

## NARRATIVE AS A RADIAL CATEGORY

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### ABSTRACT

Narrative is a complex and elusive category of cognition, culture, communication and language. An attempt has been made in this article with a large enough theoretical scope to consider the possibility of treating narrative as a radial category. To this end, the definition and characterisation of radiality is provided together with explanation of what it might mean to apply this term to the complex language-discourse unit of narrative. The prototype of this category involves features, functions, and ICMs. It has multiple representations with only family resemblance, involves more obvious exemplars and variable abstract knowledge structures. In particular, section one looks at the radiality question and what it might mean to think of the meaning of narrative in general. Section two focuses on centrality. Sections three to five deal with schematic representations of narrative and provide examples of extending the most subsuming schema of the Action Chain Model from cognitive linguistics and Labov's Narrative Schema to various other types of conversational narrative, children's dramatic plays, tactical narratives, story rounds, jokes, poems, current news articles on the Internet, images, and advertisements.

Keywords: Radial category; cognitive linguistics; narrative; story; schema; story occasioning; story rounds; interactional sociolinguistics; communication.

### 1. Introduction

Conceptual categories, including those related to language, have been shown to exhibit complex structure. Evans and Green (2006: 328), in their work on lexical items, define *radiality* as involving a network of related senses organised by convention with respect to a *composite prototype*. The prototype merges variable ICMs (*Idealised Cognitive Models*<sup>2</sup>) and at least to some extent

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<sup>2</sup> “*Idealised Cognitive Model (ICM)* [is] A theoretical construct developed by *George Lakoff* in order to account for the **typicality effects** uncovered by **Prototype Theory**. An ICM is a

constitutes prototype structure for a category. Lee (2001: 53) explains that radial category is the most typical category structure, with gradient membership as well as prototype effects relevant to the proper characterisation of lexical concepts and constructions. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2007: 139–170) emphasizes that such categories imply unequal membership status, fuzziness, the need to apply typical and essential (not necessary and sufficient) features, and *family resemblance*<sup>3</sup> structure. In other words, a radially structured category:

- a) has multiple representations with only family resemblance of exemplars to one another;
- b) includes more obvious or prominent cases of a category that motivate the formation of new exemplars within the same category;
- c) recruits cognitive models of thought (abstract knowledge structures, e.g. ICMs, scripts, schemas, frames, domains).

Categorisation then depends on: polysemy, metonymy, membership gradience, embodiment, and activation of ICMs.

Moreover, one additional dimension that is required when this topic is undertaken is the existence of schematic representations. Schemas motivate new exemplars by way of two kinds of correspondence: *elaboration* and *extension*.

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relatively stable mental representation that represents a ‘theory’ about some aspect of the world and to which words and other linguistic units can be relativised. In this respect, ICMs are similar to the notion of a **frame**, since both relate to relatively complex knowledge structures. However, while ICMs are rich in detail, they are ‘idealised’ because they abstract across a range of experiences rather than representing specific instances of a given experience. For instance, the **lexical concept** [BACHELOR] is understood with respect to a MARRIAGE ICM which includes schematic information relating a marriage age, a marriage ceremony, the social, legal, religious and moral dimensions and responsibilities associated with marriage, the participants involved in marriage and the conditions governing their status before and after the event of the marriage ceremony, different events associated with the trajectory of marriage, including the marriage ceremony itself, venues for performing the marriage ceremony, and so forth. According to Lakoff, ICMs are employed in cognitive processes such as categorisation and reasoning. As ICMs constitute coherent bodies of knowledge representation, the way they are structured is organised in various ways” (Evans 2007: 104).

<sup>3</sup> “Family resemblance [-] A notion in **Prototype Theory** in which a particular member of a category can be assessed as to how well it reflects the **prototype structure** of the category it belongs to. This is achieved based on how many salient attributes belonging to the **prototype** the category member shares. The degree of overlap between shared attributes reflects a category member’s degree of family resemblance. For instance, an ostrich cannot fly so lacks a salient attribute associated with the prototype structure of the category BIRD. However, it shares other salient attributes, such as having a beak and wings. Thus it exhibits family resemblance but does not exhibit the same strength of family resemblance as a robin, for instance, which can fly” (Evans 2007: 78).

Elaboration works top-down, i.e., from a more schematic representation to an instance. For example, a grammatical schema *Subject Verb Object* can be applied to verbally code a new event and/or scene. Elaboration is a case of full schematicity as the instance has every feature of the sanctioning schema. In contrast, extension makes use of partial schematicity as the resultant application of a language form, e.g., a metaphor, only selectively inherits features from the source semantic concept. Applied to narratives, the process of elaboration explains how people intuitively know what it means to tell a specific story or to invent one. A specific narrative schema, e.g., of a detective story, can be extended and used in different cultural contexts or even children's dramatic plays, i.e., contexts when children invent characters and events and act out their simulations on the fly. All these briefly presented aspects of categorisation naturally also subsume the important role of language use, culture and environment in the creation of radial categories.

