

## Narrative Rhetoric of Young People's Voices to be Heard in Najwa Shihab's Talk Show

Hodiono, Helen<sup>1</sup> and Gunawan, Samuel<sup>2</sup>

English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries, Petra Christian University,  
Siwalankerto 121-131, Surabaya 60236, INDONESIA  
Emails: [a1190034@john.petra.ac.id](mailto:a1190034@john.petra.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>; [samgun@petra.ac.id](mailto:samgun@petra.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The *Mata Najwa* (English: Najwa's Eyes) program on October 27, 2021, entitled "*Muda Bersuara*" was a special episode to commemorate the Youth Pledge which fell the following day. Inviting notable guest stars from various societies, politicians, and artists, Najwa explored unsettling issues among our youths and highlighted whether or not their voices are still heard. This study was conducted because there is a widespread use of narratives on various social media platforms among youngsters but the level of literacy among them is still low. This study aimed to analyze the underlying structure of the narratives and to examine their functions. This study was done using a descriptive qualitative approach. The data analysis revealed that narratives found had a regular format in which each of them consisted of at least one structure. Every narrative was also unique and served a variety of functions with making the present as its center.

**Keywords:** Narrative; rhetorical; Mata Najwa; literacy; young people; social media

### INTRODUCTION

*Mata Najwa* (English: Najwa's Eye) is one of the most popular talk shows in Indonesia. First aired on Trans 7 on January 10, 2018, this program successfully managed to win the KPI (*Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia*) Awards 2020 for the best "news talk show" category (Faisal, 2020). Timberg and Erler (2010 p. 3) described that "talk shows are governed by a set of rules or guiding principles that make it distinct from any other form of TV—soap operas, news, game shows, for instance—and also from daily conversations. It is unscripted yet highly planned and invariably anchored by an announcer." *Mata Najwa* itself is bound up into a sixty-minute discussion interview hosted by the one and only Najwa Shihab.

On October 27, 2021, *Mata Najwa* raised a theme namely "*Muda Bersuara*" (English: Youth's Voices) which could be accessed through all three media platforms. This episode invited four remarkable guest stars including Faldo Maldini and dr. Gamal Albinsaid as politician representatives, Lalola Easter Kaban as an anti-corruption activist from ICW (Indonesia Corruption Watch), and Cinta Laura as a celebrity representative who is concerned about social and women issues. All these people certainly came from different backgrounds and expertise, but they were brought together to discuss one important issue, young people. Commemorating the Youth Pledge (Indonesian: Sumpah Pemuda) which falls on October 28, Najwa explored unsettling issues among youths ranging from corruption, and environment to sexual violence. She highlighted whether or not our youths' voices are still heard and the extent to which they can contribute especially to the Indonesian political movement (Najwa Shihab, n.d). Therefore, the researcher is interested in analyzing the narrative rhetoric of young people's voices to be heard in *Mata Najwa: Muda Bersuara* (English: Najwa's Eye: Youth Voices).

In delivering ideas to underline the prominence of young people's voices for the nation, the interviewees use narratives. Walter Fisher (in MacIntyre, 1981) stated that human beings are

fundamentally storytelling creatures or *homo narrans* as contrasted with rational creatures or *homo sapiens*. It is innate to understand the world as a set of stories rather than as a series of rational circumstances. Never have we spent a single day without listening, watching, reading, participating, or even creating a narrative for someone else. It is no longer a secret that today almost 170.0 million active social media users or more than a half of the Indonesian population have unconsciously used narratives from Instagram influencers with their reviews to TickTockers with their videos and many more (Kemp, 2021).

This practice actually has the potential to be an educational instrument centered on developing one's creativity. Also, it could be a manifestation of freedom of speech which effectively assists our opinions and aspirations. Most of the time, however, what happens in our society is the opposite. People no longer heed whether the narratives that they made are constructive or not and some have even created new polemics in society. Thus, it is crucial to elevate narratives that evoke literacy among youths. They should be encouraged to create narratives that are not only entertaining but also beneficial for society. Through a profound exploration of this study on *Mata Najwa: Muda Bersuara* talk show, there will be an enlargement of the current understanding of narratives in terms of structures and functions. This study will elucidate how narratives that are presented can build the audience's awareness to have more knowledge in specific areas in order to be more critical and eventually see an opportunity for action.

