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Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou
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Analyzing Narrative

The socially minded linguistic study of storytelling in everyday life has been rapidly expanding. This book provides a critical engagement with this dynamic field of narrative studies, addressing long-standing questions such as definitions of narrative and views of narrative structure but also more recent preoccupations such as narrative discourse and identities, narrative language, power and ideologies. It also offers an overview of a wide range of methodologies, analytical modes and perspectives on narrative from conversation analysis to critical discourse analysis, to linguistic anthropology and ethnography of communication. The discussion engages with studies of narrative in multiple situational and cultural settings, from informal–intimate to institutional. It also demonstrates how recent trends in narrative analysis, such as small stories research, positioning analysis and sociocultural orientations, have contributed to a new paradigm that approaches narratives not simply as texts, but rather as complex communicative practices intimately linked with the production of social life.

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Preface

Writing this book has been a wonderful, even though somewhat humbling experience. The idea for the volume was born out of a need for a language and discourse-oriented introduction to the field that we had identified as scholars and, more importantly, as teachers of narrative. We both felt that, although scholars from sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, linguistic anthropology, social and discursive psychology, just to name some of the fields covered in this book, had produced a vast body of research and theoretical reflection on narrative, a comprehensive and critical evaluation of their work was lacking. This was in stark contrast to the proliferation of textbooks and resource books that present sociological, cultural studies and literary approaches to narrative. Our aim was to redress the balance by highlighting the specificities of a language and discourse-focused perspective on narrative but also its important place within the narrative turn in the social sciences.

The journey of writing this book involved a great deal of discussion, reflection and rethinking as we navigated our way within a body of research that tends to be fragmented and dispersed and as, in the process, we had to make difficult decisions of selection, representation and even "construction" of coherence. Most of our transatlantic exchanges were made possible by the affordances of new technologies (with skyping playing a major role!), but this distance factor made the occasional face-to-face interactions even more rewarding and hugely anticipated. In the process of this intense intellectual engagement, not only did we need to rethink issues and questions posed by the book's organization, but we also needed to explore meeting points in terms of our dissimilar "narrative" experiences and backgrounds, which had shaped our views about how to conceive of and analyze narratives. At the end of this process, we feel we have fundamentally grown together.

This book does not attempt to be exhaustive. Instead, it reflects our interest in two overarching themes that we believe have inadvertently shaped the development of language and discourse approaches to narrative: on the one hand, we focus on the investigation of narrative as textually and discursively constituted and organized. On the other hand, we highlight the analysis of storytelling as a social practice shaped by and shaping multiple social contexts. The latter

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leads us to questions of power, ideology and identity both in institutional and everyday environments and in the research context. The separation between these two areas is in many ways artificial, and indeed one of the most important questions that we discuss in this book is the tension between text and context in narrative and the difficulties of reconciling a focus on narratives as structurally defined texts and a focus on narratives as discourse embedded in micro- and macro-contexts. The presence of these two themes can be traced in the different chapters that compose the book. While Chapters 1 and 2 are more concerned with issues related to definitions, units of analysis and structural components, Chapters 3 to 6 are centered on different aspects of the relationship between narrative and social life. Another central concern of the volume is interaction. We emphasize the study of oral narratives told in interactional contexts at the expense of literary narratives, as we feel that the latter have been amply represented in the expansive narratological literature.

Overview of chapters

In Chapter 1 we introduce some of the most debated questions related to the definition of narrative and some of the methodological differences between approaches. We review attempts at formalizing the study of narrative based on structural dimensions. In particular, we critically discuss the criteria that have been proposed within narratology and story grammars and the debates over the nature of "narrativity." We also discuss attempts to look at narrative as a particular text-type and to distinguish it from other text-types. We then extend the overview to conceptions of storytelling that go beyond the search for punctual criteria but regard narrative as a mode, a frame for apprehending reality. We reflect on the narrative turn in the social sciences and on conflicting views of narrative as a mode of expression and knowledge, as an epistemology and as a method of inquiry. In the last section of the chapter, we review typologies that attempt to capture the different methodologies used in narrative research and we propose parameters that can be useful to distinguish between different orientations while also providing a guide for our readers in the classification and critical evaluation of the authors and trends presented in the book.

In Chapter 2 we review linguistic approaches to narrative structure that focus on ordinary storytelling, and that analyze the linguistic and discursive means through which structural organization is achieved. In particular, we discuss three approaches to narrative that have been particularly influential in discourse-oriented narrative perspectives: Labov's model of analysis of narratives of personal experience, ethnopoetics and conversation analysis. We describe the assumptions and criteria for identifying structural units employed in each of these traditions and assess their strengths and weaknesses. The discussion shows the difficulties involved in the definition and identification of

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narrative units and in keeping a balance between a focus on local phenomena and an interest in possible generalizations about the nature of narrative organization. In particular, we underscore the foundational nature of Labov's model and its continuing influence on the linguistic study of narrative, but we also point to its limitations: the lack of attention to the interactional dynamics of storytelling, the ambiguity of the coding categories and therefore the difficulties of applying it.

In reviewing ethnopoetics, we highlight the importance of this movement in uncovering the poetic quality of storytelling, its significance in shaping and reflecting cultural forms of expression and culturally shared values. However, we also point to some shortcomings in the ethnopoetic movement: the difficulty of applying it to narratives produced in modern literate societies and the highly interpretive nature of the analysis.

In reviewing the contribution of conversation analysis to the study of storytelling, we underscore the centrality of this movement in proposing a view of narrative as talk-in-interaction that is now prevalent in discourse studies. But we also point to its neglect of the in-between part of a story versus its beginnings and endings, its narrow focus on the here-and-now of conversation and its rejection of any interest in textual structure. We conclude with our own arguments for the development of approaches that recognize the importance of structure in linguistic analysis, together with a greater attention to interactional roles and dynamics.

