Narrative, Text and Time: telling the same story twice in the oral narrative reporting of 7/7

Abstract: (around 250 words)

The question of whether it is possible to 'tell the same story twice' has been explored in work on conversational narratives, which has set out to understand the existence of some kind of 'underlying semantic structure' and 'script' (Polanyi, 1981). In conversational narratives, 'local occasioning' and 'recipient design' (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974) are factors that determine the form and function of the story. Here, ongoing talk frames the narrative while other participants provide a ready made audience, all of which, form part of the storytelling process. What happens, however, when a survivor of 7/7* whose personal narrative was reported globally on the day of the event, is again interviewed two and a half years later for their experience of that morning? Is the 'same story' retold? Specifically, how far does the latest story replicate the experience and events of the first and which of the prototypical features of a personal narrative – at the level of both the macrostructure and microstructure - remain constant? By comparing both interviews and using Labov and Waletzky's (1967) narrative framework as the central model for analysis, it is possible to see whether events within the *complicating action* or features of *evaluation* remain the most memorable, that is, they are recalled in the second telling as important aspects of the experience, and may be seen to be core narrative categories. While findings show that both narratives are comparable in form, a closer investigation finds compelling differences as well as unexpected linguistic choices. Not only has the second narrative become informed by other, external narratives to become part of a broader, mediated narrative but various discourse strategies of 'dissociation' in both interviews have resulted in a retelling of a traumatic experience that appears to be closer to an eye witness report than a personal narrative. Moreover, this blurring of two distinct genres of storytelling provides a true insight of how the narrator positions himself inside this terrible experience.

*On July 7, 2005 there were a series of co-ordinated terrorist bomb attacks on the London transport system in the morning rush hour. Three bombs exploded on London underground trains (- just outside Liverpool Street, Edgware Rd and Russell Square stations -) and one on a double-decker bus in Tavistock Square, in central London. The bombings killed 52 commuters, the four suicide bombers and injured many hundreds of people.)

1 Background: narrating our experiences

How do individuals make sense of the events that they experience and events that occur around them, whether as participants inside the story or as witnesses watching from the outside in? One way is to organise these experiences into personal narratives or stories and then share them through narration and performance. These story telling activities are considered by many to be universal, as is a human propensity to organise our experiences into coherent structures for their comprehension, memorisation and recall (see Bruner, 1990; Emmott, 1997; Hymes, 1996; Sanford and Emmott, 2012). In this way individuals are able to shape and represent their lives as they (re)construct their experiences – and in so doing, reconstruct their identity – through stylistic choices. It is what Cobley (2001) sees as a consequence of language, which 'not only 'permits' narratives but practically makes them obligatory in the organization of human experience' (p.23). Linde (1993: 3) argues that these experiences, which she calls 'life stories' function to 'express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way' as individuals navigate their way through a constantly revised life story. She explains the importance of coherence in life stories created by: the presence of a logical narrative structure comprised of past tense clauses and evaluation devices; coherence principles where life stories are 'primarily principles of appropriate causality and continuity', where causality is a chain of events 'that hearers can accept as constituting a good reason for some particular event or sequence of events'; and a coherence system based on 'common sense', where speakers of the same culture share norms and beliefs (pp.220-2).

In order for stories to be understood, there needs to be an underlying, prototypical story structure that these personal experiences are narrated against, which influence and even determine their organisation for mutual comprehension. In other words, story prototypes influence the production and reception of narratives. Herman (2002: 1) explains this by

stating that 'story recipients, whether readers, viewers or listeners, work to interpret narratives by reconstructing the mental representations that have in turn guided their production', whereas Bruner asserts (2003:7) that 'we also cling to narrative models of reality and use them to shape our everyday experiences'. Specifically, Bruner (1990) describes this construction of experiences into narratives as a 'push' which consists of, and depends on:

> (a) 'a means for emphasizing human agency of action; (b) a sequence of some sort; (c) a sense of what is canonical, that is traditional or permitted in human interaction as well as what is non-canonical; and (d) a narrator's perspective.' (See Cobley, 2001: 27-8)

Narrative structure can be described as belonging to a particular genre (of speech), which Eggins and Slade state is 'an institutionalized language activity which has evolved over time to have a particular text structure' (1997:231). This text structure can be likened to what Emmott (1997: 75) calls 'real' texts, which often have 'a hierarchical structure' where sentences are organized, so as to have linguistic 'connectivity' where there is a 'textual context'. Real texts require the reader to 'draw on stored information from the preceding text (and general) knowledge' and the stored information 'may be used to assist interpretation'. This text structure (or story template) would explain how individual's can construct their own mental representation of the language of that narrative and that both narrator and audience are likely to share a story template of some kind which will influence both the language they produce and the way they conceptualise the language they receive .

One model of personal narrative that is seen as conforming to a prototypical or a 'canonical' structure is the framework developed by the sociolinguists Labov and Waletzky (1967) who proposed an 'analytical framework for the analysis of oral versions of personal experience in English'(p.12). They defined narratives as 'one method of recapitulating past

experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred' (1967: 20). In later work, Labov (1997: 398) succinctly defined a narrative of personal experience as 'a report of a sequence of events that have entered into the biography of the speaker by a sequence of clauses that correspond to the order of the original events', which emphasises the importance of an individual's repertoire of experiences being transformed into a narrative. The model, outline in the next section, comprises six stages or schemas and is seen as providing a prototypical structure of a narrative.

