a new approach toward understanding personal narratives. This approach will be demonstrated through an examination of the professional development of teacher educators.

In recent years there has been an increase in the study of narratives in the field of education in general and in teacher education in particular. Carter (1993) and Josselson (1993) have indicated the importance of the narrative in educational research. The study of narratives in education focuses mainly on life stories as well as on short episodic stories. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) were among the first researchers to engage in the analysis of teachers' life stories. They were followed by other researchers such as Kelchtermans (1994), who portrayed professional development of teachers through life stories; Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1994), who analyzed teachers' personal histories; and Schmidt and Knowles (1995), who presented four stories of young teachers who perceived themselves as failures in teaching.

Several personal narratives studies were conducted in the educational domain. For example, Delamont (1989) analyzed pupils' myths and horror stories, and Kainan (1992) presented narratives told in the teachers' room and explained how the ethos of the teachers in the school is constructed through those stories. Carter (1995) used narratives about remembered incidents as a bridge for linking the teachers' personal cognition and pedagogical knowledge.

Although these studies deal with personal stories, they also afford a profound understanding of social phenomena, whereas the story mediates between the narrators and their setting (Kainan, 2002). Similarly, Lomsky-Feder (1998) has claimed that personal narratives reveal the connection between the individuals and their society, and therefore enable the study of both aspects. Polkinghorne (1995) stated that analysis of narratives is a means for revealing sociological insights.

Throughout the profusion of narrative studies, questions regarding analysis constantly recur. Narrative researchers from various domains have been attempting to find methods of coping with the prodigious data bank that the researcher encounters. This problem is intensified when dealing with a group of texts when the objective of the analysis is to find common features among them. The solution that is proposed in this study is the use of Barthes's (1974) method. Below we present several of the classic methods of analyzing oral stories, beginning with the most prominent paradigm, which includes structural analytical methods developed by Propp (1926), Labov and Waletzky (1967), and Levi Strauss (1967).

Propp (1926) considered the plot to comprise a chain of 31 typical actions (which he called functions) and seven typical characters (which he calls roles). The analysis consists of surfacing these components (actions and characters) in a story or group of stories that serve as the common denominator of the literary genre. Labov and Waletzky (1967) divided stories into five elements (an abstract, an orientation, a complicating action, a resolution, and a coda). In addition, every story contains evaluative expressions that serve as indicators of the narrator's attitude toward the event. Levi Strauss's (1967) approach is based on the identification of four content fields in a story: geographic, economic, social, and conceptual. These fields are represented by binary oppositions, which are pairs of opposing concepts embedded in the text. The aim of the analysis is to reveal these components and their interconnections as a key to understanding the thinking patterns of the narrating culture.

Levi Straus (1967) represents a generation of scholars who believed that the "bare truth" of culture and society can be revealed via findings collected from the field. However, a paradigm shift, initiated by Derrida (1982) and his followers, occurred, in which a new way of thinking about culture was introduced. By using deconstructive approaches, they challenged the structuralist notion of binary oppositions, claiming that reality can be represented by an infinite spectrum of meanings. This allows for an unlimited number of readings of a text. Derrida (1982) disconnected the link between the signified and signifier by demonstrating how this link emerges from political powers. Foucault's work (1970, 1991) dealing with

the relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse critically analyzed texts and social phenomena with awareness of the strong powers of tradition and politics that rule our lives and consciousness. Subsequently, feminist (cf. Butler, 1997) and postcolonialist (cf. Bhabha, 1994) writers used these ideas to demonstrate how powers influence thought and belief. Because texts are narrated in cultures, these approaches challenge conventions by revealing covert messages and power plays embedded in the text. We thought that the modernist structuralistic point of view will serve this study better than postmodernistic approaches would because we are interested in the narrators' perspective representing a state of mind within their professional and social culture.

Although each of the above methods has its merits, we have found that they do not meet all the needs of narrative research. We will attempt to outline several central problems that arise as a result of the use of the structural methods mentioned above.

