

Conversational storytelling

Introduction

Conversation is the natural home of narrative, and the most familiar context of storytelling for most of us. Storytelling is a common part of conversation between friends and family members. We tell stories to make a point, to catch up on each other's lives, to report news, and to entertain each other. And one story opens the floor to other participants for stories of their own. Our conversational stories are embedded in their local contexts, their forms and functions developing from and reflecting these contexts.

Conversational storytelling is not simply oral storytelling. Much of the research on *oral* narrative is based on stories from *non-conversational* contexts. Research on oral storytelling began with monologic stories explicitly elicited in interviews, and much recent work maintains this tradition, while other scholars have investigated narratives produced as retellings of films, picture stories, or stories previously read.¹ Stories in everyday conversational contexts share some but clearly not all characteristics with these other oral genres. Genuine conversational storytelling is always interactive, negotiated, and not simply designed for a particular audience by a single teller; indeed, it is often hard to determine even who is the primary teller, especially when the events were jointly experienced or the basic story is already familiar. Conversational stories may be deeply contextualized, diffuse, and not easily detachable from the local conditions that occasion them or understandable outside of them. Further, there are many kinds of conversation from family dinner-table talk, to self-revelation in troubles talk between women friends, to talk between guys in a sports bar meeting for the first time; each context may have its own characteristic conditions on storytelling rights and tellability, and engender stories of different kinds. Finally, in everyday conversation, stories are told for a reason and they fulfill multiple simultaneous functions: sharing personal news, entertaining listeners, revealing attitudes, constructing identity, inviting counter-disclosure, etc.

Distinguishing story from narrative, event, and performance

In the study of conversational storytelling, a distinction is sometimes drawn between story and narrative: a *narrative* is any representation of past events, but for a text or discourse to qualify as a *story* proper it must be a narrative with a point in context.² Narratives may include travelogues, project reports, and comparable kinds of texts with no evaluation by the narrator, but a story will always possess personal and contextual relevance and contain evaluation by the teller. We can further distinguish event, story, and performance. The story can be separated from the past events narrated, but also from the performance, so that we can be said to be retelling a single story in separate performances.³ The bare narrative of temporally ordered clauses, or small fragments of discourse such as *Sue closed the door*, constitutes the substratum of any particular performance, which will generally flesh the story out with a preface, background information, dialogue, evaluation, and a closing. The same real-world events may provide the stuff for several stories, just as the “same story” will receive different narrative treatments from different tellers; indeed, even a single teller will vary the narrative form to fit the particular occasion. But the variation of story in performance is probably most obvious in cases of “polyphonic” or many-voiced narration in natural conversation, where no single participant can control the course of the story, and multiple voices vie for the right to formulate its point.

Cues to narrative structure

According to Labov, narration is a method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events reported.⁴ Thus, a narrative consists of a sequence of past tense clauses sequentially ordered with respect to each other, as in:

so he get all upset.
then I fought him.

Reversing the order destroys the sequence as a narrative proper – or changes it into a different story:

then I fought him.
so he get all upset.

Beyond the skeleton of temporally ordered narrative clauses, other “free” clauses are typically found in stories. These free clauses can be moved or eliminated without destroying the basic narrative structure. For instance, in the story excerpt below, the narrative clauses (lines 1–4 and 6) describe

an irreversible series of events, while the free, non-narrative clauses provide orientation (line 5) and evaluation (lines 7–8). In this story excerpt, a woman is describing the first time she was sent in to play in a league basketball game.

- 1 so I went I went in
- 2 and I had the ball,
- 3 and I just like turned around
- 4 and I shot it–
- 5 didn't even look
- 6 and it like hit off the backboard
- 7 so hard.
- 8 it was so bad

Labov assigns both narrative and free clauses to specific function elements, namely:

Abstract: answers the question “what was this about?”

Orientation: answers the questions “who, what, when, where?”

