

6 Narrative and identities

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we will discuss the multiple relationships that exist between narrative and identities, how links between the two have been conceptualized within different paradigms and what questions are raised by research in this field. In particular, we will look at biographical, sociolinguistic and conversation-analytic work on identity and explore similarities and differences amongst them, with the help of key concepts such as positioning, categorization, self-presentation and indexicality. Our general aim is to document and evaluate a shift in the field from psychologically based conceptions of identity largely centered on the individual self and its expressions in language to more recent views in which identity is seen as a process firmly grounded in interaction.

The first problem that every analyst is faced with when attempting to study the interactions between narrative and identity is the difficulty of defining identity itself. Although the latter has become one of the most important concepts not only in linguistics but in a variety of disciplines within the social sciences, it is surprisingly hard to find precise definitions and a basic agreement on them. This is because characterizations of identity vary according to the basic theoretical assumptions inspiring the researchers who have proposed them. In any case, definitions and choices of terms reflect the fundamental oppositions around which the debate over identity has evolved in the social sciences in general. Identity can be seen and defined as a property of the individual or as something that emerges through social interaction; it can be regarded as residing in the mind or in concrete social behavior; or it can be anchored to the individual or to the group. Furthermore, identity can be conceived of as existing independently of and above the concrete contexts in which it is manifested or as totally determined by them. Finally, it can be regarded as substantially personal or as relational. The methods for studying identities in language have been profoundly influenced by these alternative views.

A further problem is that the area of inquiry concerned with the study of interconnections between language, narrative and identity does not constitute a unified field. Research has developed in and across a variety of disciplines,

such as social psychology, linguistics, anthropology, history, just to name a few, and studies belong to different traditions and employ a variety of methodologies. That said, the so-called biographical studies of narrative exhibit many commonalities in terms of how they view the self and its constitution through narrative. As we will discuss, such studies have become canonical in the field, but there has also been a parallel, even if more recent, move toward views of identity that place interactional processes in the constitution of the self at the center of attention, and that stress the social nature of identity, its plurality and its interdependence on different levels of contextualization.

Below, we will consider what has contributed to the formation of this interactionist paradigm in identity studies, namely the movement toward a non-essentialist view of the self, the conception of identity as a social construction, and the emphasis on relationality as central characteristics to identity processes. We will subsequently structure our discussion around studies that are derived from biographical approaches (section 6.2), and studies that are inspired by the interactionist paradigm (section 6.3). This separation should not be taken as marking clear-cut boundaries in so far as interactionist trends exist within biographical approaches (see, for example, section 6.2.1 on positioning), while autobiographical narratives often constitute the data of many interactionally oriented studies.

6.1 The interactionist paradigm

6.1.1 *De-essentializing the self*

Identity is traditionally associated with the self. For this reason, most recent theorization on identity rests on a re-conceptualization of the self as a category, in particular on a critique against the view of the self as unitary and continuous, residing in the individual mind or spirit, and often also characterized by rationality and free will. From this perspective, the self is an essence that can be grasped and described and its characteristics can be isolated and do not essentially vary through time. In his excursus on the historical development of personality theories, McAdams (1996: 297) argues that an open reflection on the crisis of the self as an autonomous and well-constituted entity dates back to the nineteenth century, when a substantial number of Westerners started writing about the problems in experiencing themselves as unique and integrated persons. However, modern psychology, particularly in the United States, has been, and to a certain extent still is, dominated by a paradigm in which the self is seen as a property of the individual, firmly located within the mind and abstracted from experience and interaction with others. In her fascinating review of psychological theories of the person, Vivien Burr (2002: 4–5) notes that the modern conception of the individual as a rational and moral being, defined by a

fixed set of traits constituting her or his personality, is in fact relatively recent, and typical of the Western world. It is traceable to the rise of individualism between the Renaissance and the seventeenth century when it culminated in the Cartesian ideal of the individual as an essentially rational creature. Central to this conception was a separation between individual and social and between mind and body and a view of subjectivity as firmly situated in the mind. This notion of the self also underlies dominant trends in psychology; for example, the quest for the essential traits that describe different types of individuals and can serve as behavior predictors. It has, however, also given rise to a pervasive dualism in which oppositions are set between the individual and the group, the personal and the social, intellect and action and which has infiltrated theories of personality, determining a never-resolved fluctuation between behaviorism and cognitivism.

The tendency to essentialize and abstract the self from its social environment has come under growing attack in the last forty years thanks to a mounting awareness of the changes that have occurred in social life in postmodern societies. Observers of contemporary societies, such as Anthony Giddens (1991) and Zygmunt Bauman (2005), note that postmodern life is characterized by uncertainty, fracture, physical and social displacement and by the experience of flow and disunity. Modern men and women have lost their certainties and their allegiance to systems of beliefs and traditional structures of social organization and have become much more aware of the lack of continuity and permanence both in their personal life and in the environment.

6.1.2 *Identity as social construction*

The rise of social constructionist thinking in different areas of knowledge has been an important influence in the shift toward de-essentializing self. In it, the basic idea is that social reality does not exist as an independent entity. In their groundbreaking work *The social construction of reality*, sociologists Berger and Luckman argue that the social world, even if it appears to stand as an objective entity, is in fact built by human action and interaction and is not independent of it. Individuals continuously constitute social reality and are constituted by it in a dialectical process. In their words: "Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product" (1966: 79). Two principles are apparent here: (i) all social categories are created and negotiated through processes of communication amongst human beings; (ii) the individual and the social do not stand in opposition to each other and cannot be conceived of as separate.

Social constructionism has become the dominant paradigm in linguistic theorization about identity. Linguistic anthropologists, ethnomethodologists and sociolinguists alike have also found in it a strong theoretical basis for the

claim that processes of identity construction are closely connected to linguistic and communicative processes. Indeed, if the self is not seen as pre-existing social interaction, but as constituted through it, and if identities are bound to social contexts, then language has an extraordinarily important role in this constitution, since it is at the center of most of the social practices in which human beings are engaged. Identity is, therefore, a process, not an entity, something that does not belong to individuals but rather emerges in interaction and within concrete social practices and is achieved through discursive and communicative work (Zimmerman and Wieder 1970). As we will see, this fundamental idea underlies very different approaches to identity in narrative, such as positioning theories (Davies and Harré 1990), studies of identity as performance (Bauman 2004) and talk-in-interaction approaches (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998).

6.1.3 *Identity as a relational phenomenon*

The growing awareness, within linguistics and related disciplines, of the role of interaction as a fundamental site for the constitution of identities has posed further challenges to essentialist conceptions of the self. Interaction is relational in that the feelings, behavior and ideas of one person are constituted within the flow of communication, a flow that implies a constant work of mutual understanding and reacting. Language is the main tool for this (re)fashioning, and its role as well as the constant presence of “the other” in any process of self-recognition and expression have long been recognized. In his early work on subjectivity, Emile Benveniste ([1966] 1971), for example, equated the subject with the subject of speech, but he also pointed to the act of speaking as involving a dual role as a speaker and as listener and a continuous alternation between the “I” and the “you.”

Similarly, Bakhtin (1981) emphasized relationality and multivocality in his influential conception of language and communication as essentially dialogic and multivocal, insofar as the voice of the individual is inextricably tied to the voice of others.

Another angle on relationality comes from symbolic interactionism in psychology and sociology. Symbolic interactionists see the individual as a fundamentally social being and propose role taking as an essential process of identity management and negotiation. This conception is clear in Mead’s construct of the “generalized other” (1956: 110), according to which a person always acts based on social rules that she or he expects to be shared by others and therefore that both acting and interpreting action always involve indexing and understanding social processes. From this perspective, people construct themselves using others’ interpretation of their behavior as a fundamental point of reference; therefore, identity can never be seen as a process originating in a solitary ego. Similar views are implicit in Erving Goffman’s influential

work on the interaction order and on self-presentation. Goffman believed that human beings always need to manage themselves in social situations and that self-presentation is at the core of social interaction. He saw participants in an interaction as continuously defining and redefining their roles in order to maintain control over the situation. This role play and the management of self-presentation are major enterprises in social life. His notion of “face” embodies such a vision in that it represents identity as managed and negotiated, not as internally construed. “Face,” says Goffman (1967: 5),

may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the lines others assume he has taken during a particular context. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing of himself.

Here, too, identity is stripped of all essentialist qualities to become an entirely social process, and attention is directed to the mechanisms that allow individuals to manage and negotiate their selves in social circumstances. A pivotal notion in this respect is that of *footing* defined as “the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance” (1981: 128), which as we will see, is central to a great deal of work on narrative and identity.

6.2 The storied self: identities within biographical approaches

Narrative has served as a major methodological tool for researching people’s identities in a variety of disciplines within the social sciences. It is important, however, to emphasize that only a particular type of narrative has mainly served as the object of this inquiry, namely the life story and less frequently the so-called short range stories of landmark events (e.g. stories of pregnancy, marriage, divorce, illness, etc.). The latter are reminiscent of Labov’s narratives of personal experience which, as we saw in Chapter 2, were collected as a response to the question “Were you ever in danger of dying?” Common to both types of stories is that they are routinely elicited in research interviews. Also, both involve personal past experience from which the teller has sufficient distance to be able to reflect on them. Such narratives have been employed as heuristics for the inquiry into tellers’ representations of past events, and into their ways of making sense of themselves in light of these past events. The guiding assumption has been that the telling of stories allows the teller to bring the coordinates of time, space and personhood into a unitary frame so that the sources “behind” these representations can be made empirically visible for further analytical scrutiny in the form of “identity analysis.”

The study of narrative as a point of entry into the teller's personal, social and cultural identities has undoubtedly been the main focus within studies inspired by the narrative turn which we discussed in Chapter 1 (e.g. McAdams 1988, 1993; MacIntyre 1981; Polkinghorne 1988; Sarbin 1986). Most of those studies are often grouped together as proposing a "biographical" approach to identity. It is also common to talk about identities in biographical approaches as "narrative identities": the assumption here is that narrative uniquely affords the analyst a glimpse of how people construct a sense of self; also, that narrative is so closely linked with life and experience that it is the prime way of making sense of them in the form of stories about "self." In McAdams' oft-quoted terms: "Identity is a life story. A life story is a personal myth that an individual begins working on in late adolescence and young adulthood in order to provide his or her life with a purpose" (1993: 5). Similarly, Bruner claims that "in the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives" (1994: 53). We can see in both views a sort of developmental and temporal perspective: with living comes the telling and retelling of the life story and in that process comes unity, coherence and a stable and continuous sense of self across time and space.

This definition of one's identity as the crux of the interconnection between life as a whole and narrative has fundamentally incorporated the idea of one ideally coherent life story. In Strawson's view, this interconnection can be rephrased in the form of two normative and dominant ideas: The "narrativity thesis" according to which life is experienced as a narrative, and the "ethical narrativity thesis" according to which "experiencing or conceiving one's life as a narrative is a good thing; a richly Narrative outlook is essential to a well-lived life, to true or full personhood" (2004: 427). It is thus fair to say that research on narrative and identity within biographical studies has privileged both a certain kind of subjectivity and certain kinds of identities. More specifically, there has been a focus on the project of "storying" oneself as intrinsically oriented toward coherence and authenticity. In this respect, most studies have focused on how, even though through a dynamic process, tellers gradually move to a unified and rather stable account of self that is interwoven into their life story (e.g. Brockmeier and Carbaugh 2001; Daiute and Lightfoot 2004). The ethical narrativity thesis is lurking behind this view: the point is that "the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life" is equated with "the unity of an individual life" and in turn with "a good life" (MacIntyre 1981: 203). Put more succinctly, a good life is seen as one that has narrative unity. This idea has indelibly marked the methods of biographical researchers. Not only have their data for exploring the teller's self almost exclusively consisted of life stories, but also these life stories have been collected in interviews that have been designed so as to encourage and elicit coherent and unified accounts. The

search for and imposition of structure and unity in one's life story has been considered as part of a therapeutic process, and disjunctures, raptures and lack of coherence have been seen as evidence of a life that has not been sufficiently assembled, reflected upon and rendered meaningful. Self and narrative have thus been typically brought together in ways that emphasize the ideas of autonomy, integration, consistency and coherence over those of fragmentation and relationality (cf. on this point, Roberts 2004). Fragmentation implies a view of the self as being discursively constructed as different things on different occasions that cannot be automatically reduced to a singular and coherent entity nor easily abstracted from local contexts. Relationality, on the other hand, includes the idea that the self derives its capacity for self-perception and self-definition through relations and interactional negotiations with others. Both these views have met with resistance within biographical narrative analysis where personal narrative seems to be presented as a model of how we should configure ourselves as selves striving for a purposeful and convincing whole (Parker 2003: 314). To many, this is a Western type of ideal encompassing neo-Cartesian individualist views of personhood and privileging unity and integration of a singular and "authentic" self through the piecing together of a well-structured and orderly life story (e.g. see De Peuter 1998: 32–4).

