



The Study of Narratological Structure of the Story of Prophet Abraham (AS) in the Holy Quran Using the Model of Greimas [In English]

Payman Salehi ¹ , Elham Sobati ^{2*} 

1 Professor, Department of Arabic Language and literature, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Ilam University, Ilam, Iran

2 Assistant Professor, Department of English Language, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Ilam University, Ilam, Iran



*Corresponding author: e.sobati@ilam.ac.ir



Received: 14 Oct, 2024 Revised: 13 Nov, 2024 Accepted: 30 Nov, 2024

ABSTRACT

In Greimas narrative model, the basic structure of narrative construction in the form of action pattern, propositions and narrative chains is analyzed in order to identify the stages of production to receive meaning. Considering that the knowledge of the mechanisms of meaning production in the narrations of the Holy Quran is of special importance, the focus of the current study is to determine the degree to which the Grimas pattern aligns with the verses of this revered Surah. To achieve this objective, the narrative framework of the story of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) has been examined through a descriptive-analytical approach, utilizing Grimas's structural model. The results show that Greimas's structural pattern matches the story, and such a comparison with contemporary storytelling theories is one of the miraculous aspects of a book which has been revealed for centuries. Another noteworthy point is that sometimes the main character of the story plays different roles of subject, receiver, sender and even helper. In some situations, there are relationships of contradictions and differences between subjects. It is in the shadow of understanding these contrasts that one can understand the structure of the text and through using three syntagmes of contractual, performative, and disjunctive can covers abstract concepts and inanimate objects in addition to characters.

Keywords: The Holy Quran, Abraham story, Greimas, narration, Narratological structure.

1. Introduction

Structuralism in the classical view deals with the form and appearance of a literary genre, but in its new meaning and application, it is tied to

morphology which analyzes the structure of stories and their hidden chains. The characteristics, goals, functions, and actions that structuralists perform in text analysis cover examining the relationships between the components of a story, recognizing and arranging the smallest narrative structures, achieving a limited and common pattern, and helping to emerge the meaning and important elements of the story (Propp 1958, 45).

Classical stories deserve structural analysis due to the focus on the type of actions and relationships of individuals and the existence of coherent structural elements. Thus, fiction is one of the literary formats examined in the school of structuralism. The story is "the narration of events and the series of events in chronological order" (Forster 2005, 42). According to the Russian morphologist Vladimir Propp, "narrative is a text that expresses a change of state from a balanced state to an unbalanced state and a return to a balanced state. This change of state is called an event, which is one of the main elements of the narrative (plot)" (Okhovat 1992, 18). Thereby, he considers the plot as a dynamic part of the narration and compares this mobility with a character who seems to be static. He considers thirty-one special roles and seven operational areas for the role of stories (Propp 1989, 161-162).

The story's plot is based on rationality and values and is formed by analyzing events based on their constituent factors (cause and effect relationships) that scrutinize the story. "The most important and valuable narrative work is a combination of how and why the plot or narrative are formed. In other words, the plot includes a plan, order, pattern, and view of events." (Younesi, 2009: 65). Therefore, the events of the story are arranged based on linear narrative time (calendar time), However, in the plot, this linear time may be disrupted and the literary work may begin in the middle or end; that is, the narrator may begin the story from the end, or the story may return to the past from the middle, or there may be a discrepancy between the plot and the story. These are three narrative methods that the French structuralist Gerard Genette called: "prediction", "return to the past", and "Anachrony" (Eagleton, 2001:145). Disruption of temporal order in the plot is more typical of modern novels, and in prose narrative literature, both the story and its plot were mostly organized based on chronological time. The present study using a descriptive-analytical approach seeks to answer this question: Is the narrative structure model of Greimas compatible with the story of Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) in the Holy Quran?

2. Literature Review

Greimas' actantial model has been employed by numerous scholars as a method for constructing the narrative framework of fictional works, such as novels, short stories, and poetry. This theory can be applied to any novel, whether from artistic or popular literature, due to its inherent flexibility. Its adaptability stems from the fact that it functions as a "structure" rather than adhering to a strict framework. One notable study was conducted by Hamidreza Shairi in his book *Fundamentals of Modern Semantics* (2012) has provided numerous chains for studying the superstructural structure of discourse and narrative analysis. In their article "Analysis of the Narrative Structure of the Story of Bahram and Gol Andam Based on Grimas Theory" (2014), Mashhadi and Sawab studied the narrative structure of the story as an example of romantic lyrical poems based on Grimas theory. In their article "Narrativization of the Story of the Elf Aqvan (Aqvqne dive) (2016), Beiranvand et al. have analyzed this story based on Grimas's new theory of structuralist and semantic narratology. Hosseinpoor Sarkarizi et al. (2019), in their study "Analysis of the narrative structure and Discourse Action of the Novel *Symphony of the Deads* based on Greimas 'Theory of Narrative Semiotics of Paris School", want to answer these questions, To what extent can Greimas' Theory of Narrative Semiotics be applied to analyze the narrative structure (plot) of a novel set in a surrealistic context, and what discourse factors contribute to the creation of meaning according to Greimas' actional pattern?

