

On the interactive nature of spontaneous oral narrative

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1 Introduction.

Labov (1972a) defines narrative 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.

(Labov 1972a:359-360)

By this definition, a minimal narrative is one consisting of a sequence of two temporally ordered clauses. By the schema that Labov (1972a) sets forth, narratives may be seen to consist of various structural components, viz. an abstract, an orientation section, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and a coda. Of these components, only the complicating action is necessary to identify a section of discourse as a narrative (Labov 1972a:370). This definition of narrative is the one I adopt for the following discussion. The reader is referred to Labov (1972a) for a fuller discussion of this analysis and for definitions of the various components, whose definition and validity are accepted here without further debate.

2 Dissatisfaction with monologic oral narratives.

Labovian narratives cited in the literature often appear to be essentially monologic, following a maximally brief question from the fieldworker (questions to take no longer than five seconds to produce (Labov 1972b:113)). For example, some of the narratives quoted in Labov (1972a) have narrative stretches of more than forty clauses (e.g. Labov 1972a:357 and 359). Now, it may be the case that these narratives, and others cited in the literature are in fact faithful transcriptions of the recorded data. However, by my own intuitions, as a native speaker of New Zealand English (henceforth NZE), there is something peculiar about these stories. What I find strange is the virtual lack of interaction on the part of the interviewer.¹

Given that Labov is interested more in the issue of the larger units into which these narratives may be analysed, it may well be that any interaction which did occur has been edited out for the sake of clarity.

¹To be fair, there are some linguists who have examined non-monologic narratives, e.g. Schiffrin 1984. However, even with these narratives, the interaction examined usually centres around the logistical considerations of opening and closing narratives.

Schegloff (1981:74) observes that both lay recipients of narratives and linguists tend to disentangle the story proper from 'other conversation "degitus"'. The ability to do this provides some validation for the notion of narrative as a discourse entity. Thus, to talk of 'editing' is not to accuse Labov of fudging the texts, since it is clear that the detail in any transcription will necessarily reflect the research interests of the fieldworker. However, Labov initially gathered such narratives for the purpose of studying the vernacular, which he defines as that genre 'in which the minimum attention is paid to speech' (Labov 1972b:112). Given this goal, it may be that the transcriptions reflect a research methodology in which the linguist endeavours to minimise his or her own linguistic production so as not to influence the informant to produce speech oriented towards that of the researcher. Hints of this methodological consideration are found in Labov's comment about a conversation recorded in a family situation that 'This conversation then continued for another five minutes without any intervention of the interviewer' (Labov 1972b:117). This comment appears to carry positive connotations in the context of Labov's discussion of the problems in eliciting large amounts of data. Similarly Milroy

The quality and quantity of data collected during these community studies was excellent, including many group sessions with minimal (or even zero) linguistic participation by the fieldworker. (Milroy 1987:78)

Clearly, in a group setting there are other participants apart from the linguist who could provide the expected interactive stimulus for the production of a narrative. However, in an interview setting involving just the linguist and the informant this interaction would appear to be absent. Thus, for the linguist to abstain from participation so as to avoid the Observer's Paradox (Labov 1972b:113) may itself constitute an Observer's Paradox.

In what follows, I shall claim that, in NZE at least, it is necessary to view spontaneous oral narrative as interactive in nature, rather than monologic. This is not to deny that there may exist in NZE or in other dialects of English, or in other languages, genres in which one speaker narrates, while the recipients of the narration attend silently to what is being said. However, I claim that the interactive narrative is in some sense primary, by virtue of its frequency of occurrence in conversation, or as the archetypal exemplar of the category of narratives. It shall be seen below, that, rather than complicating the issue of the analysis of narratives, a consideration of the interactive nature of such narratives actually provides a further proof of the validity of Labov's structural analysis. Finally, I shall claim, contrary to Pratt (1977), that there are differences in essence between spontaneous oral narrative and literary narrative. Following an examination of three NZE stories, I shall proceed to a general discussion of the interactive nature of spontaneous oral narrative, then to a discussion of Pratt's (1977) claims vs. my own views, and thence to the conclusion.

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3 The narratives.