Complicating action: consists of sequentially ordered narrative clauses

Evaluation: answers the question “so what?”

Resolution: answers the question “what finally happened?”

Coda: puts off any further questions about what happened or why it mattered.

To illustrate, in the conversational story below, where two women are talking about their first jobs, the *abstract* is a joint accomplishment by both women, identifying what the story will be about in lines 1–3, namely April's first job at a fast-food restaurant. *Orientation* appears in background information such as that the incident took place the summer after April's sophomore year in high school (lines 14–16) and that there was so much to learn (lines 10–11), and in the narrower frame of the crucial event, namely “learning the drive-through” (line 18). Lines 25–8 contain the irreversible narrative clauses of the *complicating action*:

and the *first* time I had to do it
I said “welcome to McDonald's may I take your order?”
and everybody just *laughed* at me

Evaluation occurs first in line 5, “the most embarrassing moment of my life happened then,” and again in lines 8–9, “I can't believe I did this, but um I was really nerv–,” and line 24, “and, and I was so embarrassed.” The *resolution* comes in lines 29–31, as the listener and teller again jointly determine that April did not “try and pull it off like a joke.” Finally, line 34 (“yeah, that was my very first job”) constitutes the *coda*.

FIRST JOB

- 1 Ellen: what was YOUR first job?
2 April: first job um
3 oh : that was at the Halsted Burger King in Halsted Illinois.
4 and I remember
5 the most embarrassing moment of my *life* happened then.
{laughs}
6 Ellen: {laughing} what does that *mean*? {laughing}.
7 April: {laughing} um no this is just—
8 I can't believe I did this
9 but— um I was really nerv—
10 and there's so much to learn.
11 I mean y'know there's so many things at Burger King
12 you have to [make and uh—]
13 Ellen: [how old were you?]
14 April: I was like a sophomore in high school.
15 Ellen: okay.
16 April: yeah, [the summer after my sophomore year.]
17 Ellen: [you were young,] okay.
18 April: and um we were learning the drive-through—
19 and just the thought of speaking on—
20 into that microphone
21 and y'know into outside—
22 Ellen: yes.
23 April: and you have to pretend to take orders
24 and, and I was so embarrassed.
25 and the *first* time I had to do it
26 I said “welcome to McDonald's [may I take your order?]”
27 Ellen: [oh *no* {laughing}.]
28 April: and everybody just *laughed* at me {laughing}.
29 Ellen: {laughing} did you try and pull it off like a joke
30 like you meant to say that?
31 April: no. {laughing}
32 Ellen: no.
33 {laughing} good job.
34 April: yeah, that was my very first job.

In this transcript, “disfluencies” flourish, such as false starts with abrupt cut-offs and restarts or self-corrections and repetitions. False starts and pause-fillers like *ah*, *um*, along with the discourse markers *but* and *well*, cluster especially in the introductory section immediately following the initial evaluation in lines 4–5, “I remember the most embarrassing moment of my *life* happened then,” itself a partially formulaic introduction. Disfluencies

are also prominent just before the climax in lines 25–8, which – we should note – are delivered without a hitch. This pattern is characteristic for conversational stories. Even experienced storytellers performing narratives they have told before typically embed false starts, repetitions, and corrections in introductory materials. Such disfluencies give the listeners a chance to attune themselves to the coming narrative; they encourage audience attention and participation.

As this example demonstrates, the basic internal structure of conversational stories is much the same as other oral narratives, but conversational stories contain incomplete elements and extraneous bits, so that they require regularization, to be comparable to the monologic, practiced narratives of interview subjects and exemplary storytellers. The process of regularization involves the elimination of false starts, repetitions, and digressions by the teller as well as attention signals and comments from listeners, and the integration of pieces from both teller and listener into complete clauses.⁵ Nevertheless, the elements characteristic of conversational (by contrast with monologic, practiced) storytelling are important features of the performance for both tellers and listeners.

