

5 Structures and Functions

The previous two chapters focused on relations and organisational patterns in discourse. We focused on *how* units and relations compose the text's internal structure and on *what* devices are used for holding together and segmenting a text at different levels. What has not been discussed at length yet is *why* structure and organisation are present in text and how they collaborate with discourse functions. As already mentioned, any piece of discourse, apart from being a meaningful construction of part-whole relations, serves a range of functions. Both individual linguistic elements of the text and its overall structures are tuned to these functions. This form-function interaction accounts for the subjective component of discourse: the expression of attitudes, feelings, judgements, beliefs and, on the whole, the addressers' emotional interest and engagement in the content and the participants of discourse. The linguistic realisations or displays of subjectivity (i.e. interpersonal, expressive functions) have been a major preoccupation in the analyses of different discourse types. There is already a vast amount of research, a proliferation of relevant terms and a considerable heterogeneity in the approaches, sometimes even in the definitions of the same concept. Here, we will selectively present the major unifying threads of different approaches, thus avoiding a forbiddingly diverse domain. Our focus will be on the ways in which narrative and non-narrative structures are fashioned to serve textual functions and meet the needs of communication.

5.1 EVALUATION AND TELLABILITY IN NARRATIVE

The encoding of subjectivity is a central concern of narrative discourse. Narratives are generally treated as high in affectivity and expressivity. The narration of personal stories in particular is an affective device *per se*. Specific, linguistic displays of expressivity within a story have long been viewed through the lens of the Labovian evaluation and a story's point. Evaluation was introduced in Chapter 3 as a part of the structural categories of narrative, along with orientation, complicating action etc. The notion of

valuation is essentially an inspired systematisation of an old concern of narratology with metastructures that go beyond the story's referential content. These aspects of the text are not concerned with reporting what happened but with conveying the narrator's attitudes and feelings towards the sequence of events narrated (see the distinction between *fabula* and *sjuzhet* or the French structuralists' *histoire* and *discours*, i.e. story and discourse). In addition, evaluation involves the set of devices that make a story reportable or tellable. Tellability ensures the audience's engagement in it.

Numerous studies after Labov attempted to establish the validity and generalisability of the evaluative devices which he first identified. In many cases, these devices were broken down into more refined categories to suit specific data (e.g. Polanyi 1985). The following story entitled 'Eating on the New York Thruway' by Polanyi (1985) exemplifies some of these categories:

Text 5.1

Carol: I went, I always drink coke, right?

Livia: Right.

Carol: So, Livia is thr ... walking around with this gallon of spring water and I can't understand why she is walking around with this gallon of spring water. And she keeps talk ... She keeps telling me these ... vague making these vague remarks about the restaurants on the New York Thruway and at least we have this spring water and I don't ... I don't know what she's talking about. So we go to this restaurant and I order a coke and I ordered some sort of sandwich. Now, I don't think you ordered anything.

Livia: I didn't order anything.

Carol: Right

Livia: I sat there making faces.

Carol: Well, one thing about this restaurant was that every person in it was retarded. ((laughter)) that's all. The people who worked there they were one after the other of the weirdest looking people I've ever ((laughter)) either they were retarded or they were let out for the day from the mental hospital. I ... you know.

Livia: They didn't seem to be able to distinguish between washing the floor and making a hamburger. Both things were done in the same way ((laughter)).

Carol: So, this coke appears. I was very thirsty. And I went this ((demonstrates)) straw in took a sip of this coke and I started screaming 'I've been poisoned' and Livia very calmly handed me this spring water. I mean I have never in my life tasted anything so bad. ((laughter))

Some of the evaluative devices that Polanyi notes in this story are negative encoding (e.g. *I can't understand, I don't know*), hyperbole or exaggeration (e.g. *every person, one after the other of the weirdest looking people, I have never in my life*), repetition (e.g. *she's walking around, this spring water, this coke*), direct speech (*I've been poisoned*) and collapse of the storyworld and narrating world (*this coke, this straw*). Peterson and McCabe's study (1983) of children's narratives also identified a broad set of evaluative devices. Some of them are common with those found in other studies of narrative development. These include gratuitous or aggravated signals (e.g. *very, just, really*), marked emphasis in voice, negation, repetition, causal explanations, characters' speech and references to characters' mental and emotive states (e.g. *I don't know what she's talking about, the weirdest looking people, Livia very calmly* etc. from text 5.1 above).