However, the use of this method is less common in Quranic studies. We will refer to a few of them. In their article "Study of the Semiotics of the Verses Related to the Resurrection and Resurrection" from Surah Al-Qiyamat, Haqbin and Bidadian Qomi (2013) have studied the semiotics of verses related to the Resurrection and Resurrection based on Grimas' semiotic studies, especially his semiotic square, and have compared the levels of the soul mentioned in the verses of Surah Al-Qiyamat with Grimas' narrative discourse system. Ashrafi et al. (2015). In the article "Analysis of the story of Prophet Joseph (PBUH) in the Holy Quran based on Propp and Grimas' theory", have examined this story based on Grimas's triple chains.

In their descriptive-analytical study, sedghi and ganjkhnlou (2016) examined the narrative structure of the story of Prophet Sulaiman using Greimas's narrative model. The study aimed to determine whether Greimas's model aligns with the narrative of Sulaiman (AS) and the Queen of Saba, and to assess the effectiveness of Greimas's action model,

chains, and narrative propositions in analyzing a case from the Qur'anic stories. The hypothesis posited that Greimas's theory is effective for analyzing Qur'anic narratives and that his models of action and chains, along with narrative propositions, are applicable to the story in question. This research did not seek to evaluate the value of Qur'anic stories in relation to their alignment with Greimas's model; rather, it aimed to describe the surface and deep structures of this narrative, thereby revealing and substantiating another significant dimension of Qur'anic stories. The findings indicated that Greimas's narrative discourse system is indeed compatible with the aforementioned Qur'anic story.

The aim of Gheisari and fegghi zadeh (2019) in their article "Stretching the "science" in the light of semantics of the "people who Understand" in Sura Fussilat (Based on the semantics of Grimes)" was to apply the principles of semiotics and Grimes' semantic theory to explore the dual oppositions present in the structure of discourse and narrative discourse. The objective is to analyze the interactions of the "people who Understand" within this sura and to identify pathways to attain knowledge. Upon reviewing the literature, the authors concluded that the key factors facilitating the pursuit of knowledge include determination, interest, intrinsic motivation, a clear objective, perseverance, joy, and the absence of fear and sorrow. Conversely, the primary barriers to acquiring knowledge are identified as acknowledgments and disapproval, arrogance, and a lack of purpose. The authors suggest that by enhancing the facilitating factors and eliminating the obstacles, it is possible to promote the effective use of knowledge and to recognize the significance of human understanding.

The unique feature and contribution of the current study, in contrast to earlier research, is that it analyzes the narrative of Prophet Abraham through the lens of Grimas' theory for the first time. The distinct characteristics of the Quranic surahs necessitate an individual examination of each one, as it is anticipated that each will yield unique insights. Therefore, conducting this research is essential.

3. Theoretical framework

Greimas, a Lithuanian semiotician, living in France has provided definite and fixed models in narratology to study different types of narratives. He has made the narratology regarding the morphology of Propp's anecdote and has made changes in it (Scholes 2004, 230). Unlike Propp who allocated his seven categories to the characters of the folk tale and did not generalize it, he believes that a few patterns of character

actions can be found and from these patterns, the logic of the fictional world can be created (Ahmadi 2009, 163). He divided the elements of the narrative into six categories concerning the occasions and confrontations they share: 1. Identifier/subject (mostly, the subject finds her/his goal and strives to achieve it), 2. Receiver (the person or thing that is targeted by the subject), 3. Sender (the factor that motivates the subject to do something), 4. Opponent (a force that prevents the subject from reaching the goal), 5. Helper (a force that helps the subject to reach his/her goal), 6. Value-object (a goal or something that the subject tries to reach). That is the main character seeks to achieve a specific goal. Faces resistance from the opponent; A strong power (sender) sends him/her on a mission. A receiver also has the same procedure (Makaryk 1995, 152). Greimas claimed that one can find all of these six elements or some of them in a narrative.