When research deals with social or cultural aspects, structural analytical methods tend to engage with a large number of texts, thus losing the uniqueness of the individual story. An additional problem arises when the analysis focuses on one major aspect of the text. When structural analytic methods are employed, little attention is given to the narrators as holistic personas: their personality, biography, and narrating style. A third problem arises because of the inflexibility of the structural methods. These are predefined in such a way that they are imposed on the texts as they stand. This gives rise to a situation in which researchers who seek to analyze their texts are obliged to ensure that the texts "suit" the method

The challenge facing us, therefore, is finding a research method by means of which we are able to examine personal narratives as self-standing texts and at the same time refer to common issues of a group of narratives.

This might be resolved using an approach suggested by Barthes (1974), a French literary critic who was one of the leaders of the French structuralist school and a pioneer of semiotics. His threefold involvement in linguistics, literature, and cultural research divides his writings into three channels, and his interdisciplinary approach is reflected throughout his writings.

In *S/Z* Barthes (1974)[1] made a unique structuralist analysis of a literary text, *Sarrasine* by Balzac, published in 1830. The plot includes the story of an innocent young artist named Sarrasine who falls madly in love with a beautiful opera singer named La Zambinella. Sarrasine courts the singer with passion, only to realize that she is a castrated man, as were many of the performers in 19th-century Europe who played female roles on stage. Sarrasine becomes so furious about this fraud that he tries to kill him/her and swears never to fall in love or trust anyone again.

Barthes analyzed the text from beginning to end, step by step, and turned it into a case study of a structural approach to literature. To do so, he developed two main tools: the lexia and the code. A lexia is a fragment of the text, from a few words to several sentences, that can be analyzed as a unit of meaning. Barthes segmented *Sarrasine* the text into 561 lexias. The codes are categories into which the lexias are divided. Barthes formulated five codes. Under the hermeneutic code he listed the various (formal) terms by which an enigma can be distinguished, suggested, formulated, held in suspense, and, finally, disclosed. The semic code is indicated by a group of characters, places, or objects forming a single thematic group. The symbolic code refers to certain configurations of expressions that repeat in various modes and means in the text, refer to common knowledge, and go beyond the text. The proairetic code deals with actions, which are also categorized in semantic groups. The cultural code includes references to a science or a body of knowledge that is common to a group of people and known only by them, so it expresses a certain way of life and way of thinking. The five codes create a network under which all the textual signifiers and lexias can be clustered.

Barthes used his method to demonstrate the Western culture's dissonance between masculinity and femininity, which gives rise to mistaken sexual definitions and homoerotic situations. Nevertheless, Barthes proved that as for the literary qualities of the text, this ambiguity is not so unequivocal. This finds expression not only in the plot and context, which are analyzed by the five parameters of the codes, but also in the names of the main characters. Thus, Sarrasine and La Zambinella symbolize one another by the iconic shape of the first letters of their names (S and Z have the same reversed shape). This is the source of the book's title: *S/Z* is the wall between the sexes but is also a reflection of their similarity.

Barthes's method of analysis had much impact on cultural theory. Philips (1991) has proposed that Barthes's analysis should be examined on the background of intellectual theories that break the text down into its basic components and reexamine each component, free of preconceptions and previous methods. Allen (2000) examined the manner in which Barthes proposed a new way of viewing the text as multifaceted and endowed with multiple meanings, in a reading that is detached from the bonds of the literary tradition and free of restraining conventions.

In this paper this method serves as an alternative approach for investigating a group of personal narratives. Barthes's method focuses simultaneously on five dimensions of the text. It links the texts to their sociocultural setting without losing the voice of the individual story and affords flexibility in the analysis. Hawkes (1977) labeled Barthes as a philosopher who forms a link between structuralism and semiotics and thereby attempts to decipher the codes that are linked to reading and writing. A more extensive description of the method is presented hereafter.

In this study we analyzed personal narratives of veteran teacher educators at a college of education in southern Israel in an attempt to map the course of the professional development and to understand the human profile of the college. We collected narratives from teacher educators with at least 20 years of teaching experience. Out of 180 veteran teacher educators we randomly chose and contacted 10% of the population and asked for their permission to participate in the study. Finally, narratives from 11 teacher educators, 7 women and 4 men, who teach various subjects at the college were collected. This sample enables a reliable representation of the veteran teacher staff. Each of the participants was asked to tell three stories, which were taken down verbatim. The instructions were

- Tell me a story about something that happened to you during your first year of teaching (hereafter referred to as the first phase),
- Tell me a story about something that happened to you approximately 10 years later (the second phase), and
- Tell me a story about something that recently happened to you at the college (the third phase).