Storytellers deploy discourse markers like *well* and *though*, along with related cues to organize telling into coherent form and chronological order, and to navigate around contextual disruptions. Discourse markers signal how utterances are related to foregoing talk and how they are to be understood. Thus, *oh* typically introduces an utterance expressing surprise, as in “oh, I didn’t realize,” while *though* often closes an utterance expressing something negative, as in “it never really mattered though.” Discourse markers correlate with expectations that participants are likely to have about how a story should be structured and told. For example, *well* and *anyway* initiate and conclude narrative action, guiding listeners back to the main sequence of narrative elements following interruptions and digressions. Listeners key on discourse markers, attention signals (like *m-hm* or *wow*), comments, details, and co-telling to reconstruct chronological sequence, causal connections, and evaluation, and to streamline the telling performance into a consistent story.

In oral storytelling, specialized formulas and repetitions of various kinds cluster around openings and closings, transition points, and climaxes. In marking story sections, formulaic speech, repetition, and dialogue provide special windows on narrative organization. In storytelling, we find not only stock formulas but also rephrasing and parallel structures to organize the story performance and to heighten dramatic effect. All these rhetorical devices signal teller attitudes and serve as guides to listeners.

Finally, notice that all the verbs in the story FIRST JOB are in the past tense, except for those representing the narrator’s own speech in line 26.

This pattern is common, but by no means essential. Indeed, conversational narrators may use what is sometimes called the conversational historical present tense throughout a story; alternatively, they may begin in the past tense and switch to the present for special emphasis at the climax or may switch between the past and present tenses for varying effects during the course of telling.⁶

Openings and closings

Conversationalists who want to gain the floor to tell a story must signal their intention to the other participants. They must enlist the interest of these potential auditors to engage their active listenership. Further, they must signal the ends of stories, so that their listeners may respond appropriately, perhaps with stories of their own. Tellers have various standard ways of prefacing their stories to obtain the floor and to cue their closings and secure proper uptake as well. Formulaic story prefaces often seek to justify tellability, as in “You’ll never believe what happened . . .,” though it sometimes suffices for a prospective teller to say simply, “I remember this one time.” One participant may also select another as storyteller with various elicitation techniques used to justify tellability or confirm someone else’s telling rights: “tell the funny story about you and Judy.”

Storytellers generally clearly mark story closings, too, so that listeners can co-ordinate their responses. Tellers of funny stories must be particularly careful to set up their “punchlines” to elicit laughter. Tellers deploy characteristic closing formulas like “and I lived to tell about it” to link the story back to the present time, but they also frequently produce a summary of the action or formulate the point of a story with relation to the current topic of conversation, as with “yeah, that was my first job” in the excerpt above.

Constructed dialogue in conversational narrative

In line with our understanding of tellers reconstructing a story for a particular context and audience, we must recognize that tellers construct dialogue for their purposes rather than simply reproducing speech from memory verbatim.⁷ Much of what speakers construct as direct speech – that is, the direct quotation of someone else talking versus an indirect summary or paraphrase of their words – is simply not meant to, indeed cannot, represent recall of real talk: tellers produce as direct speech utterances never actually spoken (“and I almost said”), general observations (“everybody says”), talk they cannot have observed, say by multiple speakers (“so the voters are saying”), and so on. At least half of “direct quotations” are not authentic; they

lie along a continuum, ranging from possible to impossible as real quoted speech. Moreover, direct speech often has a symbolic meaning for evaluation, as when a narrator says, "and I said to myself, 'this is it.'"⁸

We can distinguish the speech being reported from the telling frame, which introduces and sometimes comments on the dialogue. The telling frame typically sets off speech with verbs of saying – most frequently the verb *say* itself and verbs suggesting voice qualities like *whisper* and *yell* – but other words are used to mark direct speech as well, such as *go*, *like*, and *all*:

she goes "so just wait till I get back."
and we're like "well maybe we will."
and she's all "whatever."