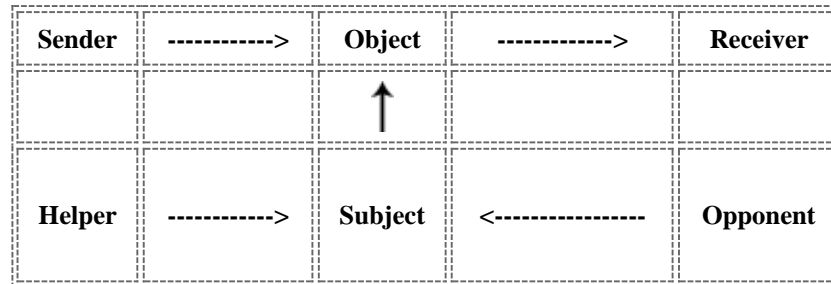


Figure 1: Greimas's actantial model (Greimas, 1996 [1983]: 207).

Referring to Figure 1, the six actants are divided into three oppositions, each of which forms an axis of the description (Hébert & Tabler, 2020):

- **The axis of desire consists of two components: (1) the subject and (2) the object.** The subject represents the entity that seeks or aims at the object. The connection formed between the subject and the object is referred to as a **junction**, which can be categorized into two types: conjunction (for instance, the Prince desires the Princess) or disjunction (for example, a murderer successfully disposes of the body of his victim).

- **The axis of power: (3) helper / (4) opponent.** The helper facilitates the attainment of the desired connection between the subject and the object, while the opponent obstructs this process. For instance, elements such as the sword, the horse, courage, and the wise man support the Prince, whereas the witch, the dragon, the distant castle, and fear serve to impede him.

- **The transmission axis, also referred to as the axis of knowledge according to Greimas, consists of two components: (5) sender and (6) receiver.** The sender represents the entity that initiates the connection

between the subject and the object; for instance, the King requests the Prince to save the Princess. Conversely, the receiver is the entity for whom this endeavor is being pursued. To clarify, we can define the receiver (or positive receiver) as the party that gains from the successful establishment of the connection between subject and object, such as the King, the kingdom, the Princess, or the Prince. It is important to note that elements serving as senders can also function as receivers.

Greimas believes that each narrative includes different propositions. These propositions make a sequence in the story. He divided them into three general categories:

1. Descriptive proposition: It refers to the description of conditions and situations, 2- Modal proposition: that is the expression of a specific state, 3- Multiple proposition: it indicates the performance of a specific task (Scholes 1974, 147).

Greimas claims that each story contains several sequences. Each sequence is a collection of several action patterns. He re-analyses the Propp's viewpoint about sequence and suggests three basic categories for narrative sequences:

1. Contractual syntagme in which the condition of the story has the bearing of the establishing and breaking of contracts, alienation and/or reintegration, etc.
2. Performative syntagme involves trials, struggles, the performance of tasks, special roles, actions, and so on.
3. Disjunctive syntagme includes movement, departure, arrival in the story (Rewaj 2003, 75).

4. Analysis of the story of Prophet Abraham based on the narrative model of Greimas

4.1. First position: Worship of the star, moon and sun

وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكُوتَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ (75) فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْإِفْلِينَ (76) فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لئن لم يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ (77) فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَازِعَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ (78) إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ خَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (79).

So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude (75). When the night covered him over, He saw a star: He said: "This is my Lord." But when it set, He said: "I love not those that set" (76). When he saw the moon rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord." But when the moon set, He said: "unless my Lord guide me, I shall surely be among

those who go astray (77). "When he saw the sun rising in splendour, he said: "This is my Lord; this is the greatest (of all)." But when the sun set, he said: "O my people! I am indeed free from your (guilt) of giving partners to Allah (78). "For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to Allah"(Surah Al-An'am, 79).

At the beginning of the story, Abraham asks God Almighty to show him what he deserves to worship, so his inner strength calls him to worship the star, the moon, and the sun, but each of them was declined. Thus, he did not consider them worthy of worship and realized that they all have a Creator (Al-An'am, 75-79).

Table 1. The Abraham (AS) narrative's actantial structure

Subject	It is Abraham who wants to know his true God.
Receiver	The moon, the star, and the sun.
Sender	Having a spirit of guidance is the factor that compels Abraham to believe in God for compelling reasons.
Opponent	It does not have.
Helper	It is God Almighty who has given a sound mind to Abraham.
Value-object	To find out if the stars, the moon, and the sun deserve worship.

Table 1-1. Narrative propositions

Descriptive proposition	Abraham witnessed the worship of the stars, the moon, and the sun by his people.
Modal proposition	Abraham wants to be sure if these are worthy of praise.
Multiple proposition	Abraham practically praises the stars and the moon at night and the sun during the day.