The biographical view of narrative identity in the sense of the "storied self" has become a well-established and dominant paradigm across a wide array of disciplines. Overall, the paradigm has been slow to move away from representational accounts of the self (i.e. accounts of the type of person that a life story presents its teller to be) that treat stories as more or less authentic, transparent and unmediated records (see Atkinson and Delamont 2006) to interactional views of identity construction. As Shuman rightly points out, "the biggest challenge to the study of personal experience narrative continues to be to avoid the conflation of experience with the authentic and the real" (2005: 9).

In contrast to this trend, as we will see in this chapter, interactional approaches to identities have become increasingly mainstream within sociolinguistics. Research on the communicative how of identities in talk has been flourishing, and recently there has been a proliferation of sociolinguistic studies of narrative and identities (e.g. De Fina 2003a; chapters in De Fina, Bamberg and Schiffrin 2006; Georgakopoulou 2007).¹ That said, biographical approaches to narrative have had a profound influence on linguistic analyses of narrative identities, particularly in the early stages of research. Such language-focused studies have drawn on the tradition of biographical research, for example, through the exploration of the discursive mechanisms by means of which tellers create coherent images of self over time and space. In this respect, as we will see in section 6.3.1 below, they have drawn on themes resonant within biographical studies of narrative identities.

6.2.1 *Identities and positions*

In line with what we suggested above, within biographical research of narrative and identities, there has been a long-standing tradition of investigating how socioculturally available – capital D – discourses (variously called “meta-narratives,” “master-narratives,” “scenarios,” etc.) are drawn upon by tellers in order to make sense of themselves over time and of the defining events that happened to them (see, for example, Kerby 1991). A concept that has informed numerous studies of narrative and identity with this focus is that of *positioning*. Davies and Harré’s (1990: 48) introduced this concept in a seminal paper in which they defined it as “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines.” This definition firmly locates the construction of selves and identities in interactional sites (*conversations*) and in this way subscribes to a discourse-based approach to identity. In fact, drawing attention to the dynamism of social interactions has been the starting point of this influential study. In this respect, positioning served as an alternative to purely cognitive and non-discursive concepts such as roles, norms and intentions. The idea was that such concepts could be made explicit and uncovered with a discursive methodology that allows analysts to look into how people realize them in their conversations. The notion of position thus has served as an umbrella concept that captures “clusters of rights and duties to perform certain actions” (Harré and Moghaddam 2003: 4) which are assigned, reassigned and dynamically negotiated in conversations. This stated interest in the interpersonal aspects of people’s positioning of one another has nonetheless not been translated into a truly interactional approach. For one, Harré and his colleagues have routinely employed made-up examples of narratives rather than actual data, be they conversational or interview ones. Second, positions appear to have a cognitive status to the extent that there is an assumption that people mentally store sets of roles and rules, as a sort of non-discursive moral order, which can then be realized and traced (by the analysts) in discursive environments. This is a far cry from the vision of positions as discursively constructed and emergent, not as pre-existent entities, in interactional contexts that, as we will see below, has been adopted by recent interactional studies of positioning.

Although Harré’s work is only one – albeit influential – of many strands of research on narrative identities and positioning, what brings most of these strands together is the tendency to postulate culturally available subject positions a priori of specific data and subsequently to look for how they impact on specific narratives. Within this tradition, the individual is seen as being assigned certain subject positions by pre-existing structures variously called “master narratives,” “dominant discourses,” “cultural texts” or, in Foucauldian terms, “culturally available subject positions” that are postulated a priori of

specific interactions. The emphasis then is on “extracting” or “looking out for” how these positions are realized in particular instances of communication (see, for example, the discussion in Widdicombe 1998: 199ff.) in order to show their connection with wider cultural narratives. Participants in local storytelling events are seen as capable of engaging in various processes of negotiation: from drawing on and assigning positions to negotiating and resisting them. Thus, the fact that agency does come into play in the discursive “realization” of positions is not disputed by positioning analysts. However, the methodologically problematic assumption is that positions are independent, pre-discursive entities that exist out there ready to be taken off the shelf and to be reproduced and revealed in discursive action.

These assumptions have been heavily contested, among others, by discursive psychologists who, drawing on conversation-analytic premises, have called for attention to local contexts, that is, to how people locally accomplish identities through interactional and linguistic moves such as characterizations and person references (see the discussion in sections 6.3.3 and 6.3.4 below).

6.2.2 *Interactional approaches to positioning*

As suggested above, a great deal of positioning analysis has not been tuned into the emergence of positioning processes through details intrinsic to an interaction. It has also shied away from an exploration of the fleetingness and contingency of identity work in local storytelling contexts. Recently, however, there have been various moves to redefine positioning as an interactionally oriented mode of analysis. The assumption here is that, rather than being positioned in a deterministic way by out-there structures, speakers actively and agentively select, resist and revisit positions. These processes are more or less indirectly marked or cued in discourse by specific devices that can be subsequently used as an analytical platform for the exploration of speakers’ identities (for examples, see Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann 2000; Wortham 2000).

One of the most influential moves toward an interactional approach to positioning is traceable to Bamberg’s (1997) three analytically separable yet interrelated levels, which were postulated as heuristics for the ways in which tellers “do” self in narrative tellings. The first level explores positioning in the taleworld, i.e. it examines how the narrator as character is positioned vis-à-vis other characters in the world of the story. More specifically, this level involves the representation of characters (e.g. descriptions, evaluations) and event sequences and the ways in which these relate to social categories and their action potential. The second level looks at positioning as an interactional process and accomplishment, emerging from the ways in which the narrator as teller in the here-and-now positions himself vis-à-vis his interlocutors. What tellers do and which aspects or sense of self they present as relevant is

co-drafted with their interlocutors in local contexts of storytelling. Finally, the third level seeks to provide an answer to the question of “who am I?” – attempting to define the teller’s self as a more or less stable entity holding above and beyond the current storytelling situation. Here, the issue is to what extent the construction of a sense of self in the segment under analysis can be traced back to individual conversational moves and to what extent it depends on discourses that seemingly impose themselves onto participant structures and individual sense-making strategies.

With this model of positioning, Bamberg’s aim has been to move to an analysis that grounds self and identity in the interactive engagement of storytelling. As he has repeatedly stressed, the basic point of departure in his model is the action orientation of the participants, not what is represented or reflected upon in the stories told. In this way, his focus is on how people use stories in their interactive engagements to convey a sense of who they are and not on how stories represent the world and identities.

Bamberg’s model has been taken up in numerous studies of interview and conversational stories, as it affords an analytical apparatus for linking local telling choices to larger identities. However, exactly how the three levels relate to one another and particularly how the analyst arrives at the teller’s sense of self as pertaining above and beyond the local telling context (level 3) remain open questions. More specifically, the analytical status of master discourses or story lines (level 3) is not entirely clear. How does level 3 differ from previous accounts of positioning that have been criticized as static and operating a priori of actual storytelling data? How can master discourses be locatable through fine-grained analysis of specific storytelling instances? These are questions with no fast and easy answers, but it is notable that interactional analyses of positioning, even if not converging with Bamberg’s model, seem to draw upon its conceptualization, particularly the idea that positioning is connected with the double temporal logic or chronology of narrative: that of the *told world* (cf. level 1) and of the *telling world*, i.e. the here-and-now of storytelling (see section 1.1.1). Tellers position themselves in both these worlds, and as we will see below, they frequently draw strategically on the opportunities afforded by their coexistence for self-presentation. We can see positioning operating in both these worlds, for example in Deppermann and Lucius-Hoene’s (2008) recent model. Like Bamberg, Deppermann and Lucius-Hoene explore the positioning of the told self as protagonist and of other actors as characters within the story and the positioning between the self as teller and the listener(s) in the here-and-now of the telling situation. Level 3 in Bamberg’s model is absent here but there is no alternative proposal as to how one can get to the teller’s more or less “constant” and “stable” self through identity analysis in storytelling instances.

Another proposal to use positioning as an analytical apparatus for an interactional account of autobiographical narrative has been developed by Wortham

(2000, 2001). In similar vein to Bamberg, Wortham offers his analysis as an example of how we can approach narrative not just as a vehicle of representation of denotational content but rather as a means for positioning narrator and audience interactionally (2000: 166). Wortham specifically identifies five types of positioning cues, that is, linguistic choices that narrators use to position themselves and others in storytelling events or, to put it in his terms, to present self and other as “socially relevant types” (p. 172). The first positioning device is the narrators’ selection of words and expressions to denote their characters. Characterizations or categorizations are frequently studied as explicit ways of doing positioning (cf. Deppermann 2007). Wortham also claims that narrators in representing their characters when talking choose certain *metapragmatic verbs* (e.g. “negotiated,” “was talked into,” etc.) to describe the current event of speaking. Such verbs may be seen as a second positioning device. A third positioning cue is the attribution of *quoted speech* to characters. A fourth device involves *evaluative indexicals*, that is, implicit characterizations of situations or events that presuppose something about characters’ social positions and position the narrator with respect to those. For instance, in the autobiographical narrative of a woman called Jane which Wortham analyses, the detail that at the academy she went to as a child “you were allowed to visit with your mother on Sundays only,” acts as an evaluative indexical of the teachers’ and administrators’ ethos. In particular, the teachers are implicitly portrayed as “cruel and blinded by archaic notions of discipline” (p. 173). The fifth and final positioning cue involves *epistemic modalization*, that is, language choices which characterize the relative knowledge status of the teller vis-à-vis the characters. For example, the epistemic status of the narrator as teller in the here-and-now may well be presented as different to the epistemic status of the narrator as character in the told world. We can see how the distinction between the telling and the told world for positioning in narrative underlies Wortham’s model too.

Broadly speaking, in the above studies, positioning has been employed as a meso-analytic concept, a means of establishing linkages between the tellings of stories – and specific interactional choices within them – on the one end, and larger processes beyond the here-and-now of interactions on the other end.² This is not an unprecedented analytical move. It is by now a truism that the business of establishing links between language choices and social processes, including identities, is no more straightforward than any connections between text and context can be. Similarly, such links are seen as complex, indirect and mediated. In the search for analytical tools for establishing those links, a number of related concepts have been invoked time: e.g. *footing*, *frame*, *stance*, *evaluation* and *involvement*. When talking about stance as one concept “with unclear and overlapping reference,” Coupland and Coupland make an argument that could be easily extended to all of them, namely that their value is to direct us to orders of discourse in the mid-range of social contextualization,

somewhere between identities and the roles associated with the management of turns or particular communication genres.

In that respect, they can be seen as “a useful corrective to analytic approaches which assume that identities can be read off from the surface forms of talk” (Coupland and Coupland 2004: 29). Similarly to such concepts, positioning has exemplified the tension between micro- and macro-analytic projects by accounting for the details of interactions, without losing sight of extra-situational resources and processes (e.g. larger social roles and identities beyond the here-and-now). However, what exactly counts as a positioning cue is not uncontroversial (cf. Georgakopoulou 2000: 188). This is not helped by the broad remit of positioning as comprising all the “discursive practices which people use to present themselves and others as individuals or performers of roles, which claim and display certain roles, identity-properties, [and] group-membership” (Deppermann and Lucius-Hoene 2008: 2). This definition encompasses personal, social, role-related properties and, importantly, as we saw in Harré’s model too, moral attributes. In other words, it somehow equates the scope of positioning with yet another elusive concept, that of identities, leaving considerable lack of clarity about the relationships between the two.

A related question is if there is anything specific or unique to positioning (cues) in narrative as opposed to other types of text/discourse. It is also the case that the analysts who have seen positioning as providing a bridge between local choices and larger identities tend to variously use it and call upon it as both a participants’ and an analysts’ resource (Georgakopoulou 2000: 189). The study of positioning seems to require that the analyst decide what counts as positioning and what type of dominant discourse is drawn upon or indexed in each case. As we will see below in more detail, this is a more generalized concern in interactional studies of narrative and identity. Finally, interactional studies of positioning are increasingly recognizing the need to analyze it in a range of stories other than the autobiographical narratives (see Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) and with a focus not only on positioning self but also other (see Georgakopoulou 2005b).