READER ACTIVITY

Read the following story told by a 6-year-old boy. Can you identify any of the above devices used for making the story more interesting and tellable?

Text 5.2

M: But, you know, once we were over at Jack's, cause we were studying there for the day, cause Mommy and Daddy had to go to work, that's where they took us every day, cause they have to go to work, we were over there, and they have lots of sheep and stuff, and he took me back there on his mini-bike, and we saw this sheep stuff, and it was just bones.

E: it was just bones?

M: And I was getting off and he said, don't be foolish. And Lenny was trying to scare me, cause there was haunts back there, and he was trying to scare me and saying, are they gonna haunt us.

E: Are they going to haunt you?

M: So he went back there and said, mo, you wanna have a ride? And they know he was gonna run out of gas, so he went back there ((laughingly)) and was pulling it back.

(Source: Peterson and McCabe 1983)

As you can see, organisationally the story does not qualify for the classic pattern. This is not surprising for a story recounted by a 6-year-old. What would you expect about the development of evaluative devices in the child's stories?

Labov's research suggested that the use of all four major types of evaluatives increases with age. Lately, developmental studies have shown that along

with the number and variety of evaluative devices, the ways of employing evaluation also change with age. Younger children have been found to lack the skill of strategically using evaluation to signal globally important events and the story's coherence. They, instead, tend to evaluate locally specific events and to ascribe meaning to individual events and actions. In Bamberg and Damrad-Frye's (1991) research, the subjects were asked to narrate a picture book (*Frog, where are you?*) that referred to a boy and dog's search for their lost frog. Despite various obstacles, the search is finally successful. The aim of the research was to establish the developmental pattern of the occurrence of evaluative devices. Bamberg and Damrad-Frye found out that one particular picture attracted many more references to 'frames of mind' or emotive states (in this case, anger) from children than adults. Young children seemed to be tied to the pictorial information of the boy's facial frustration with the dog, who has just shattered a jar. By emphasising the boy's anger, children adopted a perspective that was restricted to a purely local outcome. By contrast, in their references, adults were found to consider anger just an obstacle that is overcome for the global theme of the joint search to be reinstated. In this way, they revealed a more global perspective, in which evaluative devices were governed by an awareness of the story's overall plot structure. These findings have confirmed the important role of evaluation in a story's discourse coherence. Despite what Labov's and older narratological models seem to suggest, expressive devices are currently not treated as embellishing metastructures that are superimposed on a story's organisational backbone. These devices are not intrusive or backgrounded with respect to action. By contrast, they are recognised as vital devices for pointing to the implicit hierarchical order of the events in the organisation of the whole.

In addition to redefining the role of evaluation, post-Labovian research has also emphasised its context-sensitivity, its variation across cultures, situations and story participants. Contextual variation affects and shapes not only the ways in which a story is evaluated, but also the story's point. That too is not static or predetermined but is discovered and negotiated through the telling of a story in different settings and to different audiences (Sacks 1972, 1974; Robinson 1981; Young 1987). This context-dependence was not fully captured and expressed in Labov's model. Labov argued that evaluative devices 'say to us that this was terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy, or amusing, hilarious, wonderful, more generally that it was strange, uncommon or unusual, that is, worth reporting' (1972: 371). How is this unexpectedness of events defined, though? Is it only intrinsic? Systematic research on the telling of stories has demonstrated that what is reportable ultimately depends on what is thought to be interesting or appropriate in certain social and cultural contexts, on certain occasions and for certain storytellers and audiences. As Polanyi has aptly suggested, 'what stories can be about is to a very significant extent culturally constrained: stories ... can have as their point culturally salient material generally agreed upon by

members of the producer's culture to be self-evidently important and true' (1979: 207).

Polanyi's study of American storytelling identified general tellable themes in it and derived, on their basis, a system of cultural values, attitudes and beliefs, a cultural 'world'. For instance, the analysis of text 5.1 can yield, among others, the following basic cultural construct: food is supposed to be reliable, safe and predictable, especially in the USA and especially in relation to the quintessential American coke. Hence, the unexpectedness (and reportability) of the story's events. Another major value underlying the plot of text 5.1 is that of friendship. Livia behaved as a true friend of the narrator. She tried to protect and warn her, to be honest for her good. At the same time, we could easily imagine contexts in which this story would not be tellable. In addition to its culture-specific elements, its tellability would vary across contexts, tellers and audiences.