In conducting this study, there are two following research questions: 1) What is the underlying structure of the narratives found in *Mata Najwa: Muda Bersuara* (English: Najwa's Eye: Youth Voices)? 2) What are the functions of the narratives above?

For the theoretical framework, the researcher used narrative model theory by Labov and Waletzky (1997) and the functions of narrative theory by Schiff (2012). There are six structures proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1997):

1. Abstract
2. Orientation
3. Complicating Action
4. Resolution
5. Evaluation
6. Coda

There are three components of narrative functions proposed by Schiff (2012) as follows:

1. Declarative
2. Temporal
3. Spatial

## **METHOD**

This study is using a descriptive qualitative approach. The data are narratives delivered by Najwa Shihab and her four guest stars via the Narasi Newsroom YouTube channel. The data collecting techniques include observation and documenting. The researcher watched the video first and then made the transcription.

While the data analysis techniques include data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2014). In displaying the data, the researcher is using tables and narrative text retrieved from the transcription.

1. First, in the analysis and the appendix, the researcher uses initials to show who expresses the narratives. For example, Najwa Shihab (**NS**), Faldo Maldini (**FM**), dr. Gamal Albinsaid (**GA**), Laola Ester (**LE**), and Cinta Laura (**CL**).
2. Then, the researcher will apply a two-digit numbering system to label the host's and the guest's utterances. The first digit presents how many utterances the host or the guests deliver. The second digit depicts the structure of the narratives. For instance, **NS 2.1**. Here, **NS** means that the data is a narrative from Najwa Shihab. The first digit or number (**2**) refers to Najwa's second utterance. While the last digit or number (**1**) discusses the first structure of her narrative.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis, using Labov's narrative structure theory, the researcher found that every narrative from the host and interlocutors has a minimum of one structure. Based on that, we know for sure that even narratives have patterns. If they are combined together then they will create a much greater narrative. In addition, utilizing Schiff's theory, all narratives from *Mata Najwa: Muda Bersuara* feature different functions of narrative. However, all of those functions are related and perhaps require making a present as the foundation.

### Narratives and Their Underlying Structures

#### 1.1. Most Common Elements of Narratives

##### 1.1.1. Evaluation

According to Labov, evaluation is one of the most essential features in a narrative and not necessarily before or after the resolution, but also all through the narrative (1972). The evaluation became one of the most common elements with a total of twenty-two evaluations that can be found throughout the talk show. The data below was an evaluation that came from Cinta Laura.

##### CL 1.1:

*[S]istem kita sebenarnya sangat bureaucratic dan ada hierarchy. Dalam satu sisi kita diglorifikasi karena masih muda dan you know dijuluki "Oh punya kekuatan untuk merubah situasi yang ada sekarang." Dan tapi disisi lain ya kita tidak didengarkan. Tapi aku percaya sebagai generasi muda kita harus konsisten dengan pesan-pesan kita jangan takut untuk bersuara.... [W]alaupun banyak sekali faktor-faktor yang mungkin akan membungkam kita dan membuat kita diam.... [J]angan takut bersuara.... Dan kalau kita mau bekerjasama aku yakin perubahan bisa terjadi.*

([O]ur system is actually very bureaucratic and there is a hierarchy. On one hand, we are glorified for being young and you know being nicknamed "Oh they have the power to change the current situation." On the other hand, we are not heard. But I believe that as a young generation we must be consistent with our message, don't be afraid to speak up.... [A]lthough many factors might silence us, ..., don't be afraid to speak up.... And if we want to work together I believe change can happen.)

In the extract above, Laura first stated that she agreed with Laola Ester's statement earlier by saying that Indonesia's government system is very hierarchical and bureaucratic.

Besides, she talked about her attitude towards the problem at hand and referred to what she had got from it. According to her, there will be a transformation, and this issue—not being heard—can be solved as long as we are consistent and willing to eliminate our fears. In this case, she shared some advice in order to engage the audience in the important aspects of the narrative which became a clear indication of evaluation.

### 1.1.2. Complicating Action and Resolution

Derived from Labov's theory (1972), complicating actions are dealing with a series of events leading up to the climax—the highest point of suspense. From the talk show, the researcher found two complicating action-resolution combinations and five complicating actions without resolution. The data about to be specified was a complicating action-resolution narrative from Laola Ester.

