

# The Development of Narratological Approaches in Modern Literary Studies

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**Abstract:** This article explores the development of narratology and its transition from structuralist approaches to post-structuralist analyses. It examines the etymological and historical foundations of narratology, tracing the evolution of broad and narrow concepts of narrative from Aristotle's Poetics. The study also highlights how narratology has been formed and developed across various literary genres and artistic texts. Furthermore, the paper discusses the limitations and potentials of applying structuralist methods in the analysis of artistic narratives, while introducing post-structuralist methodologies that offer new perspectives for literary interpretation.

**Keywords:** Narratology, structural analysis, post-structuralism, Aristotle, fabula, story, narrative, semiotics, narratological analysis, literary studies.

## Introduction

Narratology is a branch of literary studies that primarily investigates the structure of literary texts and the ways in which they represent time, causality, and symbolism. Initially grounded in structuralist analysis, narratology gained prominence in the 1970s through the theoretical contributions of scholars such as Gérard Genette, Mieke Bal, and Gerald Prince. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, post-structuralism critically challenged the boundaries of structuralist approaches, proposing new interpretative frameworks that reshaped the study of narrative.

This article examines the evolution of narratology, its conceptual definitions, and its significance across different literary genres. Narratology extends beyond literature—it also finds expression in film, drama, visual arts, and other forms of communication. Therefore, this study considers not only the foundations of structural analysis but also the post-structuralist perspectives that have profoundly influenced contemporary literary theory.

The historical roots of narratology can be traced back to Aristotle's Poetics, where the philosopher emphasized the central role of plot in the structure of tragedy. By analyzing the causal relationships and sequence of events, Aristotle laid the groundwork for understanding narrative as a coherent and purposeful system. His approach served as a precursor to later structural analyses of literary form.

In the late twentieth century, structuralist methods were revisited and reinterpreted by post-structuralist theorists such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida. Their works expanded the boundaries of narrative inquiry, questioning the notion of fixed meaning within texts. Barthes, in his seminal work, argued that every literary text could be read as a system of interrelated codes rather than a closed, unified structure. This view transformed narratology into a more complex, multi-layered discipline, emphasizing the plurality of meaning and the active role of the reader.

In contemporary philology, a significant body of research has been devoted to the study of the writer's narrative thinking from the perspective of cognitive approaches. Narratology—originally rooted in Russian structuralism—has evolved into one of the most dynamic and promising branches of modern philological science, currently attracting scholars from diverse theoretical orientations.

The issues mentioned above have been explored in numerous works. Among them, N. I. Matveyeva's "The Narrative Structure of English Literary Discourse: Based on the Early 20th Century Stream-of-Consciousness Novels" (2003) offers a detailed structural and semantic examination of narrative discourse. G. A. Borse's studies, including "William Faulkner and the Oral Text" and "Narrative Technique: Its Theory in Fiction," provide valuable insights into narrative forms and oral structures within modernist fiction. Similarly, D. Herman, M. Jahn, and M. L. Ryan's "Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory" (2005) remains one of the most comprehensive references in the field, presenting interdisciplinary approaches that integrate linguistic, philosophical, and cognitive perspectives.

A. Palmer has made a substantial contribution to the development of narrative studies through his influential works “Fictional Minds” (2004) and “Social Minds in the Novel” (2010), which established the foundation for the cognitive study of fictional consciousness. Among more recent dissertations, particular attention should be paid to K. A. Andreyeva’s “Literary Narrative: Semantics of the Text and Cognitive Aspects of Poetics” (2004), I. A. Krasnoperova’s “Cognitive-Linguistic Analysis of Stable Narrative Structures” (2008), and O. V. Kovalev’s “Narrative Strategies in Literature” (2009). These studies collectively illustrate the growing significance of narratology as an interdisciplinary field that bridges literary theory, linguistics, and cognitive science.

### **The Evolution and Scope of Narrative Theory**

In Aristotle’s *Poetics*, the definition of narrative is presented in both a broad and a narrow sense. In its broader interpretation, the narrative encompasses any work that possesses a structured plot, thereby including epic and dramatic genres. In the narrower sense, it refers specifically to literary works that feature a narrator as a mediating voice. This distinction has had a lasting influence on modern narratological theory, shaping the way scholars distinguish between different narrative forms and modes of representation.

Today, the methodology of narratology has expanded significantly, demanding distinct analytical approaches for different media. For instance, the difference between the novel and drama is reflected in the way they represent action, character, and temporality. The novel, with its reflective and introspective qualities, as well as its linguistic and structural innovations, gave rise to new interpretative methods in the postmodern era. In contrast, drama—with its performative immediacy, spatial constraints, and temporal control—requires a different analytical framework.

In its early stages, narratology was predominantly applied to literary texts such as novels, short stories, and poetry. However, contemporary narratology extends far beyond the literary domain. It now encompasses film, drama, comics, and other visual or non-linguistic forms of expression. In film studies, narratology provides tools for analyzing the role of the camera, editing, and visual sequencing in constructing meaning. In drama, it helps to explore how stage space, dialogue, and actor performance contribute to narrative coherence. Thus, modern narratology has evolved into a multidisciplinary and multi-modal field, capable of analyzing narrative across diverse communicative forms.

### **Structuralist and Post-Structuralist Approaches in Narratology**

Structuralist approaches to narratology are grounded in the systematic and coherent analysis of narrative structures, emphasizing the interrelation and functional dependence of each textual element within the whole. Structuralism seeks to uncover the universal principles that govern narrative organization—plot, time, causality, and character functions—thus treating the text as a closed and self-contained system.

Post-structuralism, on the other hand, emerged as a critical reaction to these rigid frameworks. Post-structuralist theorists argue that meaning in a text is never fixed but rather fluid, open to multiple interpretations. Figures such as Jacques Derrida questioned the stability of structure itself, highlighting textual indeterminacy and the multiplicity of meaning. In this view, the reader plays an active role in constructing narrative significance, and the text becomes an open field of interpretive possibilities rather than a static system of signs.

The evolution of narratology through these two major paradigms demonstrates how the discipline has adapted and diversified within literary studies. While structural analysis remains a foundational method for examining plot and narrative composition, post-structuralist perspectives enrich the field by emphasizing ambiguity, subjectivity, and reader engagement. Moreover, narratology has expanded beyond the realm of literature to encompass other narrative media such as film, drama, and comics. This cross-disciplinary application illustrates the dynamic and evolving nature of the field, encouraging the development of innovative analytical frameworks suited to contemporary cultural forms.

In conclusion, the development of narratology, through its structuralist and post-structuralist phases, has elevated literary theory to a new intellectual level. The discipline continues to play a vital role not only in literary criticism but also in the analysis of cinema, drama, and other art forms. The discussion presented in this paper has highlighted both the theoretical and practical dimensions of narratology, demonstrating its capacity to adapt to new modes of expression and interpretation.

Looking forward, narratology is expected to integrate emerging methodologies that address the complexities of digital storytelling, multimodal narratives, and interactive media. Such advancements will further broaden

the scope of literary studies, reaffirming narratology's position as one of the most dynamic and interdisciplinary domains in contemporary criticism.

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