6.3 Shift to narrative and identities-in-interaction

Interactional approaches to identities, also commonly characterized as approaches to identities-in-interaction, have become increasingly mainstream within sociolinguistics in general. What brings these approaches together is their dynamic conceptualization of social identities: Identities are viewed as locally occasioned, discursive projects that interrelate with language forms in indirect and mediated ways as opposed to one-to-one correspondences. Emphasis on the constitutive role of language in social identities, coupled with

the recognition that identities can be multiple, fleeting and irreducibly contingent, has thus precipitated a shift of interest from category-bound research with a demographic basis, to practice-based research. This means that the focus is not on who people *are*, or who they are perceived to be a priori of language data analysis, but on what or who they *do being* in specific environments of language use for specific purposes. Instead of being seen as the speaker's properties, identities are taken to be articulated and constructed in talk where they can be negotiated, contested and redrafted (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou 2003; Antaki and Widdicombe 1998). This shift represents a far cry from earlier views of identities as singular, static and given properties that at some point in one's life become finished projects.

As we will discuss below, a first step into an interactionally sensitive approach to narrative identity was taken by work on self-presentation which explored the use of a variety of semiotic resources for conveying a sense of self.

6.3.1 *Identities as self-presentation*

Narratives are often used by tellers to convey positive images of themselves or to counter negative perceptions that others may have about them. Within sociolinguistic studies of narrative, the exploration of self-presentation has been the first point of entry into how tellers do self. In the earlier, essentially post-Labovian, studies of self-presentation, the term *identity* was seldom used. Instead, the emphasis was on how storytellers create images of themselves and negotiate a certain kind of persona with interlocutors. Self-presentation is very much related to the teller's ability to "keep a narrative going" (Giddens 1991: 54), the assumption being that, by presenting themselves and others as characters in storly worlds and by negotiating these self-images with interlocutors, tellers are able to portray themselves as people who think and act in specific ways without directly talking about who they are.

An example of how narratives may be used strategically to construct positive images of the self can be found in Charlotte Linde's (1993) study of life stories told by successful professionals in interviews about choice of profession. Linde singles out coherence as a central strategy in the construction of successful life stories. Coherence systems provided both a frame giving unity and continuity to professionals' life choices and a structure of values allowing them to cast their past actions against the background of widely shared beliefs and expectations about rights, obligations and roles of professionals in society. Amongst these complex coherence systems, which occupy "a position midway between common sense ... and expert systems" (p. 163), are cultural constructs such as astrology or Freudian psychology. Drawing on these frames to present their life choices, individuals are able to construct their current personas as the result of a series of connected developments.³

Another way of examining self-presentation in narrative has been proposed by Schiffrin in her analysis of stories told in sociolinguistic interviews by women talking about conflict in family matters (1996), Schiffrin showed that tellers construct and negotiate different aspects of their selves. Specifically, she drew on the distinction between epistemic and agentive selves originally proposed by Bruner (1990) to argue that tellers may present different facets of themselves depending on whether they report actions or feelings and beliefs. In her words: “We present ourselves epistemically when we state our beliefs, feelings and wants; agentive aspects of self are revealed when we report actions directed towards goals, including actions that have an effect on others” (p. 194).

Tellers usually display both aspects of the self in at times coherent and at times conflicting ways. For example, in one of the stories that Schiffrin analyzes, the teller, Zelda, recounts her difficulties, and eventual failure, in getting her daughter-in-law to address her using an acceptable address term such as “mom,” or even to call her by her first name. Her epistemic position is that daughters-in-law should try to overcome any problems they may be having and accept to call their mothers-in-law “mom” as a way of breaking emotional barriers. However, her agentive self, as constructed through a consistent lack of confrontational actions in her story world, appears to be that of an accommodating person who tries to be understanding and to propose alternative solutions in order to maintain family harmony. Schiffrin shows in her analysis how epistemic selves are often (but not necessarily) constructed explicitly, i.e. through external evaluation and the open discussion of beliefs and opinions, while agentive selves are indexed through the actions of the teller as a character in the story world. She also argues that the concept of position captures the dialectic relation between epistemic and agentive selves on the one hand, and the self that emerges in interactional negotiations on the other. In her analysis, Schiffrin underscores the fact that self-presentation is conveyed through the form, the content and the performance of a narrative. At the level of linguistic forms, for example, narrators may use syntactic indicators (such as a contrast between direct and indirect reported speech) or contextualization cues (such as intonation contours) to convey a certain persona. At the level of content, they may manipulate the sequential order of actions in the story or the kinds of speech acts performed by characters. In terms of performance, they may alternate utterances from the story world and non-story world in order to create contrasts.

Research on self-presentation has in general showed how presenting an image of self in interaction relies on all these levels. People do not resort to a single strategy but use combinations of linguistic and paralinguistic structures to build their self-image in stories. Amongst these strategies, two have received special attention: the teller’s alignment toward others and the negotiation of authorship and responsibility in order to assign and distribute blame and praise.

The analysis of both aspects owes a great deal to Goffman's work on footing and on participation frameworks (1981) that we discussed in Chapter 4. Goffman proposed that presenting oneself in interaction implies taking a certain footing or alignment toward other participants. In Schiffrin's example, one can argue that part of Zelda's self-presentation as tolerant and collaborative is related to her footing to the interviewer, to her effort to appear understanding and her appeal to commonly shared social norms. Let us go back to Goffman's deconstruction of the notion of speaker that we saw in Chapter 4. He distinguished between the following production roles: *author* (the person who created the utterance), *animator* (the person who physically produces an utterance), *figure* (somebody who belongs to the story world, a character) and *principal* (someone who is committed to what the utterance says).

This self-lamination has been central to the analysis of self-presentation, particularly in cases of reported speech. When speech is reported, the different interactive meaning-making contexts related to narrative are activated. Tellers are situated in a storytelling world in which they evoke a story world. However, they also animate yet another world, that of the story world in which the interaction of the characters occurs. Tellers (and listeners) thus shift from one world to the other, creating multiple relations between themselves and the story world they are evoking. It is worth reminding ourselves at this point of the importance of reported speech as an evaluative device going back to Labov's model (1972). Post-Labovian studies further documented that, as an evaluative device, reported speech can contribute to the creation of a certain self-image for the teller. In particular, studies have related reported speech to two specific aspects of self-presentation: morality and agency.

In relation to this first point, Ochs and Capps have noted that: "tellers strive to represent themselves as decent, ethical persons who pursue the moral high road in contrast to certain other protagonists in their narratives" (2001: 284). A number of studies have shown how reported speech enables the tellers to present themselves as moral selves by allowing them to activate scenarios in which they can highlight their own ethical positions (Moita Lopes 2006; Relaño-Pastor and De Fina 2005; Vazquez 2007). It has been illustrated, for example, how tellers, instead of openly discussing their moral principles and beliefs, often voice them through dialogues in which they participate as story world characters. Such animations have the advantage of supporting their self-presentation as active and morally engaged, but also of highlighting the values they stand for. Reported speech has also been related to agency inasmuch as it has been shown that narrators may mobilize this strategy to emphasize or de-emphasize their own role, involvement and accountability in the reported situations, thus presenting themselves as agentive social actors. Indeed, often characters who speak are also characters who stand out and actively take particular roles in the story world. Hamilton (1998) described, for example, how

patients' reports of speech acts initiated by them and by doctors and medical personnel in online narratives of conflict underscored their own role as active survivors. Conversely, reported speech may be used strategically so as to diffuse the teller's responsibility and accountability in the social field and to diminish their agency. By putting words into characters' mouths, the tellers can actually voice ("animate") their own opinions but without taking responsibility for them (Georgakopoulou 2005b).

Schiffrin's work is instructive here too. In comparing expressing opinions with telling stories (1990), she showed how narratives allow the tellers, particularly by means of reported speech, to assign certain aspects of themselves, including their views and beliefs, to characters and in that way to decrease their responsibility for them. In Goffman's terms, this means that tellers may keep the role of the animator for themselves but assign the roles of author, figure and principal to characters. This presents serious implications for how agency may be constructed. For example, De Fina (2003a) found that immigrants tended to downplay their agency in narrative about crossing the border to the United States by giving other characters greater speaking space and by attributing to them pro-active speech acts, such as suggestions and requests, while presenting themselves as silent. Such a strategy was one among others that tellers used to avoid presenting themselves as fully responsible for choosing to become undocumented immigrants.

It is not only when in the narrative and why tellers introduce reported speech that has attracted the attention of analysts in terms of self-presentation. It is also who is being quoted, how and how frequently that has been looked at as a marker of the teller's social identities. In Johnstone's corpus of middle-American stories (for details, see discussion in Chapter 4), the fact that women reported talk more frequently than men was linked to gendered differences in storytelling practices both at the level of action and at the level of reported interaction. Similarly, in Georgakopoulou's study (1997) of Greek stories, both male and female tellers were found to quote overwhelmingly men speaking. This was viewed as an index of socioculturally shaped notions of who counts as a source of evidence and/or as an expert. Put differently, the animation of male voices was a more powerful vehicle for constructing evidence for the teller's views.

Reported speech is a particularly well-studied strategy of self-presentation, but other discursive devices have also been examined as resources that the narrators deploy in order to convey certain images of who they are. In her study of male inmates talking about their own crimes, O'Connor (2000) talked about "authorial shaping" as the process through which tellers construct their narratives in ways that allow them to create a certain image of themselves. She argued that for prisoners it was important to show that they were changed persons and that they had in them the potential to become

different people. Therefore, they often distanced themselves from the crimes that they had allegedly committed or tried to involve the addressee in their evoked story worlds as a way to create empathy. Among the strategies analyzed by O'Connor were irony, understatement and the construction of agentless crime stories as ways to deflect responsibility.⁴ On the other hand, she pointed to switches between first and second person pronouns (*I* and *you*) as a prominent mechanism for involving the addressee into the story world, creating empathy and presenting a reflective self.

Although self-presentation is still a significant area of analysis, recent work has started to abandon the focus on the self and to favor analyses that take into account the interactional emergence of identity categories as a collaborative project between tellers and audiences. In much of this research, the concept of *indexicality* is a central one as it captures the process through which linguistic elements are connected to social meanings in ongoing processes of meaning creation. In the following sections we will explore these developments.

6.3.2 *Identities as social categories*

Although definitions and characterizations of identity vary widely, one main definitional criterion involves ascribing or claiming membership into groups. For example, according to a widely quoted definition by the social psychologist Tajfel, identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (1981: 255).

There would be much to say about identity being described as “self-concept,” but the point we want to underscore here is that group membership is essential to a sense of identity. The delimitation of group boundaries is implicit in social identity categories such as those related to gender, age, occupation, etc., and it is for this reason that the study of categorization has recently come to occupy center stage in research about identities. Indeed, if identity has to do with belonging to social categories, the study of how they are used and negotiated in discourse becomes an important task for discourse analysts. Categorization is an extremely significant mechanism, not only in storytelling, but in discourse in general, as it lays bare the basic assumptions and stereotypical views that members of a group hold with respect to themselves and others. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005: 594) rightly observe:

The most obvious and direct way that identities can be constituted through talk is the overt introduction of referential identity categories into discourse. Indeed, a focus on social category labels has been a primary method that nonlinguistic researchers have used to approach the question of identity ... The circulation of such categories within ongoing discourse, their explicit or implicit juxtaposition with other categories, and the

linguistic elaborations and qualifications they attract (predicates, modifiers, and so on) all provide important information about identity construction.

In the past, sociologists and anthropologists such as Durkheim (1954) and Lévi- Strauss (1963) highlighted the role of classification systems in cultural and social processes. They argued that such systems are the moulds provided by culture within which individuals and groups construct oppositions and affiliations, similarities and differences. They are thus basic to the creation of social meanings in general and of identity in particular. The role of language in these processes of categorization is crucial in that it is through language that membership categories are constructed and negotiated. The analysis of how these processes are managed in discourse, i.e. of how categories for identification are produced and made relevant by participants in interaction, has become one of the main areas of interest within studies of identity and is central to the movement of Membership Categorization Analysis (hence MCA; see, for example, Antaki and Widdicombe 1998; Hester and Eglin 1997). The proponents of this approach have worked around ideas on categorization first developed by Sacks (1972b and [1966] 1992e) to explain the underlying assumptions according to which interactants create and use “membership categories,” that is, employ a set of practices to refer to people and routinely link certain activities to them. Sacks, whose main interest is in how categories of membership figure in the common-sense worlds, describes the operation of generic reference categories in discourse. He says that categories such as “women,” “blacks,” “Jews” are used in a special way in that they are not seen just as designating individuals but as describing collections or sets of categories that go together (e.g. male/female) and as generalized entities so that judgments and attributions made in relation to them cannot be falsified. He sees such collections of categories as grounded in relationships (e.g. mother/baby) but also in knowledge, in particular professional knowledge. He also sees such categories as intrinsically bound to social activities:

We have our category-bound activities, where, some activity occurring, we have a rule of relevance, which says “look first to see whether the person who did it is a member of the category to which the activity is bound.” So that if somebody does being a fickle, or is observably being rich, you might then have a rule that permits you to select a preferred category to see who they are. And of course, using that procedure for finding the category, you may never come across occasions for seeing that it’s “incorrect” in the sense that the first procedure I suggest would end up showing.