2 Labov and Waletzky's (1967) narrative framework

Labov and Waletzky (1967) proposed a macrostructure of narrative comprising six stages or 'schemas' to provide a functional analysis of the internal structure of a personal narrative. Each schema in turn, provides insights into the lexico-grammatical microstructure of the discourse, organised in a specific sequential order (See Table 1, below):

1. **Abstract**	signals what the story is about
2. **Orientation**	provides the *who?, what?, when? where?;* descriptive
3. **Complicating action**	provides the *what happened?* part of the story; is the core narrative category;
4. **Evaluation**	provides the *so what?* element; highlights what is interesting to narrator or addressee; reveals how participants in story felt;
5. **Resolution**	provides the *what finally happened?* element of story;
6. **Coda**	signals the end of story; may be in the form of a moral or lesson.

Table 1. Labov and Waletzky's (1967) model of narrative

A fully-formed narrative is said to comprise all six schemas; however, many narratives are told without all six schemas being present and can be stripped back to just the *complicating action*. The *complicating action* provides the important sequence of events signalled by the temporal ordering of verbs that makes the experience a 'narrative'. Further studies on personal narratives led Labov (1972) to suggest that *evaluation* appears as waves throughout the narratives rather than as a distinct stage after the complicating action. He also commented on the importance of *reportability* by comparing it to Sacks' (1995) approach to controlling speaker-assignment in conversational narratives where a 'reportable event is one that justifies the automatic reassignment of speaker role to the narrator' (Labov, 1997: 406). Accordingly, for a personal narrative to be told at all, it follows that the narrative should contain the most reportable event, so that 'The more reportable the most reportable event of a narrative, the greater justification for the automatic reassignment of speaker role to the narrator' (p.407). The notion of reportability as an essential factor for a narrative's telling can be viewed in much the same way as the category of newsworthiness in reporting news (see Bell, 1991; Galtung and Ruge, 1973) and will vary depending on cultural values.

It is also worth reminding ourselves of some of the common features associated with an oral narrative of personal experience, even if this may appear to be obvious, as the importance of these features will be revealed in the analysis of the 7/7 narrative discussed later in this article:

a. the narrator is the protagonist; use of 1st person pronoun 'I' and inclusive 'we'

b. the narrative is spoken – in media this can be reported and found in written forms (e.g. transcripts, blogs, emails etc.)

c. the events actually happened

d. the events are temporally, that is, chronologically ordered i.e. they are told in the sequence in which they happened: this happened *then* this *and then* this…(use of conjunctions)

e. the past tense is used to record events in the past

f. the present historic is also used (e.g. I'm *walking* down the street and this person *comes* up to me and *says…*)

g. 'Trouble' with a capital 'T' is present, which defines complication (Bruner, 1997: 63)

3 Telling the same story twice

This research set out to analyse personal narratives describing traumatic experiences using Labov and Waletzky's narrative model as the central narrative framework to identify systematic patterns within the discourse of a trauma narrative. One way of exposing an underlying story structure is to investigate the same experience or story being *re*told. The research question would be something like, *To what extent does the second or retold story replicate the experience in the form of the linguistic structure, of the first and which (prototypical) features of a personal narrative remain constant?*

Polanyi (1981), in her work on conversational narratives, explores the notion of telling the same story twice. She set out to understand the existence of an 'underlying semantic structure' and 'script': a core structure that is repeated. Her findings showed that conversational narratives develop through local occasioning and recipient design factors that determine the form and function of the story in the same way that conversations do (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1984). Linde (1993) on the other hand, discusses the importance of coherence in creating life stories based on a logical narrative structure with

evaluation devices; coherence principles where life stories are 'primarily principles of appropriate causality and continuity, where causality is a chain of events 'that hearers can accept as constituting a good reason for some particular event or sequence of events'; and a coherence system that is based on 'common sense', that is, where speakers of the same culture share share norms and beliefs (pp.220-2). On the basis of these studies, it is hypothesized that the retold story is, firstly, likely to differ from the initial telling because of differences in the audience's understanding and interests which requires that the talk is tailored for the occasion. It should be clear that in forwarding this hypothesis, my focus is on the core narrative categories offered in Labov and Waletzky's model, rather than the performance of the narrative. The categories are more likely to remain constant and, if this is the case, it suggests evidence of an underlying 'semantic structure' and 'script' in the narrative. Moreover, the existence of such a script calls into question what is meant by 'the same story' and raises the issue of how far variations from the original story are deemed to be acceptable in how far they 'fulfill a promise' (Polanyi, 1981: 321). When the underlying story concerns a walk in the park or having dinner with friends, the 'sameness' of the story in its tellings may be of little consequence. However, when the case study under scrutiny is, as here, a personal narrative of a trauma, where expectations and fulfilment of a promise are high, the stakes are also considerably higher.