#### LE 1.1:

*[K]ita memperingati hari Sumpah Pemuda gitu ya setiap 28 oktober pasti selalu ada glorifikasi soal peran anak muda Agent of Change misalnya tapi tidak hampir tidak pernah dibarengi dengan bagaimana kemudian regulasi atau kebijakan itu dihasilkan untuk mengakomodasi memang kepentingan anak muda dan anak muda ini kan sebetulnya rangenya cukup luas gitu ya.... Jadi selalu ada dualisme paradoks gitu ya soal bagaimana publik atau bahkan lingkungan kita mempersepsikan atau mengharapkan seorang anak muda bertindak tapi disisi lain juga aksesnya seringkali dibatasi.*

([E]verytime we commemorate the Youth Pledge on October 28, there will always be glorification about the role of young agents of change, for example, but it is rarely accompanied by how regulations or policies are then produced to accommodate the interests of young people and young people, right? The range is quite wide.... So there is always a paradoxical dualism about how the public or even our environment perceives or expects a young person to act. On the other hand, access is often restricted.)

#### LE 1.2:

*Seringkali kita juga akhirnya hanya jadi angka gitu statistik bahwa ada sekian banyak jumlah anak muda yang jadi first voters itu hanya jadi ladang suara. (Often, we end up just being numbers. The statistics show that there are a large number of young people who become first voters are only a field of voice.)*

Data **LE 1.1** is a complicating action. Here, Ester showed how events were progressing. First, she said that young people are agents of change where there are always roles and expectations that follow. Then, it leads to the fact that actually there is no direction from the government that accommodates the interests of these young people. It is effortless to see that Ester did not only answer the question only but was also trying to express her feelings on that matter. She felt that what happened is unfair to the young generation because it forms a paradoxical dualism that is confusing to them. Up to this point, the spectators were tense and waiting for the resolution. Finally, data **LE 1.2** is a resolution or a result. It serves as a tension releaser and reveals what eventually happens (Labov, 1972). In the end, Ester said that young people end up being numbers to add votes in the election. Although this statement was not a happy ending, the spectators were relieved after all the tension created earlier.

## 1.2. Less Common Elements of Narratives

### 1.2.1. Abstract and Orientation

Since there was only one abstract orientation combination from the show then it can be categorized as less common elements. The following data presents an abstract along with orientation as found in the opening monologue by Najwa Shihab as the host.

**NS 1.1:**

*93 tahun Sumpah Pemuda sejauh mana peran dan suara anak muda. Tentu ada anak muda dalam lingkaran elit tapi rasa-rasanya peran mereka masih minor dan tidak menentukan. Sementara anak muda di luar barisan politik terasa diacuhkan.... Masih relevankah bicara peran anak muda dalam politik dengan cara apa anak muda berkontribusi di tengah atmosfer politik yang begini-begini saja. Inilah Mata Najwa: Muda Bersuara.*

(93 years of the Youth Pledge to what extent the role and voice of young people. Of course, there are young people in the elite circle, but it seems that their role is still minor and not decisive. Meanwhile, young people outside the political ranks feel neglected.... Is it still relevant to talk about the role of young people in politics and how do young people contribute amid this political atmosphere? This is Najwa's Eyes: Youth Voices.)

This monologue consisted of a combination between abstract and orientation. Both abstract and orientation are also put in the beginning to indicate that the discussion is about to start. Since it was held to commemorate the Youth Pledge, then Shihab set the whole situation which was ninety-three years after the famous pledge. She unveiled brief information about the “main character” which was the young generation along with their voice and role in society. Moreover, Shihab explained the condition in our country in which both young people who sit in the ranks of the political elite and outside have something in common. They are not heard. Nonetheless, some of them still dare to express their opinions in distinct yet unique ways. By doing this, she answered potential questions about who, what, where, and when of the narrative. She closed the monologue by asking a rhetorical question to start the discussion.

**1.2.2. Coda**

According to Labov, a coda is how the narrator signals that the story is over, for example, by saying “And that’s it” or sometimes giving a brief summary of it or linking the story to the present (1972). Since the show was an ongoing conversation and discussion with a lot of narratives here and there, then the coda does not appear after each narrative or segment but at the end of the episode. The data below was the only coda from the show uttered by the host, Najwa Shihab.

