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.

ANNA DE FINA is an Associate Professor in the Department of Italian at Georgetown University.

ALEXANDRA GEORGAKOPOULOU is Professor of Discourse Analysis and Sociolinguistics at King's College London.

Analyzing Narrative

Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives

Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Contents

1   Narrative definitions, issues and approaches

1.0   Introduction

More than numerous objects of inquiry, *narrative* resists straightforward and agreed- upon definitions and conceptualizations. Instead, its study tends to be a minefield of multiple and at times competing perspectives in a wide array of humanities and social science fields. This is a sign of richness and refreshing pluralism for some, while a sign of deplorable fragmentation for others; but the fact remains that any attempt to present and pull together different strands in the area involves delicate issues of selection and representation. It is with this acute awareness that an exhaustive and evenly balanced overview is close to impossible that we will approach in this chapter the complicated yet funda-mental issues of "What is narrative?" and "How is it studied?" That said, two principles have guided our selection of materials in the discussion to follow:

a. The inclusion of approaches that in more or less explicit ways have influ-enced the assumptions and tools of what will form the main focus of this book, namely socially minded linguistic approaches to narrative.
b. The need to extract and bring to the fore aspects of convergence and even overlapping interests from traditions that on the face of it may have devel-oped separately.

In this attempt to pull threads together, we have seen it fit to pose a working distinction, by no means dichotomous, between views of narrative as a *type of text* and views of narrative as a *mode, epistemology and method*. We will thus map each of the poles of this distinction with specific approaches and what we see as distinct assumptions and ways of analyzing narrative in them.

1.1   Narrative as text-type

Seeing narrative as a text-type inevitably involves a commitment to clear-cut definitional criteria coupled with a belief in the verbal/linguistic aspects of nar-rative as holding the key to those criteria. This main assumption leads almost by implication to other views too: for instance, a view of narrative as a structured

1

activity with a beginning, middle and an end, and with clearly identifiable units that are amenable to analysis. It is thus no accident that structuralism has been closely associated with approaches to narrative as a text-type. The assumption that strict textual criteria are the main guide to defining narrative and setting it apart from other types of text also goes hand in hand with a belief in the universal properties of narrative. Very simply put, narrative is seen as having textual properties that apply across contexts, and the task for the analyst is both to uncover those and to shed light on what may be culture-specific. Another affiliated focus is on the ways in which the knowledge of how to tell a (good) story is acquired and in turn how stories are understood and processed: this makes some of the approaches here cognitive in epistemological orientation. But let us examine the main approaches to narrative as text-type in more detail.

1.1.1   Narratology and the issue of defining a story

Narratology is one of the most important approaches to narrative as text-type. Below we present a typical definition:

Narratology is the study of narrative as a genre. Its objective is to describe the constant variables and combinations typical of narrative and to clarify how the characteristics of narrative texts connect with the framework of theoretical models (typologies). (Fludernik 2009: 8)

As is evident from the above, the focus is on the story as a type of text that can be set apart from other genres. It is therefore hardly surprising that the issue of defining what a story is should lie at the center of narratology. Narratologists also generally assume that the definitional criteria of narrative are universally applicable and that narrative can be theorized as such. Narratology is, for the most part, devoted to the study of literary texts, but its influence on linguistic studies of narrative is undeniable. In the light of this, our discussion here will mainly concern itself with issues within narratology which are relevant to the linguistic study of narrative as well.

Most of the classical narratologists[1] (Bal 1985; Genette 1980; Prince 1973) conceived of the story as their object of study and basically defined it as a series of temporally and causally ordered events. Specific definitions varied, but the basic idea that events are the stuff of which a story is made was shared by most researchers in the field. Such a predominance of the action aspects over other story elements in the theorizations about narrative can be traced as far back as Aristotle. The Greek philosopher stated in his *Poetics* (52, VI.14): "The plot, then, is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: character holds the second place". But the succession of events that a reader encounters in a story constitutes just one level of analysis of a story. Classical narratologists inherited from Russian formalists such as Shklovsky and Propp

a distinction between what is told in a story (its basic events) and the way it is told. The Russian formalists named the events represented in the story, the *fabula*, and the story as it is put together and narrated by the author, the *syuzhet*. This distinction was later revisited by narratologists who, based on Genette (1980), adopted a distinction between *narration* as the act of narrating, *discourse* (*discours* or *récit*) as the narrative text and *story* (*histoire*) as the basic sequence of events (see Toolan 2001: 15 on this point).

The distinction between *story* and *discourse* is designed to capture the fact that there are some basic stories that do not change even if the circumstances of the telling and the medium through which they are told change. It could be said, for example, that *Snow White* has a basic set of elements that make it look like the same story no matter whether it is written or told in the form of a movie or a series of newspaper strips.[2] These elements constitute its plot, but the ways in which the plot is told will vary according to authors, media and contexts of performance. Of course, the basic tenet that the plot of a story is represented by a set of temporally ordered and casually connected events is in itself highly debatable, but let us take it at face value for the moment. The point is that the distinction between *story* and *discourse* also reflects a basic conception, present in many structuralist treatments, that posits the existence of a surface level (the level of the text as it is accessed by a reader) and a deep structure (the most basic level of actions and roles from which the story is derived).

As we discuss in detail in section 3.1, structuralist studies of literary works (see Barthes 1977; Bremond 1973; Greimas [1966] 1983; Todorov 1969)[3] constituted the immediate precursors not only of narratology, but also of story grammars, and for this reason an analysis of stories based on a rigid division between levels is common to those later developments as well.

Following Vladimir Propp (1968), who had attempted to capture the fundamental structure of Russian folk tales in terms of basic roles and action functions, literary structuralists tried to describe the deep structure of fictional works as a very abstract model from which the narrative was derived. Indeed, structuralists were not so much interested in the surface level of texts as in their deep structure. The latter was described in different ways by different authors. For example, some characterized it in terms of the basic relations between a few concepts such as "love" and "prohibition" (see Greimas 1983), while others saw it as a system of relations between actions, roles and functions (as in Propp 1968 or Barthes 1977). But the common ideal was to find certain basic elements that would allow researchers to reduce the deep structure of stories to a minimal set of universal elements in order to derive from them any surface realization of narratives in any language. In this sense, structural studies of narratives resembled structural linguistics in its quest for minimal units of analysis, in its rigid separation of levels and in its attempt to distinguish between competence and performance. But of course, every time analysts tried to define

the basic elements of deep structure, they ended up proposing symbols that were not devoid of meaning but were semantically and culturally loaded (e.g. "life," "death," "love," "prohibition," etc.).