Table 1-2. Narrative syntagmes

Contractual syntagme	In this syntagme, we can see the closing of the covenant between Abraham and himself so that his faith in God is certain.
Performative syntagme	In this syntagme, we see Abraham fulfilled his covenant. He practically worships the stars, the moon, and the sun to make sure whether they deserve praise or not.
Disjunctive syntagme	Worshiping the star, the moon, the sun, and then giving up them is a kind of detachment from the negative position and moving towards the positive position.

4.2. Second position: Invitation of the father to leave idolatry

وَأَنْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا (٤١) إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا (٤٢) يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا (٤٣) يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا (٤٤) يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا (٤٥) قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ أَنْتَ عَنْ آلِهَتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهَ لَأَرْجُمَنَّكَ وَاهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا (٤٦) قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا (٤٧).

And mention in the Book [the story of] Abraham. Indeed, he was a man of truth and a prophet (41). Behold, he said to his father: “O my father! Why worship that which heareth not and seeth not, and can profit thee nothing?” (42). “O my father! To me hath come knowledge which hath not reached thee: so follow me: I will guide thee to a way that is even and straight” (43). “O my father! Serve not Satan: for Satan is a rebel against (Allah) Most Gracious” (44). “O my father! I fear lest a Penalty afflict thee from (Allah) Most Gracious, so that thou become to Satan a friend” (45). (The father) replied: “Dost thou hate my gods, O Abraham? If thou forbear not, I will indeed stone thee: Now get away from me for a good long while!” (46). Abraham said: “Peace be on thee: I will pray to my Lord for thy forgiveness: for He is to me Most Gracious (Surah Maryam (Mary):47).

In this part of the story, Abraham after believing in God and being sent as a Prophet insists a lot on his father Azar (that's mean his uncle) becoming a monotheist. Therefore, Abraham respectfully gives him many reasons for his going astray. But, his uncle treats him harshly and does not accept his invitation (Maryam, 41-47). “He wants to remind Azar that a man cannot be without any policy in his life. A person must either follow the line of God, which is the straight line, or the line of Satan,

which is the line of rebellion. The man should not make blindly decision about this” (Makarem Shirazi 1998, Vol 13, 77).

Table 2. The Abraham (AS) narrative’s actantial structure

Subject	It is Prophet Abraham who is commissioned to forbid his uncle Azar from worshiping idols and to call him on the worship of God.
Receiver	It can be both Azar who was invited to the religion of truth and Prophet Abraham; Because it was his duty to invite Azar to monotheism.
Sender	A strong desire of Abraham to guide his uncle.
Opponent	Satan and Azar's intense desire to follow the customs and traditions of his ancestors.
Helper	It is God Almighty who gave Abraham such a sound mind to show politely the futility of his father's action with reason and logic.
Value-object	Abraham's invitation to Azar to worship God and to avoid idolatry.

Table 2-2. Narrative propositions

Descriptive proposition	Abraham is a monotheist, but his uncle is an idolater. Due to this, he insists on guiding him to righteousness for good reasons, but he meets bad treatment from his uncle.
Modal proposition	Abraham seeks a solution to invite his uncle to monotheism and forbid him from worshiping idols.
Multiple proposition	Abraham came to his uncle and kindly forbade him to worship idols and invited him to monotheism, but he was insulted and threatened by his uncle.

Table 2-3. Narrative Syntagmes

Contractual syntagme	In this syntagme, the Prophet Abraham commits to invite Azar to monotheism through a rational and polite conversation.
Performative syntagme	In this syntagme, the logical and polite conversation of Abraham with his uncle shows that he has fulfilled his covenant.
Disjunctive syntagme	In this syntagme, we see a kind of positive movement. Abraham tries to save his uncle from polytheism to God and invite him to monotheism, but this movement remains in a negative state due to his uncle's opposition.

4.3. Third Position: Abraham's invitation to monotheism

In this position, Abraham is commissioned to call his people to monotheism; so when he asked them, what are these idols that you worship? They answered: our fathers worshiped them.

قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا لَهَا عَابِدِينَ (53). قَالَ أَفَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (54). قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنَ اللَّاعِبِينَ (55).

They said, "We found our fathers worshipping them" (53). He said, "Indeed ye have been in manifest error - ye and your father" (54). They said, "Have you brought us the Truth, or are you one of those who jest"?(Surah Al-Anbiya, 55).