4 Narratives of *trauma*

One sub-genre of personal narratives is those dealing with traumatic experiences. According to Hoffmann (2004:34) the term trauma has emerged as the 'master term in the psychology of suffering' and is used to describe situations where 'horrific acts of violence, interpersonal abuse, deadly accidents, and large-scale atrocities and catastrophes have overwhelmed human

coping strategies' (Seeley, 2008: 17). This century has already seen a range of trauma on a mass scale including natural disasters such as the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and resultant tsunami and the terrorist bombings in Manhattan , Bali, Spain, London and Boston, to list but a few, as well as killing sprees in Mumbai and Norway, all of which dominated the news. Many survivors of these experiences have since gone on to write and speak about their experiences, whether in news reports, interviews and television documentaries, blogs or in book form (see below) and provide a huge corpus for the analysis of personal narratives of trauma as a sub-genre of narrative story telling. .

5 The London 7/7 terrorist bombings: a survivor's story

On July 7, 2005 there was a series of co-ordinated terrorist bomb attacks on the London transport system in the morning rush hour. Three bombs exploded on London underground trains and a double-decker bus. The trains were in the following places: between Aldgate and Liverpool Street station, at Edgware Road station and at Russell Square station and the bus exploded in Tavistock Square, in central London. The bombings killed 52 commuters, the four suicide bombers and injured many hundreds of people.

In the aftermath of these terrible events there were many survivors who described their experiences. These were published in daily newspapers and as autobiographical accounts in book form (see North, 2007 '*Out of the Tunnel*'; and Tulloch , 2006, '*One Day in July*') as well as on film (see Martine Wright, 2012 '*The Journey: the Martine Wright story*'.) One survivor, Angelo, a friend of mine and a barrister, was travelling on the Russell Square tube train when the bomb exploded. He was in a different carriage to the one that exploded and was physically uninjured. He, along with other survivors on the train, made their way out of the carriage and along the tracks to emerge at Kings Cross station. Angelo

was interviewed by a news reporter within moments of emerging from the tunnel and this report was broadcast around the world. The interviewer turned to Angelo and let him narrate his personal experience. There was no framing interview question as such. It is this recording (available from 'Democracy Now' July 7th 2005) that I analysed first before going on to interview Angelo two and a half years later for his account of what happened on 7/7/05 in my endeavour to investigate whether it is possible to tell the same story twice.

6 Methodology: data collection and analysis

The first account of Angelo's experience was broadcast worldwide and I was able to purchase a copy of the recording. I was satisfied that the recording represented an authentic, unedited account of Angelo's narration. (I also happened to see the 'live' interview on television when it was broadcast that morning.) I produced a low level transcription of the interview, that is, a transcript of the text minus transcriptions codes, because I focused on the lexico-grammatical structure of the narrative content (Transcript 1.)

1	People started to scream because there was a burning smell, and everyone, to cut a long story short, thought they were going to die. People started saying prayers, praying to God, sss-panicking, breaking the carriage windows with their bare hands, anything to get oxygen into the carriage, because the more people tried, the more em distressed they
5	became, women passing out em people inside started getting very agitated that there was no communication from any drivers everyone was in pitch black, then the emergency lights came on. And more and more smoke started coming into the carriage and we were there for something like twenty to thirty minutes, during which the smoke intensified, the screaming intensified, the hysteria – and that's what it was – became
10	almost pande- to a state of pandemonium. Then eventually um somebody said that someone at the back of the carriage - because I was on the second to the back carriage – that um had managed to force the door open. But they wouldn't get out, because they thought they were going to be electrocuted by the live train lines. Then smoke was coming down the tunnels, so nobody would go out that exit, no one would go out the
15	other exit, because as I understand it, there was a bomb in the middle of the carriage. And so e-e-we were all trapped like sardines waiting to die, and I honestly thought my time was up but – as as did everyone else - and finally, after about thirty minutes or so, people started to leave the carriage, and to their credit, in a very controlled manner. But as I exited, I saw people's belongings scattered all over the place. People were

| 20 | physically injured, and the carriage windows were all smashed. There were no emergency people on hand to escort anyone off the trains save for two officers who who had arrived thirty minutes or so. But the question I ask is: Why was the train allowed to proceed from Manor House when they knew, or must have known, that these things were going on? And it's it's just almost negligent… (interview continues) |

Transcript 1. Angelo's 7/7 experience broadcast on July 7, 2005.

I interviewed Angelo two and a half years later on 7/2/08 for a second account or a retelling of what happened on 7/7/05. I asked one question: *Can you tell me what happened on July 7th 2005?* I then recorded Angelo's story without interruption. I also produced a low level transcription of this recording. See Transcript 2.