**NS 2.1:**

*Sumpah Pemuda berharga karena melampaui asal dan masa lalu yang diikrarkan ialah hasrat mencipta hal yang sama sekali baru. Tak mengapa sesekali melanturkan serapah yang tak terkira. Jengkel atau hari ini adalah awal dari esok yang lebih mulia. Bukan anak muda jika serba puas dengan apa yang tersaji.... Bangsa mesti jadi ruang lapang menjebol dan membangun. Monumen baru mesti tegak diatas pondasi candi yang anggun. Itulah yang dinamakan daya cipta. Melahirkan yang semula tak ada. Untuk tanah air tumpah darah Indonesia.*

(The Youth Pledge is valuable because it transcends origins and the past that is promised is the desire to create something completely new. There's nothing wrong with occasionally uttering countless curses. Irritated or today is the beginning of a more glorious tomorrow. Not young people if they are completely satisfied with what is presented.... The nation must be an open space to break down and build. The new monument must stand on the foundation of a beautiful temple. That is called creativity. Give birth to something that doesn't exist. For the homeland of Indonesia.)

Shihab began the story with a monologue and ended it with a monologue as well. She may not close the show by saying “that’s it” but she gave the spectators a few words about what

had been discussed with all the interviewees. By saying this, she was trying to bring the spectators back to the present in a moment where they got into the narrative.

## Narratives and Their Functions

### 2.1. Most Common Functions of Narratives

#### 2.1.1. Declarative

Referring to Brian Schiff's theory of the function of narrative, he believes that the main purpose of a narrative is to make the present (2012). Making present here also means showing and declaring our experiences, feelings, thoughts, or anything we have ever dreamt up (2012). From this particular episode, the researcher found twenty-three narratives with the declarative dominant function as the most common function of narratives. This following data originated from Laola Ester.

##### LE 3.1:

*Bahwa kita memang diperhadapkan dengan berita-berita besar yang mana karena memang sering sekali tuh nilainya sangat tangible gitu ya kerugian negara sekian banyak suap sekian besar gitu.... Di sisi lain kita juga sebenarnya diperhadapkan dengan apa yang kita kenal sebagai Petite Corruption gitu ya..., terutama dalam pelayanan publik.... [K]ita diperhadapkan dengan rasa frustrasi soal bagaimana negara ini berupaya untuk melakukan pemberantasan korupsi.*

(That we are indeed faced with big news, which is because the value is very tangible. The losses are big, so are the bribes.... On the other hand, we are faced with what we know as Petite Corruption..., especially in public services.... [W]e feel frustration about how this country is trying to eradicate corruption.)

The narrative above depicted how Ester was communicating her views or reflections and her feelings regarding corruption that happens in Indonesia. Certainly, declarative always covers subjective matters so the audience will probably discover Ester's opinion different from the other's. She came up with an idea saying that corruption and frustration are two sides of the same coin. On one hand, we—as Indonesians—realize that it is actually what we will find on our doorstep. We do not only see a lot of big corruption on the news which is unfavorable but also encounter petite corruption around us, especially in public services. On the other hand, it is bothersome to see Indonesia has to deal with it over and over without arriving at a real solution.

### 2.2. Less Common Functions of Narratives

#### 2.2.1. Spatial

The first less common function of narrative is spatial or space. There are six narratives found with spatial dominant function throughout this episode. The fact that human beings are surrounded by others and cannot live alone has led Schiff to the idea that creating narratives is totally socialized (2012). The data below was a narrative from Cinta Laura.

##### CL 5.1:

*[S]aya dulu major psikologi. Saat kuliah saya sempat harus bekerjasama dengan banyak perempuan-perempuan yang menjadi korban kekerasan mau itu kekerasan seksual atau domestic violence apapun itu. Dan aku melihat dampak psikologis dan mentalnya terhadap mereka setelah itu terjadi. Hidup mereka tidak bisa sama lagi.... Dan setelah delapan tahun hidup di Amerika yang saya lihat adalah jika menjadi korban kekerasan, korban langsung diberikan penanganan hukum gratis. Dan penanganan mental emosional dan fisik gratis....*

([I] used to major in psychology. When I was in college, I had to work with women who were victims of violence, whether it is sexual violence or domestic violence whatsoever. And I saw the psychological and mental impact it had on them after it

happened. Their lives can't be the same anymore.... And after eight years of living in America what I see is that if you become a victim of violence, the victim is immediately given free legal treatment. And free mental, emotional and physical treatment....)