Table 3. The Abraham (AS) narrative's actantial structure

Subject	After receiving the divine mission, Prophet Abraham goes to his people to guide them.
Receiver	On the one hand, some idolatrous people are invited to worship God, and on the other hand, there is Abraham who is commissioned to guide his people to the right path.
Sender	It is God Almighty who obliges Abraham to guide the people.
Opponent	It refers to the people of Abraham who with blind obedience to their ancestors' traditions rise against the guidance of him.
Helper	Besides the God Almighty, there are strong arguments and proofs that Abraham has in his speeches with the people due to his common sense.
Value-object	Completing the argument against the people of Abraham by sending a Prophet to guide them and forbid them from idolatry.

Table 3-1. Narrative Propositions

Descriptive proposition	The people of Abraham following the misconceptions of their ancestors turned to idolatry and he has commissioned to lead them to monotheism.
Modal proposition	God Almighty by sending Prophet Abraham intends to guide his people.
Multiple proposition	The subject invites his people to the religion of truth with argument, but they do not accept his invitation and claim that Abraham makes fun of them.

Table 3-2. Narrative Syntagmes

Contractual syntagme	Abraham made a covenant with God to call his people to monotheism.
Performative syntagme	In this syntagme, the Prophet Abraham, himself, logically avoids worshipping idols and prevents his people from doing that and even from polytheism to God.
Disjunctive syntagme	At this point of the story, the people of Abraham reject his invitation and made fun of him. This caused the direction of movement to remain in the negative.

4.4. Fourth position: Destruction of idols by Abraham

Abraham, after failing to lead his people for obvious reasons, swears to destroy all the idols, so he destroys all of them except the bigger idol with an ax and puts the ax on its shoulder.

وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ (57) فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُدَادًا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ (58).

“And by Allah, I have a plan for your idols - after ye go away and turn your backs” (57). So he broke them to pieces, (all) but the biggest of them, that they might turn (and address themselves) to it (Surah Al-Anbiya, 58).

When people came back and faced this scene, they were terrified who brought this calamity on the idols?! At this time, they said that Abraham was the only one who spoke against the idols (Al-Anbiya, 58-60).

قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (59) قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ (60).

They said, “Who has done this to our gods? He must indeed be some man of impiety”! (59). They said, “We heard a youth talk of them: He is called Abraham” (60).

Table 4. The Abraham (AS) narrative’s actantial structure

Subject	It refers to Abraham who avoided his people from worshipping idols. When he faces strong opposition, he broke all the idols to show that they are not capable of defending themselves.
Receiver	There are idols on one side and people on the other side to think about what they worship.
Sender	It is Abraham’s inner desire to lead his people rationally and courageously.
Opponent	There is not any force to prevent idols from breaking.
Helper	Abraham's firm belief in God Almighty, the inefficiency of the idols, and his rich intelligence in putting the ax on the idol's shoulder helped him to show people the wrong path of worship.

Value-object	Abraham broke the idols to show their inability to defend themselves and thus lead his people.
--------------	--

Table 4-1. Narrative Propositions

Descriptive proposition	God Almighty sends Abraham to guide his people. They do not accept his invitation. Thus, Abraham destroys the idols to show their inefficiency.
Modal proposition	Abraham intends to break the idols.
Multiple proposition	Abraham breaks all the idols and places the ax on the shoulder of the greatest idol.

Table 4-2. Narrative Syntagmes

Contractual syntagme	Prophet Abraham makes a covenant with God to break all the idols.
Performative syntagme	Abraham breaks all the idols except the big idol and puts the ax on its shoulder.
Disjunctive syntagme	The direction of movement in this syntagme is positive; because Prophet Abraham intends to show the public opinion about the inefficiency of the idols by breaking them.

4.5. Fifth Position: The trial of Abraham for breaking the idols

قَالُوا أَأَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِالْهَيْئَةِ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ (62) قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ (63) فَرَجَعُوا إِلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (64) ثُمَّ نُكِسُوا عَلَى رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ (65) قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ (66) أَفَتُكْفِرُونَ بِمَا كُفَرْتُمْ وَلَمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَقْلًا تَعْقِلُونَ (67) قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ (68).

They said, "Art thou the one that did this with our gods, O Abraham?" (62). He said: "Nay, this was done by - this is their biggest one! Ask them, if they can speak intelligently!" (63). so, they turned to themselves and said, "Surely ye are the ones in the wrong!" (64). Then were they confounded with shame: (they said), "Thou knowest full well that these (idols) do not speak!" (65). (Abraham) said, "Do ye then worship, besides Allah, things that can neither be of any good to you nor do you harm?" (66). "Fie upon you, and upon the things that ye worship besides Allah! Have ye no sense..?" (67). they said, "Burn him and protect your gods, if ye do (anything at all)!" (Surah Al-Anbiya, 68).