Lastly, it needs to be stressed that models of categorization must not be equated with cognitive models of brain-representational formats of knowledge and processing activity. This view was made explicit by Rosch and Lloyd (in Lakoff 1987: 43) and Geeraerts (1989), i.e., the prototype effects are to be interpreted solely as judgments of typicality.

This study attempts to demonstrate that the category *narrative* has a radial structure; the main aspects of this discourse (genre, textual) category will be discussed with appropriate examples. Thus, section two explains whether *narrative* can be viewed as a radial category and what it means to think about a meaning of narrative in a general sense, followed by section three focussing on the centrality issue. Next, section four deals with schematic representations of narratives and possibilities of extending the narrative prototype to various other contexts besides the elicited monologues, the Labovian types of narratives. Finally, the last section five outlines the importance of images in/and narratives.

## 2. Narrative as a complex unit

Linguistic theory is concerned with units of variable complexity, from phonemes to text. This is true of various strands of structural and functional linguistics (cf. Fisiak 1985). Cognitive Linguistics is not exceptional in this respect but views unit status in relation to an individual or a community of language users. Langacker (e.g., 2008) defines unit as a cognitive routine, i.e., as a knowledge structure of variable complexity, with semantic and phonological poles that can be activated fluently and spontaneously. This definition of unit status naturally applies to different discourse genres, including narratives and stories. The ability to produce a complex narrative is never possible without the skill of producing

sub-routines, events, evaluations, and orientations together with proper understanding of relevant temporal and causal narrative layers meticulously intertwined to form the gestalt of a story.

Thus, the very complexity of narrative type is one reason why it eludes a single satisfactory definition. Different scholars have emphasized its variable aspects. Labov and Waletzky (1967) focused on narratives of personal experience, in which a researcher elicited a narrative from a person who had experienced a dangerous and potentially life-threatening situation. It was hypothesized that story production is a task of invoking (as opposed to being an effortful construal) past experience and coding it in language form (cf. Norrick 2000).

The stories (14 altogether) which were collected in the study described above were of variable size and complexity. The shortest consisted of only a few clauses.

- (1) I know a boy named Henry. Another boy threw a bottle at him right in the head, and he had to get seven stitches.

Others were much longer, in fact, too long to be quoted in total here. They all inspired questions regarding the relation between the clauses and events, the temporal scope of the clauses, and sequencing as well as the question how many narratives there are in an oral presentation of past experience. It was found that the events recreated from memory were coded in clauses and utterances that were either locked in their position and hence not movable without changing the meaning of the story, restricted and movable to some extent, or completely free, i.e., they could be placed anywhere within a given sample.

Moreover, the now well-known narrative schema was suggested, containing an abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda. Orienting and evaluating comments tend to appear initially, but can also be interspersed through the entire narrative. The schema can be elaborated to different degrees. The short narrative (see above, example (1)) has no abstract and the only orientation provided concerns the speaker's and the main character's age, their relation to the presenter and that it all happened in the past.

The frequent argument against Labov and Waletzky's (1967) study concerns the observation that it assumed a stable biographical memory and it made an impression that such an outlook on this category was far from exhausting its full potential. Though it would be hard to disagree with this argument, Squire reminds us that Labov's (1997, 2001) research additionally suggests that:

[...] for narratives to be emotionally expressive [...] [they do not have] to include explicit statements about emotions among their evaluative clauses – if individuals are to be judged psychologically healthy. His research suggests that the most powerful stories, for listeners, are 'objective' accounts of events, almost like verbal

movies [...] which simply assume that common emotional evaluations of the stories will be made within the language communities where they are produced [...]. (2005: 95)

Moreover, more recently Labov (2004, 2006, 2011) also studied the relationship between reportability and credibility of the so-called *most reportable event*, i.e., an event for which the story is worth telling in the first place, with the conclusion that the more reportable an event is, the less credible it is, too. He also explained how story tellers know which event to convey as the first in their stories and this choice was taken as evidence of active construal of how the MRE (most reportable event) came about. The selection of the first event in a story is not the sole aspect of construing its causal structure. Labov (2011) also demonstrated that convicted murderers were able to manipulate the content of their narrative testimonies so as to put blame on another person for the events that had taken place prior to somebody's death. This is a prime example of not simply relying on some biographical memories and recreating these memories in a verbalisation, but an indication of active mental construal and adequate linguistic coding (typically using more subjective events and more evaluative statements instead of objective events) in the context of a socially real, communicative situation. Squire argues that:

Labov's work [...] turns our attention to language itself, not just to what language 'means' – and social science work on narrative has a common tendency to move too quickly and easily from language to 'meaning' [...] Labov's more recent work introduces a conception of narrative as theory that seems to leave behind late-modern understandings of narrative as personal sense-making, in favour of it operating as a kind of contemporary politics. (2005: 95–96)

In sum, Labov and Waletzky's (1967), and later Labov's (1997, 2001, 2004, 2011) work, though often criticised for its preoccupation with biographical, monologue-type of data relying on subjects' past memories, constitutes a most important strand in narrative research. In fact, others seem not to be able to even begin their analyses without using the concepts and theoretical constructs offered by Labov. Squire's (2005) observation that the social science work tends to draw conclusions about the meaning of narratives without proper focus on how these meanings are coded in language is interesting.

Apart from the aforementioned interest in narrative and stories, Ricoeur (1985; cf. also Wood 1991) focuses on human life as a whole. Narrative is understood as essential in uncovering the meaning of life, or, as he puts it, "the examination of life" involves its recounting. This strand of research is akin to Bruner's (1990) belief that every human is a *homo narrans*, a phrase which expresses their "innate predispositions to narrative organisation" that can assist in understanding the self.

Another strand of research into narrative focuses on the concept of positioning, identity expression, self, and small stories in interactive contexts (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; Bamberg 2011; Bamberg & Demuth 2016). This approach examines small stories in real life conversational contexts, in which narratives appear and disappear. These contexts provide valuable data on how people construe their identities. Acknowledging it is somewhat artificial to draw boundaries between people's inner representations and outer expressions of this representation, Bamberg contends that it would be equally unnatural to ask a 10 year old about their identity, as the most likely answer would contain information about hometown and school attended, but little else. Aside from age, there are other factors which skew or limit how an individual (consciously) construes identity. For example, Bamberg cites the awkwardness of asking a Chinese labourer working at an assembly line to explain their identity. Such a question may not even be understood (Bamberg & Demuth 2016).

Similarly, Norrick (2000) argues for a focus on personal stories that enable improved self-understanding and micro analysis of teller/speaker strategies together with proper characterisation of story occasioning contexts. Some of the research questions that are followed in this publication refer to the way of remembering past experience (whether it is verbal and sequential) and chunking strategies (cf. Miller 1956; Chafe 1994, 1998; Badio 2004).

The study on how stories are occasioned in conversation was also undertaken by Ervin-Tripp and Küntay (1997). In the first part of their study they provided examples of children's dramatic play, in which children make up events and simultaneously act them out. Next, they elicited narratives, dyadic conversations between a child and an adult, in which the adult provides a framework for a child's story by asking additional questions and prompting the child to provide more details. In the third phase, using rounds of stories, interlocutors take turns to provide a story after a story on a given topic. In the fourth phase, in the so-called environmentally-cued narratives attention is paid to how different objects in a given context may provide an impulse for imaginative comments regarding their use and interacting with them. In other conversational narratives, a parent presents a story to illustrate a point, persuade, dissuade, or warn a child against some past, present, or future action. The authors note how important it is that during story performance speakers gesticulate, use facial expressions, and assume variable body postures – cues that need to be used in the interpretation of meaning in the data.

Other categories of narratives include certain types of jokes and stories as rehearsal for action (Kielkiewicz-Janowiak 2016) or the equally interesting idea of imagined stories that become activated as the base against the profile of some lexical items (Filar 2015). A case in point is the expression *dirty money*, the meaning of which can only be understood after simultaneous activation of a schematic narrative whereby the characters come to possess money in an illicit way.

These diverse strands of research into narrative shed some light on the complexity of this category. It can be approached from the point of view of structure, and how structure consists of components together with the functions of these components. Moreover, causality and temporality can be considered to demonstrate their relations when people carefully select linguistic forms in order to mentally construe and linguistically code their intentions as stories unfold. Other avenues of research have concentrated on the so-called big stories, i.e., biographies or life histories and social interactions during the production of small stories effected during conversations. One may add to this list stories in advertisements, TV commercials, and cartoons, and certainly the political stories on the Internet about the current events. The list is not exhaustive as narratives are ubiquitous.

The brief discussion of the different options justifies the suggestion that, like other less complex language units, narrative also has a distinctive form, its schematic phonological pole, to use Langacker's (1991) term, and it brings to the forefront the understanding that the form can be used with a myriad functions in a great number of different social contexts. This is arguably a case of polysemy and sense relatedness. A discussion of the nature of the similarity between these different forms, functions, and occasioning contexts of the narrative category is undertaken in the next section.