Three narratives are presented below,² each illustrating various aspects of the interactive nature of spontaneous oral narrative. The first narrative, *The door*, was recorded from an 'open radio talkback', i.e. a form of talkback in which people call to discuss anything at all, rather than one centred around a given topic. The other two stories, *The cop* and *Reckless driving* were recorded during a conversation at the home of some friends of mine, Phil and Phillippa, who were aware that the conversation was being recorded. Phil and Phillippa are speakers of NZE. It is my (subjective) perception that Jim and George in *The door* are also speakers of NZE (given the nature of radio talkback, it is not possible for me to verify George's linguistic status). When the conversations with Phil and Phillippa were being recorded, I had not yet decided the focus of the study. My initial purpose was to gather some narratives occurring in a 'natural' context. In view of this, my own interaction in the conversation may be considered as data.

The stories cited are quite long. This is necessary given the focus below on the linguistic phenomena involved in the marking of the boundaries of units in narrative. Hopefully the stories' intrinsic interest will offset any tedium resulting from the quantity of the data.

3.1 *The door.*

3.1.1 Text of *The door.*

- 1 Jim: twenty-eight minutes past one
2 we have news next
3 we're goina say hello to George first though
5 Gge: ough hello Jim
6 Jim: Hi
7 Gge: ahh look jist... umm hhh
8 I don't know
9 if this'll ahh go into the news
10 or I'll have to... cut short
11 but ahh I had a garage door installed ahm
12 I'm not going to say the firm at the moment
13 because ahhh that could be... awkward for yi
14 but anyway it was installed in September last year
15 hhh and ahh it was paid for uhh...
16 immediately it was finished
17 as soon as the installation was complete
18 Jim: Right
19 Gge: and then ahh in Feb- early February beginning of February

²For a list of the transcription conventions employed, see the Appendix.

20 ahh it was ahmm...
 21 when I'd close it with a remote unit
 22 Jim: mmm hmm
 23 Gge: it'd hit the bottom
 24 bounce up
 25 and open again...
 26 so ahh I rang the firm
 27 and said
 28 ahh righto I'd like it adjusted...
 29 ahh this was after reading the ahh warranty the installation
 30 warranty and the conditions of warranty
 31 and ahh one part of the conditions state that
 32 the warranty shall cease to apply
 33 if ah unauthorised alteration ahh of the unit
 34 so ahh the guy had given me ahh full instructions
 35 copy of the owner's manual 'n' operating instructions
 36 installation instructions
 37 the whole bit
 37 Jim: yep
 38 Gge: I read it...
 39 and ahh I thought
 40 righto well I'll have a go at this
 41 but then after I read the warranty
 42 I thought
 43 ohh howee wee hold on a minute
 44 Jim: heh heh heh
 45 Gge: I could negate the warranty
 46 Jim: yes
 47 Gge: so I rang them
 48 they made a service call
 49 ahh the the umm chappy... the same guy
 50 who installed it
 51 came round 'n'
 52 made the adjustment
 53 Jim: mmm hmm
 54 Gge: now the original cost was five hundred and forty
 55 dollars
 56 that was paid bang straight away
 56 Jim: yep /cash on the/ knocker
 57 Gge: /I'd be-/
 58 I'd...ehh?
 59 Jim: yeh cash on the knocker
 60 Gge: yeh well I got an hhh
 61 I got an account for forty-five dollars for a service call
 62 so I rang them
 63 now I got it on the...

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64		I got it on the Frydee	106
65	Jim:	yeh	107
66	Gge:	ahhh let's see	108
67		ahhh... about the seventh of February	109
68		so ahh... I rang the office straight away	110
69		the manager wasn't available	111
70		...ahhh... I was told that I would receive a pho...	112
71		I'd... you know	113
72		he would call me on the Monday	114
73		so ahh... no phone call	115
74		and then... on tenth of April	116
75		I got another account	117
76		and it was...	118
77		or a photocopy of the... ahh account for the service call	119
78		and ahh... it was noted	120
79		you know...	121
80		please pay by return mail	122
81		and... ahh payment due within seven days of invoice	123
82		or interest will accrue	124
83	Jim:	k jist hang on there George	125
84		we'll come back to you after the news	126
85	Gge:	sure OK	127
86	Jim:	It's newstime one thirty	128
87		{News opening music}	129
88		{News bulletin}	130
89	Jim:	well he's told us the time	131
90		so we won't worry about that	132
91		but ahh George we're in the middle of a nice little story there	133
92	Gge:	hhh	134
93	Jim:	so you've had you've had one bill service bill for repairs for	135
94		forty-five dollars	136
95		and now you've had a... one of those shirty notes	137
96	Gge:	seven days or else	138
97		yeh well... ahh.. I sort of ahh... sat on this	139
98		and I thought	140
99		ough no hang on a minute	141
100		you know	142
101		don't do your nana yet ³	143
102		so I went down to see the guy in person	144
103		and ahh... I didn't get...	145
104		I didn't ask for his name	146
105		I jist asked for the manager	147
		and ahhm... this fellow says	148