However, in conversational storytelling the reporting frame may also mark speech with bare *and* or without any lexical signal at all, as in:

when my grandmother BROKE in on us
and SHAMED me for life.
and "JIM what are you DOing."
"GIRLS go home."

The flexibility of the human voice allows conversational storytellers to clearly mark speech by different characters with voice shifts alone. When speakers construct dialogue with no explicit marker of direct speech, they often suggest quoted talk with terms of address (like *Jim* and *girls* above) and discourse markers (like *so* and *well* in the previous example).

Storytelling rights

The right to tell a particular story in a given context may be a matter for negotiation between the participants. Storytelling rights are generally related to personal knowledge of the events reported. We can distinguish *A-events* known only to the primary storyteller from *A-B events* known to the teller and one other participant, and further distinguish both from *O-events* known generally to members of a group or culture at large.⁹ We can extend this list to include *F-events*, those shared by the members of a family, or, since any close-knit group will share events constitutive for their identification as a group, *G-events* can serve to denote the more general category.¹⁰ Thus, children may tell an oft-heard anecdote about their parents' meeting, getting married, and so on, just as any new member will begin to absorb and participate in the telling of stories about the origins and history of the group. These vicarious G-events are often the material for repeated co-narration in groups. Furthermore, groups may narrowly constrain storytelling rights. Only those

individuals personally involved in the events reported generally possess the right to tell or co-tell the story: if a girl who had a fight is present, the story is hers alone to tell; but if she is not, another girl who experienced the fight may tell the story.¹¹

Tellability

The tellability of a story is also something conversationalists negotiate in the given context, though in earlier approaches it was often viewed as an inherent property of the (detached) content of a story. According to this earlier tradition, a story must be "reportable" or "tellable": A would-be narrator must be able to defend the story as relevant and newsworthy to get and hold the floor and escape censure at its conclusion. Labov essentially builds a specific version of tellability into his corpus by requesting stories on specific topics like near-death experiences. But tellers do not simply relate the seemingly fatal events step by step; they characteristically stop the action at the climax for an evaluative comment, typically something like "and I said to myself, this is it." Consequently, Labov focuses on the importance of evaluation in determining reportability. Telling a story without evaluation or without a currently relevant point can lead to a loss of face for the teller, especially when the story is received with a scathing "what's the point?"¹²

Tellability is often equated with "local news" by tellers and listeners, in so far as their stories generally begin with some reference to a new or unexpected event, e.g., "the most gosh-awful wreck on the Ventura Freeway." They also characteristically end with some final reference to the reportability of the story, as in the closing "It wasn't in the paper last night. I looked."¹³ The sort of news that makes a story salient today will no longer make it salient tomorrow. If you see a person every day at work, the sorts of news which count as tellable need not exceed the sort of thing one might hear on the evening news, but this same material will not suffice for a story to tell someone you see only every six months. Stories about potential local news events seen or heard recently tend to be told first, then stories of personal accomplishment and experience since the last meeting occurred. Even when interlocutors run out of news, they can reminisce, telling old stories not for the sake of their content but for other reasons. A primary reason for telling a particular story in reminiscence is the opportunity for co-narration and laughing together.¹⁴

According to more recent research perspectives, tellability depends not only on the (detached) content of a narrative but also on the contextual (embedded) relevance of the story for the participants involved. Thus,

family dinner-table talk reveals children routinely telling familiar stories and relating unnewsworthy tales at the request of their parents as a part of the socialization process.¹⁵ Indeed, conversationalists often tell stories familiar to some or even all their listeners, and it is precisely the familiarity of story content which influences participation rights, since it presents the opportunity for significant co-narration. Familiar funny stories are typically prefaced in ways which label them as unoriginal (e.g., "remember the time we . . .") and yet these signals animate participants to involvement rather than cuing them to question the relevance and tellability of the stories. The tellability of familiar stories hinges not on their content as such but on the dynamics of the narrative event itself, and humor makes co-narration desirable.