Ultimately, 33 oral narratives were collected from 11 narrators, thus producing a collection of 11 retrospective stories about the narrators' careers, stories that deal with three periods in their careers: the beginning, the middle, and the present. The narratives were collected and jointly analyzed by all the members of the research team.

Using Barthes's method, we will attempt to identify the process that each of the narrators underwent during their career as well as the process the 11 narrators underwent as a professional group. As mentioned previously, we found that Barthes's analysis provided a suitable solution to some of the central problems of narrative analysis.

Method: Roland Barthes' analytical method

The analysis was conducted in terms of the five codes that he formulated. According to Barthes, each code is a voice out of which the text is woven. In addition, each code examines a different aspect of the text (Makaryk, 1993), as follows:

- The hermeneutic code (HER) is used to examine discrepancies, questions, and puzzling elements that arise from the narrative and need to be deciphered. With reference to the HER, we inquired whether the narrators asked any questions or expressed any doubts in their personal narrative with regard to their work.
- The semic code (SEM) is used to identify connotative expressions in the narrative. These help to build up the quality and depth of a character or an action. Taking the SEM into account, we inquired what the dominant motifs of the personal narrative were.
- The symbolic code (SYM) is used to examine symbolic templates that are reflected in the basic binary oppositions located in the deep structure of the narrative. In view of the SYM, we inquired about the most frequent pairs of binary oppositions.
- The proairetic code (ACT) is used to examine the verbs of the text categorizing them into semantic fields. With reference to the ACT, we inquired what the main semantic fields of the verbs that featured in the personal narrative were.
- The cultural code (REF) is used to examine details that refer to sociocultural context of the narrative and are connected to cultural authorities and communal thinking. In view of the REF, we inquired as to which expressions the narrators employ when they relate to the world of teaching.

Despite the fact that Barthes analyzed one literary novella, whereas our study deals with 33 nonliterary oral narratives, each code raises a unique question about the narratives. Using Barthes's method afforded us a synchronic, diachronic, and multidimensional analysis of the narratives: (a) an individual analysis of each narrative (individual experience), (b) an analysis of the process each narrator underwent by means of a longitudinal examination of the three stories (personal development), and (c) finding the common denominator of each of the three phases (group development).

The advantage of this method is that it provides answers to the difficulties previously enumerated. First, the personal narrative does not lose its place. Second, it affords a comprehensive sociocultural picture of the corpus. Finally, the method provides the researcher with a multidimensional view.

Findings

Below we present three stories describing three experiences from three phases of the narrator's professional teaching career. The three stories constitute a representative sample of the collected narratives and serve as a basis for demonstrating the way in which Barthes's method is used for understanding the texts.

Text 1 describes an incident that occurred at the beginning of the narrator's career, during her first year of teaching, more than 20 years ago:

> I had a pupil who didn't study and didn't work. The club where I worked was for
> teenage dropouts. She really wasn't prepared to have a conversation or speak
> with anyone. That girl had attempted suicide twice. I decided to be her friend, but
> I couldn't be a real friend, because in spite of everything, we came from different

places. I showed her that she was really important to me, that I cared. And after two months I think I succeeded in gaining her trust, and we became almost friends, because we'd meet in the afternoon, and we'd meet after club hours. I felt that I was doing a genuine service, that I'd saved someone. Afterwards, when she got married, she invited me to the wedding and that—you understand…. That's a nice ray of light in the work. There were lots of stories in the club.