### 3. The centrality issue

Given the mind-boggling variety of types of narratives and stories, one is left wondering what, if anything, they have in common or if there is a type and/or an instance that is central and which most, if not all, language users – regardless of language and culture – would understand and relate to.

Categorizing relationships (and the paper revolves around the question of radiality of the narrative category) ultimately depend on the judgments of similarity. This concept has received some attention in linguistic and philosophical literature. Poczobut (2006) lists the following types of similarity, which overlap to some extent:

- a) similarity based on features
- b) structural similarity
- c) functional similarity

With regard to different stories and narratives similarity based on features might focus on properties involving characters, goals, and events. Structural similarity might focus on the conclusion that different stories can have at least some of the Labovian parts. The functional similarity concerns goals of telling a story. These

goals include imaginative play, making a point, entertaining, spending time together (as in the case of story rounds), emphasizing one's identity, or positioning oneself in a group.

Similarity judgments result from acts of comparison, conscious or not. Piłat (2006) points out that the relation of similarity tends to be asymmetrical. For example, a new story can be said to be similar to a well-known or an established story; a new usage of a narrative will tend to be compared to the one that tradition has long accepted as canonical. Moreover, narratives central in one culture may not be in another. Each nation and region has its own fables, literary traditions, and history.

#### 4. Schematic representations of narrative

A usage-based model of language such as Langacker's Cognitive Grammar and other models within Cognitive Linguistics define *abstraction* as a process of generalising instances (Evans 2007: 1), e.g., tokens of the past simple tense, whereby a structure of the regular past tense emerges, which becomes prominent enough to subsequently be used to sanction<sup>4</sup> new experience and code it with the use of the regular past tense (Taylor 2002: 263–323). A related and relevant concept, *schematisation*, is a cognitive process that results in “much less detailed [representation] [...]” (Evans 2007: 189).

A caveat and a reminder before we continue, the present work does not reject the importance of sociolinguistic interactionists' perspective on discourse (e.g., Goffman 1974, 1981; Gumperz 1981, 1982) with its interest in qualitative analyses of cues one can find as people interact and the analyses of these in the process of the interpretation of how meanings are construed in real-life contexts. On the contrary, Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (2008: 457–539) embraces *discourse genres*, *dynamicity*, *structure building*, and *meaning negotiation*.

In the case of narrative, one candidate schema conception that comes from Cognitive Grammar is the so called *action chain* model.

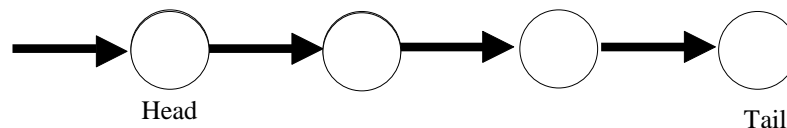


Fig. 1. Action chain (based on Langacker 1991: 283)

<sup>4</sup> “Sanction [is] [t]he motivation afforded a novel structure by the conventional [also schematic] units of a grammar. Sanction is *full* or *partial* depending on whether a categorising relationship is one of elaboration or extension ...” (Langacker 1991: 552)

It represents energetic, forceful interactions between physical objects, e.g., billiard balls. The far left of the chain is marked by an initiating force applied to the ball (the arrow represents the force, and the length of the vector is positively correlated with the amount and direction of the force), whereas the initial force is subsequently passed on to the other balls in the chain. The model can be extended metaphorically to designate schematic sequences of events, where the force (the arrow in the model) is understood to be a cause; a ball (circle) stands for a single event and the sequence of balls stands for a temporal (and causal) sequence of events. Moreover, to accommodate Labov and Waletzky's (1967) narrative schema, one needs to add that the ball beginning the sequence is the earliest construed by a language user to be causally linked to another ball, the one that needs to be identified with the MRE (most reportable event). In between the balls one can insert any other objects that may influence this extended metaphor of the transfer of energy; here these would have to be understood as orienting comments that constitute the broadly understood context as well as the evaluating commentary interspersed throughout the whole narrative.

As a result, we would get a sequence of *windows of attention* on consecutive events or static scenes, where each window is an update on the evolving story, including evaluation and orientation. Such a description is similar to what one gets in a cartoon in which each panel presents a moment of change prominent enough to register a new event or scene (cf. Tversky & Hemenway 1984; Tversky 1990, 2015: 6).

The world presents us with a continuous multi-modal flow of information to our senses. From this, the mind forms the categories important to our lives, people, places, things, events. These components are then linked into the explanations and narratives, visual and verbal that constitute our understandings of our lives (Tversky 2015: 6).