Now, one consequence of that procedure’s use is, if it turns out that someone is a member of some category, then what you have is an explanation, X is fickle. Why? Use the relevance rule. It turns out that the one who did it is a woman, and women are fickle. One importance of these statements, then, is that they make some large class of activities immediately understandable, needing no further explanation. ([1966] 1992e: 337)

The MCA movement has strongly advocated a methodology of analysis of categorization processes in discourse centered on member's orientation to social identity categories and on local constructions of what belonging to those categories implies. In particular, Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) and Edwards (1997) have argued that analysts should not assume the relevance of political or social identity categories for a particular interaction unless such relevance is manifested by the participants themselves. Since Sacks' influential work, there has been an internal dialogue within conversation analysis about the validity and applicability of MCA, not helped by the fact that Sacks did not work with conversational data when he developed MCA. In reviewing the history of MCA in the field, Schegloff (2007: 464) states:

As the focus of CA work came increasingly to be on conversational materials, carefully transcribed, the work on categorization devices receded ... One key site for work on categorization has been story telling, and that may not be coincidental but worth pursuing. For example, a great deal of the subsequent work by others that draws on MCA is addressed to interview data, that is, data in which recounting is done, but which does not focus on the interview itself as a site of talk-in-interaction. Still, the relevance of membership categorization has seemed to many to extend past these boundaries to the very constitution and organization of perception, of understanding, of the character of stipulated reality, to the organization of experience. The question is whether it is possible to find a way to re-engage or adapt the early analytic work to the sort of data which the current state of the art requires – a constraint which Sacks himself insisted on. The answer to that question is by no means clear.

Recent studies of categorization in storytelling have pointed to the need to combine close attention to how identities are locally constructed with how larger constructs (e.g. ideologies) play within local interactional displays (see Bucholtz 1999a; De Fina 2000 and 2006; Flannery 2008; Kiesling 2006; Moita Lopes 2006). This work has shown how tellers give situated meanings to categories describing race, ethnicity and gender, how they align or distance themselves from groups that are “naturally” associated with them, how different categories are often interconnected in discourse, and how stories are used to back up and negotiate positions about the social characteristics of in-group and out-group members. They have also underscored the role of macro-social categories and processes such as practices of exclusion and discrimination for locally constructed identities. For example, in his analysis of narratives told by a Brazilian boy, Hans, during a fifth grade literacy event, Moita Lopes (2006) shows that race and gender categories are associated in his discourse and that those associations reflect mainstream discourses about sexuality. Hans tells, for instance, a brief story in which he depicts his father scolding his sister for being out in the street instead of staying home while at the same time instigating him to go and find a girlfriend. In the story, Hans uses his father's words to legitimize both his own masculinity and his vision of what it means to be

a man in society by creating an opposition between men and women through a characterization of the former as hunters and the latter as prey. In addition, Hans indexes this vision about men and women by presenting his father as the most authoritative character in the narrative and as someone who dictates to members of the family what they should or should not do. These oppositions between “normal” and marked identities are built in the stories around stereotypical views of blacks as lazy, homosexuals as weird and pathetic, and women as sexual prey and are supported through the recounting of the actions that black, homosexuals and feminine characters perform in the stories.

In other cases, commonly shared views about particular categories may become the object of critical scrutiny.

Conversation analysts have been particularly attuned to the study of categorization in institutional settings. For example, Stokoe (2006) and Stokoe and Edwards (2007) analyzed person formulations (cf. references) in neighbor dispute mediation (e.g. mediation sessions, telephone calls to mediation centers). They found that such person formulations did not occur as direct descriptions (e.g. “She is an X”) but in reported speech, and ultimately in narrative accounts (e.g. “They called me an X”). These stories normally reported why the teller’s previous attempts to solve problems with neighbors had failed and often served as scene-setting devices, which described a trouble-free, pre-dispute period of time. The important finding in Stokoe and Edwards’ study is that identity-relevant categories such as person formulations were put to use methodically in specific interactional environments, presenting systematicity in their location and design as well as in the types of responses that follow them. For instance, a systematic practice for reporting racial insults involved pairing national or ethnic categories with another word (e.g. *Paki bastard*, *bitch Somali*) or editing the racial insults with generalizers and extenders (e.g. *black this*). In both cases though, the two-word formulation was maintained, either by indexing the swearword or by stating it next to the ethnic or racial category. Such person formulations received a continuum of response types from the mediation interviewers, from explicit assessments to minimal but aligned acknowledgments in mediation talk, to no affiliative response in police interviews. This work is a good example of how an identities-in-interaction approach can uncover systematicity in the use of categorizations in conversations by social actors. However, in this case as with other MCA analyses, little is said about how exactly telling a story is linked with the uses of categorizations and the types of responses they generate. This is despite the attested close association between person formulations and reported speech (which in itself is part of a story). As we have said previously (see Chapter 4), a certain lack of attention to stories in their own right characterizes most conversation analysis. As a result, here too there is much scope for exploring, from a conversation-analytic point of view, how identities as categorizations are worked up within the context of telling a

story and how that differs to or compares with other discourse activities that take place in a conversation.

In an attempt to redress this balance, Georgakopoulou (2008) examined self- and other- categorizations, ascriptions and characterizations (cf. in her terms, identity claims) in stories as narrative-interactive resources. For the analysis, she postulated the distinction between *taleworld* and *telling* identity claims, recognizing that the immediate sequential context in a storytelling event in which claims occur is consequential for their interactional management. *Taleworld identity claims* pertain to characters (either third parties or the teller as a character) in the reported events and are embedded in the narrative (inter) action (e.g. they may occur in reported speech: as in *He was looking so sexy*). *Telling identity claims* on the other hand pertain to the interactional level of the here-and-now / you and I of the local storytelling situation and either suspend the narrative action (reminiscent of external evaluation; Labov 1972) or serve as a follow-up/coda to the reported action: e.g. *I'm too smart for sweet talk*.

The analysis showed that in the context of the classroom stories of 14-year-old female students in a London comprehensive school, such identity claims were predominantly about physical appearance and modes of conduct. They were also organized relationally, in contrastive pairs of positive and negative attributes (e.g. “pretty” – “ugly”). Finally, they were associated with likes and dislikes and with certain category-bound activities in plots and in that respect served as membership categorization devices. This system of organization comprised hierarchies of attributes and thus (re)constructed notions of normative value agreed upon in the local network: for example, what it is appropriate for a man or a woman to say, act like, where applicable wear, etc. in specific environments ranging from MSN (with web cam) to text-messaging and so on. The study also showed that taleworld identity claims supported the main teller's rights to tell the story's events and contributed to their tellability. Telling identity claims, on the other hand, were normally produced in relation to a story's evaluation and the overall assessment of the characters talked about. There, they set up spaces for co-construction between teller and interlocutors and a joint exploration of moral frames. Overall, identity claims were drawn upon as interactional resources, in order to justify, defend or challenge a point of view. In similar vein, the tellers did not always wholeheartedly subscribe to an identity claim made, but at times they playfully invoked it and distanced themselves from it.

Showing how identity claims in stories ultimately perform social actions and are sequentially managed stands in contrast to the tendency within biographical research on narratives to take identity claims at face value and in representational terms, when in actual conversations, identity claims are primarily interactional resources. In fact, as we will see in the following sections, looking at explicit identity ascriptions and categorizations is only one part of

what the identities-in-interaction approach includes in its remit. There is also systematic attention to the ways in which semiotic resources and details in the conversational management more, or less, subtly index larger social roles.

6.3.3 *Identities as semiotic resources: indexicality*

We saw in the previous section that identities can be identified through social identity categories. Sometimes the criteria for membership into these categories or the social consequences of belonging to them are openly discussed and contested. However, a great deal of identity work is done much more indirectly, through the use of symbolic processes. Sounds, words, expressions of a language, styles are associated with qualities, ideas, social representations and entire ideological systems. These in turn are related to social groups and categories which are seen as sharing or representing them, in a process of meaning creation that rests upon accepted social meanings but at the same time constantly modifies them. This process of pairing of utterances with extra-linguistic categories has been called *indexicality* (Silverstein 1976) based on the idea that symbols (not only linguistic ones) “index,” or point to something that is external to them. Phonological traits and styles of speaking may become symbolically associated with complex systems of meaning such as ideologies, social representations about group membership, social roles and attributes, presuppositions about all aspects of social reality, individual and collective stances, practices and organization structures. Thus, for example, dropping *-ing* endings may be associated with popular speech and may be used by a speaker as an index of authenticity. Or, speaking English with a French accent may be related with being sexy. Recent research on narrative (see, among others, Bucholtz 1999a; De Fina 2006; Georgakopoulou 2007; Kiesling 2006; Maryns and Blommaert 2001) has emphasized the importance of a close analysis of the ways in which these resources are deployed in narrative, arguing that such a detailed study of talk allows for a deeper understanding of the subtleties and complexities of identity work. Indexical processes are often revealing of the coexistence of conventional and creative ways in which people use social knowledge to construct themselves and others.

The analyses have shown that identities are projected through clusters of indexical resources that involve juxtapositions of narrated action, choice of words and syntax, metaphors and cues such as intonation, rhythm, code choice and switching, etc. Often these clusters amount to particular styles of telling that become associated with identities based on shared social knowledge. An example of the complexity of these mechanisms is provided by Mary Bucholtz (1999a) in her analysis of how masculine identities are managed and projected in a narrative told in a sociolinguistic interview. The story, told by a Californian male student, centers around a mugging perpetrated against him.

In the example, the narrator and protagonist is white while the story world opponent is African American, and race is signaled as an important construct by the teller himself. Bucholtz notes that in the first part of the narrative the teller reproduces stereotypical associations between language, race, gender and identity by presenting his African American opponent as violent and therefore reinforcing an ideological representation of black masculinity as characterized by physical brutality and aggressiveness. Bucholtz shows that at many points in the story, the white student uses African American Vernacular (henceforth AAVE) phonology, intonation and grammar in constructed dialogue to characterize his opponent. When his antagonist speaks, his use of AAVE together with word selection and intonation projects and indexes the identity of a physically and verbally abusive person. For example, after pushing the protagonist, the African American character is depicted as saying, “what you gonna do you little punk ass *whi:te bi:tch*” (1999a: 448). This utterance indexes the aggressiveness of the antagonist through the choice of words (the use of insults), syntax (AAVE copula deletion, i.e. the absence of the verb to be in “what you gonna do”), and the juxtaposition of the utterance with violent action (pushing). In the same scene, the narrator as character in the story world speaks in a colloquial variety of English and is depicted as non confrontational through his actions. In other parts of the dialogue, the African American antagonist is characterized as using further typical AAVE features when his speech is reported. For example, he uses a monophthongal (ay) and glottalized word-final (d). These elements co-occur with a description of actions and utterances that index aggressiveness and violence. Thus, the stylization of the antagonist’s AAVE speech in the story is central to his characterization as violent. Bucholtz notes that these associations between the use of AAVE and aggression are indexically produced via a widespread ideology of masculinity in which African Americans males are constructed as physically overbearing and violent. Allegiance to such ideology is presupposed by the teller. However, there are other points in the narrative in which the narrator himself crosses⁵ into AAVE. These instances of language crossing co-occur with the description by the narrator of his encounter as a story world figure with two school friends who are African American and who save him from the grip of his antagonist. When reproducing his own words in the dialogue with these two friends, the narrator himself uses features of AAVE speech. In this case, then, the code shift indexes his identification and solidarity with African Americans, rather than his opposition to the group. As Bucholtz explains, identification with aspects of the African American culture is an aspect of the urban youth identity that many white boys embraced in the High school in which the research took place.

The significance of this analysis lies in that it shows how tellers may use exactly the same linguistic resources to make completely different identity claims. In this case, switches into AAVE index in one case distancing and in

another case alignment with members of the African American community. Another important point here is that identities can be complex and multilayered and can combine competing (dominant and non-dominant) ideologies (e.g. the view of black people as physically abusive and cool at the same time). Finally, the analysis also shows how the same narrator can switch between very different identity enactments in the same narrative.