As noted by Herman and Vervaeck (2005), there are significant problems with structuralist narratology. These have to do with the ambiguity of the categories used in the analysis of stories, the rigid separation between levels (such as deep and surface structure) and the lack of specificity on how transitions between them work. The authors conclude (p. 100) that

the creation of unambiguous and generally accepted categories remains a utopian enterprise. Any classification proposed by structuralist narratology gives rise to borderline cases and problems that have yet to be – and probably never will be – solved. In many cases the structuralist is forced to acknowledge that concrete stories always upset the theoretical demarcations.

Of particular interest here is the problem of the definition of a story as a text, which has occupied narratologists for decades and which has been inherited by all text based approaches to narrative. As already mentioned, for narratologists, a story has to comprise a series of related events. Chatman (1990: 9) pointed to chronological ordering as the main criterion to distinguish stories from other texts or, to put this more specifically, proposed the criterion of double chronology. For a text to qualify as narrative, it has to entail movement through time, not only externally (i.e. through its telling, cf. discourse time) but also internally (through the duration of the sequence of events that constitute its plot, cf. story time). In his *Dictionary of Narratology*, Prince proposed instead that such a link was not only chronological, but also causal. He thus characterized a minimal story as a set of "two states and one event" that are chronologically ordered and causally connected in that the second state is a "reversal"or "modification"of the first state. Thus, the following was classified as a minimal story:

John was happy, then he saw Peter, then, as a result, he was unhappy. (Prince [1987] 2003: 53)

As is evident from these definitions, structuralists and narratologists alike have had little interest in storytelling contexts, given their focus on the text-internal properties of narrative. This lack of interest in the context is not shared by more recent narratological approaches as we will discuss below.

1.1.2   *Narrative and cognition*

The basic idea that the story is a series of temporally and causally connected events is echoed in story grammars, another set of approaches to narrative as a text-type. Such approaches, however, are not so much focused on the production

as on the comprehension and processing of narratives. Researchers in the field look at narrating as a cognitive activity and their main interest is discovering how people understand and remember stories and what criteria determine their judgments about story well-formedness. According to de Beaugrande (1982), although at the beginning of the story-grammar movement it was difficult to distinguish amongst different trends, later on two approaches became identifiable: the story-schema approach (Rumelhart (1975) and the story-grammar approach (Mandler and Johnson 1977, 1980; Mandler 1984). In the story-schema approach a story is defined in cognitive terms as an abstract representation about story structure and content or, in Mandler's terms, as: "a mental structure consisting of sets of expectations about the way in which stories proceed" (1984: 18).

Story-schema theories derive from cognitive models of text processing (see, for example, Schank and Abelson 1977) that regard text comprehension as a process of decoding new information based on previous knowledge. The latter is stored in memory through schemas, frames and scripts representing either constellations of meaning relations (schemas and frames) or stereotypical situations (scripts). Such schemas allow people to make inferences about what they are reading or hearing. In the case of stories, according to story grammars, they are formed by sets of basic components (such as SETTING, THEME, PLOT, etc.) and sets of relationships amongst them.

For some (see Stein and Policastro 1984), story schemas are prototypes (Rosch and Mervis 1975), i.e. kinds of general models with stereotypical characteristics that people keep in mind when judging whether a text is a story. In this view, stories may be closer or further away from the prototype, and in that sense narrativity may be a matter of degree.

Story-grammar models focus more than story schemas on the description of the internal structure of a story and present a type of syntax of story organization based on the combination of the basic story components and their internal ordering. Thus, for example, a story would consist of a combination of elements such as SETTING + INITIATING EVENT + REACTION + ENDING and would specify the position and content of each of those elements. According to de Beaugrande, however, these two approaches are compatible as:

A comparison of the literature indicates that a story grammar can be viewed as a rule-set for relating the ordering of surface-text categories to the underlying schema (cf. 1.13). Thus, the grammar is a theoretical formalization that operates upon the knowledge organized within the schema, with major focus on the arrangement of categories in sequences. (1982: 410)

Thus, there is no contradiction between the conception of a story as a mental schema and its conception as a grammatically well-formed string, since the grammar is a concrete realization of the mental prototype that we have about

stories. It is worth noting the recurrence of certain definitional criteria of narrative in the approaches we have seen so far. We have already pointed to the chronological criterion as the *sine qua non* of definitions. Here, we will single out the idea of an initiating (see above) or a complicating event as another pivotal ingredient. The view that to have a narrative, a disruption of sorts is needed, that is, an event or series of events that will introduce some kind of a complication to an initial state of affairs or an equilibrium, is not new. It goes back to Aristotle's notion of *peripeteia* and has been variously described since then (cf. "trouble" in Burke 1969).

These definitional criteria in story grammars are essential in their aim to construct abstract models of narrative so as to account for the kinds of information that people would expect to find in a story and for the type of organization that characterizes it (see Johnson and Mandler 1980: 51) in order to explain people's comprehension of stories. Thus, story grammars try to represent or even simulate cognitive processes that accompany story comprehension and test them through experimental work.

However, as noted by de Beaugrande and others, such abstract models are fraught with problems. First, the status of the rules created by story grammarians is not clear. Are they true representations of mental processes or are they models devised and used by the analyst? Are they all causally ordered with respect to one another?

Second, story grammars and schema theories (like narratology) have attempted to come up with basic features that need to be present in order for a story to be considered such, but they have not really been able to empirically demonstrate the validity of their hypotheses.

Some of these features have been summarized by Stein and Policastro (1984) who claim that they have found twenty different descriptions of stories. However most of them share the idea that a story

1. represents a series of temporally and casually related events;
2. introduces some form of a complication or disruption;
3. presents (more or less) goal-directed actions and reactions to deal with this disruption;
4. has an animate protagonist.

The last two criteria are related in that definitions that do not consider goal-directed behavior to be a necessary feature for stories (such as Prince 1973) do not include the presence of a protagonist as a defining feature either.

The abstraction and context-independence of many of these definitions has led to different reactions within both story grammars and narratology. Many have also noted that experiments conducted as part of the testing of hypotheses regarding the characteristics of stories have not provided definitive answers. Unsurprisingly, there is still a great deal of controversy about which texts can

be regarded as stories. For example, Stein and Policastro (1984) were not able to show in their experiments with children and adults that goal-directed behavior was essential for recognizing a text as a story. In general, they found that "not all constituents of a goal-based episode need be included in a text for it to be classified as a story" (p. 149) and that no definition of story accurately predicted their subjects' behavior.

One point that many within the story-grammar approach have raised is that stories cannot be defined or understood in abstraction from users, and without a consideration of the relative status of narrator and audience in storytelling. Indeed, according to some researchers (in particular Brewer and Lichtenstein 1981, and de Beaugrande and Colby 1979), story-like qualities do not depend exclusively on structural properties of the stories but are attributed to them by audiences. Therefore, for a text to be seen as a story, the audience needs to be emotionally involved and the action must deal with difficulties and obstacles to be overcome, i.e. it must be able to arouse interest and affective participation.