Text 2 serves as an example of a retrospective story from the middle of the teacher's career:

At some stage in my career, I thought it was necessary to help the kids after lessons as well and work with them and sit with them as much as necessary. And there was a girl who was rather weak in something, I don't remember what, so I told her that twice a week she and her friend were to come to the teachers' room during their break and I'd teach them, I'd help them. I did that about six times and I felt, "That's what a good teacher is," "I'm really" . . . And then one day I was sitting and I don't remember how it came up, but the girl said, "You've got a terrible nerve taking our break away like this." I remember that I exploded, and her friend tried to say, "It's not so bad, she's still young," but I felt . . . you do so much for them and they throw it back in your face, and afterwards I tried to understand her and ease off a bit from the business of taking away their free time in order to teach them. Now I wouldn't give a kid half a minute after the bell [laughs]. That's not quite true. We have to, because of the ones who have learning disabilities; I have to.

Text 3 serves as an example of a story about an incident that occurred recently, after more than 20 years of teaching:

I'll tell you about an incident that happened to me not long ago. I'm a very open person, very straightforward, that is, I speak out even when something isn't good and I don't care about sharing it with others. I think that also from the professional point of view, we have to do so all the time. So even if something isn't 100%, you can succeed when you brainstorm with another person. During one of the pedagogical meetings at the beginning of the year, I had doubts about the students' growth process, because I teach them in the first, second and third years. The girls also came and complained to me that they were feeling kind of uncertain. They kept on changing instructors and each one presented the objectives in a different way. So I thought to myself, that we as instructors must serve together and reach some kind of consensus so that the learning is not all mixed up. So I consulted with our department head, and she told me, "Bring it up at the pedagogical meeting." The instruction coordinator was also invited to the meeting, and I brought it up, and afterwards everyone attacked me as if I were out of line. It seemed that they were all superstars and I was some kind of idiot! Then some kind of decision formed in my mind. Not that I'd be quiet, but that I'd do it more quietly, more modestly, and I'd solve the problems, for instance, only with the instructors. It sounds as if it's only our problem, but it's not only our problem. Students graduate and they still don't know how to build a lesson plan properly and determine objectives in the right way and accomplish the objectives in the right way. If they prefer to sweep the problem under the carpet, they should do whatever they want. But it wasn't pleasant, not at all. They criticized me, perhaps because they thought I was criticizing them. Perhaps it was my tone, or something I said. I don't want to blame only them, but it didn't turn out well. I

thought, why did I start it? Why did I talk? So I decided to take things in proportion, not that I'll keep quiet, but I'll say the things in the appropriate places. I've noticed that people don't tell the whole truth, as if everyone's lessons are wonderful, everyone's teaching is marvelous, everyone's students are excellent. So why do we have unsuccessful teachers? I have very weak students in my class, and I have brilliant ones. It still doesn't mean anything.

The analysis in light of Barthes's five codes will be presented and demonstrated using the above stories:

The hermeneutic code

Following Barthes's hermeneutic code, we inquired whether the narrators asked any questions or expressed any doubts with regard to their work. Reading the narrative with reference to this code might well reveal hidden attitudes expressed in these questions. We chose to focus on the voices of the narrators, who raised the questions themselves: What questions do they ask? At what stage do these questions arise? What do the questions imply? Significant findings emerged from an analysis of the narratives according to the hermeneutic code, as described below.

It seems that in Text 1 (as is true of all the narratives in the first phase) no questions were asked and no doubts were expressed about the work. The prominent characteristic in the narrative from this point of view is the unequivocal approach toward decisions and behaviors. The success achieved by the narrator magnifies her feeling of confidence that this is how teenage dropouts should be dealt with, and that the way to channel youth back into normal social functioning depends on devoting informal individual attention to them.

In Text 2, as in 36% of the narratives in this phase, questions and doubts appear. To a certain extent this narrative serves as an antithesis to the previous one because for the first time the voice of the "client"— the pupil—is heard. Thus, when the pupil speaks, her inner world is exposed, and it is suddenly clear that what the teacher confidently thinks is suitable for her is not necessarily right and that every successful treatment of a problem must commence with a dialogue. The narrator learns this the hard way, however. The pupil's reaction sparks deliberations in the teacher and inundates her with questions about issues that have never bothered her before.

Text 3 describes an incident that occurs in the arena of the college. The veteran teacher has joined the college staff and is now occupied not only with questions of imparting knowledge but also with questions dealing with the professional development of the students and with the consequences of the training process. An incident in a faculty meeting exposes her to a situation in which she begins to ask questions and express doubts about her work now, after more than 30 years in the field of teaching.