Indexical cues can be very subtle. In their analysis of stories told by an asylum seeker in Belgium, Maryns and Blommaert (2001) discuss how speakers use patterns at different levels (linguistic, thematic, affective, epistemic, etc.) to organize the narration. They illustrate that stylistic shifts between distinct patterns are very subtle, both because the speaker uses a mixed language that incorporates elements of different varieties and because he plays with different voices that enact varied selves (the rebel, the victim, the black man in Europe, etc.). Thus, changes in identities and stances in this case get communicated through a clustering of indexical cues that belong to a variety of levels of structure. In the authors' words (p. 79):

the narration of experience is mediated through a number of micro-shifts and this at various levels: structure (intonation, grammar, etc.), mobilizing heavy stylistics, place-time articulations (narrative mode associated with place) and through identity work. Packages of performance can actually be identified as "voice" and identity building.

Work on indexicality has greatly contributed to our sense that the study of the enactment and production of identity within narrative cannot be reduced to the analysis of themes and explicit affiliations, but it still needs to delve into the immense richness of linguistic resources at all levels of expression.

6.3.4 *Identities-in-interaction and telling roles*

The current emphasis on the fluidity and emergence of identities in discourse, particularly in interactional sites, where they can present a multiplicity of meanings, brings together approaches to discourse as diverse as social constructionism and conversation analysis (Widdicombe 1998: 201). Nonetheless, there is far less convergence on how the discourse constructions of identities relate to factors that are external to a specific interactional situation (sic *exogenous*). Despite the focus on the communicative how of identities within identities-in-interaction, exactly how identities are located in interactions and how they can be linked with macro-social identities remain points of theoretical and methodological debate. The conversation-analytic view very much locates the macro in the micro and as such sees a person's identities as their display of, or ascription to, membership of some social category, with consequences for the interaction in which the display or ascription takes place. Which category or combination of categories, and which of the characteristics it affords are

matters of changeable arrangements made locally. Membership of a category is ascribed (and rejected), avowed (and disavowed) and displayed (and ignored) in local places and at certain times, and it does these things as part of the interactional work that constitutes people's lives. In their introduction to the oft-quoted volume *Identities in talk*, Antaki and Widdicombe specify five principles which a conversation-analytic approach to identities endorses:

1. For a person to “have an identity” – whether he or she is the person speaking, being spoken to, or being spoken about – is to be cast into a category with *associated characteristics or features* (the sort of thing you'd expect from any member of that category; their actions, beliefs, feelings, obligations, etcetera).
2. Such casting is *indexical and occasioned*. That is, it only makes sense in its local setting.
3. The casting *makes relevant* the identity to the interactional business going on.
4. The force of “having an identity” is its *consequentiality* in the interaction – what it allows, prompts or discourages participants to do next.
5. All these things are visible in people's exploitation of the *structures of conversation*.

This nose-to-data approach and the single-minded focus on the specifics of a local interaction are not shared by all analysts. Drawing upon a wide range of social science and sociolinguistic approaches, Bucholtz and Hall (2005), for instance, propose a more synthetic, sociocultural linguistic, framework of identities analysis, which “focuses on both the details of language and the workings of culture and society” (p. 5). Their five principles are still premised on a view of identities “as intersubjectively rather than individually produced and interactionally emergent rather than assigned in a priori fashion” (p. 6). However, they also include local ethnographic categories and they aim at forging links between identities as discursively constructed in local contexts and larger, macro-social categorizations. The principles in question are as follows:

1. **Emergence:** Identities are viewed as emergent products, a fundamentally social and cultural phenomenon (p. 7).
2. **Positionality:** This principle stresses the fact that identities “encompass macrolevel demographic categories, local, ethnographically specific cultural positions and temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles” (p. 14).
3. **Indexicality:** By this principle, the links between language choices and social identities, instead of necessarily and automatically being direct, straightforward and explicit, are variously implicit, indirect and based on associations.

4. **Relationality:** In this case, identities are not seen “as autonomous or independent but always acquire social meaning in relation to other available identity positions and other social actors” (p. 26). Furthermore, identity relations include “sameness/difference, similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy” (p. 26).
5. **Partialness:** This principle stresses the fact that any construction of identity is ever-shifting as the interaction unfolds, partly habitual, partly strategic and partly the outcome of interactional negotiation (p. 28). Taking this argument further, we can claim that no analytical account of identities construction can be complete and comprehensive.

This turn to identities-in-interaction within socially minded approaches to language has also been gaining currency within narrative analysis. As we have already suggested before (section 6.3.1), in this systematic turn to identities, one of the first domains to capture the analysts’ attention was the ways in which tellers presented aspects of their self by making the most of the possibilities that the separation between the here-and-now of the narrative telling and the there-and-then taleworld (cf. told, narrated events) afforded them. More recently, however, there has been a shift toward exploring ways of connecting narrative tellings with larger social identities. This inquiry involves scrutinizing the narrative genres and their specific language and interactional choices for how they more, or less, subtly and indirectly point to (cf. index) aspects of the teller’s identities, such as ethnicity, gender, age, etc. Context remains a key concept in this respect, and although there is an undeniably long-standing tradition of contextualized studies of narrative (e.g. ethnography of communication in studies such as Bauman 1986 and Hymes 1981, among others) there are distinct elements in this latest shift that, as we have argued elsewhere (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008a), qualify it as a “new” narrative turn:

1. An increasing acceptance of narrative as talk-in-social interaction informed by conversation analysis (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2007; chapters in Quasthoff and Becker 2005; Schegloff 1997).
2. An emphasis, derived from recent theories of context and genre (e.g. Bauman 2001), not just on the *contextualized* but also on the *contextualizing* aspects of narrative. In this sense, narrative is being studied both for the ways in which its tellings are shaped by larger sociocultural processes at work, including social identities, and for how it provides organization for the interactive occasions on which it occurs.
3. An increasing commitment to social theoretical concerns (mainly within the framework of cultural studies). This is particularly evident within studies that focus explicitly on narrative and identities (e.g. De Fina 2003a; De Fina, Bamberg, and Schiffrin 2006; Georgakopoulou 2002, 2007). One of the tasks here has been to problematize, de-essentialize or add nuance to

the widely held view that narrative is a privileged communication mode for making sense of the self.

This line of inquiry has already come a long way in forging links that are by no means presented as deterministic between narrative and identities through a focus on the action properties of language in narrative and away from the representational accounts of narrative studies in the social sciences.

This latest and more dynamic shift to narrative and identities-in-interaction has generated a renewed interest in co-construction. Within biographical research, it is fair to say that the researcher–researched co-construction has been widely acknowledged (e.g. Phoenix 2008; Squire 2008) as part of narrative interviews but mostly in general terms and not through painstaking, fine-grained analysis. On the other hand, a lot of the really groundbreaking work on teller–audience co-construction from an interactional point of view, which we discussed in Chapter 4, was carried out before the turn to identities-in-interaction and without a specific focus on identities. As a result, there is currently much scope for bringing the two together. Indeed, the premises of identities-in-interaction, as outlined above, necessitate a scrutiny of what kinds of local participation roles tellers assume in the course of a story’s telling and in turn what roles they project for their audience. Zimmerman (1998) has developed the idea of identities as participation roles that can provide an empirical handle on social identities. He suggests the following three kinds of identity at play in any social encounter:

Discourse (or interactional) identities, such as “questioner,” “answerer,” “inviter,” “invitee,” etc., which may well shift in the course of an interaction. Discourse identities are tied to the sequentiality of a conversation (e.g. adjacency pairs). As they are formed in and by participants’ actions, they constitute the type of activity underway and provide particular resources and constraints for the participants’ display of values within it (pp. 90–1).

Situational identities, such as “teacher,” “student,” “doctor,” “patient,” which come into play in particular kinds of situation. These are brought about by local telling roles and are connected with the topic at hand and the activity under way. In turn, situational identities link the local with the distal context of social activity by proposing to the interlocutors how they should understand the relevance of an exchange (p. 89) and by invoking the participants’ differential types and degrees of knowledge and skills regarding the activity underway.

Transportable identities (cf. exogenous, extra-situational) which are latent, travel with individuals across situations, and are potentially relevant at any time in a given interaction (e.g. “adolescent black girl,” “middle-aged white woman,” etc.).

Discourse identities have been shown to be one of the components of the conversational machinery that circumscribe and make salient the participants’ larger social identities, constituted of such attributes as gender, age, professional status, etc. (Goodwin 1987). As such, they provide a point of entry into

the exploration of the connection between the micro- and the macro-level of any interaction, in other words, of how details intrinsic or endogenous to the specific situation of the interaction make available or visible extra-situational resources. Put differently, these are assumed to furnish for the participants “a continuously evolving framework within which their actions ... assume a particular meaning, import, and interactional consequentiality” (Zimmerman 1998: 88). In this way, they provide not just the relevant proximal turn-by-turn context but also the distal context for social activities, that is, the oriented-to extra-situational agendas and concerns accomplished through such endogenously developing sequences of interaction. In general terms, according to Zimmerman, identities-in-interaction can either be “oriented to,” actively influencing the way that people try to shape both their own actions and the subsequent actions of others, or merely “apprehended” – tacitly noticed but not treated as immediately relevant to the interaction on hand. In turn, the interactional and institutional identities that a person projects at any moment may be ratified, reformulated or resisted in the immediately following actions of their interlocutors.

This intimate link between discourse and social identities has formed an object of inquiry mainly in talk in institutional contexts (see, for example, papers in Drew and Heritage 1992), where it has been shown how institutionally prescribed and pre-allocated roles, at best, shape and, at worst, constrain the participants’ organization of talk (i.e. turn-taking, turn design, sequence organization). As we have argued elsewhere (Georgakopoulou 2006), however, discourse identities (in the sense of local participation roles) have remained largely unexplored in the case of stories.

In a study of the pairing of storytelling participation roles (*sic* discourse identities) with social identities, Georgakopoulou showed how at the local level, different participants contributed in varying degrees to different story components, particularly plot line and evaluation. Furthermore, the participants were differentiated in the degree in which their contributions were ratified and taken on board by others or, equally, challenged and delegitimated. More specifically, the qualitative analysis of the data suggested that there were three types of telling roles that were important as platforms for the participants’ larger social roles and identities:

- a. The roles that participants assume vis-à-vis a story’s emerging structure
- b. The action performed with each of the contributions vis-à-vis prior story talk
- c. The shape of a participant’s story turn, that is, the local linguistic choices and devices in operation.

A quantitative analysis of the above-mentioned aspects in a corpus of selected stories showed that there were systematic and significant differences in the

ways in which each of the four participants (female adolescent friends) tended to contribute to different parts of the story. Another difference involved who ratified or challenged others' contributions more, and by the same token whose contributions were accepted or challenged more. What was perhaps more important was how these distinct telling roles for each participant brought into focus certain situational identities, again systematically assumed by each of them. These identities had to do with role-relevant and topic-relevant knowledge, that is, advice-seeking and -giving on one hand and expertise (in this case, in the topic of male/female relationships) on the other hand. These arrangements were visible in the participants' turn design and choice as well as in their storytelling contributions. For instance, Fotini, a participant who regularly assumed the identity of an advice-seeker and a novice tended to elicit stories from the other – more expert – participants and to pose clarification questions about the plot in the course of a story's telling. In turn, Vivi, who assumed the role of an advice-giver, provided by way of emplotment, solutions and suggestions to such questions.

But the co-articulation of telling with situational identities made also visible certain wider social identities: in the case of this study, gender identities, and the participants' relational identities as close friends. Overall then, the study showed the usefulness of extending Zimmerman's approach to identities-in-interaction to the analysis of stories. It also showed that a close link can be found between identity construction in narrative and a story's (emerging) structure. Looking into this relationship further would build on the interactional line of inquiry to narrative structure, as we discussed it in Chapter 4, which sees structure as raising alternative tasks and types of action for different participants (see Goodwin 1984: 245). Further studies in this direction could shed more light on how the relation between locally enacted participation roles and story parts bears on the tellers' identity construction.

The above suggests that there is still much scope for attempting to tie identities to particular kinds of story sequence and furthermore to examine the kinds of social action that they locally perform.