Prophet Abraham defends himself against the accusation of breaking idols and says that the ax is on the shoulder of the greatest idol, why don't you ask him?! If they speak, ask them, and this is when the people realize their mistake and the Prophet questions them, but the

king and the other tribal elders, who see their position in danger incite the people to defend the religion of their ancestors. So they order to .throw Abraham into the great fire (Al-Anbiya, 62-68)

Table 5. The Abraham (AS) narrative’s actantial structure

Subject	It is the king of the time, Nimrod, who incites the people to kill Abraham on the pretext of supporting their ancestral religion.
Receiver	It is Abraham who is condemned.
Sender	It was a grudge that Nimrod and his idolatrous people had against Abraham.
Opponent	It is Abraham who defends himself with convincing reasons and tries to guide the people.
Helper	It is the people of Abraham who rebel against Abraham in support of the king and their idolatry.
Value-object	Trial of Abraham to cover up the idols' inability and also to maintain the religion of idolatry.

Table 5-1. Narrative Propositions

Descriptive proposition	Nimrod and the other pagans come together to try Abraham.
Modal proposition	The king and many other pagans despite realizing the truth of Abraham’s words and their mistake in worshipping the idols tried to judge Abraham.
Multiple proposition	Nimrod and other pagans condemned Abraham to be burned.

Table 5-2. Narrative Syntagmes

Contractual syntagme	The idolatrous people vowed to severely punish anyone who broke the idols.
Performative syntagme	The court ordered the burning of Prophet Abraham.
Disjunctive syntagme	Although the direction of this scene of the story goes in the favor of Nimrod, it has a negative direction.

[Downloaded from jsal.iut.ac.ir on 2026-06-24]

[DOR: 20.1001.1.29809304.1403.7.4.2.6]

4.6. Sixth Position: Abraham on fire

Prophet Abraham was threatened to be burnt by the fire. Nimrod ordered to prepare a great fire and cast Abraham into it. But the fire became cool and harmless for him by God's will and their plot was nullified (Surah Al- Anbiya, 69-70).

قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (69) وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ (70).

We said, "O Fire! Be thou cool, and (a means of) safety for Abraham"! (69). Then they sought a stratagem against him: but We made them the ones that lost most! (Surah Al- Anbiya, 70).

Table 6. The Abraham (AS) narrative's actantial structure

Subject	Nimrod and the idolatrous people.
Receiver	It is Abraham who is condemned to death.
Sender	Supporting paganism.
Opponent	The will of God Almighty to save his faithful servants.
Helper	There are two types of helpers in this situation. The first refers to the people who gather a lot of firewood and light a big fire to throw Abraham into it following Nimrod. The second refers to God Almighty that He orders the fire to cool down and harmless to Abraham and neutralizes their plot.
Value-object	Abraham became a lesson so that no one would insult the idols and worship God.

Table 6-1. Narrative Propositions

Descriptive proposition	Nimrod orders the people to light a big fire to Abraham's trial.
Modal proposition	Nimrod and his idolatrous people seek to burn Abraham in the fire.
Multiple proposition	Abraham is thrown into the fire.

Table 6-2. Narrative Syntagmes

Contractual syntagme	Nimrod decides to burn Abraham in the fire.
Performative syntagme	Abraham is thrown into the fire and Nimrod carried out his decision.
Disjunctive syntagme	In this proposition, the direction of movement went from negative to positive. Due to the cooling of the fire on Abraham, the plan of Nimrod was defeated. Therefore, many pagans became theist by watching this scene.

4.7. Seventh Position: Abraham at the Altar

After fulfilling his mission in the land of Babylon, Abraham migrated from there. Since he did not have a child, he asks God to give him a righteous child, and God gives him the good news of a righteous child:

«فَبَشِّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ خَلِيمٍ» (Surah Saffat, 101)

So We gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear (Surah Saffat, 101).

After a while, his prayer was answered and he had a son named Ishmael. Ishmael is just a teenager whom Abraham dreams of sacrificing. The Imam discusses the matter with his son and Ishmael also says that this is a divine will and they must submit to the will of God:

قَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (Surah Saffat, 102).

Then, when [the son] reached [the age of] [serious] work with him, he said :O my son! I see in vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what thy view is!" [The son] said: "O my father! Do as thou art commanded: thou will find me, if Allah so wills one practicing Patience and constancy" (Surah Saffat, 102).