1.1.3   *Stories and mental models*

This more central role accorded to the reader and the process of interpretation can be seen in recent so-called *post-classical* narratology (see Dolezel 1998; Herman 2002; Ryan 1991; Werth 1999). Recent narratological approaches have started paying more attention to context in the sense that they recognize the role of the reader, in particular of people's knowledge and beliefs in the interpretation of the text. In this respect, they have started to converge with cognitive theories about text processing. Contrary to story grammars, in which text comprehension was conceptualized as the process of integration of information into a stereotypical schema or script, in more recent cognitive theories, text comprehension is viewed as the creation of "mental models." Such mental model theories derive from original work by Johnson Laird (1983) and Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) in which understanding was not conceived as a mental representation of the text itself, but rather as a process of creation of mental or situational models of the world described in the text. In Van Dijk and Kintsch, text comprehension implied three different mental representations of the text: a verbatim representation, a semantic representation in terms of propositional content, and a situational representation. In later applications (see Zwaan and Radvansky 1998), text comprehension is related to the construction of coherent mental models. Such models are seen as complex multimodal mental representations containing spatio-temporal, causal relations, and information about objects, persons and motivations. They are continuously updated and change at different moments in time reflecting different stages in the process of text understanding. In these later developments, the interest for stories as texts has

given way to a preoccupation with stories as a suitable site for the study of mental processes of understanding and of memory retrieval and storage.

These cognitive approaches have greatly influenced recent narratology. Herman (2002), for example, talks about *story world* as a concept that should replace that of *story* and equates story worlds with mental models that readers create, about who did what to whom, where, why and in what fashion in a particular story. According to him, narratives build their own possible worlds, which are different from the world in which readers live. Such worlds have their own rules so that their logic and their events make sense within them, even if they deviate from the laws of the real world. Thus, for example, in a magic realist novel such as Garcia Màrquez's *One hundred years of solitude*, it is possible for children to be born with a pigtail or for rain to last for years or for events that have not happened yet to influence the protagonists' behavior. Readers understand these possible worlds by relating them to their own experience of the natural world, and this happens through the activation of schemas and scripts that they derive from such experience.

Fludernik's approach is similar to Herman's in that she also claims that narratives are representations of possible worlds, but she argues that the primary function of narrative is communicating human experience, thus rejecting a vision of narrative as a simple recapitulation of events and downplaying the importance of action as the criterion for narrativity par excellence. In her definition:

A narrative … is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at the centre of which there are one or more protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal or spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal directed actions (action and plot structure). It is the experience of these protagonists that narratives focus on, allowing readers to immerse themselves in a different world and in the life of the protagonists. (Fludernik 2009: 6)

In such a perspective, conversational and literary narratives are not as distant as they may seem, since the focus in both is not on events and actions per se but on the way humans experience and react to them.

The concept of narrativity has also undergone important changes. Narrativity can be seen as the property that defines the difference between a narrative and a non-narrative.[4] In traditional narratology, the criteria for narrativity included the features that we have discussed above, i.e. temporal ordering of events, complication, the presence of human characters, goal-directed action, etc. In more recent approaches, however, narrativity has been redefined not as a property of texts, but as something that is attributed to texts by readers. It has also been anchored to the existence of mental schemata that represent basic features of human experience. Fludernik, for example, defines narrativity as "the representation of experientiality" (1996: 20), that is, the ability to capture

human reactions and emotions in the face of life events. In accordance with Prince's ideas, narrativity is also increasingly regarded as a scalar predicate, something that can be present in greater or lesser degree in a text. In this way, different narrative text-types are described in terms of high or low narrativity: e.g. "reports" are typically seen as low-narrativity texts, on account of their lack of evaluation (Fludernik 1996: 52–3). This distinction has not been devoid of evaluative judgment. It has in point of fact helped establish specific kinds of narratives as the "canon," and the natural consequence of this has been that these narratives have been researched more. We will come back to this point in Chapter 4.

Within a scalar conceptualization of narrativity, Herman (2002: 91) proposes that while "narrativehood" involves binary oppositions (either a text is a narrative or it is not), narrativity is a matter of degree such that a story may be more or less story-like. Story-likeness depends on the equilibrium between stereotypicity and breach of expectation in narratives. If a story has too many or too few stereotypical cues, its narrativity diminishes. In other words, a prototypical narrative works on expected patterns but also on their breach by creating suspense and interest.

Another strand of latest narratological research involves revisiting a long-standing preoccupation with the place of media (e.g. cinematic) and visual narratives in the remit of narratology, and even the extent to which these can be considered as narrative. The recent move away from strict textualist criteria, as we have outlined it above, has renewed this interest. For instance, in one of the few large-scale attempts to examine narrative through a comparative lens in the media, Ryan (2004a: 22) starts off with the observation that

the comparative study of media as means of expression lags behind the study of media as channels of communication; individual media have been studied with well-developed analytical tools and methodologies, but we do not have a comprehensive and widely accepted theory of the importance of the medium as material support for the form and content of message.

Ryan puts forth a program for what she calls "a transmedial narratology," which is undoubtedly a desideratum. Her vision has an obvious cognitive orientation and a lingering emphasis on narrative as defined on the basis of abstract textual criteria. That said, some of the questions that Ryan (p. 35) claims should be addressed can be adapted and extended to more socially and interactionally inclined studies of narrative too. For instance, how narrative gets transposed from one medium to another and how each medium encourages or prohibits specific ways of narration. Also, what the applicability is of concepts and analytical modes that have been developed with regard to the study of narrative in one medium across media. Ryan rightly stresses the point that the examination of such questions should "avoid the temptation to attribute

features and findings to the medium solely" (p. 34). She also warns against the other extreme, that is "media blindness," which often involves an indiscriminate transfer of concepts designed for the study of narrative in one medium to narratives of another medium.

Narrative as a text-type in different media is already attracting the interest of researchers in increasing ways. Closely related to this is the focus on the interrelationships between the new ways to present stories in different media, in particular in digital media, and what these implicate for the involvement of 'audiences' or 'users'. Above all, exactly what counts as a story, particularly in new media environments, remains a focal concern in narratology. For instance, in a comparative study of interactive drama, hypertext, computer games, web cams and text-based virtual realities (role-playing or adventure MOOs), Ryan (2004b) reports that the role of narrative in these cases differs from central to intermittent (e.g. in MOOs where dramatic action and storytelling alternate with small talk) to instrumental (e.g. computer games). The role of the user also varies in terms of how much interactivity is allowed: in computer games, for instance, the users become an integral part of the fictional world as main characters.

It is worth noting again that textual criteria, in particular the temporal ordering of events, remain as the main guiding principle in terms of what constitutes a narrative in narratological studies that are venturing out to the "transmedial" terrain. We will however revisit the issue of narrative in digital media in Chapter 4.