In fact, it is not really very difficult to get the floor to tell a story in interaction among family and friends; indeed, storytelling is a central, desirable ingredient of such interactions. There are standard ways of moving from topical talk, where everyone takes turns speaking, into the storytelling mode, where a single teller is the primary speaker while the others become listeners. One participant may elicit a story from another in various ways ("Tell the one about you and Judy"), and a simple "I remember one time" is enough to gain the floor and the attention of other participants – or, in the case of "remember the time we . . .," to enlist them as co-narrators. Moreover, storytellers and recipients deploy various "contextualization cues"¹⁶ to ensure smooth transitions from topical talk into the narrative mode and back. These contextualization cues are words like "okay" and "so" or prosodic features of talk such as tempo, volume, and intonation. Conversationalists share expectations not only about relations between the elements of a narrative like the climax, resolution, and coda but also about story patterns themselves, such as how a travel story will progress or how a personal anecdote will end. They are attuned to typical signals like "when I was a kid" to introduce personal narratives; they recognize the typical formulas like "that was that" to end a story; and they prepare to respond in appropriate ways – for example, by telling apposite stories of their own. Of course, they also recognize standard justifications for tellability like "the most embarrassing moment of my life" in the conversational story excerpt above.

The dark side of tellability

Some stories, though eminently tellable in their extra-ordinary content, are not tellable for many tellers under most circumstances, because they are too personal, too embarrassing, or obscene. Some newsworthy personal experiences are for that very reason untellable, because they would be embarrassing to the teller, the listeners, or both. The details of illness and medical

procedures, or sexual behavior and fantasies, have no place in stories told in polite conversation for many people. Stories should report events outside everyday experience, but they should not stray too far from community standards. Furthermore, stories about infidelities and crimes may be outright dangerous to tell – for fear of affected persons or the authorities finding out and seeking retribution.

Even if tellability is often equated with local news, and a story about “the most gosh-awful wreck on the Ventura Freeway” is tellable as news, at some point the gruesome details of the wreck with the dead and injured, the blood and guts may go beyond the tellable into the area of the no longer tellable. Conversationalists may tell transgressive stories “in the pursuit of intimacy,” pushing the envelop of propriety in order to modulate rapport, attending to cues like laughter to avoid rushing beyond acceptable standards.¹⁷ In relating a transgressive experience, the teller risks rejection on two levels: the other participants may refuse to listen to the offensive story; and they may negatively judge the teller for the behavior reported. On the positive side, the teller may gain the listener’s admiration for the experience reported, may modulate intimacy through self-disclosure, and may inspire the listener to reply with similar self-disclosure.

Tellability is, then, a two-sided notion: Some events bear too little significance to reach the lower-bounding threshold of tellability, while others are so intimate (or frightening) that they lie on the dark side of tellability.¹⁸ The conversational narrator navigates the path between these two boundaries in various ways. Storytellers may worry about the “scathing ‘so what?’” following a story with no clear point or significance, but there is often more shame in transgressing norms than in telling a boring story. The societal sanctions for obscenity are more immediate and obvious than those for telling pointless stories: responses to the former are immediate and unmistakable reprimands like “You can’t talk like that here!” while responses to the latter are ambiguous long-term behaviors such as avoidance. Within the scope of expectations about appropriate experiences to relate and appropriate ways of telling, narrators and their audiences co-construct their individual personalities through their negotiation of the upper boundary of tellability and their joint evaluation of the characters and events described.¹⁹

Audience response and co-narration

Even as a teller works to design a story appropriate to the local audience and context, the audience is already imposing a designing of its own: interrupting, correcting, co-narrating. Conversational narrative is always interactive telling, more or less polyphonic, but necessarily negotiated among

participants. Listenership is not a passive state, but an active involvement in the storytelling process.