³To do your nana' is to become abusive under provocation.

- 106 yih talkin' to im
 107 so I said right well look
 108 I got this... on Friday
 109 I said
 110 I'd recei-... I'd already rung up about it earlier
 111 and pointed out the ah installation warranty
 112 if in one year et cetra et cetra 'n' no cost to the original
 purchaser
 113 I said
 114 now if it's failing to close proply
 115 is that a malfunction or not?
 116 ough crikey
 117 he said
 118 can't you read the instructions hhhh heh heh
 119 yih see
 120 well this... I I don't like discourtesy
 121 when /I'm/
 122 Jim: /mm/
 123 Gge: being polite
 124 Jim: right
 125 Gge: and ahh... that sort of got my back up a wee bit⁴
 126 and the ahh... the long and short of it was that
 127 ahhh... he claimed
 128 I was reading far too much into that warranty
 129 and ahh.. that of the hundreds they'd installed
 130 I was the first one that had managed to put it over on
 them⁵
 131 Jim: put it over on them heh heh
 132 Gge: yih see (laughing)
 133 so... that sort of... I thought
 134 ough well the the guy... yih know
 135 he's not very bright apparently
 136 /but/
 137 Jim: /you'd start/ the the old hairs on the back of the neck
 would start to rise at that stage
 138 I would guess
 139 Gge: yeh well it it they do yih see
 140 but what he doesn't know
 141 is... that I'd had experience of this sort of thing... some years
 ago
 142 and I've got a dictation machine a tape recorder

⁴If something 'gets your back up' it causes you to become angry.

⁵To 'put something over on someone' is to deceive them or to get the better of them.

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- 143 which I carry in my pocket
 144 'n' I took it down
 145 'n' I taped eem
 146 Jim: mmm hmm
 147 Gge: and ahh... his final remark was
 148 well if you can't be bothered reading the instructions
 149 or if you can't understand them
 150 he says
 151 they're in black and white
 152 and they're plain English
 153 he said
 154 don't come back to us for any/thing/
 155 Jim: /h/
 156 Gge: I said
 157 well I won't
 158 unless it's within the twelve month warranty period
 159 Jim: now tell me
 160 are you talking to the /ahh/ to the
 161 Gge: /manager/
 162 Jim: yih talking to the organ grinder not the monkey
 163 are you talking to the people
 164 that manufacture the doors
 165 /are/
 166 Gge: /no/
 167 Jim: you talking to their agents?
 168 Gge: no I'm talking to the manager of the ahh... ahh.../well/
 169 Jim: /the place/
 170 Gge: subsidiary⁶... the bloke who in...
 171 ahhh... the manager of the... firm
 172 who installed it
 173 Jim: alright then
 174 ... why don't you go to the...
 175 go straight up to the top
 176 go to the people
 177 that manufacture the doors
 178 'nd and explain everything
 179 Gge: ough I'm I'm putting that in writing
 180 I'm in the process of transcribing the tape
 181 Jim: well I'd be interested to hear the outcome of that one
 George
 182 Gge: well I'll ahh try
 183 and remember /it/
 184 Jim: /yeh/

⁶A variant NZE pronunciation of 'subsidiary'.

