Role of pauses in a narrative context

* What defines a pause?

There are several approaches as to how pauses in speech are defined. Obviously, a gap in between words spoken by the speaker needs to occur. So a natural definition of a pause, as in (Oliveira), is a period of silence in between two vocalizations. This is certainly a simplified defintion, mainly since not all periods of silence. Some are simply too short, some can occur as a result of taciturnity. A pause may not always be a silent period, but could hold vocal hesitations( filled pauses) repetitions, false starts etc. which is not covered by that definition.[1]

* Pause as a prosodic feature

A prosodic feature is defined as a feature that can connect sounds together. Examples of prosidic features are intonation, stress and rhythm[2]. Although what is widely acknowledged by researchers is that pauses are the most efficient prosodic feature. (Oliveira) concludes that pauses can imply 1) narrative boundary in spoken text and 2) non-finality in some statement made by the speaker. The conclusion is based on 2 variables which are give constructive arguments. These variables are duration and occurance of pauses in speech.

* Role of pauses, what can a pause imply in terms of narrative structure?

According to (Oliveira), the chance of observing a pause is significantly high given a narrative boundary, compared to observing a pause at a non-narrative boundary. They are also predicted to be off greater length. So speakers tend to intentionally add longer pauses nearly each time they are changing the narrative context(reach a narrative boundary).

* What about the listener?

The next question is; what effect will this have on the listener? According to (Oliveira) these long pauses is important for 2 reasons: 1) It gives the speaker more time to formulate better 2)  The listener gets more time to digest the information. Any data is not provided to underpin this conclusion.

References:

[1] Oliveira M., ILTEC, The Role of Pause Occurrence and Pause Duration in the Signaling of Narrative Structur, year: ????

[2] British Council, <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/prosodic-features>