Short of becoming ratified co-narrators, the audience acts as co-author of the story and helps determine the trajectory, structure, and point of a narrative through questions and comments like those in the sample excerpt FIRST JOB above. Attention to audience response underscores the nature of telling as a *narrative event*, a speech event among others with its own characteristic norms governing the scene, participation rights, message content, message form, and rules of interpretation.²⁰ Listeners may engage in byplay during narrative, producing observations, details, and dialogue designed to comment on the ongoing story for some sub-group of listeners.²¹ “Heckling,” by contrast, addresses the primary teller directly and is heard as negative commentary on the telling or content of the story in progress. Byplay is apparently more likely to attract the attention of a primary teller and thereby to assume center stage in an interaction, when both the byplay and the primary narrative are oriented toward humor.²²

In full-fledged collaborative co-narration, all co-tellers have had access (at least vicariously) to some common previous event, so that there is no need to establish common experience and no competitive “story topping,” though participants may still vie for the right to tell. Co-narration of this kind provides participants with a resource for saying “we two” to each other or portraying their togetherness for an audience. Indeed, differing expectations about what counts as a story can lead to dissonance between co-narrators.²³ Participants use various strategies – both supportive and antagonistic – to become co-narrators. Two co-narrators may produce a “conversational duet,” presenting a single shared story for a third party; such collaborative telling affects turn-taking and related matters such as simultaneous speech.²⁴ For example, co-narration can be a genuine team performance with the co-tellers subordinating their personal identities to the success of the performance.²⁵

Response stories

Response stories are produced in reply to foregoing stories by other participants in a conversation. They may be second stories, responding thematically to the immediately foregoing story, or responses to various preceding stories, perhaps in a longer series of related stories. Response stories either seek to establish common experience, saying “the same thing happened to me . . .”; or they competitively seek to “top” previous stories in some way, saying, for instance, “an even funnier thing happened to me.” Either way, response stories attest to attentive listenership, ratify foregoing stories, and provide

participants with a resource for saying "me too." They allow conversation-
alists to expand on a particular theme in narrative form, recording similar
experiences and their personal reactions to them.

In response to a story told in the third person ("she went to X," "he did
Y"), a potential teller can follow up with a story about the same topic or
the same characters, thus building thematically on a previous story. More-
over, there are global telling contexts such as "flash bulb memory" stories
in response to "where were you when . . . ?" and "eulogies" at birthday
parties, roasts, and funerals, built around "I knew her when." Finally, two
tellers may team up to perform related personal narratives as sequential
stories with common characters and events, where the second presents a
continuation of the first, say because the outcome of the first set of events
involving one set of people affected what happened to their friends right
afterwards. Such *interlaced* stories represent a resource for conversational
narrative performance, ranging between first story-second story organiza-
tion, where separate storytellers relate similar experiences, and collaborative
narration of an experience the two tellers shared.²⁶

Retelling and retold Stories

Retellings make a story generally familiar in a group: "what becomes increas-
ingly important is not the news itself, but the way of telling it."²⁷ Stories
help define and ratify group goals and values; co-narration of familiar sto-
ries demonstrates membership and contributes to group cohesion. Research
on retelling was initially a matter of defining what was meant by "the same
story" in one theoretical framework or the other. Then as real data became
available and research began to focus on them, other questions became
important: e.g., about when and how tellers repeat stories; the effects of
retelling on telling rights, tellability, co-narration, and on the internal form
of the narrative.²⁸

Focusing on narrative events in which tellers reconstruct a story for sep-
arate audiences yields a clearer view of what tellers repeat, which makes it
possible to recognize separate performances as versions of the same story.
Comparing two natural occurrences of a story told for different audiences,
one sees the teller expanding or suppressing particular scenes, even as the
two versions maintain a shared underlying plot, the same primary foci of
interest, substantial overlap in narrative statements concerning what hap-
pened, and even wording repeated more or less verbatim. Of course, each
audience shapes the trajectory of the story as well. Storytelling is more than a
process of retrieving information from memory, selecting from it, and verbal-
izing it in serial, narrative form; the conversational storytelling performance

requires contextually appropriate reconstruction rather than simple recall of ordered events. Tellers become caught up in a dynamic context and in their own performance, even as they tailor a basic story to fit the current thematic needs of the interaction. In telling our personal stories, we create and recreate our past in light of our present needs and concerns, instead of simply recapitulating stored experience.