6.4 Sample analysis

Below, we will illustrate some of the discursive mechanisms for presenting self and others that we discussed above in an excerpt taken from a sociolinguistic interview with a Mexican undocumented worker, Antonio, 36 years old, which focused on his experience with migration. The interview was part of a corpus collected for a study on identity construction through narrative discourse among Mexican immigrants to the United States that we have quoted at different points in this book (De Fina 2003a). The interviews were centered on questions about the life trajectory of interviewees: why they had migrated,

what kind of jobs they had in Mexico, how they had arrived into the USA, found work, etc. and about their perceptions about life in the USA: what they liked or didn't like, whether they had adapted and/or changed as the result of this experience. The interviews were semi-structured: They loosely followed a set of questions but were rather open-ended since the interviewer tended to follow up on answers given by interviewees. The recordings took place at the interviewee's homes and were mostly done in the presence of a researcher and an assistant researcher who was also a member of the community.

Antonio, the interviewee here, had been coming to the USA on a temporary basis and then going back to Mexico for around ten years. Before the point where the transcript starts, the researcher had asked Antonio about his work experience in Mexico, and about how he had found jobs in the USA. When the excerpt begins, the interviewer is asking him about his impressions of the country when he first arrived.

(6.1)

Participants: (A)ntonio, R(earcher), I (Assistant researcher)

- 1 R: Y qué impresión le hizo el país cuando llegó?
- 2 A: (.)
- 3 R: Qué pensó cuando llegó aquí, qué era muy distinto qué no era muy distinto?
- 4 A: No, en todo es muy distinto,
- 5 en todo.
- 6 porque por ejemplo en el pueblo de uno puede andar uno a las dos
- 7 en la calle y nunca le falta nada,
- 8 y aquí no puede usted andar a las tres de la mañana, dos de la mañana,
- 9 solo,
- 10 sOlo, verdad?
- 11 porque pasan muchas cosas y allá en el pueblo de uno, no!
- 12 allá puede uno andar a la hora que quiera.
- 13 R: A usted le ha pasado algo aquí?
- 14 A: Nada más una vez (.)
- 15 nos asaltaron trabajando en un apartamento,
- 16 R: Uhu.
- 17 A: remodelando un apartamento, entraron y nos asaltaron ahí mismo,
- 18 a mí y a un patrón,
- 19 uh?
- 20 y con pistola y se imagina qué hacíamos,
- 21 a mí me quitaron veinte dólares que traía nada más,
- 22 a mi patrón su reloj y su dinero,
- 23 y toda la herramienta se la llevaron,

- 24 y y fueron morenos verdad? morenos,
 25 y todavía cuando fuimos a poner la demanda,
 26 nos dice el policía, 'Y cuántos hispanos eran?'
- 27 I: @[@
 28 R: [@ @ @
 29 A: A ver.
 30 R: Directamente.
 31 A: Uhu.
 32 y, y, y se enojó porque, el policía era moreno,
 33 le digo 'No, eran puros morenos, puros negros,'
 34 verdad? (.)
 35 ahora por ejemplo aquí ya no se puede salir ya ni en paz-,
 36 ya no se vive en paz aquí,
 37 por tanta droga que hay, tanta drogadicción, tanta cosa.
 38 R: Entonces, esa fue una diferencia.
 39 y qué otras cosas notó que le parecen diferentes en su país?

Translation

- 1 R: And what impression of the country did you have when you came?
 2 A.: (.)
 3 R: What did you think when you came, that it was very different, it
 wasn't different?
 4 A: No, everything it is very different,
 5 everything.
 6 because for example in one's village one can go around at two three
 in the morning,
 7 in the street and never miss anything,
 8 and here no you cannot go around at three in the morning, two in the
 morning.
 9 alone,
 10 alOne, right?
 11 because many things happen and there in one's village, they don't!
 12 there you can go around at the time you want.
 13 R: Has something happened to you here?
 14 A: Just once (.)
 15 they robbed us while working in an apartment,
 16 R: Uhu.
 17 A: remodeling an apartment, they came in and robbed us right there,
 18 me and an employer,
 19 uh?
 20 and with a pistol and can you imagine what could we do,
 21 they took from me just the twenty dollars that I carried,

- 22 from my employer his watch and his money,
 23 and all the tools they took them,
 24 and it was dark-skinned people, right? Dark-skinned people,
 25 and on top of it when we went to notify the police,
 26 the policeman says to us, "How many Hispanics were they?"
 27 I: @[@
 28 R: [@ @ @
 29 A: Let's see.
 30 R: Directly.
 31 A: Uhu.
 32 and, and, and the policeman got mad because he was dark skinned,
 33 I tell him, "No they were all dark skinned, all blacks,"
 34 right? (.)
 35 now for example here one cannot go out in peace any more-
 36 one does no longer live in peace here,,
 37 because of so much drug that there is, so much so much drug addiction,
 so much
 stuff happening.
 38 R: Then, this was one difference.
 39 and what other things did you notice that look different from your
 country to you?

As we can see from the transcript, Antonio does not answer the interviewer's question about his impressions of the country right away (line 2). However, in line 4 he starts arguing that everything is different in the USA with respect to Mexico. We see that he proposes a first opposition between his village and "here." In his village people can go around freely at any time in the night, while in the USA many things happen (lines 6–12). At this point, the researcher asks Antonio a narrative eliciting question, i.e. if something specific has happened to him. In response, Antonio produces a typical story-opening device ("just once," line 14) followed by a Labovian abstract in which he gives the gist of the narrative: "they robbed us while working in an apartment" (line 15). As we can see, Antonio does not describe the assailants in the beginning of the narrative. He simply refers to them as "they" (lines 15 and 17). In line 20, Antonio provides further details on his assailants: he describes them as being armed with pistols and comments, "Can you imagine what could we do." In Labovian terms, this utterance functions as external evaluation in that the narrator stops the action of the story to insert details and comments on the characters and their actions that convey his point of view on what was happening. In this case, he conveys his and his employer's sense of impotence in dealing with people who were armed. He then goes on to describe the things that were taken from him ("twenty dollars") and his employer (his "watch and some money plus all the

tools,” lines 21–23). Until line 23, there is not much evaluation of the events and the robbers have not been identified. However, in line 24, almost as if adding a detail, Antonio identifies the robbers as “morenos” (‘dark skinned’). Such a term was used by the Mexicans interviewed in the study as a more “politically correct” label for *negro* (‘black’). It is interesting to note that this description has, again, an evaluative function signaled by the repetition of the qualifier at the end of the line. Antonio starts building on the relevance of this description of his assailants in racial terms for the development of the story world action when he recounts that the police that they notified of the assault asked “how many Hispanics” there were (lines 25–26). Notice the function of the expression “on top of it” in the same line to signal Antonio’s evaluation of the police intervention as something that “topped” the negativity of the experience. Although nothing explicit is said here about relations between ethnic/racial groups, Antonio is implicitly conveying the idea that the policeman was prejudiced against Hispanics. Such an implicit meaning is partly being conveyed through the use of the expression “on top of it,” which, as we saw, implies that the police increased the problematic nature of the situation. It is also communicated through a selective use of reported speech. Indeed the policeman is presented as having uttered exclusively the question about the perpetrators of the robbery. The selection of this particular line of reported speech can be seen as creating an image of the policeman as prejudiced on the basis that it violates a generally shared expectation about police behavior in these circumstances, i.e. that policemen would try to seek information on the identity of the robbers instead of presupposing it. That this implication is understood is clear from the reactions of the audience. Both the researcher and the research assistant laugh here (lines 27–28), and then the researcher comments, “Directly” (line 30), thus indexing that she has understood what Antonio is trying to say. The preceding laughter coupled with this comment shows both an awareness of his interpretation of the behavior of the police as prejudiced and an alignment of the audience with Antonio’s implicit rejection of it. At this point Antonio has signaled, and his interlocutors have accepted, the relevance of the identification of the assailants as black for the unfolding of the action in the narrative and its evaluation. He has already indexed the relevance of the opposition black/Hispanic through both external evaluation (his identification of his assailants as “morenos” in line 24) and reaffirms it through use of constructed dialogue. In fact, the characters themselves voice their own understanding of how being black or Hispanic affects the interpretation of events. In particular, as we have seen, the policeman is presented as presupposing that if there is a robbery it must have been carried out by Hispanics (line 26), while Antonio is presented as emphatically contesting that interpretation. The emphasis is achieved through repetition of the robber’s race (“puros morenos, puros negros” [all dark skinned, all black], line 33). The relationship between being black or Hispanic

and the action in the story world is also emphasized in the external evaluation in line 32 since Antonio explains the policeman's anger with the fact that he was black (notice the use of the connective *because* in "the policeman got mad because he was dark skinned"). The use of these storytelling strategies allows Antonio to convey his stance toward the particular events and characters, but also toward interracial relationships more in general.

Antonio's use of identity descriptors based on race ("morenos," "negros") in this narrative is a good illustration of the way narrators use membership category devices to convey stances and attitudes about identities. In this case, the category "black" is related to the activity of "robbing" and members of the category are also attributed the characteristics of "being prejudiced" (at least against Hispanics) through a variety of devices. In this way, membership categorization devices are used to construct categories that are related to actions and properties in systematic ways and are therefore important in the construction of "us" versus "them" categories. In this case, the "them," i.e. black people, are constructed as criminals and as prejudiced. As we have seen, the narrator stresses the racial origin of the assailants through repetition at different points (lines 24, 32), thus emphasizing the opposition between the facts and the interpretation of the policeman. However, the repetition also has the effect of underscoring the importance of race and ethnicity to understand some further implications of the narrative. In fact, after the end of the story (lines 35–37), Antonio speaks of the difficulty of living in peace in his neighborhood. These lines seem to provide a further evaluation of the story as an example of the kinds of things that happen in the neighborhood based on the experience of the narrator as a victim of robbery. Since, in this case, the narrator underlines the race of the robbers, the meaning of the narrated events changes: it is not just a robbery, but a robbery carried out by blacks. This information creates a relevance space not only with respect to the action in the story world, but also with respect to the more general evaluation of the story: since the narrative has at its center black people acting in a criminal way, all the other criminal activities going on in the neighbourhood, such as drug consumption and violence, can also be more easily attributed to them.

In the light of the above, we can say that Antonio is discursively constructing identities indexically, rather than directly or explicitly. A typical mechanism of identity construction in discourse is opposition and Antonio builds an opposition between blacks and Hispanics which is centered on the description of blacks as criminals (the robbers) or in any case dishonest (the policeman) and of Hispanics as victims. These meanings are conveyed indirectly. Nothing is said openly about ethnicity or race relations, but Antonio's stance is indexed, as we have seen, through evaluation, constructed dialogue, repetition, emphasis, and temporal ordering of actions and reactions. Together these linguistic strategies help convey his point on the story and his vision of how

having a certain identity implies acting in a certain way toward other individuals categorized as members of specific social groups. However, Antonio is also relying on the mobilization of indexical associations between identities and social characteristics that are part of circulating discourses and representations. For example, the idea that black people are prone to criminal activity is widely circulated in US public discourses.⁶ Also the idea that black people do not like Hispanic people is both shared among members of this group and part of circulating stereotypes about minority relations. Thus, although our analysis started from local identity negotiations, it has led us to the consideration of the role of stereotypes that are brought to bear in the interaction. Given the audience responses during the storytelling, the presuppositions sustaining these stereotypes appear to be shared among the three participants. That said, it is also important to note that the researcher was not familiar with prevailing views about race relations in this particular community at the beginning of her research. She reached a certain understanding of how people felt about other ethnic or racial groups through the process of interviewing different members of the community, discussing her observations with them and with the research assistant who also was a member of the community, and gathering other kinds of data and information on Mexican immigrants in the area. In brief, the analyst's interpretation of identity construction in discourse depended on a close analysis of interaction data, but it also went beyond them to the wider context of social relationships, ideologies and stances that may be shared by members of a particular community (for details, see De Fina 2003a, chapters 5 and 6). Making these connections necessitates some form of ethnographic work.

How different would the above analysis be if it had been done from a conversation-analytic perspective? CA analysts would devote attention to the identities constructed within the interactional occasion, pointing, for example, to the situational orientation of the participants as interviewer/interviewee and as teller/ audience as elicited by the interview format. The analysis of the use of MCA would have probably pointed to the type of implicit meanings that we have signaled in the construction of black people as a category defined by certain kinds of actions, but there would have been no attempt to relate those meanings to Antonio's macro-identity as a member of a community of Mexican undocumented workers and to circulating discourses in this and the larger community. Indeed, these kinds of generalizations would be seen as illustrations of the analyst imposing her own categories on the data.