1	Early that morning I caught the train at Manor House and probably waited 30 minutes till the Piccadilly train arrived it was absolutely packed…tried to get on carriage number 1 but couldn't and was ejected off that particular carriage so made my way to the back of the train got into carriage number 6 and the train proceeded sluggishly to
5	Kings Cross. It arrived at Kings Cross… more people got on and it was absolutely crammed…13 seconds into the tunnel there was a blinding flash which…traced its way along the side of the tunnel wall at the same time I was physically propelled out of my seat…thereafter the lights went off…the emergency lighting came on…the smell of smoke in the carriage people started screaming and then…there's a deathly silence and
10	people thought the train had broken down… then smoke started coming through the floor through the air vents and…someone from the other carriage said a bomb had gone off…[tch] at which point people started to panic (4.0) women started smashing the doors with their bare fists and not succeeding the skin was hanging off their bones and people started to try to force the tunnel doors open sorry tube doors open and thick
15	plumes of black smoke started to come into the carriage…and it was all in vain as the tunnel was only six inches from the carriage doors and for the next 35 minutes people were basically in a state of terror including myself and eventually two British Transport policemen managed to open the rear doors of the train whereupon people started to spill out of the back and head towards the platform of Kings Cross. On arrival there was no-
20	one there people were literally…asphyxiating with smoke having to haul themselves five or six or seven feet onto the platform…still no-one arrived so having helped a few people out of the tunnel a few people up onto the platform I started making our ways up the escalator and to my absolute surprise and consternation trains -this is some 50 minutes after the incident are still spilling into the platforms particularly on the
25	Metropolitan [Line] offloading people and [ ] people sorry…[tch] taking people away in the other direction with no knowledge whatsoever of what had happened and em [tch] eventually I managed to get to the surface upstairs and em my clothes were covered in soot my fingers were covered in dust my lungs were burnt and em once we arrived

30	outside the station a few paramedics had started to arrive at that stage and I alerted a police officer to what had gone on and was told that I was wrong and that the trains had suffered a power failure…given I was there and had seen what had happened [tch] I was somewhat concerned by his comments…anyhow em I spoke to another officer a bit more senior tried to alert him about what was going on and still no-one took any notice…it was only about after 40 minutes when people started to be stretchered out
35	some members of [ ] started to realise I was actually correct and they were wrong and that was the 7th of July…(continues…)

Transcript 2. Angelo's retelling of the 7/7 experience two and a half years later

The next stage was to undertake a close analysis of both narratives which were placed side by side to be able to do this most effectively. The aim was to compare both transcripts for similar patterns in the discourse (i.e. microstructure) and identify whether the second narrative replicated the story content of the original. (I call these Narratives A and B for ease of discussion). This comparison aimed to discover which aspects of the personal narrative remain constant at both a structural and lexico-grammatical level in the retelling. Where I was able to identify similar descriptions of the events, these were numbered. For example in Narrative A, 'People started to scream because there was a burning smell' was labelled as '1'. A parallel or matching description in narrative B, 'people started screaming', was also labelled '1'. Both narratives were analysed throughout for similar patterns of discourse and numbered. See Transcript 3 and phrases highlighted in bold.

Narrative A: Interview 1 Original (7 July 2005)	Narrative B: Interview 2 Retelling (7 February 2008)
1. People started to scream because there was a burning smell, and everyone, to cut a long story short, thought they were going to die. **2. People started saying prayers, praying to God,** sss-**panicking, 3**. **breaking the carriage windows with their bare hands**, anything to get oxygen into the carriage, because the more people tried, the more em distressed they became,	Early that morning I caught the train at Manor House and probably waited 30 minutes till the Piccadilly train arrived it was absolutely packed…tried to get on carriage number 1 but couldn't and was ejected off that particular carriage so made my way to the back of the train got into carriage number 6 and the train proceeded sluggishly to Kings Cross. It arrived at Kings Cross… more people got on and it was

women passing out em people inside started getting very agitated there was no communication from any drivers everyone was in pitch black, then the emergency lights came on. **4. And more and more smoke started coming into the carriage.** And we were there for something like twenty to thirty minutes, during which the smoke intensified, the screaming intensified, the hysteria – and that's what it was – became almost pande- to a state of pandemonium. Then eventually somebody said that someone at the back of the carriage - because I was on the second to the back carriage -, had managed to force the door open. But they wouldn't get out, because they thought they were going to be electrocuted by the live train lines. **5. Then smoke was coming down the tunnels, so nobody would go out that exit**, no one would go out the other exit, because **6. as I understand it, there was a bomb in the middle of the carriage.** And so e-e-we were all trapped like sardines waiting to die, and I honestly thought my time was up but –as as did everyone else - and finally, **7. after about thirty minutes or so, people started to leave the carriage,** and to their credit, in a very controlled manner. But as I exited, I saw people's belongings scattered all over the place. **8**. **People were physically injured,** and the carriage windows were all smashed. **9. There were no emergency people on hand to escort anyone off the trains, save for two officers** who who had arrived thirty minutes or so. But the question I ask is: **10. Why was the train allowed to proceed from Manor House when they knew, or must have known, that these things were going on?** It's just almost negligent…(interview continues)