When he takes him to the altar, the devil repeatedly tempts him that he is your only child. Lest you do so, yet Abraham did not succumb to the temptations of Satan. But as soon as he tried to slaughter him, he was told that you had accomplished your mission. We wanted to test you, and you succeeded in this test:

قَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ (103) وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبرَاهِيمُ (104) قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (105) إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ (106) وَقَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (Surah Saffat, 107)

So when they had both submitted their wills [to Allah], and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead [for sacrifice] (103). We called out to him "O Abraham (104). Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!" – Thus indeed do We reward those who do right (105). For this was obviously a trial (106). And We ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice (Surah Saffat, 107).

Table 7. The Abraham (AS) narrative's actantial structure

Subject	It is Abraham.
Receiver	On the one hand, it is Abraham who obeys the divine commands, and on the other hand, it is Ishmael who accepts to be sacrificed in the way of God.
Sender	The faith of Abraham and his son in God and submission to His will.
Opponent	It is Satan who tries to stop Abraham from fulfilling his divine mission by tempting him.
Helper	It is God Almighty who saves Abraham's son by realizing Abraham's sincerity in obeying God's commands.
Value-object	Obedience to divine commands.

Table 7-1. Narrative Propositions

Descriptive proposition	Abraham dreams that he is sacrificing his son Ishmael. He discusses the matter with him and he tells his father that he must obey God's commands.
Modal proposition	Abraham intends to sacrifice his son Ishmael for God's sake.
Multiple proposition	Abraham takes his son to the altar to sacrifice him.

Table 7-2. Narrative Syntagmes

Contractual syntagme	Abraham made a covenant to always obey God's commands.
Performative syntagme	Abraham puts the child on the ground to fulfill his promise to obey God's commands by sacrificing him.
Disjunctive syntagme	In this scene, the direction of movement went from positive to positive. Because both Abraham will be proud in the divine test and Ishmael will be saved by the will of God.

4.8. Eighth position: Building the house of God

Prophet Abraham (AS) has gone through difficult stages in propagating the divine religion since he was sent as a prophet. From the disobedience of his father and people to being condemned to be thrown into the fire, as well as the great divine test in sacrificing his son Ishmael, who in all these stages, with the help of God Almighty, came out proud. Now the last divine command; That is, he was told to build the house of God for the worship of the people. This issue is mentioned in verses of Surahs Al-Baqara and Hajj:

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ
 وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ (26) وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ
 عَمِيقٍ (Surah Hajj, 27).

Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the (Sacred) House, (saying): "Associate not anything (in worship) with Me; and sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or stand up, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer) (26). "And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men: they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways" (Surah Hajj, 27).

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ
 (127) رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
 التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ (128) رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
 وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (Surah Al-Baqara, 129).

And remember when Abraham raised the foundation of the House with Ishmael, both praying, "Our Lord! Accept 'this' from us. You are indeed the All-Hearing, All-Knowing (127). Our Lord! Make us both 'fully' submit to You! and from our descendants a nation that will submit to you. Show us our rituals, and turn to us in grace. You are truly the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful (128). Our Lord! Raise from among them a messenger who will recite to them Your revelations, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Indeed, You 'alone' are the Almighty, All-Wise." (Surah Al-Baqara, 129).

Table 8. The Abraham (AS) narrative's actantial structure

Subject	It is Abraham.
Receiver	It was Abraham who was commissioned to build the house of God.
Sender	The submission of Abraham to the command of God Almighty.
Opponent	The story does not have any opponent.
Helper	God Almighty and Ishmael.
Value-object	Building a house of God for worshipers.

Table 8-1. Narrative Propositions

Descriptive proposition	Abraham is commissioned by God Almighty to build the house of God for worshipers, and Ishmael helps him in this important matter.
Modal proposition	Abraham intends to build the house of God.
Multiple proposition	Abraham and his son (Ishmael) build the house of God.

Table 8-2. Narrative Syntagmes

Contractual syntagme	Abraham made a covenant to always obey God's commands.
Performative syntagme	Abraham, with the help of his son, built the house of God and asked Him to grant them success so that they would always submit to His command and raise a great Prophet from their descendants.
Disjunctive syntagme	In this scene, the movement is from positive to positive; Because both Ibrahim succeeds in building the house of God and his prayers are answered, and from his descendants, a great prophet (Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)) is appointed to guide the people.

5. Conclusion

The narratological study of the story of Prophet Abraham in the Holy Quran based on the pattern of the narrative structure of Grimas showed that this pattern is completely consistent with this blessed Surah, as follows:

In some situations of the story, the number of subjects is less than six and this does not contradict the above theory. Subjects fall into one of the actantial categories according to the analysis of the action element and its description. In some situations, the subject, the receiver, the sender, and even the helper match the main character of the story so that one person has all of these roles.