The evolution of narratological approaches from a rigid structuralist perspective focused on defining the abstract properties of stories toward a more flexible understanding of narrative as interaction between text and reader as well as of narrative across media has undoubtedly been positive. The recognition, within narratological studies that have traditionally focused on literary narratives, of the fact that everyday narratives may be the basis for as well as being closely related and relatable to literary narratives is also important. Within linguistic analyses too, the literary qualities of everyday narratives have often been documented (see Polanyi 1982; Tannen 1989; Wolfson 1978). Devices and strategies such as characters' reported speech, tense alternations between past and present, performance devices are only a few amongst these. As we will see in the following chapters, questions about the stories' voice and authorship, their spatio-temporal anchoring, and the embedding of different worlds within story worlds are at the center of linguistic studies of narrative as much as of literary ones and constitute areas where interaction and enrichment between the two camps is possible and desirable. However, the problems deriving from a text-oriented vision of narrative are not easily overcome, as we will see below too. We will come back to this question in Chapter 2.

1.2   Narrative as a special text-type

As we have already suggested, one of the aims of the discussion in this chap-
ter is to tease out certain assumptions and perspectives within the otherwise
fragmented narrative studies that have had a lasting impact on socially minded
linguistic approaches to storytelling, which form the main focus of his book.
As we have seen so far, the attempts to delimit narrative as a text-type have
been guided by the quest for clear-cut definitional criteria. Delimiting narra-
tive has also implicated a process of setting it apart from what is *not* narrative.
One notable common denominator in this respect is the inclusion of narrative
in all proposed text-typologies, which, however, present a wide variation in
terms of what and how many other text-types there exist, what their relative
ranking is and how they are kept apart from one another, in particular from nar-
rative. We can see this very clearly in some of the numerous attempts at such
classifications: Chatman (1990) distinguishes between narrative, description
and argument, while Adams (1996) distinguishes between narrative, description
and expositions. Werlich's typology (1976) consists of narration, description,
exposition, argumentation and instruction. In the same spirit, Longacre's (1989)
text-type distinctions introduce further categories that are different from the
ones above. Based on the combinations of two binary oppositions, i.e. texts
with or without temporal succession and texts with or without an "agent orien-
tation," Longacre differentiated between four text-types: narration, procedural,
hortatory (cf. behavioral) and expository discourse.[5] It is notable that Longacre
unusually dispensed with both description and argumentation. The use of the
term *discourse* is also notable. As we have discussed so far, one of the main
distinctions that approaches to narrative as text-type have worked with is that
between ideal text-types and surface manifestations or linguistic realizations of
those text-types. This goes hand in hand with the assumption that storytellers
(or writers) manipulate in many ways and to varying degrees the "pre-linguistic"
material, i.e. the events, that they have at their disposal, when expressing them
in the form of a story (cf. distinction between story and discourse).

   Distinguishing between text-type and discourse or discourse type is not a
straightforward matter, and it is largely outside the scope of this discussion. It
suffices to say though that text-types are often defined as the actual, linguis-
tically expressed manifestations or instantiations of "discourse types," while
"discourse types" tend to be posed at the pre-linguistic level, as the functions
of communication that are constituted by text-types. Following this distinction,
Virtanen (1992) systematizes a widely held view according to which narrative
cannot be put at the same level as other text-types. Instead, it has to be seen
as a "special" and fundamental text-type. A similar view is found in research
on genre, where narrative has been argued to be a meta-, arch- or pre-genre,
that is, an archetypal form that cannot be put on the same level as "ordinary"

genres (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 139; Swales 1990).[6] In Virtanen's terms, the narrative text-type can be used in any discourse type. For instance, one can put forth an argument by telling a story, but the opposite does not apply; that is, one cannot put forth an argument in order to tell a story. Narrative thus emerges as a versatile text-type, as, unlike other text-types, it can fulfill more than one discourse type.

As already suggested, there is not much convergence amongst text-typological approaches to narrative on exactly which and how many text-types there are. What is more, different text-types tend to be used indiscriminately: e.g. text-types covering very specific situations are placed alongside more frequent or general categorizations. And certainly, if we follow Virtanen's line, the importance and salience of narrative tends to be skewed in such typologies. Depending on how and from which standpoint one looks at these lists, they can be queried for what they have included and what they have excluded and for the reasons why a particular text is classified as X and not as Y. Furthermore, the exact number of typical features of narrative remains a controversial issue. Despite its problems, this long-standing tradition of defining narrative along with other text-types on the basis of formal, textual criteria has been instrumental in delimiting narrative as an object of inquiry, and its influence in recent socially situated linguistic approaches to narrative is undeniable. As we will see in this book, the textual features of what constitutes a story are being increasingly examined through context-sensitive approaches, and the very definitions of narrative have become much more flexible so as to include in their remit a wide range of texts.

1.3   Narrative development and socialization

One of the spin-offs of a view of stories as cognitive constructs has been the study of their development in children. The underlying assumption in this research has been that narrative possesses certain universal properties at the same time as presenting cultural specificity. One of the main aims of narrative development studies has thus been to shed (further) light on what is universal and what is culture-specific. At the same time, exactly as in other research on the development of language and communication skills amongst children and adolescents, there has been an assumption of *deficit* or *deficiency*. In other words, it has been assumed that narratives produced by children are inevitably less elaborated than the ones told by adults and that through a temporally defined progression, the former succeed in reaching the endpoint, that is the adult model, as they grow up. This perspective of non-adulthood as a transitional period marked by developing competence and judged against the normative benchmark of adulthood and its norms has been challenged from various quarters, not least within social psychology (e.g. Arnett 2004). The controversy

surrounding this issue is beyond the scope of our discussion here. What is relevant, however, is that these challenges to a linear development of narrative have been connected with a shift toward the study of narrative development in context and with attention to the types of activities and social practices that the participants engage in, be they children or adults. We will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 3.

Numerous, particularly earlier, studies of narrative development have worked with elicited data. Peterson and McCabe (1983) developed, for instance, the Conversational Map Elicitation Procedure, which consisted of story prompts. Another well-known data elicitation technique involved showing children picture-based books and asking them to tell the story. The best-known book in this respect is the 24-page children's book *Frog, where are you?* (Mayers 1949) and numerous studies from many languages (at least 150 studies in fifty languages) have been based on it. In particular, Berman and Slobin used it for their influential book *Relating events in narrative*: *A crosslinguistic developmental study* (1994). A number of scholars were subsequently inspired to use the same picture-based book for eliciting data and this yielded a second volume on *Relating events in narrative* (2004). As the title suggests, these studies traced in many languages the transition of children from 3 to 9 years old from the simple encoding of events as individual occurrences in a story to more complex ways of organizing them around temporal and causal interrelationships, to finally integrating them into thematically coherent plot lines.