absolutely crammed…13 seconds into the tunnel there was a blinding flash which…traced its way along the side of the tunnel wall at the same time I was physically propelled out of my seat…thereafter the lights went off…the emergency lighting came on…the smell of smoke in the carriage **1**. **people started screaming** and then…there's a deathly silence and people thought the train had broken down…**4. then smoke started coming through the floor through the air vents and**…**6. someone from the other carriage said a bomb had gone off…**[tch] at which point **2. people started to panic** (4.0) **3. women started smashing the doors with their bare fists** and not succeeding the skin was hanging off their bones and people started to try to force the tunnel doors open sorry tube doors open **5. and thick plumes of black smoke started to come into the carriage…and** it was all in vain as the tunnel was only six inches from the carriage doors and **7. for the next 35 minutes people were basically in a state of terror including myself and eventually two British Transport policemen managed to open the rear doors of the train** whereupon people started to spill out of the back and head towards the platform of Kings Cross. **9. On arrival there was no-one there 8. people were literally…asphyxiating with smoke** having to haul themselves five or six or seven feet onto the platform…still no-one arrived so having helped a few people out of the tunnel a few people up onto the platform I started making our ways up the escalator and **10. to my absolute surprise and consternation trains - this is some 50 minutes after the incident are still spilling into the platforms particularly on the Metropolitan [Line]** offloading people and [ ] people sorry…[tch] taking people away in the other direction with no knowledge whatsoever of what had happened and em [tch] eventually I managed to get to the surface upstairs and em my clothes were covered in soot my fingers were covered in dust my lungs were burnt and em once we arrived outside the station a few paramedics had started to arrive at that stage and I alerted a police officer to what had gone on and was told that I was wrong and that the trains had suffered a power failure…given I was there and had seen

	what had happened [tch] I was somewhat concerned by his comments…anyhow em I spoke to another officer a bit more senior tried to alert him about what was going on and still no-one took any notice…it was only about after 40 minutes when people started to be stretchered out some members of [ ] started to realise I was actually correct and they were wrong and that was the 7th of July…(interview continues)

Transcript 3. Comparison of original personal narrative with second interview

An analysis of Narrarive B showed that some parts of the original narration were replicated in this retelling but there were some variations at both the lexico-grammatical level (microstructure) and also in the temporal order that they appeared (macrostructure). The next step was to identify and categorise the matching sections of the narratives against Labov and Waletzky's model to identify which of the narrative schemas or core narrative categories were present. See Table 2. (CA represents *complicating action*; E is *evaluation*.)

Schema category (in Narrative A)	Narrative A: Interview 1 Original (7 July 2005)	Narrative B: Interview 2 Retelling (7 February 2008)
CA	1. People started to scream because there was a burning smell,	1. people started screaming
CA	2. People started saying prayers, praying to God, panicking	4. then smoke started coming through the floor through the air vents and…
CA	3. breaking the carriage windows with their bare hands	5. someone from the other carriage said a bomb had gone off…
CA	4. And more and more smoke started coming into the carriage	2. people started to panic
E	5. as I understand it, there was a bomb in the middle of the carriage.	3. women started smashing the doors with their bare fists
CA	6. after about thirty minutes or so, people started to leave the carriage	6. for the next 35 minutes people were basically in a state of terror including myself and eventually two British Transport policemen managed to open the rear doors of the train

CA	7. People were physically injured	8. On arrival there was no-one there
E	8. There were no emergency people on hand to escort anyone off the trains	7. people were literally…asphyxiating with smoke
E	9. Why was the train allowed to proceed from Manor House when they knew, or must have known, that these things were going on?	9. to my absolute surprise and consternation trains -this is some 50 minutes after the incident are still spilling into the platforms particularly on the Metropolitan [Line]

Table 2. Results of analysis: a comparison of *CA* and e*valuative* commentary in Narratives A and B showing the order of events and evaluative commentary.

Sections 1-9 that were replicated in the second story, Narrative B, were found to fall within two categories of Labov and Waletzky's (1967) narrative schemas: the *complicating action* (CA) and *evaluation* (E). As outlined earlier, the *complicating action* describes past events that are part of the narrator's biography and represents the core narrative category of a narrative and the *evaluation*, provides the important '*so what?*' element of the personal experience, or reportability value of the experience. Bruner's (1997: 63) 'Trouble' with a capital 'T' clearly defines complication in these events.

7 Results of analysis

Analysis of the retold story Narrative B against the original Narrative A highlighted some interesting findings in the exploration of how far the retold story replicates the events and discourse of the first telling. The most salient results are discussed below under separate subheadings.

8 Temporality in story structure

As indicated above, the order of events in the *complicating action* differs slightly in

Narratives and A and B:

Narrative A- original CA	1	2	3	4	6	7
Narrative B – retelling CA	1	4	2	3	6	7

Table 3. 'Differences in the order of events in the complicating action'

These differences are not significant as the same events in the *complicating action*

and *evaluation* of them are present in both. According to Labov (2001: 63):

> An oral narrative of personal experience employs temporal junctures in which the
>
> surface order of the narrative clauses matches the projected order of the events
>
> described (Labov and Waletzky1967). If the order of the clauses is reversed, the
>
> inferred order of the reported events changes.

However, the variation in Narrative B is minimal and does not detract from the

intensity of the experience, while also providing a comprehensive account of the experience

when compared to the original narration. It could be argued that these events are likely to

have become 'fossilised' in the narrator's memory as the key narrative events in this

experience and recalled as significant in the retold story. This would suggest that the narrator

is very much aware of the importance of the *complicating action* in a narrative about such a

traumatic experience.

9 Narrative beginnings: the *orientation*

One of the most significant differences in Narrative B is a long, developed *orientation* which

precedes the first *complicating action*. In the original Narrative A, the news reporter turned to

Angelo to interview him for his experience. The very fact that the reporter was present to

provide coverage of the terrorist attacks did not require Angelo to contextualise his story.