In this respect, the two approaches would produce quite different readings of the same data. However, there are advantages in trying to find a middle ground and in attempting to reduce the distance between more macro- and more micro-oriented approaches. While the consideration of what Coupland and Coupland have called middle-range contextualization (see above p. 00) may allow discourse analysts to understand how local identity construction

depends a great deal on processes that lie outside it, greater attention to the local level can prevent them from reaching unwarranted conclusions. In this case, for example, a fine-grained analysis of the discourse management and construction of local roles by participants allows for a more nuanced understanding of categorization processes as sheds light on the fact that portable identities, such as racial or ethnic ones, are often invoked as part of strategic negotiations with the interlocutor, rather than as categories with absolute and fixed meanings.

PROOF

Notes

1 Narrative definitions, issues and approaches

- 1 We distinguish here between “classical” narratologists, that is the founders of the narratological approach to literary texts such as Bal, Genette and Prince, and “post-classical narratologists” who, according to Prince (2008: 115), share the same commitment to formalism as their predecessors but are more interested in studying narrative as “contextually situated practice.”
- 2 However, this assumption is not shared by transmedial narratologists who are interested in the study of narratives in different media. See Herman (2010: 196) who argues that “Unlike classical, structuralist narratology, transmedial narratology disputes the notion that the fabula or story level of a narrative (= what is told) remains wholly invariant across shifts of medium (= an aspect of how that ‘what’ is presented).”
- 3 We refer to these authors as structuralists in that they followed some basic principles first laid out by Ferdinand de Saussure. Amongst those, the most important was that languages are systems of elements which can be described based on their combinations and oppositions independently of their concrete use and realization.
- 4 Prince ([1987: 65] 2003) defines it as “The set of properties characterizing NARRATIVE and distinguishing it from non-narrative: the formal and contextual features making a (narrative) text more or less narrative, as it were.”
- 5 Hortatory discourse in Longacre’s terms is any discourse that attempts to persuade the addressee to fulfill commands, and typical examples of it include sermons, political speeches and warnings to children.
- 6 The definition of genre is yet another complicated and controversial issue. We will, however, discuss the view of narrative as genre within sociolinguistic perspectives in section 3.0.

2 Narrative as text and structure

- 1 See Mishler (1995) for a discussion of this point.
- 2 We reproduce the coding proposed by Labov and Waletzky. Note that the authors divide the narrative into lines corresponding to independent clauses, or independent clauses + their dependent clauses, whenever those exist.
- 3 On this point see Edwards (1997: 141–2).
- 4 Bauman (1986) showed that dog hunters expect their interlocutors to make up stories. The ability to recount tall tales is regarded as an art among them.

- 5 Keller-Cohen and Dyer (1997) go as far as arguing that Labov and Waletzky in fact took active steps to constrain the intertextuality of the stories in their data by controlling, for example, the context of the story occurrence (i.e. by means of elicitation) and the type of story (they chose personal stories). In their view, Labov and Waletzky saw intertextuality as “a resource to manage in such a way as to not infringe into a kind of analysis aimed at drawing generalizations across narrative structures and abstracting a stable structure across contexts” (p. 150).
- 6 *The Journal of Narrative and Life History*, vol. VII (1997), a retrospective of Labov and Waletzky 1967, makes reference to several of those. Polanyi (1989) is a notable case inasmuch as it was one of the earlier studies to bring into sharp focus the context-specificity of the model, evaluation in particular.
- 7 The obvious parallels between the notion of involvement (Tannen 1989) and evaluation are a case in point (see Chapter 3 for a discussion). Attempts to formalize “positioning strategies” (see discussion in Chapter 6) have also had to use Labov and the notion of evaluation as a point of departure (e.g. Bamberg 1997; Wortham 2000). It is notable too that multilevel analyses that introduce narrative dimensions such as teller-tale-telling or narrated vs. narrative event (see Bamberg 1997; Blum-Kulka 1997) that were neglected in Labov’s model still more or less explicitly appeal to a notion of narrative structure.
- 8 The idea that storytelling, even in its everyday forms, has a poetic quality and aesthetic functions has been fruitfully developed by narrative analysts. Polanyi (1982), for example, talked of “literary complexity” as a characteristic of everyday stories, showing that narrators use devices such as indeterminacy, polyphony or indirect free style that are typical of literary forms of language. Tannen (1989) also argued that literary narrative is a refinement of everyday storytelling, that the devices used by everyday narrators to manipulate different voices within a story are close to the ones employed in novels and short stories, and that storytelling, because of its aesthetic qualities, creates involvement in audiences. Building on the tradition of uncovering (instead of erasing) the verbal artistry involved in everyday talk, Georgakopoulou (1997) analyzed performance devices in conversational storytelling, grouping them into theatrical and poetic devices. We will come back to this point in Chapter 3.
- 9 For example, Poveda (2002) proposes an ethnopoetic reading of a narrative told by a Gypsy child during sharing time (*la ronda*) in a Spanish kindergarten classroom. In similar vein as Gee, Poveda uses ethnopoetics to demonstrate both the high communicative skills possessed by a child belonging to a group that is normally classified as less proficient than other groups in the educational setting, and the existence of storytelling traditions and practices that are profoundly different from the ones known and taught in the Western world.
- 10 The terms *emic* and *etic*, first introduced by the linguist Kenneth Pike (1967), refer to interpretations produced from the point of view of a member of a specific culture (emic) as opposed to those produced by external observers (etic).
- 11 See Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) for an accessible introduction to the conversation analysis.
- 12 Emergence is discussed in Hanks (1996), and it originates in linguistic research by, among others, Hopper (1987).

3 Narrative and sociocultural variability

- 1 For a comparison between the two scholars, see Dundes (1997).
- 2 Hufford (1995: 528) describes contextualist theories of language and culture as emerging from a “pandisciplinary shift from an explanatory quest for universal principles to an interpretive exploration of situated communication.”
- 3 The term *formalist* here is used to refer to views of language in which the focus of attention is on the form, seen as an autonomous level that can be studied in its own merit. Formalism was typical of linguistic models that dominated in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, in his grammar model (1965), Chomsky posited a rigid division between levels of linguistic description: syntax was independent from semantics (the level of meaning) and phonetics (the level of sound). The effect of formalism was seen in the emphasis on the creation of descriptive systems that addressed each individual linguistic level.
- 4 For a discussion of context in different discourse approaches, see Schiffrin 1994: 365–78.
- 5 See section 2.2.1, for an explanation of the distinction between *emic* and *etic*.
- 6 See Darnell (1974: 315) on this point. The author argues that traditional performers change and adapt their performances to different audiences (including researchers) and social occasions.
- 7 Bauman also aims at an extension and a deepened understanding of the concept of performance relating it not to idea of “folklore,” but to concepts such as verbal art and oral literature. The concept ties verbal art with ways of speaking. In his words: “Verbal art may comprehend both myth narration and the speech expected of certain members of society whenever they open their mouths, and it is performance that brings them together in culture-specific and variable ways, ways that are to be discovered ethnographically within each culture and community” (1969: 5).
- 8 Similarly, Katherine Young distinguished between different narrative frames that are embedded in what she calls *the realm of conversation: the story realm* (i.e. the world of the telling) and *the taleworld* (or the world of the story) (1987: 28).
- 9 A discussion of the role of detail (particularly orientation detail) in building up audience participation can also be found in Lavandera (1981). The author argued that orientations, besides providing temporal, spatial and personal coordinates for the story, also reflect social expectations about what is relevant to a particular group of speakers. By calculating such expectations, the speaker can create specific pragmatic effects such as audience involvement.
- 10 A case in point is Georgakopoulou’s study (1997) of performance devices in Greek conversational stories. The analysis showed that the sustained use of narrative present and constructed dialogue (two of the main involvement strategies in Tannen’s study of Greek storytelling, 1989) was far from a clear-cut culturally shaped performance choice. As it happened, the use of the devices also fulfilled organizational purposes: it demarcated different narrative parts. It was thus difficult to suggest that the devices in question acted as solely or primarily performance or involvement mechanisms.
- 11 In the original project, narratives were transcribed based on a division in clauses. We reproduced the coding used in the study.
- 12 The notion of a socio-centric conception of the self, proposed by Hill in connection with pronominal choice, has also been used by social psychologists that have looked

at the degree of social orientation in the discourse of different social groups such as ethnic communities or children (see Veroff, Chadiha, Leber and Sutherland 1993; and Dreyer, Dreyer and Davis 1987).

4 Narrative as interaction

- 1 Following a sequential approach such as that proposed by Jefferson, Kjaerbeck and Asmuss (2005), observe that story closings often follow a three-step sequence that starts with the punch line, that is the climax of the story. First, the punch line is produced, then the recipient acknowledges the modality of the story, i.e. the kind of story the teller is producing (whether it is a funny, sad, ridiculous story, etc.) and finally the teller acknowledges the recipient's comprehension. The function of this sequence is to negotiate the frame of understanding of the story. Then a post-punch-line sequence starts. In this second sequence storyteller and participants negotiate understanding, i.e. they jointly produce Labov's story evaluation (see section 2.1).
- 2 As we discussed in section 3.4, Blum-Kulka distinguished between three different socioculturally shaped modes of performance based on audience participation and distribution of rights, namely the monologic, the dialogic and the polyphonic mode.
- 3 Another angle on retellings has been recently proposed by Bamberg (2008) who locates their importance in their ability to put together a sense of self and rework it on different occasions, and therefore regards them as an ideal basis for a developmental look into the formation of self and identity.
- 4 Norrick (2000) has used the term *diffuse* for those half-tales.

5 Narrative power, authority and ownership

- 1 In Bourdieu's terms: "In a determinate social formation, the stabler the objective structures and the more fully they reproduce themselves in the agents' dispositions, the greater the field of doxa, of that which is taken for granted. When, owing to the quasi-perfect fit between the objective structures and the *internalized* structures which results from the logic of simple reproduction, the established political and cosmological order is perceived not as arbitrary, i.e. as one possible order among others, but as a self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned, the agents' aspirations have the same limits as the objective conditions of which they are the product" (1977: 176).
- 2 Critical Discourse Analysis, or CDA, whose most prominent proponents are van Dijk, (1984, 1993), Fairclough (1989) and Wodak (1999), focuses on the study of language as a form of social practice and has amongst its objectives the use of linguistic analysis to fight social injustice and power abuse. "CDA sees itself as politically involved research with an emancipatory requirement: it seeks to have an effect on social practice and social relationships, for example in teacher development, in the elaboration of guidelines for non sexist language use or in proposals to increase the intelligibility of news and legal texts" (Tischer, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2000: 147). Critical discourse analysts are particularly interested in public discourse such as political discourse, the language of the press and of the mass media.
- 3 See, for example, Goodwin (1990) and Shuman (1986) on the use of stories to create alignments among groups of adolescents.

- 4 We use the term *index* to refer to a process through which sounds, words, expressions of a language, styles are associated with qualities, social roles, ideas, social representations and entire ideological systems. We will discuss indexicality in depth in section 6.3.3.
- 5 Studies of the inclusion of voices in stories, particularly in instances of reported speech, routinely draw on Bakhtin's (1981) concepts of *heteroglossia* and *polyphony* to describe the stratification of a variety of different and at times conflicting (as in the case of heteroglossia) voices within utterances, and even within the same word (see, for example, Hill 1995).
- 6 For a review of work connecting the use of reported speech to authority building see Briggs (1996a: 27).
- 7 Bash, D. McCain tells his story to voters. CNNpolitics.com, March 31, 2008 www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/03/31/mccain.tour/index.html. Site accessed 4/5/08.
- 8 Both these authors talk about the persistence of the political motif of the regular guy, the anti-intellectual and anti-snob in republican political campaigns. They also argue that both Ronald Reagan and George Bush have been presented this way by their party and gained popularity because of their association with average people. For a press story applying the idea of the regular guy to one of the 2008 Republican presidential candidates (Fred Thompson), see Rodrick (2007).
- 9 Blommaert's (2005) summary of definitions of ideology is comprehensive and clear. He discusses certain fundamental antinomies, such as those between ideologies as cognitive systems versus ideologies as practices, or between ideologies as monolithic wholes versus ideologies as diffused elements of common sense and proposes some alternatives.
- 10 See, for example, the following text from the Introduction to a special issue of *Narrative Inquiry* on power and narrative: "The development of each of these three conceptual frameworks [Postmodern, postcolonial and feminist theories], albeit variously expressed, has been founded to a significant degree upon the recognition of the myriad narratives that make up any reality, and all three are thus intricately intertwined. While perhaps not the first, postmodern theorists have been the most influential in articulating and focusing attention on the question of meta-narratives" (Daya and Lau: 2007: 6).
- 11 See, for example, Fowler (1991) and Hodge and Kress (1993).
- 12 Taking the case of an indigenous woman unjustly accused of infanticide, Briggs (2007) details, for example, the extremely homogeneous (and, in his view ideologically biased) depiction of infanticide in news stories in the Venezuelan press. According to him, the press criminalized all episodes of infanticide by: placing news stories that focused on this topic in the crime section of the paper and framing them in the lead as stories of crime, embedding them in textual fields that indexically linked them to violent crimes, setting up contrasts between dehumanized parents and romanticized children, selectively quoting witnesses, judges and legal professionals, not giving voice to the accused. Briggs concludes that, "ideological constructions of communication enable powerful actors to determine what will count as silences, lies, and surpluses, just as they create silences of their own – these cartographies of communication write issues of critical poverty, domestic violence and sexual abuse, and the violence of the state out of infanticide narratives" (2007: 328).