This context-dependence of tellability casts doubt on the validity of unexpectedness as its criterial feature. In numerous cases, a story's point may not arise at all from the content of the events narrated but from the importance attributed to the story's telling in particular circumstances. Shuman (1986) has postulated a distinction between a story's intrinsic point (storyability) and its contextual point (tellability). She has further argued that an experience may be storyable in its being remarkable and yet not tellable in a particular context and vice versa. We can put this more simply by saying that events are not only tellable in themselves (intrinsically tellable) but also tellable on occasions (contextually tellable). Since tellability is not only a matter of narrative reference (i.e. real-world events) or of narrative text, we can also suggest that a story can be very tellable without being very evaluated with specific linguistic devices and the converse.

READER ACTIVITY

A. The following brief story was told (in Greek) in a conversation about nudism on Greek beaches in a group of three men and four women. The storyteller, who supports nudism, relates the following incident before she expresses any of her views. Where, in your view, does the story's tellability lie and how does it interact with its evaluative devices?

Text 5.3

This happened in Folegandros ((a small and not very developed Greek island)), the locals were up in arms, because of the nude tourists, and on the beach, there was a large water tank, for showers, and it said, don't drink this water, they had it for watering their plants, or I don't know what. So we used some to wash, and there was this tourist, probably Dutch, blond guy, long hair, he pulls down his trunks

to wash. So they start yelling, from a balcony opposite, oy put your pants on, put your pants on, put your pants on, hh hh. How could he understand? And someone threatening him with his walking stick, put your pants on, shame on you, and the others shouting at him//hh hh. At some point he says, why are they yelling at me, do they want to save the water? ((whispers)) it's your trunks, somebody tells him, it's your trunks, oh my trunks. And he finally pulled them back on.

(Source: Georgakopoulou 1994c: 26)

B. You may wish to apply a similar analysis to the following story that was jointly told by Ira and Jan, a lower-middle-class, middle-aged Jewish couple. Note that, unlike the story above, this story is part of a sociolinguistic interview. Ira and Jan are explaining their position against intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles to their interviewer, Deborah Schiffrin:

Text 5.4

Ira: Now my daughter went out with eh— she went out with a couple Gentile kids, and she said that=

Jan: //she wouldn't go out with them=

Ira: =she wouldn't go out with them again.

Jan: = again.//She// said they're too different.

Ira: She said that uh ... they're just eh—the—

Jan: //they're// different.

Jan: She says, 'It's not what I'm used to'.

Ira: So em ... s—she

Jan: //One// was a, his father was a friend of my husband's. And when I heard she was goin' out with him, I said, 'You're goin' out with him', I said, 'You're goin' out with a Gentile boy?' She says, 'Well Daddy knows his father'. I said, 'I don't care'. So she introduced him, and they went out, and she came home early, and I said, 'Well, y' goin' out with him again?' She says, 'Nope.' I said, 'Did he get fresh?' She said, 'No!' She says, 'But he's different!' She says, 'I'm not used t' Gentile boys!' That cured her! She'd never go out with one again.

(Source: Schiffrin 1990: 250–1)

Can you think of contexts in which the above stories would not be tellable?

5.2 STRATEGIES OF INVOLVEMENT

Studies of expressivity in storytelling have frequently employed alternative but comparable concepts to evaluation. These are intended to capture the ways in which stories express their tellers' inner states and degrees of emotional interest and engagement in the various elements of the story-world. They are also intended to describe the ways in which stories shape their audiences' interest and engagement in them. Specific linguistic strategies and techniques used for these purposes are frequently called in the literature 'involvement strategies'. Involvement was initially proposed as a strategy of any type of discourse and was contrasted to detachment, which comprises devices for encoding distancing from the elements of discourse. Chafe (1982), who introduced the distinction, suggested that the list of involvement features mainly comprises the following features:

- details and images (tendency towards concreteness, imageability and particularity)
- first- and second-person pronouns
- actions and agents (emphasis on people and relationships rather than states and objects)
- hedges (e.g. just, sort of, kind of, somewhat)
- aggravated signals (e.g. really, so, very)
- direct speech and dialogues.

Detachment, on the other hand, comprises features of complex syntax such as relative and complement clauses, sequences of prepositional phrases, nominalisations, passive voice, attributive adjectives, etc.

Chafe claimed that the degrees of involvement or detachment differ according to discourse type. In his research, conversations and narratives were found to draw more on involvement strategies than academic essays and other non-narrative texts which integrate their ideas by means of complex syntax in order to convince their addressees of their arguments.