Instead, Angelo's personal narrative begins with the *complicating action* in what appears to

be in *media res*, thus foregrounding the urgency of narrating the core events of his personal

experience. However, in Narrative B, recorded two and half years later, Angelo fulfils Labov

and Waletzky's (1967) description of an *orientation* by providing contextualisation

information - See Transcript 4:

The who?   *I…*

The what   *I caught the train…a blinding flash*

The when   *Early that morning…* ('that' referring back to the interviewer's question *Can
                 you tell me what happened on July 7th 2005* which is essentially the story
                 abstract*)

The where   *Manor House…Piccadilly line…Kings Cross*

Narrative A (7/7/05) original	Narrative B (7/2/08) retelling
1. People started to scream because there was a burning smell, and everyone, to cut a long story short, thought they were going to die.	Early that morning I caught the train at Manor House and probably waited 30 minutes till the Piccadilly train arrived it was absolutely packed…tried to get on carriage number 1 but couldn't and was ejected off that particular carriage so made my way to the back of the train got into carriage number 6 and the train proceeded sluggishly to Kings Cross. It arrived at Kings Cross… more people got on and it was absolutely crammed…13 seconds into the tunnel there was a blinding flash which…traced its way along the side of the tunnel wall at the same time I was physically propelled out of my seat…thereafter the lights went off…the emergency lighting came on…the smell of smoke in the carriage **1. people started screaming** and then…

Transcript 4. Longer, detailed *orientation* in the retold Narrative B

17

It appears that in response to the interviewer's question, Narrative B has been influenced by a story framework that corresponds to a recognisable prototypical story structure as opposed to replicating the structure of the initial story, Narrative A. The narrator provides the all important contextual details for the audience as the narration is taking place out of context and two and a half years after the event. This suggests the presence of some kind of underlying story template or story script onto which Angelo maps his narrative, either consciously or unconsciously. As I have suggested elsewhere (Lambrou, 2005: 30) with reference to the work of van Dijk and Kintsch:

> a narrative involves a macrostructure composed of smaller parts or schemata that follow a meaningful pattern. Such patterns play a role in the understanding, representation and retrieval of discourse. Underlying this theory is the notion that structures not only exist in the text but also in the mind of the reader or hearer to facilitate story comprehension, since 'one must know about conventional schemata before one can use them' (1983: 251).

It could be argued, therefore, that Angelo's knowledge, intuitions and expectations of a conventional story structure are primarily based on cognitive models and prior knowledge of texts (see also Contextual Frame Theory in Emmott, 1997; Sanford and Emmott, 2012). His awareness of providing an *orientation* also shows he is practising recipient design, an ability to tailor his retelling in terms of the expectations and requirement of structure on the part of his interlocutor or audience, and shows him to be a skilled narrator. It is also worth noting that narratology shows how those stories that are deemed reportable require a process of 'transformation' of their story grammars (see Prince, 1973; Thorndyke, 1977; Todorov, 1969). This involves a disruption to the state of normality, or the state of equilibrium at the

outset, what Todorov (1969) calls disequilibrium, so that there is a clear demarcation between the before and after in the story.

10 The influence of other (external) stories

A close linguistic analysis of Narrative B shows several descriptive details about the experience that are absent in the original Narrative A. These additions appear to be factual, numerical details that have been inserted throughout the narrative to produce a more elaborated narrative; for example (see bold):

tried to get on **carriage number 1** but couldn't and was ejected off that particular carriage so made my way to the back of the train **got into carriage number 6;**

13 seconds into the tunnel there was a blinding flash **which…traced its way along the side of the tunnel wall**

and it was all in vain as the tunnel was only **six inches** from the carriage doors

for the **next 35 minutes** people were basically in a state of terror including myself and eventually two British Transport policemen

people were literally…asphyxiating with smoke having to haul themselves **five or six or seven feet** onto the platform

trains - **this is some 50 minutes after the incident** are still spilling into the platforms particularly on the Metropolitan [Line]

Where did this additional factual data originate? Why is it present in the second narration and not the first? Some of the numerical data would not have been known to Angelo at the time of the first interview, i.e. immediately after the explosion, hence their absence from his transcript. The London terrorist bombings dominated the news for many months because of the extent of the loss and injury caused by the mass bombings and the fact that the suicide bombers held the same political beliefs as the bombers implicated in the shocking and devastating terrorist attacks in the USA (known as 9/11) and only a year before in Madrid (known as 11-M, for 11 March 2004). Reports of stories of personal loss and stories from survivors injured or caught up in the bombings appeared daily. The news intensified as the bombers were identified and other suspected suicide bombers were arrested. Forensic investigations were able to identify a comprehensive timeline of the events of that day, and factual data for each explosion was constantly updated and published. There is no doubt that Angelo had time to reflect on his experience in the two and a half years since the experience. The factual details reported on a daily basis were likely to have been absorbed and assimilated into Angelo's story to become part of his personal narrative. In other words, Angelo's personal experience became informed by other mediated narratives to become part of a much larger mediated narrative, a 'big story' (see Georgakopoulou, 2007) that had become part of the public's collective consciousness and repertoire of stories.