- 13 Baynham and De Fina defend this political stance in the introduction to their edited volume on displacement in narratives: “In an era in which public discourses, particularly in the media, increasingly present displacements through the lenses of nationalist and racist rhetoric (Wodak and Rieseigl 1999), creating atmospheres of social panic in which migrants and refugees are seen as threatening the stable borders of national identities, there is an urgent need for accounts of such processes ‘from the inside,’ emphasizing through micro discourse analysis the subjective construction of these movements of human beings, rather than the objectivist ‘othering’ of these in nationalist or racist mainstream discourses, and offering an ‘emic’ perspective (Harris 1999) on them” (2005: 2).

6 Narrative and identities

- 1 This turn to identities has been slow, as shown by the fact that the focal concerns of the area looked very different in 1996 when Schiffrrin made a plea for sociolinguistic studies of narrative and identities (in her terms, narratives act as “self-portraits”).
- 2 Micro-meso-macro should be understood here as a metaphor, a heuristic for analysis. Not only is the distinction a continuum rather than a trichotomy; there are also multiple levels involved on each end.
- 3 For a more recent study on self-presentation amongst successful professional women, see Wagner and Wodak (2006).
- 4 See Anderson (2008) for an analysis of similar strategies in narratives of violence.
- 5 The term *crossing* is used here to designate the use by a speaker of the language variety of a group that the teller is not demonstrably a member of (Rampton 1995).
- 6 In his book *A Country of strangers: Blacks and whites in America*, David Shipler writes, for example, “The image of black violence spins through daily life like a dust devil across a plain. It filters so thoroughly into the American consciousness that non blacks actually argue among themselves about whether or not they are justified in discriminating against all black males as a shortcut to security. A *Washington Post* columnist, Richard Cohen, wrote sympathetically of jewelers who refuse to buzz blacks through the locked glass doors of their downtown stores. A public radio host in Washington allowed, without comment or objection, the assertion by Dynesh D’Souza, a right-wing writer originally from India, that taxi drivers should be legally permitted to refuse black men as passengers; this, he claimed, was ‘rational discrimination’” (1997: 358–9)

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Index

- abstract, 28, 30, 36
Account(s), 113, 129–30, 137, 139
Acronym for Speaking, 60
Adjacency pairs, 43
agency, 75–6, 79, 169–70
alignment, 89, 159, 168, *see also* participant
 (mis)alignment(s)
animator, 106, 169
anthropologist, French, 54–5
argument(s), 11, 97, 98, 103, 105
argumentation, 11, 97
argumentative devices, 97, 98, 103
argumentative stories, 97, 103, 104–5, 115
audience, 58, 59, 70, 91, 106, 115, 122
 diversity, 92, 93, 123
 interpretation, 62
 participation, 69, 72, 92–3, 95, 123
 uptake, 48, 70
author, 106, 122, 169
authority, 106, 137
- back-channeling, 93
breaking news, 117, 118, 120, 122
- capital D discourses, 162
categorization, 172, 173, 174, 190
 other, 175
 self, 175
category-bound activities, 172, 175
co-construction, 95, 132, 181
coda, 29, 30, 36
complicating action, 29, 30, 32, 49
consequentiality, 117, 179, 182
constructed dialogue, 70, 105, 136,
 see also reported speech; quoted
 speech
context, 54, 55–6, 61, 83, 129
 of culture, 55, 56, 58
 of situation, 55, 58
contextualism, 55
conversation analysis, 43–4, 48–50
co-teller(s), 91, 93, 105
 co-tellership, 87
credibility, 33, 137, 140
culture, 65, 66–7, 68, 71, 81, 83
 cultural grammar, 65–6
 diversity, 74, 84
- depersonalization, 76, 82
description, 11, 33
detail, 63, 72
dialogic/dialogicality, 70, 97, 158
direct speech, 59
disagreement, 74–5
discourse type, 11, *see also* genre;
 Text type
discursive mechanisms, 161, 183
double chronology, 123, 164
drama, 10, 16
dramatization, 64, 69, 141
- emergence, 44, 46, 48, 61, 178, 179
emic, 42, 74, 83
entextualization, 132, 133–4, 147
epistemic modalization, 165
ethnography/ethnographic studies, 19,
 53, 55
ethnopoetics, 37–8, 41, 43
evaluation, iii–2, 32–3, 34, 49, 65
 embedded, 29, 32
 external, 29, 186
 internal, 29, 65
evaluative devices, 29
 comparators, 30
 correlatives, 30
 explicatives, 30
 intensifiers, 30
evaluative indexicals, 165
event, 2, 27, 58
 narrated, 27, 62, 64
 narrative, 62
 performance, 62
 sequence of, 3, 17, 20, 62
 speech, 60, 83

- storytelling, 59, 84, 92, 165
 exemplum/exempla, 98, 101, 102, 104
 experientiality, 8
 exposition, 11
- fabula, 3, *see also syuzhet*
 face, 159
 fiction, 3, 16
 figure, 106, 169
 folklore studies, 53, 54, 55
 folk tales, 3, 54
 footing, 159, 165
 formalists, Russian, 2, 3, 54
 frame(s), 5, 80, 165
 framing devices, 61, 120
- genre, 2, 11, 16, 19, 24, 60, 149, *see also*
 discourse type; text-type
- heteroglossia, 195
- idea unit, 39, 42
- identities
 discourse, 181, 182
 ethnic, 174, 187, 190
 exogenous, 178, 181
 indexed, 168
 -in-interaction, 181, 182
 situational, 181, 183
 transportable, 181
- identity, 155, 156
 as a relational phenomenon, 158, 175,
 see also relationality
 as performance, 158, 178
 as social categories, 157, 171–2, 173
 as social construction, 157–8
 as talk-in-interaction, 158
 biographical approaches, 160
 claims, 175–6
 conversation-analytic approach to, 179
 -in-interaction, 166, 174, 176, 180
 interactionist paradigm, 156, 158
 sociocultural linguistic framework
 for the study of, 179
- ideology, 143, 150, 154
 indexical cues, 178
 indexicality, 171, 176, 178, 179
 initiating event, 5, 6
 intertextuality, 35, 49, 147
 involvement, 10, 68–70, 72, 73
 high, 70, 71
- Labovian model, 28–30, 34–6
 life story/stories, 19, 151, 159, 160
 limba storytelling, 58–9
- line, 37, 39, 42
 local occasioning/locally occasioned, 44,
 87, 166
 logico-scientific mode, 16, 17
 logico-semantic mode. *see* logico-scientific
 mode
- master narrative, 149, 162
 Membership Categorization Analysis, 172–3,
 174, 189
 mental model theories, 7
 metalinguistic formulations, 96
 meta-narrative, 109, 143, 154, 162
 metapragmatic verbs, 165
 mode, 15, 17
 (anti)-positivist, 20
 monologic, 194
 narrative, 15–17, 22, 138, 181
 of performance, 56, 64
 polyphonic, 194
 multivocality, 158
 myth, 54, 160
 mytheme, 54
- narrative, *see also* master narrative;
 meta-narrative; story
 as cultural grammar, 65–6
 asylum seekers, 129
 Athabaskan, 39, 57
 definition of, 1–2, 4, 5–6, 8, 12, 22, 27
 dinnertime, 66, 70, 73, 137
 elicited, 86, 113
 event. *See under* event
 functions, 23, 54, 58, 59
 generic, 82, 113
 genre, 54, 85, 180
 habitual, 104, 113
 in legal settings, 131, 134
 interview, 65, 86, 151
 minimal, 4, 78
 of personal experience, 27, 29, 33, 72, 106,
 147, 159
 structure, 27, 34, 36, 43, 45, 48
 style. *See under* style
 turn, 19–21, 147, 180
 unit, 27–9, 32, 38, 42
 narrative turn. *See under* narrative
- narrative-based medicine, 20
 narrativity, 5, 8–9, 70, 160
 narratology, 2, 4, 7, 8
 transmedial, 9
 news stories, 143–6
 non-narrative, 17, 28, 73
- onomatopoeia, 59

- orientation, 28, 30, 36
ownership, 107, 147, 149, 150, 151
 co-ownership, 73, 108, 151
 rights, 107
- paradigmatic mode. *See* logico-scientific mode
- partialness, 180
- participant (mis)alignment(s), 97, 105
- participation, 95, 96, 105, 123
 audience. *See under* audience
 framework, 45, 92, 93, 108
 roles, 92, 109, 181, 182
- Pear* stories, 67, 68
- performance, 57, 59, 60–2, 107
 devices, 58, 63–4, 69
 key, 64
 keys, 61
- person formulations, 174
- plot line, 116, 182
- positionality, 179
- positioning, 162–3
 cues, 165
 interactional approaches to, 163–6
- positions, 103, 106, 162–3, 179
- power, 107, 126–8, 136, 137, 141, 150, 153
- preface. *See under* story
- principal, 106, 169
- projection(s), 117
- pronominal choice/shift, 75, 76, 80
- prosodic(s), 39, 40, 105
- punch line, 102, 110
- quoted speech, 63, 165, *see also* constructed dialogue; reported speech
- ratification, 96
- recipient(s), 45, 88, 92, 93
 designed, 46, 113
 knowing/unknown, 46, 92
 ratified, 92
- recognitional question(s), 46, 96
- reference(s), 23, 109, 111, 172
- relationality, 158, 161, 180
- repetition, 30, 38, 41, 59, 69, 96
- report(s), 9, 117
- reported speech, 32, 70, 169–71, 174,
 see also constructed dialogue; quoted speech
- resolution, 29, 30
- response sequence, 87
- rewinds, 115
- role(s). 44, 48, 55, 75, 123, 129, 181,
 see under participation
- scaffolding, 14
- scene, 38, 39, 60
- script(s), 5, 8
- second stories, 94, 95, 118
- self, 66, 70, 80, 156–7, 163
 agentive, 168
 Cartesian conception of the, 157, 161
 conception of the, 66, 80, 156
 de-essentializing of the, 157
 epistemic, 165, 168
 fragmentation of the, 161
 relationality of the, 161
 self-lamination, 169
 self-presentation, 159, 167–71
 storied, 161
- self-lamination, *see also* animator; author;
 figure; principal
- sequentially implicative, 48, 87
- setting, 5, 28, 55, 60, 111, 179
 legal, 131, 133
- shared stories, 109, 118
- small stories, 108, 116–18, 121
- social constructionism, 157, 178
- socialization, 15, 40, 70, 72
- sociocultural variability, 53, 64
- sociolinguistics, 52, 161, 166
- speech event. *See under* event
- stanza, 38, 39, 40, 57
- story, *see also* life story; narrative; second stories; shared stories; small stories
 closing, 48, 89, 114
 exit/exit devices, 48, 89
 opening, 48, 49, 88
 preface, 45–6, 47, 87
 recipients. *See* recipient(s)
- story talk, 182
- story world, 8, 29, 62, 167, *see also* Taleworld
- story grammars, 5–7, 26
- story-prefixed phrases, 48, 88
- story-schema, 5
- structure of attention, 92
- style, 25, 58, 60, 68, 71, 176
 communicative, 52
 narrative, 14, 41, 64, 68, 71
 topic-associating, 41
 topic-centered, 41
- stylistic shifts, 178
- subjectivity, 73, 157, 158
- syuzhet*, 3
- tags, 96
- taleworld, 65, 80, *see also* story world
- talk-in-interaction, 43, 50, 70
- teller, 86, 87, 91, 94, 105, *see also* co-teller

tellership, 86, 107, *see also* co-tellership
telling rights, 107
telling roles, 47, 182
templates, 115, 142
text-type, 1, 11, *see also* discourse type; genre

textual resources, 62
turn-taking, 18, 43
verse, 38, 39
voice, 70, 158, 178

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