In Chapter 3 we shift attention to research that centers on the relationships between narrative and context and on the embedding of narrative in social life. In particular, we focus on research that has investigated sociocultural variability distinguishing between:

a. approaches that conceptualize the relationship between narrative and culture in terms of contexts of narrative activity;
b. approaches that see narrative as connected to culture through values and ideas;
c. approaches that focus on communicative styles.

In discussing work that we situate within the first category, we emphasize the importance of the research on oral storytelling in preliterate cultures conducted by anthropologists between the 1960s and the 1980s as their work constituted a break with the structuralist orientation of studies of fables and myths produced before then, for example by Lévi-Strauss and Propp. We review the concept of performance as proposed within the anthropological tradition, paying particular attention to the work of Hymes and to Bauman's framework for analyzing narratives as emergent within communicative events. In the second and third categories, we include sociolinguistic studies of cultural variability that have focused on the differences in story content and storytelling styles among

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national and ethnic groups. We conclude with a reflection in which we problematize a view of culture as a set of values and styles characterizing a national community, and argue that such conception may result in oversimplification and in a neglect of the multiple ways in which local contexts shape and are shaped by narratives.

In Chapter 4 we look at stories as interactional achievements and we therefore stress the significance of participation structures and of the conversational work done in the moment by moment unfolding of a story's telling. We discuss how studies of storytelling have gradually shifted from an exclusive focus on tellers toward the analysis of tellership and from story as a product to storytelling as a process. In the first part of the chapter, we analyze ways in which storytellers open, sustain and close narratives in interaction, and we illustrate the role of both storytellers and audiences in the unfolding of stories. Thus, we review work on story openings and closings, audience participation and telling roles. We illustrate how even though narratives are often cooperative achievements, they may as often be used by interactants as strategic tools in situations of conflict and/or as argumentative devices to back up controversial positions. We also engage with the notion of telling rights as central to an understanding of different participant configurations in specific storytelling contexts. In the second part of the chapter, we illustrate the variability of storytelling formats presenting different kinds of story types such as counterfactual narratives, habitual narratives, second stories, argumentative narratives. We conclude with a review of *small stories research* as an attempt to unify efforts at broadening the scope of narrative analysis.

In Chapter 5 we turn to the relationship between narratives and power, illustrating how narratives can be sites for the imposition of forms of domination by powerful individuals and institutions, but also how they may be used to negotiate new roles and norms by members of society. We start from a general review of the concept of power, to then illustrate its relation to storytelling in concrete social encounters: we focus on institutional contexts, and in particular on legal settings. We discuss strategies for the exercise and negotiation of power in storytelling and highlight the role of processes of contextualization and entextualization. We then turn to a discussion of how narrative power involves questions of authority and legitimation and to an analysis of ways in which the latter are negotiated in storytelling. As we argue, the study of narrative and power also implies a consideration of the relations between narrative and truth. In connection with the themes of truth, authority and credibility, we examine work that has linked narratives with ideologies and research that has underscored the central role that storytelling has in shaping public opinion through the news. In the last part of the chapter, we extend these questions about truth, ideology and power in storytelling to story ownership. We conclude with a consideration of the implications of our reflection on power for

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the relationships between researchers and researched and the analysis of their role in data collection and analysis.

In Chapter 6 we discuss how connections between narrative and identities have been conceptualized within different research paradigms and the kinds of problems that research in this field raises. We analyze biographical, sociolinguistic and conversation-analytic work and explore similarities and differences amongst them, using key concepts such as positioning, categorization, self-presentation and indexicality. In the first part of the chapter, we discuss theoretical developments in different disciplines within the social sciences that have constituted the basis for an important shift in the study of identity toward an interactionist and social contructionist paradigm. We then review biographical approaches, discussing the division within this camp between orientations that connect identity to the expression of the self in a coherent and unitary life story and orientations that focus on the positionality of identity as a process of production of identities vis-à-vis specific interlocutors and circumstances.

In the second part of the chapter, we turn to sociolinguistically oriented studies. In particular, early studies on self-presentation and more recent research that has developed around the concept of indexicality. We assess the impact of recent frameworks for the study of identity, such as conversation-analytic/ethnomethodology-oriented (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998a) and socioculturally oriented models (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). We conclude by arguing for the advantages of a middle ground between more macro- and more micro-oriented approaches.

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Note on transcription conventions

The following two systems of transcription conventions were used in the examples

System 1

((smiling))	Non-linguistic actions
(…)	Inaudible
(.)	Noticeable pause
.	Falling intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at end of declarative sentence)
?	Rising intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at end of interrogative sentence)
,	Continuing intonation : may be a slight rise or fall in contour (less than ““.”“ or – “?”); may be not followed by a pause (shorter than ““.” or “?”)
word→	Listing intonation
-	Self-interruption
=	Latched utterances by the same speaker or by different speakers
_____	Emphatic stress
CAPS	Very emphatic stress
::	Vowel or consonant lengthening
[	Overlap between utterances
→ (line)	Highlights key phenomena
@	Laughter

System 2

//	the point in a turn where the utterance of the next speaker begins to overlap
=	two utterances closely connected without a noticeable overlap
( )	speech that can't be deciphered
(text)	analyst's guess at speech that's hard to decipher

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(( ))	stage directions
(.)	micro-pause, not timed
(1.)	approximate length of a pause in seconds
> <	faster than normal speech
::	extended speech
?	Question
↑↓	Rising Falling Intonation

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