There need not be a single schema for a narrative. Instead, more detailed and local schemas could be proposed. In the case of grammatical constructions, such as the double object construction, e.g. SVO and an actual sentence that elaborates it, e.g., *He ate*, one notices that the second object of the construction is not elaborated in the example sentence. However, it does not mean that it is absent in a conceptualization.

Similarly, though with some important differences due to the complexity of narratives in comparison to basic sentence patterns, a schema of the narrative structure can be elaborated in a selective way due to different contexts occasioning storytelling. By way of example, the following excerpt extracted from a round of stories with earthquakes as the common theme comes from Ervin-Tripp & Küntay (1997: 137).

(2) Earthquake story. Albert and Ned are two brothers. Olga is Ned's friend, Cynthia her roommate. All are college students.

- a. Al:       you know that-  
 b.           that \*nice \*glass \*china \*display case in our \*dining room  
 c. Ned:     =in the \*dining room=  
 d. Cyn:     =o-o-oh=

The theme in the case of story rounds is established only once, and there is no need to verbalise the whole narrative schema. The example provided above contains no animate protagonist (does not linguistically code one), or a strict protagonist, no clear temporal juncture between events, no conflict, let alone the orientation and coda sections. The story is about the “implicit temporal sequence, an earthquake followed by the outcomes” (Ervin-Tripp & Küntay 1997: 137). The focus of this rendition of what happened, i.e., that there was an earthquake, is on the most reportable event, on the earthquake itself, which is as if scanned in great detail. The construal and linguistic coding describe a few seconds, which seemingly extend for ever. But the story schema, e.g., the one suggested by Labov & Waletzky (1967), is active. To use a phrase from Langacker (1991), the semantic and segmental poles need not be isomorphic, i.e., not every entity from the semantic pole has to be coded. On the level of morphology this situation can be exemplified by the word *blew*, which codes the idea of BLOW and PAST on the semantic pole, but the word *blew* itself does not tend to invite analysis into past and the activity; it is only one form fusing these two ideas into one gestalt. Returning to example (2), only the elements written in the bold font (below) are profiled against the less prominent, but still activated schema: *orientation, evaluation, complicating action, most reportable event(s) with evaluations, resolution, coda*.

Another example of selective application of the narrative schema in language and extension of storytelling and narrative to the context of children's play is exemplified by the following example.

(3) Doctor-patient play of 4-5 year olds

- Kit:       pretend there's something wrong with my leg, my leg-  
           let's pretend that I tell you that my leg's-um-  
           lets pretend I tell you-first, you operate on it  
           um, but before you operate on it,  
           let me tell you something, ok, nurse?  
 Jill:       um, okay.

Kit: um, when I was walking down the street,  
I saw this piece of glass and I picked it up,  
then I didn't see too well,  
then it goes way up to here.  
see now. Its-now it's over there.  
can you-can you operate on it, nurse?

Andy: I can.

Kit: can you not-I said um-  
somebody has to operate on-on-on it. (Ervin-Tripp & Küntay 1997: 140)

Evidenced in the above transcript is the way Kit imagines future events, while at the same time acting out some possible dialogues, e.g., *can you operate on it nurse?* Children can understand and imagine details of dramatic event sequences that are culturally embedded. Naturally, Kit appreciates that if a piece of glass gets stuck in one's leg, they need to be operated on in a hospital, where they are taken to by ambulance, and it is usually a nurse who first explains things to a patient arriving with a problem. Moreover, the activation of a background frame is additionally (cf. Schank & Abelson 1977) correlated with the activation of a script, also a schematic knowledge structure that contains information regarding the temporal organisation of events, utterances, and discourse roles. The general narrative schema, as elaborated in example (3), is also extended to contexts of hypothetical scenarios in children's dramatizations during play.

Such partial elaborations of the general narrative schema as presented in examples (1, story rounds) and (2, children's play) above do not exhaust the list of occasioning contexts where a story appears. Other options listed by Ervin-Tripp and Küntay (1997: 149–160) include: *environmentally-cued narratives*, *narratives presenting problems*, *narratives as performances*, and *tactical narratives*.

The environmentally-cued narratives tend to revolve around a problem that is discussed, which triggers the presentation of narrative scenarios. Example (4) demonstrates how a problem can be proclaimed (adapted from Ervin-Tripp & Küntay (1997)).

(4) Hel: you know ...I was talking with a friend  
that asian caucasian dating thing ...  
and my complaint to my friend  
is that that is that asian guys just don't ask  
=y'know?

The problem involves an observation of how Asian males behave towards women in general, itself a schematic event. The problem is further elaborated in example (5).