In conclusion, the hermeneutic code enabled us to track the transition undergone by the narrators from an unequivocal approach to their educational work patterns, to an approach wherein they ask questions, cast doubt, and examine possible alternatives with regard to the situations in which they find themselves.

The semic code

In accordance with the semic code, we searched for patterns or recurring motifs that reflected the teacher's work and world. Reading the narratives evoked many motifs, such as the pioneer (in the narrative about a new initiative in the field of education), good cop–bad cop (ostensibly a strict teacher but with a heart of gold), and so on. However, careful scrutiny of all the narratives revealed that one motif predominates in the first and second narratives and disappears completely from the third narratives. This phenomenon merits attention, and to that end we focused on it.

It turns out that there is a widespread motif in the first group of narratives (it appears in half of the narratives): the savior motif. This motif applies to narrators who establish a personal, generally informal relationship with one problematic pupil out of the entire group (in most cases a class). They elect to invest their therapeutic efforts in a particular pupil and help him or her through his or her darkest hour.

Thus, in Text 1, for instance, the narrator, who is a beginning teacher, devotes herself to taking care of a pupil who is defined as problematic from the point of view of the establishment because she neither studies nor works. It appears that the girl is suffering from a lack of trust in the adults who have tried to look after her up until now because the narrator mentions that she is not prepared to talk to anyone. The narrator, who is young, begins to create informal ties with the girl. Two months later she succeeds in obtaining the girl's trust, and the girl is so grateful that she even remembers to invite the teacher to her wedding. The teacher's framework of action takes place during club hours (in the afternoon) and beyond them as well, probably in the evening, when the narrator is certainly aware of the delicate situation in which she finds herself: "I couldn't be a real friend, because in spite of everything, we came from different places." Nevertheless, she tries with all her heart to become the girl's friend. It also seems that because the age difference between the two is not particularly big, she manages to make friends with the girl, even though the people who treated her previously failed to do so. Indeed, she obtains the results she anticipates and feels that she has succeeded with the girl.

The narrator's feeling of being the girl's savior is very prominent here. She does not function as a teacher but, rather, as a savior of souls when she consciously moves from the role of teacher to friend/therapist. She is prepared to cross this line to save the girl. School studies are not the issue at all in this narrative, which overflows into the private lives of the characters and into the personal hardships that a teacher—an expert in a discipline—would not necessarily resolve in the optimal way.

Not only does the narrative not deal with study material, but it does not deal with a group either. Although the club is full of children with various types of problems, the narrator's entire attention is devoted to one pupil as an individual. The narrator's personal project brings her to the point that she fails to mention the rest of the youngsters, whom she presumably has to take care of as well.

The savior motif generally appears at the beginning of the career. In the second phase it features in 36% of the narratives, but it gradually disappears over the years. Thus, Text 2 demonstrates the process of change. Here, too, the savior motif appears. The teacher tries to help a girl, except that three changes occur here. First, the voice of the "client," the pupil, is heard undermining the teacher's confidence in the merit of her actions. The pupil has absolutely no desire to be "saved" in the manner the teacher has chosen. Second, the world of the subject matter being studied enters the picture. The narrating teacher, after amassing some 10 years' experience in teaching, focuses on the thing she has to do: teach pupils. Although it is true that once again she gets into a situation of providing struggling pupils with informal help, this time she focuses on the learning difficulty and not on difficulties that stem from other sources and from the pupils' private lives. Third, the narrative is about two pupils and not about a single pupil.

During the third stage of the teacher's professional life the savior motif vanishes altogether and no longer features in any of the narratives. Text 3 demonstrates this well. Here, the teacher expresses concern about the students in general. She operates in a formal manner and tries to get her colleagues to take part in finding a solution. She does not relate individually to a single pupil but conducts herself professionally and toward a group, her concern being how to enhance the performance of the entire group.

In conclusion, the semic code enabled us to track the narrators' transition from the status of a savior, who deals with isolated cases and focuses mainly on their personal problems, to a professional approach that

takes the group into account and focuses on the field of learning, which, after all, is the narrators' area of knowledge and training.