The main finding of these studies concerns the ways in which children use forms already acquired to express new functions but also newly acquired forms to express already mastered functions. Overall, they have shown the complex interaction of universal, cognitive and linguistic forms (as shaped by the exigencies of the linguistic system of each language under investigation) in the development of narrative. In this respect, they are illustrative of a particular school of thought within narrative development that has often been criticized for basing its results on "quasi-experimental" data and for ignoring narratives as occurring naturally in everyday contexts and as part of the children's interactions with other children or with adults. There is also a question mark about what the ideal or most critical age is for looking into narrative development. Finally, as we have already suggested, the assumption underlying this approach that the mastery of narrative forms and functions develops in a linear, age-linked fashion is also debatable.

Another strand of research involves the exploration of narrative development in terms of the children's interaction with others. It has to be said here that relevant studies present considerable variation in their definitions of interaction and in the role that they assign to the context of the occurrence of narratives. A case in point is the lingering emphasis on elicited narratives in several studies despite their interest in the interactional dynamics. One of the main foci of

inquiry in this respect is on the so-called adult *scaffolding*, i.e. the adult verbal support during children's storytelling. How adults' storytelling styles affect the children's own story production has also been put under scrutiny (e.g. Miller and Sperry 1988; Oppenheim, Emde and Wamboldt 1996). As a result, numerous studies have engineered storytelling situations in mother/caregiver–child dyads in research situations (e.g. mother telling child a story from a picture-based book). The results have shown that differences in the form and content of adult stories to children as well as of adult intervention in children's stories are shaped by cultural norms (e.g. McCabe 1996; Minami and McCabe 1991) and by the social identities of the adults, such as gender, social class and education (e.g. Fivush 1998; Hicks 1990).

Studies of narrative development, regardless of the kind of data they are based on, tend to focus on any of the following aspects of narrative production: event sequencing, topic maintenance or shifts, ways of referring to story characters, informativeness and evaluation of the stories. Each of these aspects is in turn associated with specific devices: for instance, event sequencing has been looked at in connection with tense choices and shifts. Evaluation has been explored in terms of how emotions are expressed but also terms of a host of semiotic choices that have also been at the centre of interest of studies of evaluation in narrative in general (see discussion in section 2.1).

The study of cultural specificity in the narrative production of children has yielded rich and relatively consistent findings, at least in terms of where the cultural specificity seems to lie (for details, see our discussion in Chapter 3). For instance, it has shown:

- how cultural norms shape whether stories tend to be monologic or heavily interactional;
- how much emphasis is placed on sequencing events as opposed to creating more tenuous connections that are signaled by, for example, paralinguistic features such as tone of voice;
- how much telling the facts and presenting a version of events as accurate and authentic is valued;
- how explicit references to characters are and how detailed the tellings are;
- who the main characters of a story tend to be and what place the extended family network has in that;
- what the main themes of a story are;
- how children present themselves as characters in their stories.

One of the main applications of narrative development studies has been in the area of education. Two aspects have been found to be relevant here: First, narrative development in preschool children has been found to correlate with reading ability and comprehension later at school (see, for example, McCabe and Bliss 2003). Second, the narrative models and styles that children have

been socialized into in their family and peer-group has been found to affect children in terms of their compliance with what is expected and valued at school (e.g. Gee 1991).

The above discussion has tried to identify certain key themes in the area of narrative development, but it needs to be stressed that the field is far from homogeneous. A case in point is Bamberg's edited collection (1997) on narrative development in which six distinct approaches are represented on the basis of many different criteria, amongst which: the role that they attribute to the individual in development, their conception of the goal of narrative development, their methodology and the function they accord to interaction and culture. In this book, we will come back to interactional research on narrative development in Chapter 3, when we discuss how narrative styles are shaped by culture and interaction. We will see that the data on which interactional studies are based are not elicited but come from conversations and discursive practices arising in everyday contexts, either in the family or in the school settings. A more fitting description of the process studied in this type of research is that of "narrative socialization," rather than "narrative development" particularly because of the cognitive focus of the latter. Alongside the shift to the local contextual factors that shape how children tell stories, there has also been a shift of emphasis from the idea of children as passive recipients of narrative toward one in which they are active co-producers of stories (e.g. see chapters in Blum-Kulka and Snow 2002).

1.4   Narrative as mode

The study of narrative as a text-type, as discussed above, represents only one long-standing tradition. Alongside it, there is an equally long-standing cross-disciplinary tradition in which narrative is seen as a mode. Indeed, scholars such as Bruner (1986, 1990), Hymes (1996), Ricoeur (1990), MacIntyre (1981) have proposed that narrative is a mode of thought, communication and apprehension of reality which is both super-arching and fundamental to human cognitive makeup. This view of narrative has inspired many of the proponents of the *narrative turn* (see section 1.4.1 below) in the social sciences, a movement which Bruner (2010) traces back to the publication of two issues of *Critical Inquiry* devoted to Narrative in the autumn of 1980 and summer 1981. The contributors to these issues (social scientists such as Hayden White, Jacques Derrida, Frank Kermode, Nelson Goodman and others) set out to "explore the role of narrative in social and psychological formations, particularly in structures of value and cognition" (Mitchell 1980: vii, quoted in Bruner 2010: 47). Bruner himself is amongst the early proponents of narrative as mode. He sees narrative as a way of apprehending reality and as a primary means of communication. In his famous 1986 paper "Two models of thought,"

he opposes the narrative to the "logico-scientific" mode, which he calls "para-digmatic," arguing that although both are fundamental human paradigms, and that their products (stories and arguments, respectively) are "natural kinds" (p. 11), the logico-scientific mode has been privileged as an object of investigation and as a tool in the pursuit of knowledge. Both modes have their own objects, methods and validation criteria, but while the paradigmatic mode is based on the confirmation or rejection of hypotheses through their testing against empirical data, the narrative mode is not based on truth, but on verisimilitude. Its value does not lie in the ability to describe reality, but rather in the capacity to give meaning to human experience. In Bruner's words (1986: 13), the narrative mode "leads to good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not necessarily 'true') historical accounts … and strives … to locate the experience in time and space." In the narrative mode logic can be used, but it is also often violated, as many narratives bring about ruptures in expected patterns. Human intention and emotion predominate over reason and objectivity, and the worlds of action and consciousness are presented as parallel but separate universes. At the center of the narrative mode are human vicissitudes and drama, and the particularities of human existence rather than its general patterns receive the greatest attention. Thus, for example, while the play Hamlet may be instantiating the old scheme of Oedipal love, it does so in a unique way and through the mind and action of unique characters. Also, in the narrative mode, meaning is not presented in terms of definitive truths, as, for example, in scientific writings where the results of experiments are reported, but as ambiguous and open to exploration. This is particularly clear in fiction where stories lend themselves to multiple interpretations and re-readings. In that sense, according to Bruner, narratives operate through presupposition (by creating implicit meanings) and subjectification (1986: 25), i.e. by presenting events through the point of view of a character and by leaving multiple perspectives open. In sum, both modes are tools that allow humans to know the world, but also reveal the way the human mind works. As Bruner concludes (p. 43):

In the end, the narrative and the paradigmatic come to live side by side. All the more reason for us to move towards an understanding of what is involved in telling and understanding great stories, and how it is that stories create a reality of their own – in life as in art.