11 The narrator as reporter: narrative versus report:

Another unexpected finding is the stylistic strategies in both of Angelo's narratives that foregrounds how he positions himself within his experience. As pointed out earlier, a personal narrative where the narrator is the protagonist would expect to see evidence of the use of: ***1st person pronoun 'I' and the inclusive 'we'.*** However, analysis of both Narrative A

and B shows that something else is going on: Angelo appears to observe the events from the outside in as he appears to narrate what happens to others around him experiencing the same events:

Narrative A (Interview 1):

People started to scream / *People* started saying prayers / *people* started to leave the carriage/ the more *people* tried, the more em distressed *they* became/ *women* passing out em / *people* inside started getting very agitated / *everyone* was in pitch black/ But *they* wouldn't get out, because *they* thought they were going to be electrocuted / *People* were physically injured

Narrative B (Interview 2):

people started screaming / *people* thought the train had broken down / *people* started to panic/ *women* started smashing the doors with their bare fists/ whereupon *people* started to spill out of the back

The stylistic choices are remarkable. Both narratives refer to other 'people', 'women', everyone' and the plural pronoun 'they', all of which are more characteristic of witness reports rather than first person narratives. Fludernik (1996:71) identifies a range of what she calls 'natural narratives' and other oral modes that include a 'narrative report' and the 'observational narrative'. The narrative report functions only to 'provide information, not to tell a story' and lacks the necessary 'tellability' factor crucial to personal narratives as well as lacking an evaluative commentary to draw attention to the point of its telling. Stylistically, reports are more likely to use *then* clauses instead of the causal *so*, commonly found in narratives. Observational narratives, on the other hand, may be considered a basic story

category which use the first person *I* 'as witness', and convey 'the narrator's surprise, dismay, shock, fear or frustrated expectation that constitutes the tellability of the story' (p.73). However, observational narratives cast the narrator in the role of 'a passive experiencer of the events that usually do not concern him/herself directly' (p.74). Narratives, according to Polanyi (1981:326) illustrate 'some sort of general truth with implications for the world in which the story is told as well as for the impact of events in the story itself'. Police reports, on the other hand, 'give a picture of what went on during a particular period' but convey only the facts and not an evaluation of the events. Furthermore, recipients 'bear the burden of building the "story" out of the report', if that report was produced as an answer to a request for information. (1982: 515). This is not the case with Angelo. Angelo's narratives however, contain evaluative commentary such as those highlighted in Table 2 and the evocative metaphorical description '*we were all trapped like sardines waiting to die, and I honestly thought my time was up*' in Narrative A. It appears that Angelo's narratives are a blend of a personal narrative with features that correspond to a witness report because the experience is not only happening to him but to many others around him. But there is also a further explanation.

Psychologists are aware that individuals who have experienced (or are experiencing) trauma (including post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)) can signal the state of their mental health by their linguistic choices (see Boals and Klein, 2005; Fergusson, 1993; Harvey and Bryant, 1999; Pennebaker, 2011). One example of linguistic variation in how individuals describe themselves and their experiences is in their use of the third person pronoun which can indicate 'dissociation'. Dissociation is where individuals detach themselves from their surroundings as a coping mechanism for dealing with their experience. This can range from minor symptoms to more extreme signs of detachment that involve severing 'normal connections of memory' (Herman, 1992). Whether this is an explanation for Angelo's

stylistic usage is unclear and is the reason for extending my research to investigate narratives of trauma among other survivors of 7/7 and 9/11 (see Lambrou, 2014.)

12 Use of formal language

On the subject of linguistic strategies, a further unexpected finding was Angelo's use of formal lexical choices including Latinate-derived words to describe his experiences in both Narratives A and B. According to Labov (1972; 1972a), the more dangerous the events are, the more likely there will be a style-shift to the *vernacular*, which is an individual's most natural speaking style because minimum attention is paid to the speech. However, the opposite appears to occur in Narratives A and B, some of which are listed below:

Narrative A

people inside started getting very **agitated**

the screaming **intensified**, the hysteria […] to a state of **pandemonium**

It's just almost **negligent**…

Narrative B

was **ejected** off that particular carriage…

and the train **proceeded** sluggishly to Kings Cross…

thereafter the lights went off…

I was physically **propelled** out of my seat…

But as I **exited**…

There were no emergency people on hand to **escort** anyone off the trains

What is particularly interesting about Angelo's narration is the calm and articulate delivery of his first personal narrative which took place within moments of the bomb explosion. One explanation is Angelo's barrister training suggested by his use of the legalese 'negligent' to describe the lack of action following the co-ordinated bombings. In this case, the lexical choices can be attributed to something idiosyncratic and can be described as part of Angelo's vernacular so that factors such as his employment and education throw into relief a middle class socio-economic status. It is also noticeable that the highlighted words relate back to the earlier discussion of narrator as witness as they can be associated with a more objective and precise (witness) reporting style rather than with a subjective vernacular style of a personal narrative about extreme trauma.