The symbolic code

Barthes's symbolic code led us to scour the narratives for pairs of oppositions that reveal the narrators' reality. The pairs of oppositions express not ideas that are explicit in the text but, rather, the contrary: They express the text's hidden stratum, which is reflected in the abstract ideas that arise from the actions and events. In the narratives a variety of binary oppositions were found, such as inside-outside, single-multiple, and bad-good, but the small-big contrast was the most prominent one (appearing in 85% of the narratives). The contrast appears in most narratives, but a change occurs in the way the narrators employ this contrast to present themselves in relation to their surroundings. The contrast exists in any case, but the narrators shift between its two poles. The narrators express a feeling of "small" in 90% of the first narratives, whereas by the third phase, as a result of the change that takes place over the years, 55% express a feeling of "big" in relation to their surroundings.

In Text 1 the narrator appears as an inexperienced teacher who helps a student confronting severe problems of suicide attempts and detachment. In contrast, a change occurs in the narrator's status in Text 2. Initially she depicts herself as someone who is sure of herself, and appears big and strong in relation to the ignorant little pupils. Even though the pupil's reaction causes her to feel "small" in front of the pupils, the new insights she has obtained with regard to the teacher-pupil, teaching-learning relationship make her stronger. In Text 3 the narrator appears as someone who operates from a position of strength and self-confidence. Although her colleagues do not agree with her ways, she does not fear confrontation and stands alone versus her peer group. She is "big," and the conflict with her colleagues does not cause her to lose face in her own eyes; on the contrary, it strengthens her position. The ability to cast doubt is an ability that stems from her confidence and powerful status (bigness), and this is very evident in the manner in which she herself proposes options for continuing the actions in the future.

In conclusion, the symbolic code enables us to track the change the narrators undergo in their subjective feeling vis-à-vis their surroundings, from a position of "small" in relation to the world at the beginning of their careers to a position of "big" in the present.

The proairetic code

The Proairetic Code, as Barthes formulated it, is used to examine the verbs in the narrative. Although this code maps the narrators' external actions according to how they report about themselves, these actions carry implications regarding the narrators' work. In this case the analysis required the simple and almost automatic marking of all the verbs and the actions in the narratives. Thus, we found verbs that are linked to teaching and learning and are ostensibly a natural, albeit trivial, part of the educational dialog. They can be classified into verbs that are connected with lesson administration (I began, I spoke, I said) and verbs that express different levels of thinking (they learned, they understood, I thought). It should be mentioned that although these and other verbs, which are connected to both of the above semantic fields, might appear in all of the narratives, the frequency of their occurrence in the narratives was not particularly high.

A major finding that emerged is that in parallel to the "teaching" verbs, stated above, two other groups of verbs were conspicuous: a group that is linked to doing and creating (built, established, created, developed, gave birth, consolidated, achieved, brought off, dealt with, processed, did, saved) and, in contrast, a group linked to destruction and annihilation (killed, committed suicide, died, buried, destroyed, exploded, eliminated, disintegrated, attacked, wounded).

Expressions of creation are common to teachers talking about their work and are dominant in teacher metaphors (Yero, 2002). Nevertheless, these expressions of creation stated along with expressions of destruction is a finding that we did not expect at all, and we would not have looked for it had Barthes not introduced the idea of looking for verbs out of context. Thus, as expressions such as "I exploded," "I wanted to bury myself," "he tried to commit suicide," "he committed suicide," "if you don't progress, you're dead," and "I thought my end had come" accumulate, a tension between creation and destruction forms, which might imply how the narrators perceive their work.

Expressions of creation occurred among all the narrators and in most of the narratives (70%). A total of 17 verbs from this semantic field appeared in 7 (64%) of the narratives from the beginning of the career, 25 such verbs appeared in 6 (55%) of the narratives from the middle of the career, and 39 such verbs appeared in 10 (91%) of the final narratives. In other words, we see an increase in the use of doing and creating verbs during the course of the career.