The idea that narrative is not merely a genre but constitutes a mode of thought and knowledge connects the work of scholars from a variety of traditions and disciplines. Hymes (1996), for example, embeds his reflections on narrative in a more general discussion about ethnography. He expresses deep concern over the loss of a tradition of narrative ability in modern societies, as for him narrative is a way of understanding and conveying experience and knowledge which maintains a sense of the particular and of the essentially

human (see section 2.0). However, unlike other scholars whose interest in narrative as mode is purely academic and philosophical, Hymes is interested in the concrete social implications of the dichotomy between narrative and non-narrative forms of discourse and knowledge. He argues that oppositions such as those between narrative and scientific or scholarly discourse rest on ideological assumptions. Amongst these, for example, is the identification of the narrative mode (particularly the use of personal narratives) with oral, spontaneous, unplanned, concrete uses of language and of the scientific mode with written, carefully crafted, planned and abstract discourse. These oppositions artificially divide human communication and knowledge modes into higher and lower, prestigious and non-prestigious. Also, by associating non-narrative modes with cognitive superiority, they deny the centrality of narrative forms of understanding. Thus, such ideologically driven dichotomies end up setting the stage for social discrimination in education and other social settings. In Hymes' terms (1996: 114):

if one considers that narrative may be a mode of thought, and indeed that narrative may be an inescapable mode of thought, then its differential distribution in a society may be a clue to the distribution of other things as well – rights and privileges having to do with power and money, to be sure, but also rights and privileges having to do with fundamental functions of language itself, its cognitive and expressive uses in narrative form.

In Ricoeur's work ([1983–5] 1990), the narrative mode is connected to a philosophical reflection on the role of time and memory in human life. In his view, narrative has the fundamental role of registering human time, which he opposes to the phenomenological inner time of individual consciousness and to the cosmic time of the universe. Through the telling of stories, humans keep the memory of their experiences, the history of their communities. At the same time, the narrative mode imposes order on the heterogeneity of experience and therefore does not merely reflect it, but constructs it. The idea of narrative as a fundamental mode of knowledge also resonates with Polkinghorne's (1988 and 1991) concept of emplotment as a basic sense-making mechanism. Emplotment is defined as:

A procedure that configures temporal elements into a whole by "grasping them together" and directing them towards a conclusion or ending. Emplotment transforms a list or sequence of disconnected events into a unified story with a point and a theme. (Polkinghorne 1991: 141)

In all the above views, the narrative mode is seen as basic to human understanding of the world.

1.4.1   *Narrative as epistemology – narrative as method*

Common to the perspective on narrative as mode is the endeavor to promote the recognition and acceptance of different types of human inquiry and knowledge

and to counter the predominance of scientific and empirical modes in thinking and research. As we have seen, this defense rests on a variety of arguments: one is the idea that narrative is a quintessentially human way of apprehending reality based on emotion and subjectivity (see Oatley 1999 on this point). Another argument is that stories represent the concreteness of human experience as opposed to the abstractness of experiments and general truths. Finally, there is the claim that through the mechanism of emplotment, narrative imposes order on the chaos of human experience of the world. One could conceive of these different positions as converging on a general re-evaluation of the subjective and the particular, which has been one of the driving forces behind the explosion of the narrative turn in the social sciences.

The use of narrative methods and analysis in all fields of the social sciences started gaining momentum from the 1980s onwards. The narrative turn has touched most disciplines in the social sciences. Narrative-based studies have, for example, blossomed in sociology (Bell 1999; Richardson 1992; Riessman 1991, 1993; Somers and Gibson 1994), history (Carr 1991; White 1987), psychology (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Mishler 1986; Oatley 1999; Polkinghorne 1988; Rosenwald and Ochberg 1992) and anthropology (Mattingly 1998; Ochs 1996; Rosaldo 1993). Scholars have used narratives to analyze participants' views about social issues as diverse as illness and health, social exploitation and isolation, the subordination of women to men, migration. Uniting this wide array of fields and interests is a faith in the power of storytelling as a tool for eliciting people's local knowledge and understandings of social phenomena and of narrative analysis as an instrument for analyzing them. Proponents of the narrative turn have spoken not only against quantitative methodologies that do not pay any attention to the way people generate their own understandings of social reality, but also against ethnographic methods that treat informants as mere vehicles of information (see Narajan and George 2001).

The focus of narrative turn analysts is as much on what is said as on who says it and how, and therefore there is a stated emphasis on language and discourse and greater attention to the contexts of storytelling than in previous traditions within the social sciences. Mishler's early work on interviewing and narrative (1986) was exemplary in drawing attention to the interview as a setting, to the dynamics of story elicitation and emergence within that context and to the significance of the cultural presuppositions that interviewer and interviewee brought to bear when coming face to face. He pointed to co-construction as central to storytelling in interviews and to turn-taking and other discourse mechanisms as worthy objects of attention. His work has served as a guide for much research in the design of narrative-based studies.

While attention to people's individual experience and the focus on discourse are common to social scientists that use narrative analysis, given the cross-disciplinary nature of the field, many differences can also be found in terms of

specific theoretical-methodological orientations. Indeed, one finds that scholars take diverse routes in terms of the types of stories that they focus upon and the kinds of analytical toolkit that they adopt. Some analysts focus on life stories (Linde 1993; Mishler 1999), elicited through multiple interviews with informants, and study the way people construct a sense of identity through them. Others work on the different types of stories that people tell about a specific issue, for example illness (Mattingly 1998), in order to understand how people deal with such problems. Yet, others select narrative explanations of particular incidents or events in the life of their subjects, for example divorce accounts (Riessman 1990), as a lead into ways in which people make sense of turning points in their existence. Some focus on case studies and individual stories, while others try to find patterns across interviews and interviewees. Theoretical-methodological orientations vary enormously as well, since choices depend on the discipline involved and the tradition to which researchers belong. In this respect, it would be erroneous to think that the narrative turn in the social sciences has produced a specific approach to narrative.