READER ACTIVITY

Compare story 5.3 above with the following text in terms of their involvement and detachment devices. Which of the two draws on detachment features more?

Text 5.5

Once one has gained some familiarity with constructing simple Turing machines, it becomes easy to satisfy oneself that the various basic arithmetical operations, such as adding two numbers together, or multiplying them, or raising one number to the power of another, can indeed all be effected by specific Turing machines. It would not

be too cumbersome to give such machines explicitly, but I shall not bother to do that here. Operations where the result is a pair of natural numbers, such as division with a remainder, can also be provided – or where the result is an arbitrarily large finite set of numbers. Moreover, Turing machines can be constructed for which it is not specified ahead of time which arithmetical operation it is that needs to be performed, but the instructions for this are fed in on the tape.

(Source: Roger Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind*
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 47)

Chafe did not posit involvement and detachment as the two poles of a strict dichotomy. He rather viewed them as a continuum, in which there are different degrees of relative focus on involvement. As Tannen has claimed, these grow out of communicative purposes, social and cultural conventions and discourse-type norms. The prototypical spoken discourse is expected to be characterised by involvement, while the prototypical written discourse by integration and detachment. Comparably, narrative discourse is prototypically more involved. In fact, conversational and literary narratives prove to be more similar than they are usually thought of as being, from the point of view of their involvement strategies (Tannen 1986). Ultimately, both discourse types seek to encode feelings more than information and, in doing so, to move rather than convince their audiences. Storytelling about personal experiences in particular has been found to be very high in involvement and to occur more frequently in high-involvement conversations that exhibit numerous instances of overlapping talk and interruptions between the participants (Tannen 1989).

In Tannen's (1989) terms, there are two major categories of involvement strategies. The first work primarily on sound; they involve the audience with the speaker or writer and the discourse by sweeping them up in what Scollon and Scollon (1995) call 'rhythmic ensemble', much as one is swept up by music and finds oneself moving to its rhythm. This category mainly comprises patterns based on various forms of repetition (see chapter 4). Repetition succeeds in giving discourse a character of familiarity and creating the impression of a shared universe of discourse between the participants. By contributing to the connectedness and coherence in discourse, repetition also contributes to the emotional experience of connectedness between the discourse participants. This is its essence as an involvement strategy.

According to Tannen, the other category of involvement strategies aims at engaging the audience in the discourse through participation in its sense-making. It comprises *ellipsis, imagery and detail, tropes* and *constructed dialogue*. Tropes cover four figures of speech: metaphor (speaking of one thing in terms of another), metonymy (speaking of a thing in terms of some-

thing associated with it), synecdoche (a part for the whole) and irony (saying the opposite of what one means). Constructed dialogue refers to the representation of characters' speech as direct quotation rather than as a report (indirect speech) or as dialogue with other characters or with oneself (direct thought presentation). Tannen coined this term to emphasise the fact that 'when speech uttered in one context is repeated in another, it is fundamentally changed even if "reported" accurately' (1989: 110). In numerous cases, much of what appears as reported speech in discourse was never uttered in this form: for example, when a character's inner speech is represented, when speech is represented as choral, that is, attributed to many people in unison, etc. (for details see Tannen 1989: pp. 111–18). Its occurrence in these cases serves as a means of dramatisation and authenticity.

All the above devices bring the discourse alive by creating a sense of concreteness, particularity and familiarity. The speakers communicate their meaning and emotions through the power of evoking specific scenes. In this way, they send messages of rapport and intimacy to the audience inviting their involvement with them and with the events which are so vividly recreated.

Numerous studies have looked into the vital role of speech presentation in narratives as a device for vividness and involvement (e.g. Polanyi 1985; Dubois 1989; Mayes 1990). The animation of voices adds to the immediacy of the narration and creates the illusion that both teller and audience co-witness the events. In story 5.3 above, constructed dialogue occurs in the peak event to emphasise its point:

So they start yelling, from a balcony opposite, oy put your pants on, put your pants on, put your pants on ((audience laughs)). How could he understand? And someone threatening him with his walking stick, put your pants on, shame on you, and the others shouting at him ((audience laughs)).

The repetition of the speech renders it more salient as an involvement strategy. In addition, the narrator imitates the male voices with the effect of enhancing the dramatic evocation. The story finishes on a high point with a dialogue:

At some point he says, why are they yelling at me, do they want to save the water? ((whispers)) it's your trunks, somebody tells him, it's your trunks, oh my trunks.