Expressions of destruction and annihilation were used by 10 (91%) of the narrators in at least one narrative during their careers and by 7 (64%) of the narrators in at least two of their narratives. In the case of 9 of the narrators (82%), expressions of destruction and annihilation appeared in their mid-career stories. The expressions of destruction and annihilation can be classified according to the relation between them and the "real" situation presented in the story: We found literal expressions that relate to actual death (died, was killed, committed suicide, will kill) as well as a group of metaphorical expressions (I exploded, I wanted to bury myself, buried her head in the sand). This is how the verbs were distributed among the narratives: Death metaphors appeared in only the second and third narratives. Literal death appeared only in the first and second narratives. The expressions of destruction and creation can be demonstrated in the narratives quoted above as follows.

In Text 1 the girl is described as someone who had already attempted suicide twice, and, in contrast, the teacher implies that she had saved her life. In other words, expressions of literal death as well as of creation appear here. The verbs in this narrative deal dramatically with questions of life and death. In Text 2 the literal expressions become metaphorical, and the teacher mentions that she "exploded" with anger when the pupils dared to complain about her generous assistance at the expense of her break. On the other hand, there are also more low-key expressions of creation as teach and help. In Text 3 a disagreement between colleagues is described as an "attack," while simultaneously a variety of creation verbs are used: learn, solve, and so on. In contrast to what is commonly thought, it is this narrative—the one about the present—that is laden with verbs of creation that attest to vitality, energy, and willingness to vitally continue engaging in educational work.

The proairetic code, then, enabled us to reveal the dialogue that takes place between situations of destruction and creation in the narrators' world by identifying the dominant verbs in their narratives.

The cultural code

Using the cultural code, we sought expressions that are linked to the dialog that relates to the world of teaching, as this world reflects the narrators' professional reference group. Expressions such as "matriculation exams" or "the pedagogic council" have connotations of professional knowledge that is shared by people who teach. Moreover, the linguistic use of an "encoding" dialogue constitutes a part of the identity of belonging to the reference group, as is the case in any other professional field. Education jargon, therefore, not only expresses a form of communication but also constructs a worldview.

The search for professional expressions that are common to the dialogue of the teaching world revealed that most of the narratives reflect a broad use of power acquisition mechanisms. We hasten to add that power acquisition is not necessarily a negative phenomenon because it is obvious that to lead a group of

pupils, the teacher has to acquire authority. We discovered that the narrators use a range of power acquisition strategies that enable them to influence their surroundings and accomplish their objectives. For instance, narrators reported forming a coalition with administrators, maintaining contact with parents, establishing personal ties with pupils, employing innovative teaching methods that spark a special interest in the lessons, and so on.

These strategies can be classified into two behavior patterns. The first is the use of professional knowledge to accomplish educational and personal objectives; for instance, authentic teaching, relating to the class as heterogeneous, acquiring knowledge, and collaborating with colleagues. Although markers of professional knowledge were found in 34% of the first and second narratives, they were found in 73% of the narrators' third narratives. The second pattern is power acquisition through personal ties with pupils, parents, colleagues, and the administration. In the first and second narratives, this pattern can be discerned among 45% of the narrators, whereas in the third phase, we found markers of personal ties in only one narrative. In other words, personal ties are used at the beginning of the career as a method of power acquisition. Later on in the career, this pattern is transformed into the use of professional knowledge.

Thus, when we examine the narratives, we can see that in Text 1 the power acquisition pattern is a way of establishing personal ties with one pupil, ties that persist until the invitation to the wedding. In Text 2 we find a combination of the two patterns. The teacher tries to establish ties (unsuccessfully) with two pupils through the use of professional knowledge. She does so by inviting the pupils to meet her during breaks so that they can do well on the matriculation exams. In the third narrative the teacher operates solely on the professional knowledge pattern. She describes a situation in which she is still constantly searching for ways to improve teaching. Her seniority does not lead her to rest on her laurels; quite the contrary.

In conclusion, the cultural code enables us to track the transition undergone by the narrators from a situation of power acquisition by means of personal ties to the present situation of power acquisition by means of professional knowledge.