- (5) Hel: so then if that's true then how come *you guys*  
*get* like like *mad at us*  
*if we go out with caucasian people*  
*then you guys don't ask.*  
*you guys don't get off your butts*  
 \*answer me

Next, soon after the story is presented, this time an actual story that Min heard from media on racial prejudice and women's abuse is delivered.

- (6) Min: yeah AMU .. they like wrote kill whitey and then like  
 in the girls' bathroom downstairs they're like like y'know  
 basically like slammin on asian woman  
 for dating caucasian men  
 like stay within your own kind .. stay within your own group..

An example of one of the interlocutor's own experiences in this regard are in place, and relevant to the discussion of the problem.

- (7) Yuan: well, I just met a Caucasian guy yesterday  
 and we were just talking right?  
 and he he he speaks a little bit of Chinese  
 and he got a job uh got a job with a company like  
 uh doing tradings and stuff → ORIENTATION
- and he was just telling me  
 yeah .. you know ... some asian women .. man  
 some Chinese women you just take them and  
 bang them .. you know  
 like have sex with them  
 yeah bang them .. and then yeah so y'know  
 I'm going to work here a couple of years {mimicking the man}  
 and then go back to Thailand and get a wife {mimicking the man}  
 you know what I am supposed to respond to that {evaluation}  
 [...]  
 all I can say is being in this world  
 there's always somebody who like to hit other people  
 [...] and somebody who like to get hit you know  
 [...] cause whoever the girl that wants to go out with  
 him, that's her problem .. that's not my problem.

This unresolved conflict story has been presented here to provide yet another example of a conversationally occasioned and co-construed story. The general

narrative schema is indeed elaborated (represented) as there is some orientation, evaluation, and commentary. The schematic extension of the general schema has it that as problems usually refer to our lives and culturally embedded scenarios with schematised and particular events, language users activate this understanding and narratives appear, but they are not of the elicited type.

Language users also frequently imitate other people's way of walking, facial expressions, or tone of voice. This is strikingly similar to the view that the expression of meaning to a substantial degree involves *mental simulation* of remembered or imagined activity (cf. Barsalou 1999, 2008; Bergen 2012). Cognitive Linguistics has no problem including this observation in the semantic pole of yet another narrative sub-schema or as a frequent feature of conversational English, often rude and colloquial.

It is additionally important to notice the implicit understanding that narrative schema is also used in jokes. These may activate a culturally relevant scenario or cultural stereotype, as in the sexist Polish jokes about *baba*, the Polish pejorative and polysemous word, whose designatum is an old peasant woman with focus on the negative connotations of the general category WOMAN. The earliest example of a number of jokes in this category runs as follows (with literal translation in English).

(8) Przyszła baba do lekarza, a lekarz też baba.

Lit. *A woman went [Polish: came] to a doctor, and the doctor is a woman, too.*

The joke seems to be activating the narrative schema without the orientation section, though this can be easily filled in by any native speaker of Polish. Somebody becomes sick and an appointment with a GP is necessary. The complicating action sequence seems to be opened, but it stops abruptly after the announcement of the first event, *woman went to a doctor*. The last comment in this joke can hardly be equated with what Labov called the most reportable event. The comment that the doctor turned out to be a woman can only be understood against the cultural expectations regarding the traditional division of roles between men and women. In other words, the salient concept after announcing that the woman went to see a doctor is that the doctor is male. The verbal stimulus, *a woman went to see a doctor*, is biased and receives top-down control from cultural knowledge (cf. Giora 2003). Stating the obvious in place of the most reportable event is paradoxically reportable for the humorous effect it produces against the joking frame active in this context (cf. Goffman 1974).

One interesting example of a joke that invites the activation of cultural schemata is quoted below after Misztal (1990: 74).

(9) Extract from a petty cash book:

*April*

1. Advertisement for secretary	£ 5
3. Violets	£ 1
4. Candy	£ 1.25
8. Secretary's salary	£ 30
10. Flowers	£ 2
11. Candy for wife	£ 1
15. Secretary's salary	£ 60
18. Handbag	£ 18
19. Candy for wife	£ 1.25
22. Gloria's salary	£ 90
24. Theatre and dinner, Gloria and self	£ 55
25. Chocolates for wife	£ 2
28. Fur coat for wife	£ 2,500.00
29. Advertisement for a male secretary	£ 5

