

## A special type of speech event: story telling

1.

right (.) three men sat in a pub (.) and er sat there having a quiet drink (.) and in walks this really drunken old man (.) and he staggers in and he's all over the place he's knocking drinks over (.) he's er standing on people's feet and (.) urn all the rest of it and urn he walks over to the bar this old man (.) and he orders a pint of lager (.) he er gets his pint (.) and downs it fast as he can in one (.) and then he staggers over to these three men (.) these three men are looking at each other nudging each other (.) right what does he want (.) and ur (.) this man walks over he says (.) I've had your mam I've had your mam and one of the men says (.) piss off! so (.) this this old man he staggers away and he goes to the bar and he orders another drink (.) another pint of lager and downs this even faster (.) he staggers back over to these three men (.) and he says I've had your mam I've put cream on her body and I've licked it off (.) guy stands up again he says look go away (.) so er this old man staggers back to the bar (.) all over the place he orders another pint (.) this one downs even faster and he comes and again again he comes back over to these three men (.) he says I've had your mam I've put cream on her body I've done things to her you wouldn't understand (.) well they've had enough so (.) one of the men stands up he says look dad you're drunk go home.

2.

RAJ: and another good answer is I don't know the answer and let's go and find out together

RICHARD: I'll tell you one thing when we moved to London and we'd been here for about a month and we were just driving around looking at the sights and we were driving past Buckingham Palace right and Chloe's in the back of the car right this is so funny urn and she said there it is there's Buckingham Palace woah woah oh we should open the window oh and the Queen lives there oh look the flag's up the Queen's in there now and she said is that the Queen's house then? and we said yeah she said ooh fancy building a palace next to the main road

RAJ, R & J: (laughter)

JUDY: on the main road *(laughs)* which is logical

RICHARD: which is very observant absolutely why did they do that she said and actually I couldn't think because the road was probably there when they built it although there wouldn't have been cars on it

RAJ: I hope you praised her for making a good point

RICHARD: well we fell apart

3.

- I'll tell you one thing
- Kidding aside...
- Now, I'm not really serious about this
- Just kidding/joking
- Have you heard the one about...
- Have you ever stopped to think why...
- Did you know that...
- I'll always remember the time...
- Did I ever tell you about...
- Then there was the time we...
- I must tell you about...
- You'll never guess what happened yesterday...
- I heard a good one the other day...
- I had a funny experience last week...
- this is so funny

4.

#### **Labov's theory of narrative structure (1972).**

According to Labov, in an essay entitled "*The transformation of experience in narrative syntax*", narrative is natural to both written and spoken language and its structure can be divided into the following:

- abstract (signals that a story is about to begin; is a brief explanation of what the story is about);
- orientation (context in which the story takes place, the who, what, where and when of the story);
- action (the 'what happened' element of the story);
- resolution (what finally happened);
- coda (signals end of story and can link back to the present situation);

- evaluation (comments, gestures running throughout the story to show how this is interesting).

All these elements are not always present, but this is a useful framework for evaluating oral stories. The elements usually occur in the order given, but evaluation can occur at any point.

5.

Will:I have a 2-year-old. Ned. He's got blue eyes and sort of sandy-coloured hair...

...and he's about 2'3. And his mum left.

-Really?

Will:Yeah. Yeah, I mean, obviously it was a very big shock... because we were so happy, you know? Sandra's neurology practice was just up and running... and then one day her bags were packed, and my best friend was waiting outside... in his Ferrari. Yeah. You know, the Modena? The one with the supercharged engine, where you can see it through the back back window?

Spat:You got dumped then?

Will:Yeah.

Spat:May I ask, does your ex see Ned at all?

Will:Sorry, I didn't catch your name.

Spat:Suzie.

Will:Suzie. She doesn't see much of him, no.

Suzie:How does he cope with that?

Will:You know, he's a very good little boy. Very, very brave. They've got amazing resources, don't they? Just the other day I was thinking about my ex. He came crawling up, put his little pudgy arms around my neck, and he said: "You hang in there, Dad."

Suzie:God, that's amazing for a 2-year-old!

Will:Is it? Yeah, well, he's very special. Very, very special. Sometimes I think, you know, he's the one taking care of me. Teaching me the ways of the world. Oh, sorry. Thank you.

(My God, what a performance! I was even fooling myself.)

Suzie:There you go. You okay?

Will:Yeah. Perfect, thanks. Trust me?

Suzie:Of course.

(By the end of the evening, I had a date lined up.)