Constructed dialogue has been reported as a major involvement strategy in conversational narratives of cultures that are very close to oral styles (such as Brazilian, Greek or American Indian communities). As we will see below, it is an integral part of performed (i.e. highly dramatised) narratives.

READER ACTIVITY

Identify the involvement strategies of the following text. How would you account for the use of the underlined items?

Text 5.6

Amy and I went to see *An Inspector Calls* at the National. Brilliant production on a stunning surrealist set, played without a break, like a perfectly remembered dream. I never rated Priestley before, but tonight he seemed as good as bloody Sophocles. Even Amy was swept away – she didn't attempt to recast the play once over supper. We ate in Ovation, a selection of starters – they're always better than the main courses. Amy had two and I had three. And a bottle of Sancerre between us. We had a lot to talk about besides the play: my trouble with Heartland and Amy's latest crisis over Zelda. Amy found a pill in Zelda's school blouse pocket when she was doing the laundry, and she was afraid it was either Ecstasy or a contraceptive. She couldn't decide which would be worse, but she didn't dare to ask the girl about it for fear of being accused of spying on her. She fished the pill, sealed inside an airmail envelope, out of her great swollen bladder of a handbag, and tipped it on to my side-plate for inspection. I said it looked like an Amplex tablet to me, and offered to suck it and see. I did, and it was. Amy was hugely relieved at first. Then she said, with a frown, 'Why is she worried about bad breath? She must be kissing boys'. I said 'Weren't you at her age?' She said 'Yes, but not with our tongues down each other's throats like they do now'. 'We used to' I said, 'it was called French kissing'. 'Well, you can get Aids from it nowadays' said Amy. I said I didn't think you could, though I don't really know. Then I told her about clause fourteen. She said it was outrageous and I should sack Jack ...

(Source: D. Lodge, *Therapy* (London: Secker and Warburg 1995), p. 113.)

In addition to the involvement strategies discussed above, Text 5.6 also exhibits instances of affective (expressive) devices which are often labelled in the literature as *intensity markers*. As we have seen, in Labov's model, the evaluative category of intensifiers comprises a range of items from repetition and details to markers such as *certainly, really, very, absolutely*. The category of intensity markers is as a rule less embracing and covers only lexical elements that express the speaker's positioning, attitudes, emotions and degrees of certainty towards the proposition. In Quirk et al.'s (1985) terms intensity markers can be divided into the following three classes:

- amplifiers (also referred to as quantifiers: e.g. *certainly, mainly, only*)
- downtoners or hedges (e.g. *rather, sort of, maybe*).

Intensity markers also include verbs, adjectives and adverbials that encode the speaker's emotions, feelings, moods and general dispositions. These can be classified as positive (e.g. *fortunate, amazing, happily, luckily, conveniently*) or negative (e.g. *shocked, sadly, alarmingly*) depending on the emotion encoded. Although the proliferation of terms may be confusing, what is important to remember is that intensity markers, when occurring in stories, are vital clues for the narrator's subjective orientation towards the message. Let us look at them more closely in the following extract from a personal letter:

Text 5.7

The big news is ... I might be moving to Minneapolis Minnesota! See, this is the situation: recently I have been in contact with an old ex-boyfriend. His name is Alan. He's the guy I broke up with while I was in Scotland. At any rate I had spoken with him maybe four times in the four years since then. Each time I saw/talked to him I was totally attracted to him. I saw him while I was at home at Christmas and I really felt passionate toward him (nothing happened between us because at that time we were both seeing other people). Anyway in the six months since then I spoke with him more regularly – once a month, once a week and eventually quite often. He's a PhD student at the University of Minnesota. So eventually he started asking me to come visit him in Minneapolis. Originally, I thought to myself 'It'll never happen', but as things with Kevin became apparent I came to the conclusion that I needed to make a decision ... So I decided to go to visit him for the first week of July. And it was absolutely wonderful. I felt totally head and heels in love. We spoke about all sorts of serious things like the M-word, religion, children etc. etc. He asked me to move to Minneapolis to live with him and I think I just might go! The real question is timing. It has all happened so fast that I can't believe it myself. My biggest reservation is leaving my job ...