The information that is typically expected in the orientation section of a narrative can be inferred from the cues provided on the list, namely that there are three main characters (man, wife, secretary), and that the man has a business. Petty cash expenses are recorded and the numbers on the left as well as the sequential organisation of the expenses are temporally arranged. Interestingly, however, some numbers are missing, which makes one think they had been erased for fear the wife might find out. Moreover, a little more cash is spent on the secretary and her salary soon doubles. Importantly, she suddenly becomes Gloria, with triple the salary she got at the beginning and the reader is left wondering why, the most likely interpretation being Gloria and the man are having an affair. Soon after this £55 worth of cash is spent on theatre and dinner with Gloria. The most reportable event seems to be the need to spend £2500 on a fur coat for the wife as she finds out her husband has been flirting with the secretary. The resolution offered in this story is that, apart from having to spend a fortune on the fur-coat, Gloria has to be dismissed from work and a new ad has to be arranged for a new secretary, male this time. In a way, though the characters are particular and so are some other details, the cultural stereotype, a script, and a schematic knowledge structure is controlling the comprehension of this joke in a top-down fashion.

It should not come as a surprise that also poetry, to say nothing of novels and other forms of fiction, use narrative. Let us read the following poem by Hugo Williams (1982: 65).

## (10) The Butcher

The butcher carves veal for two  
 The cloudy, frail slices fall over his knife

His face is hurt by the parting sinews  
 And he looks up with relief, laying it on the scales

He is a rosy man with white eyelashes  
 Like a bullock. He always serves me now.

I think he knows about my life. How we prefer  
 To eat in when it's cold. How someone

With a foreign accent can only cook veal.  
 He writes the price on the grease-proof packet

And hands it to me courteously. His smile  
 Is the official seal on my marriage.

The poem presents the scene of buying veal (for two, here for a married couple living together). As in the case of conversational stories analysed above, there is no special setting or orientation section, but we find out about the characters (the butcher, the man in the shop, his wife – not present in the shop). There are some events, and some of them with a narrative juncture, e.g., *carves veal* + *looks up with relief* + *laying it on the scales*. Instead of a surprising and reportable event, the poem – construed from the point of view of the male customer – turns to the presentation of the man's reflection on the routine of life. Williams' preoccupation with the ordinary in this poem construes a narrative as a way of reflecting on one's life. A similar preoccupation with ordinary events was also demonstrated by Labov (2004), where a nurse presented everyday events, talked about mundane activity (e.g., she put the plate on the table) in order to argue she was not responsible for the patient's passing away.

Also, daily news is full of narration on a variety of topics, e.g., Brexit – *May urges Tory MPs to unite*, sports – *Messi reaches 30-goal mark for Barcelona for 11th straight season*, entertainment – *Coronation Street lines up a shocking heart attack storyline*, technology – *5G Moto Mod gets FCC certification*, or money and technology – *Is Google hiding behind shell companies to scoop up tax break*.


To sum up, both cognitive and sociolinguistic interactionist/constructionist perspectives are needed to characterise the schematic representations of narrative. The action chain model discussed by Langacker (1991) is an abstract enough candidate to subsume the other sub-schemas relevant to this complex discourse genre/unit. The general narrative schema (abstract, orientation, complicating

action, evaluation, resolution, and coda) proposed by Labov does not have to be dismissed. Instead, the general schema can be activated selectively rendering its particular elaborations and extensions (conversational stories, poems, and media news). The semantic poles of various narrative schemas and sub-schemas not only involve information regarding the characters, time and space, but also cultural norms, scripts, values, occasioning contexts, possible inferences, dynamic acts of construal and expectations. Section four provides a brief discussion of non-verbal narratives.

### 5. Images in/and narratives

Narrative is not solely reserved for verbal (oral or written) codes. It is also frequently occasioned by the need to advertise a product or service, as in the following example.

**We'll help you get your  
business off the ground.**



Starting your own business can seem a tall order. But just fill in the coupon, or dial 100 and ask for Freephone NatWest, and you'll be well on your way. Within a few days you'll receive our Business Start Up Pack. It's crammed with information on Marketing, Law, Money and Administration, to help you get your business started. Of course, if you can't wait that long, just get in touch with your local NatWest Branch Manager.

To: NatWest The Action Bank, PLC, Royal Business Centre, FREEPOST, Harrogate, YO10 1BB. Please refer to your advice from NatWest and help you start up to business.

Name:  Mr/Ms/Ms/Ms/Ms/Ms

Address:

City/Town/Village:

Postcode:

How should we contact you?  Home  Work  Other

How often should we contact you?  Regularly  Occasionally  Only when necessary

I agree to receive your offers and services.  I do not agree to receive your offers and services.

I agree to receive your offers and services.  I do not agree to receive your offers and services.