The extract discussed how Laura saw women who were victims of sexual or domestic violence—back then in the United States when she was majoring in psychology—whose lives are no longer the same because of the post-traumatic conditions that affected their psychological and mental health. Laura's story here did not belong to her only but also to anyone who had or will have conversations with her. Thus, constant face-to-face interactions with those people abroad over eight years made Laura recognized more vivid and genuine social meanings behind the stories of the community and appreciated the intensive protection provided by the States (Shiff, 2012). This process eventually resulted in a joint and various understandings of the world which also explained why she had multiple perspectives when facing a certain topic in this case sexual violence in Indonesia.

### 2.2.2. Temporal

The second less common function of narratives is the temporal dominant function with four narratives from different interviewees. Based on Schiff's theory, temporality is all about making present in time in order to put value to the past, present, and future (2012). The data about to be mentioned was derived from dr. Gamal Albinsaid.

#### GA 1.1:

*Pertama kita bicara masalah data indeks demokrasi kita turun paling buruk dalam 14 tahun terakhir skor kita sekarang 6,3 peringkat kita sekarang 64 dari 167. Kita tinggi di tahun 2015 di akhir kepemimpinan Pak SBY masuk ke Pak Jokowi dan selama lima tahun kita mengalami kemerosotan.... [B]ahkan kebebasan sipil mengalami penurunan 20% itu yang pertama. Artinya secara data internasional yang saya kita akui ya, kredibel, menunjukkan penurunan kebebasan sipil.*

(First, we talk about the problem of our democracy index data, which fell the worst in the last 14 years, our score is now 6.3, and we are now 64 out of 167. We were high in 2015 at the end of President SBY's leadership into President Jokowi and for five years we have experienced a decline.... [E]ven civil liberties have decreased by 20%. This means that the international data, which I admit, is credible, shows a decline in civil liberties.)

The extract showed how Albinsaid's opinion relied on solid data from credible sources. He drove the audience to a certain period to refresh their memory of what had happened during the last fourteen years. Clearly, it was not a smooth journey for Indonesia because there was an increase in the democracy index within 2015 before it kept dropping and finally putting us at 64 out of 167. By telling the statistics, Albinsaid was actually attempting to understand the past and get the essence of it. Afterward, he invited the audience to compare and then think about who we are today as a nation in particular and what improvements have been made since.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, everyone can create narratives, and when they narrate, it is not only about their stories or personal experiences but they also put their opinions, feelings, and reflections on a certain issue that has been discussed. Every and each narrative found consists of at least one structure which means that narrative has a certain pattern. In this case, *Mata Najwa: Muda Bersuara* (English: Najwa's Eyes: Youth Voices) is a massive narrative in which all narratives coming from both the host and the interviewees contributed to shaping its perfect

structure. Furthermore, the center of every narrative here is ourselves whether as an individual, a group, or a nation. Thus, every narrative produced in the show was a one-of-a-kind ingenious act which revealed the way people think of the world and how they put themselves in the present contexts and social life can lead to different yet related functions of narrative.

## REFERENCES

- Faisal, A. (December 10, 2020). *Mata najwa jadi "talkshow" berita terbaik dalam anugerah kpi 2020*. <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/1888708/mata-najwa-jadi-talkshow-berita-terbaik-dalam-anugerah-kpi-2020>
- Kemp, S. (February 11, 2021). *Digital 2021: Indonesia*. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-indonesia>
- Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press.
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1997). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. *Journal of Narrative & Life History*, 7(1-4), 3–38. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.7.02nar>
- MacIntyre, A. (1981). *After virtue: A study in moral theory*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook third edition*. USA: Sage Publications.
- Narasi Newsroom. (2021, October 30). *Muda bersuara (full version)|Mata najwa*. [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/xFmiCfZf-XI>
- Schiff, B. (2012). The function of narrative: Toward a narrative psychology of meaning. *Narrative Matters*, 2(1), 33–47. [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nw2\\_1art03](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nw2_1art03)
- Timberg, B. M., & Erler, R. J. (2010). *Television talk: A History of the TV Talk Show*. University of Texas Press.