In some cases, each of the subjects has a confrontational relationship with the other. There are relationships of contradiction, contrast, and difference among them. Understanding the structure of the text occurs in the shadow of recognizing these confrontations. Sometimes the main character has a relationship of desire and passion with the other characters and in some other cases, the main character is in the struggle with them.

The findings of this study align with those of Ashrieh et al. (2017), who determined that the narrative of Prophet Moses (PBUH) typically features an average of four actors. In this analysis, four distinct scenarios from the childhood of Prophet Moses were identified. Grimas' theory posits that characters should be categorized into six components, with each actor assigned to an action category based on the nature and description of their actions. Furthermore, within this narrative, each actor interacts with the others, revealing instances of conflict and divergence among them.

Subjects besides the characters can also include abstract concepts and inanimate objects through the contractual, performative, and disjunctive sequences. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Ashrafi et al. (2015), who posited that Grimace sequences are present in the narratives of the Holy Quran, as they are not limited to a particular genre of narrative text. The three phases of contractual, performative, and disjunctive sequences are also clearly illustrated in the account of Prophet Joseph (PBUH).

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks to reviewers for their valuable suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

REFERENCES

- Holy Qur'an
Ahmadi, B., (2009). *The Text-Structure and Textural Interpretation*. 11th Edition. Tehran: Center.
- Ashrafi B, Taki G, Behnamfar M. (2015) "The Analysis of Joseph Story in The Quran according to Propp's and Greimas' Approaches". *Language Related Research*, 6 (7): pp. 33-52.
- Ashrieh, R., Seyyed Mohammad Mousavi; M., (2017). "Studying the childhood story of Prophet Moses (PBUH) in Surah Al-Qasas based on the Grimas narrative model". *Research Journal of Quranic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 31, pp. 183-203.

Beiranvand, N., Arian, H., Kazem Khanloo, N., (2016). "Narrativization of the story of Elf Aqvan (Aqvqne dive)". *Specialized quarterly for the analysis and criticism of Persian language and literature texts*, Vol. 21. pp. 98-127.

Eagleton, T., (2001). *An Introduction to Literary Theory*, translated by Abbas Mokhbar, Tehran: Markaz.

Forster, Edward Morgan. (2005). *Aspects of the novel*. Translated by Ebrahim Younesi. 5th Edition, Tehran: Negah.

Gheisari, H., fegghi zadeh, A., (2019). "Stretching the "science" in the light of semantics of the "people who Understand" in Sura Fussilat (Based on the semantics of Grimes)". *Quran and Hadith Studies*, 12(2), pp. 23-44.

Greimas, A. J. (1966). *Structural semantics: An attempt at a method*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Haqbin, F., Bidadian, F., (2013). "A study of the semantics of verses related to the resurrection and resurrection from Surah Al-Qiyamah based on Grimas' semiotic studies". *Quarterly Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (8th issue), pp. 51-74.

Hébert, L., Tabler, J. (2020). *An introduction to applied semiotics: Tools for text and image analysis*. Routledge.

Hosseinpoor Sarkarizi, A., Alavi Moghaddam, M. and Firoozi Moghaddam, M. (2019). "Analysis of the narrative structure and Discourse Action of the Novel Symphony of the Deads based on Greimas 'Theory of Narrative Semiotics of Paris School". *Journal of Literary Criticism*, 3(6), pp. 81-55.

Makarm Shirazi, N., (1998). *The Ideal Commentary*, 32th Edition. Tehran: Islamic Books House.

Makaryk, Irena Rima. (1995). *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches*,

Mashhadi, M., (2014). "Analysis of the narrative structure of the story of Bahram and Golandam based on Grimas theory". *Literary Text Studies*, Vol. 81, No. 68, pp. 84-105.

Okhovat, A., (1992). *on Literature: The Grammar of Story*. Esfahan: Farda Publisher.

Propp, V., (1958). *Morphology of the Fairy Tales*. University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 2th edition. English translation of (Propp, 1928).

Rewaj, J., (2003). *Structuralism and semiotics*. 2th edition. Taylor and Francis group: London and New York.

Scholes, Robert E., (1974). *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Sedghi, H., Ganjkhnlou, F., (2016). "An Analysis of the Narrative Structure of the Story of Prophet Sulaiman (AS) and Queen of Saba Based on Greimas's Narrative Model". *Literary Quranic Researches*, 4(3), pp. 23-46.

Shairi, H., (2012). *Fundamentals of Modern Semantics*. Tehran: Samt.

Younesi, E., (2009). *The Art of Storytelling*. 10th edition, Tehran: Negah.