The many elusive and diverse methodological and analytical perspectives on narrative within the narrative turn partly emanate from a lack of clarity or convergence on whether narrative is an epistemology or a method. As an epistemology, narrative becomes much more than a set of techniques and tools for collecting and analyzing data. It becomes a particular way of constructing knowledge requiring a particular commitment and even bias from the researcher in addition to a political stance. It is instructive here to turn to Blommaert's reflections on the status of ethnography, also indeterminate in its definitions, as an epistemology or a method. According to him, ethnography should be seen as an epistemologybecause the knowledge that it involves "is constructed by means of everyday, mundane and interpretive resources and mechanisms. Hence the frequency of the inexplicable, intuitive and autobiographical status of much of what ethnographers 'know' about their subject. Method is very often 'added' afterwards" (2001: 2). These observations are immediately applicable to much of narrative research too, which is unashamedly interpretive and subjective and problematizes preconceived ways of collecting data and notions of data categorization.

The very beginnings of the narrative turn are unquestionably epistemological in aims. Narrative, as we have already suggested, was proposed as an antidote to rationality and the quantitative measures prevalent in the social sciences at the time as well as a political tool that celebrated lay experience and lay voices and created opportunities for them to be heard and validated. It was also put forth as an alternative to modernist reality itself, which had brought about the demise of storytelling as a traditional genre thriving in close-knit groups and communities, "the decline of the value of experience" (Benjamin 1968) and the privileging of facts over personal experience. In this sense, many scholars

within the narrative turn have associated it with a postmodern reaction to a modernist bias, a reaction that was generated by both a postmodern social reality and a postmodern lens of doing qualitative research (cf. Gabriel 2000: 19). As we have seen, within the narrative turnnarrative was put forth as the privileged form of sense-making. Rather than this being based on hard evidence, it mostly stemmed from the simple observation that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives (Connelly and Clandinin 1990). In tune with what they saw as their object of inquiry, the researchers of narrative embraced an epistemology that encourages a reflexive empathy with and understanding of the research participants.

Another shift that has been associated with the postmodernist epistemology of the narrative turn is the shift from events to experience (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou 2008: 5). As we have seen, text-typological and narratological approaches to the definition of narrative traditionally placed emphasis on the temporal sequence of events related in a narrative as well as on the actual correspondence between the real world events and the narrativized events. The latter were seen as expressions or representations of the former. In contrast to this, "experience-centered research stresses that such representations vary drastically over time, and across the circumstances within which one lives, so that a single phenomenon may produce very different stories, even from the same person" (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou 2008: 5). This emphasis on the experience of the research participants has distinctly qualified the narrative turn epistemology as interpretive, meaning-seeking, subjective and particularistic, all elements which have stood in contrast to the experimentation and the core values of scientific research, such as reliability, validity and generalizability. The contrast is frequently put in terms of an anti-positivist (*sic* narrative) vs. a positivist epistemology.

The narrative turn with its research participants-driven agenda has become a pivotal perspective (often referred to as "the narrative perspective") in numerous domains such as organizational research, health research, etc. A case in point is the so-called narrative-based medicine. Set out as a patient-centered perspective, in contrast to a doctor-centered one, narrative-based medicine advocates the role and study of narrative at different levels (Greenhalgh and Hurwitz 1998: 7): the diagnostic encounter where patients should be encouraged to tell stories of their illnesses as valuable meaning-making tools and where narratives can promote understanding and empathy between clinician and patient; the therapeutic process, where narratives "encourage a holistic approach to management, are themselves intrinsically therapeutic or palliative and may suggest or precipitate additional therapeutic options?" (p. 7). Finally, the level of the education of patients and professionals where "narratives are often memorable, grounded in experience and enforce reflection" (p. 7).

The narrative turn has also been instrumental in questioning the objectivity and positivist outlook of numerous social science and humanities disciplines, including that of history and historiography. In an oft-quoted paper, White (1987) suggested that writing about the past is not an objective, full-proof discourse that holds an absolute truth but a process of imposing order, structure and coherence onto the past. In doing so, historians use well-defined and culturally recognized plots such as romances, tragedies and comedies, and in this respect, they are not very different from writers of fiction. By relativizing the distinction between fact and fiction, truth and plot-making, White does not set out to undermine the validity of historical accounts but instead to put forth narrative epistemology as a legitimate way of constructing knowledge. This is far from controversial within history, and as Schwandt (1997: 97–8) puts it:

There is a long-standing controversy in the discipline of history over whether stories about past events (historical narratives) explain the occurrence of those events. The debate unfolds between defenders of formal scientific explanation on the one hand and proponents of a unique form of narrative understanding on the other, and thus the debate echoes the more general argument over… the proper goal of social inquiry. The critical issue here is epistemology, namely the nature and justification of knowledge claims … Whether narrative explanations actually are legitimate explanations or only fictional narratives continues to be an important topic in philosophy of history.

In general, a prevalent tendency within the narrative turn is ultimately to blur clear-cut distinctions between "story and fact, story and other narratives, story and embellishment, story and interpretation" (Gabriel 2000: 17). As we suggested above, the narrative turn has been ubiquitous in the social sciences, and it has had profound implications for how social scientific qualitative methods are currently being conceived. However, as tends to be the case with all dominant paradigms, it has also been the object of intense critique. To begin with, the narrative primacy, that is the privileged position that the narrative turn has accorded to narrative, has increasingly come under scrutiny. There are two theses associated with this primacy, as Strawson suggests (2004), both of which are questionable. The first thesis claims that human beings experience their lives as narrative and in narrative form. The second, related, thesis states that experiencing one's life as narrative is essential to a well-lived life. It has to be noted that both of these theses are subscribed to in varying degrees within the narrative turn and that there are more or less moderate positions around them. At its extreme though, the position that human lives are essentially storied and that an individual cannot have true or full personhood but through the form-finding act of narration have come under fire. One of the premises of this thesis that has been viewed as methodologically problematic is that narrative is a unique form-finding and meaning-making activity. At issue here is both the privileged role accorded to narrative at the expense of other communication activities and the fact that the process of telling a story is equated with

the process of imposing structure and coherence on the events (for a detailed discussion, see Chapter 6, section 2.0). Closely related to these objections is the argument that the celebratory view of narrative as a privileged mode of human communication has often lent itself to transparent or representational approaches, which treat what the tellers say as documents of life, accurate reflections of realities and thus take tellings at face value (e.g. Atkinson and Delamont 2006). These approaches are, in Josselson's terms, "animated by faith in the tellers and by the analysts' intention to record and restore as faithfully as possible the meaning addressed to them as interpreters" (2004: 3).

The problem with this tendency is that it assumes the existence of a true and given story that each teller possesses. It thus overlooks the intimate connections of what is told in a story with the here-and-now of the telling, i.e. the actual environment or context in which the story occurs. This emphasis on the context-specificity of narrative tellings is something that we will discuss in detail throughout this book.