Summary of findings: Barthes's codes as a means of narrative analysis

The use of Barthes's five codes as a guide to examining the personal narrative by means of isolating verbs, symbols, professional expressions, contrasts, and questions enabled us to expose hidden strata in the narratives.

The research findings include symbolic, binary, and cultural aspects that are embedded in the narrative's deep structure. Following Barthes's path—albeit making the appropriate modifications for the transition from a developed literary novella to an anecdotal personal narrative—led us to a situation in which we asked new questions about the narratives. Accordingly, the answers we received were surprising and contained the possibility of revealing a facet of teacher educators that had not been revealed before. As a result of looking through Barthes's prism, the teacher educators' professional world acquired a unique and different expression. Thus, one can see that beyond the individual narratives there is a metanarrative of a teacher educators' career development.

We will now sum up and stress the changes that occur during the transition between the three stages of the narrators' careers as they are revealed by means of the five codes:

- Teacher educators progress from the personal treatment of the individual's problems to personal treatment on the professional level, and subsequently to the treatment of the entire group.
- Teacher educators progress from determination and decisiveness with regard to their methods of action to a situation of doubt and questions with regard to the continuation of their paths.

- Teacher educators progress from a feeling of smallness in relation to the world and the establishment to a feeling of power and ability to control the world. The veteran teachers have inner locus of control and feel powerful regardless of the responses they get from colleagues and students.
- Teacher educators progress from taking care of literal life-and-death cases to feelings that are linked to a state of metaphorical death that is evoked in contexts of professional questions. Metaphorical life-and-death expression might imply that they are occupied with the fear of burnout or of stagnation. Nevertheless, although burnout, stagnation, and bitterness are overtly expressed by many veteran teachers (Huberman, 1989; Sikes, Measor, & Woods, 1985), the teachers in our study did not express such despair.

Discussion: From the researcher to the text and back

In this article we have described an experiment using Barthes's method as an alternative approach to oral narrative analysis. This experiment dealt with the relations between the researcher and the text. This is the focus of Fish (1980), Hirsch (1967), Ingarden (1972), and Iser (1976), who defined the text as elusive and not predefined and thus open for interpretation. The researchers, therefore, serve as agents of meaning who produce their meaning of the text. A hermeneutic circle between the text of the narrator and that of the interpreter is thus introduced (Derrida, 1982).

A further aspect deals with the relation between the personal narrative and cultural research. Barthes's codes link narrative research, which is drawn from aesthetic-literary characteristics, and culture studies, which have a social-communal perception. It seems that this assumption helped us to proceed naturally from the investigation of the personal narrative to the investigation of the organization. Finally, using Barthes's method, we simultaneously dealt with explicit and implicit messages in the text. It seems that Barthes tried to examine the limits of the text in a way that would reveal its hidden and yet more authentic cultural and conceptual nature. The combination of the textual and contextual perspectives creates a new hermeneutic option.

Our innovation in this experiment was using this method on a corpus of texts, on oral personal narratives, and in the context of social sciences, in this case the study of career development. In addition, we went one step beyond Barthes and not only revealed the five dimensions of the text but also found a link between all of them.

Thus, a natural link is created between the study of the personal narrative and that of the teacher educators' culture, a link that could enlighten us regarding the human characteristics of a college of education in Israel of the 21st century. Therefore, the method affords a possibility of relating to the multiple dimensions of the text simultaneously and reading beyond details. A metanarrative has emerged: one of the professional development of the teacher educator. According to this "story," the teacher educators have developed from the state of being "saviors" of individual students to nurturers of whole classes. Their perception changed from that of inferiority and impotence to that of confidence and omnipotence, so that they can question themselves and their ways and still maintain a professional identity and integrity.

Because Barthes's method, as it is presented in relation to the analysis of Balzac's 1830 novella *Sarrasine*, remains amorphous and open to questions, we thought it seemly to conclude this paper with questions: Does this method reveal all the dimensions contained in oral personal narrative? If not, what additional dimensions could be proposed? How is it possible to reveal them and examine them?

By following the research trail that was commenced by Barthes, an innovative view is engendered in the field of narrative research, thus posing new opportunities of interpretation.

Note

1. Subsequent citations of Barthes or *S/Z* refer to this text.

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