(Source: Authors' data)

As can be seen, the narrator draws on a series of intensity markers to evaluate the tellable experience, which is her relationship with and feelings towards Alan (*big news, totally attracted, really passionate, totally heads and heels in love, all sorts of serious things*). At the same time, she highlights her emotional dilemma about leaving her job and going to live with Alan with quantifiers and hedges (*I just might go, the real question, all so fast, biggest reservation*). Furthermore, the intensification of the events narrated is put forward by verbs that denote feelings, thoughts and beliefs (*I thought to myself, came to the conclusion, decided, felt, I think, I can't believe*).

READER ACTIVITY

The following short narrative is from a film review. How do intensity markers contribute to the text's involvement strategies?

Text 5.8

On first meeting the gay writer Lytton Strachey during a visit to Vanessa Bell's south coast cottage in 1915, the virginal young painter Dora Carrington feels such antipathy that she decides to cut off his beard as he sleeps. His awakening however coincides with the sudden, secret awakening of her love for him; only later does she manage to convince Strachey to share a country home with her. Inevitably, given his preferences, the relationship is rarely untroubled, so that after a while both look elsewhere for sexual gratification; so deep is Carrington's love however that to the end she'll stay true to him in her fashion.

(Source: Geoff Andrew, *Time Out*, 13–20 December 1995)

Intensity markers are prototypically associated with the affective component of written discourse as more explicit cues. Compared to Tannen's categories of involvement strategies, they are more overt, less internalised ways of encoding attitudes and emotions (Tannen 1982a). Oral narratives as a rule draw more on involvement strategies which are deeply embedded in the narrative action and owe their emotive effects to the creation of drama, reminiscent of that in a play: the events are acted out on stage in front of the audience's eyes. Appropriately, the term used for such a narrative style is 'performance'.

5.3 NARRATIVE PERFORMANCES

The overall discourse style of performance is prototypically associated with oral narratives and their interactional dynamics. This involves the construction of highly dramatised and animated storytelling that calls forth special attention to the act of its expression and to its teller. From a psychological point of view, performance is an act of personal communication, of total engagement and emotional identification (Havelock 1982). At a linguistic level, it constitutes a form of verbal artistry. According to Bauman (1986, 1993), the essence of oral narrative performances is the storyteller's assumption of responsibility to display communicative skill and efficiency, thus creating a story which will sweep the audience off their feet.

Bauman also claimed that the specific set of devices for signalling performances is not fixed and predetermined but is expected to vary cross-culturally and needs to be discovered empirically. Each community conventionally makes use of a structured set of distinctive communicative means

among its resources to key the performance features. However, certain features have been widely attested as an integral part of narrative performances. Some of them are found in Wolfson's (1979, 1982) list of performance features:

- expressive sounds and sound effects
- motions and gestures
- repetition
- direct speech
- historic present
- asides (the narrator's suspension of the action to explain what is going on behind the scenes).

We have already seen how these devices form part of Labov's evaluative categories and Tannen's involvement strategies.

Recurrent performance features in the narratives of numerous cultures include historic or narrative present and direct speech (frequently introduced by a verb in narrative present). In Chapter 4, we discussed how switches to narrative present contribute to a story's organisation by separating discourse units and events, in particular the pivotal or peak events. In this way, they set off and highlight the experientially significant moments of storytelling. Combined with the characters' animation of voices, tense shifts function as a means of abolishing the distance between the past taleworld and the immediate situation of telling. Conveying this sense of proximity has significant implications for the relation between teller and listeners: the teller is presented as recording the experiences as if they were happening at the moment of their telling and, by implication, the listeners become 'eyewitnesses' of the events.

READER ACTIVITY

Do you agree that the oral narratives used in this chapter draw more on performance devices than the written narratives? If yes, how would you account for this difference?

Narrative performances are not an all-or-nothing affair. Stories may exhibit rapid breakthroughs into performance or may constitute more sustained, fully-fledged performances. The latter are based on an orchestration of performance devices: sustained repetition patterns, repeated switches to narrative present, animation of voices accompanied by shifts in prosodics and imitation, numerous gestures, deictics which abolish the distance between the taleworld and the immediate storytelling situation (e.g. *now* for *then*, *this* for *that*) etc. In this way, a narrative becomes a kind of multi-media show of dramatic evocation combining visual and auditory resources

READER ACTIVITY

Ask a friend to tell you a story on a specific topic and record it. Then, try and record a story that occurs spontaneously in a conversation. Are there any differences in their degree of performance? What, in your view, are the contextual features (e.g. setting, participants, themes, functions etc.) that favour narrative performances?

