

# Preface

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**Conversational Narrative: Storytelling in everyday talk**

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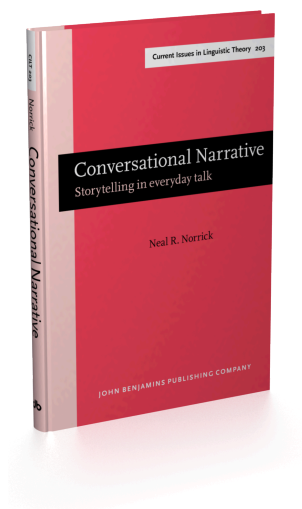
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## Preface

This book aims to advance narrative theory in two ways. First, it includes types of storytelling not previously treated in the literature. Second, it integrates perspectives on narrative usually kept separate. By analyzing a more diverse collection of data, and by comparing different narrative types from a range of perspectives, I seek new insights into the forms and functions of storytelling. By treating storytelling in a broad array of contexts, this monograph also contributes to conversation analysis. I initially envisioned a book consisting of approximately half transcribed narratives and half sample analyses. The analytical component has grown in proportion to the data, but my original orientation toward exemplification and away from theorizing will still be evident in parts of the book.

My research began with the collection of conversational data. This phase of the project took place at Northern Illinois University, where I worked and taught from 1985 till 1997. During that time I had the pleasure of mentoring some excellent, highly motivated graduate and undergraduate students. Several of them shared their recordings and their transcriptions with me. I would like to express my gratitude to members of this Northern Illinois group: Mary Jandek, Amy Julian, Jason Turner, Shelley Synovic, Ed Leidl, Todd Laufenberg, A. J. Grant, Steve Marsden, Sandra Anderson, Lynne Pantano, Katharine Parr, Than Than Win, and, especially, Kelli Lyon. Virginia Robinson served as an undergraduate research assistant to me in the spring of 1997, and she produced first drafts of many of the transcriptions consulted and used. Bill Baker of Northern Illinois University worked along with me in the early stages of developing the treatment of Beckett's "Endgame" in chapter six. I would like to express my gratitude to Katharina Barbe and Don Hardy for reading and commenting on earlier versions of portions of this book as well.

The second phase of the research took place at Saarland University in Saarbrücken, Germany. In my present position as chair of English Linguistics, I have continued to collect oral narratives and to transcribe stories from my store of tapes. I would like to express my ongoing gratitude to the staff here in Saarbrücken. Cornelia Gerhardt, Claudia Bubel, Alice Spitz, Nicole Valentin,

Jens Harder, Oliver Naudorf and Sylvia Monzon have all been involved in various phases of the project, transcribing stories from tapes, compiling bibliography, producing and proofreading several drafts of the manuscript.

In the spring of 1996, I presented the basics of my approach to co-narration in a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics in Chicago. I first aired my ideas on the Nurse's story from Shakespeare's "Romeo & Juliet" in a panel I organized at the International Association of Literary Semantics conference in Freiburg, Germany, in September 1997. I discussed aspects of the jokes analyzed in chapter six in a panel on humor and cognition organized by Victor Raskin at the annual conference of the International Society for Humor Studies in Oakland, California, in June-July 1999. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Wally Chafe for extensive comments on my work-in-progress. Input from anonymous reviewers has led to numerous improvements in the final version as well. Remaining weaknesses are, alas, due to my own shortcomings.

Saarbrücken, February 2000