Interactional functions

Stories fulfill many functions in conversation. They allow participants to share news, to catch up with each other's lives, to entertain each other, to ratify group membership, to modulate group rapport, and to present an individual personality within the group. Response stories contribute directly to the coherence of conversation and they reflect shared experiences and attitudes on the part of participants. Especially the retelling of familiar tales and the reformulation of common experiences over time serve to get a group story straight and to convey or ratify group values.

In recent years, much has been written about the narrative construction of identity: the way narratives constitute one's individual identity, especially within the (peer) group.²⁹ Narrators construct identity through their choice of certain personal experiences to relate and their way of presenting these experiences to the current audience in the current context. They negotiate the perspective and trajectory of the story with their listeners, based on the present setting, type of interaction, and foregoing talk as well as the history of interaction the teller shares with these interactants. All these decisions reflect the sort of identity a teller hopes to convey in the given context.

A two-sided notion of tellability, encompassing both the familiar lower-bounding side of tellability and the often ignored upper-bounding dark side, sees identity construction as taking place between these two bounds. Even safe and impersonal stories do much work in social identity construction, by demonstrating recognition of, and respect for, standard group norms, but transgressive ones accomplish a different kind of identity work, due to the higher risk factor. Narrators ensure that their stories bear enough general significance to engage the interest of listeners, but usually avoid transgressing the boundaries of propriety and intimacy, unless they seek to approach or traverse these boundaries – with the cued approval of their recipients – in order to present special facets of their personalities in the pursuit of increased intimacy. It is within this framework of expectations about stories that tellers work to ratify their membership in the group even as they construct an individual personality through a conversational performance attuned to the dynamic, ever-shifting contexts of talk.

NOTES

1. For a foundational study on stories elicited in interviews see William Labov and Joshua Waletzky's "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience." In June Helm (ed.) *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), pp. 12-44. Charlotte Linde continues this tradition in *Life Stories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), whereas a number of scholars examine oral retellings of filmed events in Wallace Chafe (ed.) *The Pear Stories* (Norwood: Ablex, 1980).
2. Livia Polanyi, *Telling the American Story* (Norwood: Ablex, 1985).
3. Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Shoshana Blum-Kulka, "'You Gotta Know How to Tell a Story': Telling, Tales, and Tellers in American and Israeli Narrative Events at Dinner." *Language in Society* 22 (1993), pp. 361-402.
4. The name Labov, with no further specification, refers to the work of Labov and his co-workers, as described in: Labov and Waletzky, "Narrative Analysis"; William Labov, "The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax." In *Language in the Inner City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), pp. 354-96; and William Labov and David Fanshel, *Therapeutic Discourse* (New York: Academic Press, 1977).
5. According to methods described in Polanyi, *Telling the American Story*, pp. 26-33, and Neal R. Norrick, *Conversational Narrative* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000), pp. 29-38.
6. On the conversational historical present see Nessa Wolfson, "The Conversational Historical Present in American English Narrative." *Topics in Socio-Linguistics* 1 (Dordrecht: Foris, 1982); Barbara Johnstone, "'He says . . . so I said': Verb Tense Alternation and Narrative Depictions of Authority in American English." *Linguistics* 25 (1987), pp. 33-52; and Joanna Thornborrow, "The Construction of Conflicting Accounts in Public Participation TV." *Language in Society* 29 (2000), pp. 357-77.
7. See Deborah Tannen, "Introducing Constructed Dialogue in Greek and American Conversational and Literary Narratives." In Florian Coulmas (ed.) *Direct and Indirect Speech* (Berlin: Mouton, 1986), pp. 311-22, and Patricia Mayes, "Quotation in Spoken English." *Studies in Language* 14 (1990), pp. 323-63.
8. Labov, "The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax," p. 37.
9. Labov and Fanshel, *Therapeutic Discourse*, pp. 62-4.
10. On F-events see Shoshana Blum-Kulka and Catherine E. Snow, "Developing Autonomy for Tellers, Tales, and Telling in Family Narrative Events." *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 2 (1992), pp. 187-217. On G-events see Neal R. Norrick, "Twice-told Tales: Collaborative Narration of Familiar Stories." *Language in Society* 26 (1992), pp. 199-220.
11. See Amy Shuman, *Storytelling Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 29-38.
12. See Livia Polanyi, "So What's the Point?" *Semiotica* 25 (1979), pp. 207-41.
13. Harvey Sacks, *Lectures on Conversation*, Vol. II. Edited by Gail Jefferson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), pp. 3-16.
14. See Neal R. Norrick, "Humor, Tellability and Conarration in Conversation." *TEXT* 24 (2004), pp. 79-111.