5.4 SUMMARY

Our discussion so far has introduced a rather long list of terms designed to capture the linguistic means by which discourse, narrative in particular, encodes subjectivity and realises its interpersonal functions. These terms are: evaluation devices, involvement features or strategies, intensity markers and performance devices. Evaluation and performance devices are to a major extent narrative-specific, since they have grown out of research on narrative structures and functions (for evaluation in non-narrative, see section 5.6). Involvement strategies and intensity markers have been applied to both narrative and non-narrative texts, sometimes with the aim of comparing different text-types (cf. Chafe's work on involvement).

The terms discussed here are only a small selection from a proliferation of terms in the relevant literature, for example affect keys, affect specifiers, loaded terms etc. (for a detailed discussion, see Caffi and Janney 1994). On numerous occasions, even the same term means different things within different paradigms. Involvement, for instance, has been used to refer to specific linguistic strategies, to speakers' preconditions (inner states) and to the effects of these strategies and states (i.e. 'metamessages' of rapport, shared feelings; again see Caffi and Janney 1994).

This profuse terminology is at times confusing and exasperating. The upshot, however, is that the topic of subjectivity in discourse, albeit overlooked and under-researched in the past, is currently at the heart of attention in various discourse analyses. There are already numerous unifying principles in the different, seemingly chaotic research strands. First, we have seen how certain devices are recurrent: for instance, repetition forms, narrative present and characters' (direct) speech and dialogues are well-established expressive devices in narrative. Second, we discussed the concept of context-dependence of expressive devices, mainly in relation to evaluation. Studies of involvement in particular have cast significant doubt on the cross-cultural validity and applicability of devices postulated for English discourse. It is nowadays apparent that the concepts of expressivity or subjectivity need to be relativised to be of use in cross-cultural investigations. Instead of being defined as lists of signs *a priori* of discourse analyses, they are linked to different discourse types and contexts (see Besnier 1994).

Third, all the different subjectivity concepts (e.g. evaluation, involve-

ment, intensity) are not necessarily incompatible. They can be brought together by certain linguistic categories of subjective (i.e. emotive, expressive) communication. One such category is related to positive or negative orientation towards discourse. Biber and Finnegan's positive and negative affect markers are immediately classifiable as its instantiations. The same applies to Labov's external evaluation which encodes the narrator's explicit, positive or negative evaluation of events. Intensity is another dominant category of emotive communication: it is related to more or less intense orientations and is clearly the point of departure for intensity markers. There are numerous other categories (Caffi and Janney 1994: 340–2), among which is that of proximity.

Proximity is related to far/near orientations, the speaker's positioning towards the discourse and its participants. All discourse, narrative in particular, is capable of signalling different degrees of proximity to or distancing from its message and its participants. This is an indispensable means of encoding subjectivity. Most of the devices discussed in this chapter can be brought together through their function of signalling proximity. Chafe's involvement and detachment are nothing more than a scheme for capturing the linguistic means by which different degrees of proximity are marked in discourse. Proximity also underlies the use of narrative present, which owes its expressive function to its shift from the distant and reminiscing mode of the past tense to the proximal visualising (Fleischman 1990: 42) mode of the here and now of storytelling. In this mode, the narrator presents the events as if witnessed and experienced at the moment of their telling. The animation of characters' voices is also a means of signalling the abolition of distance between the taleworld and the immediate situation of telling. Combined with various intonational variations, it adds an auditory element to the visual mode of immediacy. We could argue that the essence of (oral) narrative performance devices is the signalling of proximity between the teller and the tale and, by implication, between teller, tale and audience. In this way, the displays of subjectivity are not overt and explicit but deeply embedded in the story's drama. In the discussion which follows, we will see how non-narrative discourse normally draws on devices which make explicit references to feelings and attitudes.

5.5 NON-NARRATIVE RHETORICAL PATTERNS AND FUNCTIONS

Narrative is an inescapably fundamental mode for encoding subjectivity, since it is the ideal site for registering and making sense of our experiences. We showed how this major function of subjectivity is realised by specific linguistic devices. These devices are well suited to the prototypical purposes of sharing experiences in narrative form. We tell stories to create or enhance intimacy and rapport with our interlocutors, to entertain, move and invite them to partake in our emotional life, to express and at the same time comprehend our personal, social and cultural reality. Proximity devices which dramatise and animate our formal and informal communication are