NatWest The Action Bank

**P R E S S   F O R   A C T I O N**

Figure 1. Advertisement of the NatWest Bank with an implied narrative<sup>5</sup>  
(Wright 2005: 51)

<sup>5</sup> The small font on the advertisement reads: Starting your own business can seem a tall order. But just fill in the coupon [on the left], or dial 100 and ask for Freephone NatWest, and you'll be well on your way. Within a few days you'll receive our business Start Up Pack. It's crammed with information on Marketing, Law, Money and administration, to help your business started. Of course, if you can't wait that long, just get in touch with your local NatWest Branch Manager.

Any advertisement, this one being no exception, is used to persuade a customer that a product or service is worth buying. This seems to be metaphorically construed in the above example by inviting a viewer/reader to assume the viewpoint of the window cleaner suspended on solid, metal ropes (therefore also safe), able to see clearly through the window (so also being able to see the future). The advertisement is promising to “get [...] business off the ground”, in other words to succeed. The phrase is an example of the GOOD IS UP, a positive upward movement metaphor.

If one tried to rewrite the story, it could go like this: *He [the man in the picture] had a window cleaning business, and with proper support [cost and risk backgrounded] from the NatWest Bank, he was able to invest and run the business. Not only did he clean the windows of shops and restaurants, but he also received bigger jobs that catapulted him from a small firm to an important company.* The interpretation of this story on a more abstract level could run as follows: *Anybody wanting to run a business should consider the offer of the NatWest Bank. This can boost her/his career, and s/he will feel safe. S/he will also be able to look into the future with certainty and understanding.* The advert is inviting dynamic construal and negotiation of meaning in dialogic/interactive form between the viewer/reader and the author.

Another type of visuals typically used to tell stories are cartoons. They tend to present a series of images and are used in satire, humour, politics, children’s stories, or history. Cartoon artists select the moments crucial to the development of a story, i.e., moments of maxima of change regarding various action parameters such as change of character, change of location, change of direction of movement and change of body part (cf. Badio 2014; Tversky 2015). Such moments are most meaningful in the dynamic construal of causality, temporality, and continuity of action.

The question whether a single frame cartoon can suggest a narrative is answered positively. However, one needs to disentangle the conceptual level of a narrative and any signalling system or medium (text and/or image) which is used to code it. If a single frame were to be used, such a frame would need to refer to the most reportable event of a narrative, i.e., the event for which the narrative is worth telling. Groensten (2013) supports the view that some kind of transition and sequence is necessary for cartoons to suggest (not present) narratives. Such transition and sequence, may be the feature of a conceptualisation, form or both.

As signalled in this section, narrativity, i.e., the ability to invoke a story/narrative in the context of interactive encounter between people, is not limited to the use of words in speech and writing. The example of the advertisement inspires a metaphorical extension of the picture and other

information in the advert, such as theoretically limitless professions, life plans, and hopes. Cartoons are able to invoke continuity, change, and understanding of causal and temporal relations in the dynamic construal of dynamic events despite the presentations of static pictures.

## 6. Conclusions

The discussion has demonstrated that narrative is a complex category that can be studied from structural, functional-interactionist, and cognitive vantage points. Each tradition provides unique perspectives. The Labovian type of research into this topic was able to find the important structural characteristics and it brought our attention to the way causality, temporality, and sequential organisation of variable types of events are interrelated. The research into the big narratives of human biographies has skilfully demonstrated how people construct meaning through telling life stories. The small story research has argued that research should turn to conversational narratives, where dynamic meaning is negotiated and constructed on the fly, not just re-created from memory. Despite the obvious variability within studies of narrative, the paper suggested that narrative is a complex unit with the semantic pole including structural and social, cultural and communicative characteristics, which induces a conclusion that one deals with the case of sense relatedness, i.e., polysemy. The centre of the narrative category may be described differentially as involving features, (e.g., character, goal, intention, MRE), actual stories we remember or hear from others (prototypical exemplars), or typical functions stories are used with. Another option is to propose that the most subsuming schema that narratives revolve around is the Action Chain model from Cognitive Linguistics, whereas the general story schema's best candidate is the Labovian abstract-orientation-complicating action-resolution-evaluation-coda schema, selectively activated in variable story occasioning contexts. Examples would be story rounds, tactical narratives, children's dramatic play, conversational narratives, jokes, advertisements, cartoons, poems, or news on the Internet. The intention of this article has been to emphasize that the narrative category is variable, and different researchers tend to focus on (sometimes) dramatically different research goals. However, the paper has argued that the different senses, features, occasioning contexts, functions, exemplars, activated ICMs, and frames can be considered a radial narrative category.

## Transcription symbols

- \*       stressed syllable or word
- \*\*      additional stress on a syllable or word

=	anacrusis, lengthening of a syllable
/	falling intonation at the end of an intonation unit
pre-	unfinished word
o-o-o	/o/ pronounced exceptionally long
..	pause
...	longer pause

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