13 Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the notion of *telling the same story twice* by closely analysing two narratives from a survivor of London's 7/7 terrorist bombing, the first told within moments of the bombing and the second, narrated two and a half years later. The aim was to understand the existence of an underlying story structure that influence narrative story telling, as well as highlight which prototypical elements or schemas of the story structure remain constant as they are memorised and recalled, thus revealing insights into a cognitive model for story telling. Similarities in the macrostructure and microstructure of both Narratives A

and B in the organisation of events or *complicating action* and evaluative comments provide compelling evidence of a mental story template with universal claims for its comprehension. This is further confirmed by Angelo's development of a fully formed *orientation* two and a half years later, to provide the important *who?*, *what?*, *where?* and *when?* contextual information, which is also evidence of recipient design. There were also other unexpected findings, such as the more elaborated second narrative, filled with factual, numerical details as a result of absorbing information from other reports in the aftermath of the bombings to become part of a larger mediated narrative. Angelo's use of formal language suggests a composed and skilled speaker, perhaps aided by his legal training, when a style-shift down to a less formal style would be more likely following such an emotional ordeal. One of the most interesting findings is what appears to be a blurring of the personal narrative genre with a narrative report as the narrator appears to position himself outside the events as though a witness looking in. Perhaps this dissociation, indicated by the use of the third person pronoun and references to other people present in the events is a coping strategy, although it can also be argued that this may be another example of Angelo's vernacular, influenced by his barrister training which requires a more objective reporting of events. The finding here are compelling and provide interesting insights into narratives of trauma and is an area of narrative research that requires further investigation, elaboration and discussion. The answer to whether it is possible to tell the same story twice, according to Polanyi (1981: 335), is 'yes and no' because it 'all depends on what we might possibly mean by "story"'.

References

Bell A (1991) *The Language of News Media.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Boals and Klein K (2005) Word Use in Emotional Narratives about Failed Romantic Relationships and Subsequent Mental Health. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 24(3): 252-268.

Bruner, J. (2003) *Making Stories: Law, Literature and Life*. London: Harvard University Press.

Bruner J (1997) Labov and Waletzky Thirty Years On. *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7(1-4): 61-68.

Bruner J (1990) *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cobley P (2001) *Narrative*. London: Routledge.

Democracy Now (2007) 7 July 2005

Eggins, S. and Slade, D. (1997) *Analysing Casual Conversation*. London: Cassell.

Emmott C (1997) *Narrative Comprehension*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fergusson P A (1993) *Writing about Traumatic Events Using the Third Person Pronoun: Psychological and Health Effects*. University of Washington Press: Washington

Fludernik M (1996) *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*. London: Routledge.

Galtung J and Ruge M (1973) Structuring and selecting news. In: Cohn S and Young J (eds) *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance, and the Class Media*, London: Constable, pp.62–72.

Georgakopoulou,A (2007) *Small stories, interaction and identities*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins

Harvey A G and Bryant R A (1999). A qualitative investigation of the organization of traumatic memories. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology* 38: 401-405.

Herman, D (2002) *Story Logic*. University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln and London.

Hoffman E (2004) *After such knowledge: Memory, history and the legacy of the Holocaust*. New York: Public Affairs.

Hymes D (1996) *Ethnography, Linguistics, Narrative Inequality: Toward an Understanding of Voice*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Labov W (1972) *Language in the Inner City*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov W (1972a) *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov W (1997) Further Steps in Narrative Analysis. *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7(1-4): 395-415.

Labov W (2001) Uncovering the event structure of narrative. In: Tannen D and Alatis J (eds) *Georgetown University Round Table on languages and Linguistics 2001*, Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, pp. 63-83.

Labov W and Waletzky J (1967) Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience. In: Holm J (ed.) *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, pp.12-44.

Lambrou M (2005) *Story patterns in oral narratives: a variationist critique of Labov and Waltezky's model of narrative schemas*. Phd thesis, Middlesex University, UK.

Lambrou M (forthcoming 2014) Narrative accounts of 7/7 and 9/11: an ethnographer's tale. In: Thomas B and Round J (eds) *Real Lives, Celebrity Stories: Narratives of Ordinary and Extraordinary People Across Media*. London: Continuum.

Linde, C (1993) *Life Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

North R (2007) *Out of the Tunnel*. London: Friday Books.

Pennebaker J (2011) *The Secret Life of Pronouns*. Bloomsbury Press: New York.

Polanyi, L. (1982) Linguistic and Social Constraints on Storytelling. *Journal of Pragmatics* 6: 509-524

Polanyi L (1981) Telling the Same Story Twice. *Text* 1(4): 315-336.

Power A (2007). Interview. In: *Democracy Now*. 7 July 2005. 13.33.

Prince G (1973) *A Grammar of Stories*. The Hague: Moulton.

Sacks, H. (1995) Lectures on Conversation (Vols 1 and II), ed. G. Jefferson. Oxford: Blackwell.

Sacks H, Schegloff E.A and Jefferson G (1974) A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation. *Language* 50(4): 696-735.

Sanford J A and Emmott C (2012) *Mind, Brain and Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seeley KM (2008) *Therapy after Terror*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Journey: the Martine Wright story (2012) Short film. Directed by Daryl Goodrich. London: IMG Sports Media.

Thorndyke PW (1977) Cognitive Structures in Comprehension and Memory of Narrative Discourse. *Cognitive Psychology,* 9: 77-110.

Todorov T (1969) Structural Analysis of Narrative. *Novel* 3: 70-76

Tulloch J (2006) *One Day in July*. London: Little, Brown.

van Dijk, T. A. and Kintsch, W. (1983) *Strategies of Discourse Comprehension*. New York: Academic Press.