A view of narrative as a mirror of experience is not shared by psychoanalytically inclined scholars either. Their position instead is that a "told story conceals an untold one" (Josselson 2004: 13), that what is not said or is unsayable is also a vital part of the teller's experience and that there will always be gaps and ruptures in meaning-making. So it rests upon the analyst to make the connections, decipher and discover meanings that remain "hidden within a false consciousness" (p. 5).

At a different level, analysts who seek to delimit narrative as a text-type or equally as a genre have also found the narrative primacy of the narrative turn as an unhelpfully underspecified and anything-goes position that has lent itself to presenting narrative as a deceptively homogeneous mode (for a discussion, see Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 2000: 68–9). As we have already suggested, it is true to say that there is a fair amount of variability within the narrative turn as to how narrative is defined, with more or less all-encompassing definitions at play. At its worst, this lack of specificity has hampered the development of agreed tools and frameworks of analysis, which is being increasingly deplored by leading scholars in the field. A case in point is Riessman who recently urged students of narrative

to resist the loose talk about narrative that is common these days. The term has come to mean anything beyond a few bullet points; when someone speaks or writes more than a few lines, the outcome is now called narrative by news anchors and even some qualitative investigators. Narrative runs the danger in this usage of becoming little more than a metaphor. (2008: 152)

Having undoubtedly served as a rather revolutionary outlook within the social sciences, the narrative turn seems now to be heading toward a re-examination of its core assumptions. This is in the face not only of the existence of numerous

and at times competing perspectives within its remit, but also of profound socio-cultural changes. As Savage and Burrows aptly point out, talking about qualitative methods in general, "although it was sociologists who pioneered the use of interviews in allowing popular narratives to become 'public,' the routine use of such methods in all forms of contemporary journalism, from the colour magazine to the Oprah Winfrey show marks a clear shift of expertise away from the academy" (2007: 891). They also point out that the interview as a method of eliciting narratives and in turn studying people's identities may be an important resource, but it is an insufficient one to capture the fluidity of modern lives. We will return to this big question of the place of interviews within narrative studies at various points in the book, and particularly in Chapter 6.

1.5   Analyzing narrative

Researchers who start in narrative studies are eager to find methods that can help them both define their object of investigation and study it. The reality is that there is no one-fit-for-all method of narrative analysis. Methodological choices, which are often eclectic, combine insights and conceptions that come from different disciplines.

Having said that, some very basic distinctions between orientations in narrative research can be drawn, and these largely determine the methodologies most commonly used within each tradition. In this respect, certain typologies have been proposed that describe aspects in which methodological approaches may differ. A case in point is the typology of narrative studies proposed by Mishler (1995) who distinguished between the following:

a. Studies focused on temporal ordering and reference. Within this orientation the interest is on the content of the narratives: either events or experiences are focused upon, not the act of telling per se.
b. Studies based on the analysis of coherence and structural makeup. Here the focus is on the properties that characterize narratives as opposed to other texts.
c. Studies centered on the investigation of narrative functions in social contexts. Their focus is on the interactional and social work that narrators do through stories, on the settings and on the concrete effects and consequences of narrative talk.

Further typologies have been proposed more recently by two social scientists: Jane Elliott (2005) and Catherine K. Riessman (2008). Elliott talks about the elicitation of narratives within the research interview as a qualitative method in itself. Within that method she then considers differences between what she calls a "naturalist" versus a "constructivist" approach (p.18). Naturalist

approaches assume the "transparency" of the narrative data with respect to an external reality (see also Mishler's distinction between "the telling" and "the told"). Following Mishler, Riessman proposes a distinction between "thematic approaches" focused on the "what" of narrative (i.e. on the content of stories), structural analysis (focused on the way narratives are organized and therefore on how meanings are presented), and dialogic-performance analysis, i.e. an approach that draws on elements of thematic and structural analysis but makes them part of broader interpretive research agendas. In her view, while thematic and structural analyses do not pay attention to the roles of participants in the storytelling event and the local context of storytelling, dialogic performance analysis does.

Rather than representing hard-and-fast divisions between approaches, these distinctions point to parameters that may vary in research methodologies. Indeed, most researchers adopt eclectic methods, and studies can be placed on continua with respect to the amount of attention that they devote, for example, to the "what" or the "how" of narratives. However, even the broad distinction between emphasis on form and emphasis on content should by no means be taken as absolute. In fact, most investigations that focus on content, i.e. on story worlds, protagonists, events, etc. also discuss the "how," i.e. the forms in which such content is organized by narrators either by looking at temporal and casual sequences, or by looking at evaluation devices. Thus, a more productive way of differentiating methods of narrative analysis may be to look at variations in some of the research parameters adopted, for example the following:

1. Object of analysis:
   a. narratives as texts/genres
   b. events, identities, social phenomena (i.e. contexts that are external to the storytelling event)
   c. storytelling as communicative/interactional/process
2. General methodological approach:
   a. qualitative (focus on small samples, distrust of pre-existing hypotheses, emphasis on observation and analysis of participants' understandings, discovery of units of analysis)
   b. experimental/quantitative (hypothesis testing in research environments, large body of data, use of predetermined units and models of analysis)
   c. eclectic (elements of both)
3. Methods of data collection:
   a. elicited
   b. non-elicited
   c. research-independent (natural) contexts
   d. research-dependent (experimental) contexts

4. Types of data:
   a. oral/interactional
   b. written
   c. multimodal
5. Data analysis:
   a. focus on language/style (how are people narrating?)
   b. focus on content/themes (what are people narrating about?)
   c. focus on interactional processes and social practices (how do partici-
      pants engage in narrative practices? Why?)

A consideration of the object of analysis allows for a first, significant distinc-
tion amongst those analysts who are interested in structure, those interested
in storytelling as a way of accomplishing social action and those interested
in the social phenomena, events and identities represented by and constructed
through storytelling. Such distinctions in turn generally imply also specific
methodological orientations. In fact, as we saw in section 1.4.1 above, many
researchers (particularly within the narrative turn) refer to "narrative" as a
method of inquiry per se. But this conception of narrative as a method is not
shared by all narrative analysts since it rests on the assumption that narratives
are tools that facilitate the understanding of some non-narrative phenomenon.
Such an assumption is not shared (or only partly shared) by those who are
interested, for example, in narrative as discourse or text unit, as a cognitive
construct, as a kind of social practice. In addition to this, it must be noted that
even among social scientists who use narrative as a method of inquiry, there
is a great deal of variation in approaches to data analysis, data-gathering tech-
niques and conceptions of narrative itself.

   The list of parameters provided here can help readers better place the vari-
ous models and scholars that we will present in this book. In terms of data, our
emphasis will be on oral/interactional storytelling, while in terms of analysis our
emphasis will be on approaches that have advocated attention to the language/
style, interactional processes and social practices of storytelling.