15. See Elinor Ochs, Ruth Smith, and Carolyn Taylor, "Detective Stories at Dinner-time: Problem Solving through Co-narration." *Cultural Dynamics* 2 (1989), pp. 238-57; Blum-Kulka, "'You Gotta Know How to Tell a Story,'" pp. 374-83; and Blum-Kulka and Snow, "Developing Autonomy," pp. 187-9.
16. John J. Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 131-40.
17. See Gail Jefferson, Harvey Sacks, and Emanuel Schegloff, "Notes on Laughter in the Pursuit of Intimacy." In Graham Button and John R. E. Lee (eds.) *Talk and Social Organisation* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1987), pp. 152-327.
18. Neal R. Norrick, "The Dark Side of Tellability." *Narrative Inquiry* 15 (2005), pp. 323-43.
19. See Michael Bamberg, "'I know it may sound mean to say this, but we couldn't really care less about her anyway': Form and Functions of 'Slut-bashing' in 15-year Olds." *Human Development* 47 (2004), pp. 331-53.
20. As described by Dell Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974), pp. 52-3.
21. For more on these interactional dynamics of conversational storytelling see Marjorie H. Goodwin, "By-play: Negotiating Evaluation in Story-telling." In Gregory R. Guy, John Baugh, Deborah Schiffrin, and Crawford Feagin (eds.) *Towards a Social Science of Language: Papers in Honor of William Labov*, Vol. II. (Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1997), pp. 77-102. Goodwin's account builds on Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 174-86; see also "Footing" in Goffman's *Forms of Talk* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), pp. 124-57, on types of participation frameworks.
22. See Neal R. Norrick, "Contextualizing and Recontextualizing Interlaced Stories in Conversation." In Joanna Thornborrow and Jennifer Coates (eds.) *The Sociolinguistics of Narrative* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2005), pp. 107-27.
23. As demonstrated by Deborah Tannen in "The Effect of Expectations on Conversation." *Discourse Processes* 1 (1978), pp. 203-9.
24. See Jane Falk, "The Conversational Duet." *Berkeley Linguistics Society: Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting* (1980), pp. 507-14.
25. Norrick, "Humor, Tellability and Conarration in Conversation," pp. 99-104.
26. Norrick, "Contextualizing and Recontextualizing Interlaced Stories in Conversation," pp. 107-10.
27. Tannen, "The Effect of Expectations on Conversation," p. 261.
28. See Wallace Chafe, "Things we Can Learn from Repeated Tellings of the Same Experience." *Narrative Inquiry* 8 (1998), pp. 269-85; and Neal R. Norrick, "Retelling Stories in Spontaneous Conversation." *Discourse Processes* 25 (1998), pp. 75-97.
29. Bamberg, "'I know it may sound mean to say this, but we couldn't really care less about her anyway,'" pp. 332-5.