- 185 Gge: but that that yih see
 186 it's ahh the after sales service
 187 ah I'm just wondering...
 188 what prompted me to ring you
 189 and ahh put this on air was
 190 that I was talking to a couple of friends of the family
 191 and there were two ladies amongst them
 192 and they said
 193 well... we wonder
 194 how many womenfolk... have had the same problem
 195 and jist paid out
 196 because the guy was so arrogant
 197 Jim: mmm...
 198 well it's prob- its probably...
 199 you you could probably repeat you story many times over
 200 for for all different sorts of ahh ahh... items of equipment as
 well
 201 and ahhh... maybe ahh... maybe we can hear ahh... some
 202 or maybe we can hear umm someone
 203 that had had a successful conclusion to the to the ahhh
 ...problems
 204 that you've got
 205 Gge: well this... so f... I'm quite happy with this
 206 because the guy... he said right
 207 we'll tear this up
 208 and ahhm...
 209 we'll call it quits
 210 and I said
 211 well look yih not gonna send me another one of these
 things in three of four months
 212 and say
 213 it hasn't been paid are yih?
 214 ough no no we won't do that
 215 he says
 216 you're the first one to put it over on us
 217 Jim: put it over
 218 Gge: I thought
 219 you cheeky sod /(laugh)/
 220 Jim: /yeh/ that's a bit on the nose
 221 isn't it
 222 Gge: yeh /well/
 223 Jim: I mean that seems to me to be a responsibility on the part
 224 if there's a warranty for...
 225 and ahh most most ahhh... items of equipment
 226 you buy these days do have a warran/ty/
 227 Gge: /yeh/

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- 228 Jim: and they stand by their warranties
229 don't they?
230 Gge: oh yes yeh
231 well the the manufacturers do
232 but I'm just wondering
233 if this guy deserves to be manager of a franchise
234 Jim: well ahh... that's a that's a question
235 you raise elsewhere of course
236 Gge: ough yeh sure
237 Jim: but I'd be interested to hear the outcome
238 but... we won't mention any names at this stage
239 Gge: no no that's why
240 I'm very careful about that
241 because I know (laughing)
242 in New Zealand libel laws are pretty shocking
243 Jim: well that's right here
244 and ahhm... and ahh... we we can't afford to pay any
money out 'nd ahh in libel suits here anyway
245 Gge: ough I dunno...
246 the politicians can heh heh
247 Jim: well they can
248 because they've got
249 they have access to taxes
250 we don't
251 Gge: yeh heh that's right
252 Jim: alright George
253 Gge: OK thanks Jim
254 Jim: keep us keep us posted mate
255 Gge: yep will do
256 Jim: bye for now ta ta
257 Gge: bye
258 Jim: alright then... well it's ahh twenty three {trilled /r/}
minutes to two o'clock...{etc}

3.1.2 Discussion.

Having been introduced (lines 1-5) George requests the floor (lines 7-11):

I don't know
if this'll ahh go into the news
or I'll have to... cut short
but {etc}

Given that this was said at 1:28 pm, and that the news is usually broadcast on the half hour, this constitutes a request for the floor of at least two minutes duration. In the absence of any objection to his projected length of turn, George is able to proceed. Thus, George resolves the initial problem facing the teller of a narrative, a problem which Schiffirin discusses (following Jefferson 1978):

Since narratives usually occupy more than one sentence, the problem for potential storytellers is to indicate their need for an extended turn. (Schiffrin 1984:318).

However, as I shall claim below, in §5, it is not the case that the teller of a narrative requests the floor, and is subsequently granted exclusive speaking rights.

In lines 12-13, George avoids naming the company involved in the installation of the garage door, in accordance with the policy of the radio station that names ought to be avoided so as to avoid the possibility of litigation. Similarly in lines 168-169, Jim attempts to head off a possible mention of the name of this company (see below), and again in lines 238ff 'but... we won't mention any names at this stage'. As shall be shown below in §6 this avoidance of names is partly a reflection of 'recipient design' (Polanyi 1981) in such narratives, and partly a reflection of the speech event within which this discourse occurred.

Lines 11-17 thus constitute the orientation section of this narrative, giving the background to the installation of the door. Line 17 ends on a rising intonation on 'complete'. Allan (1990) comments that [the high rising terminal contour in NZE] is used at a point where a structural unit terminates and the hearer might be expected to contribute, to hold the floor or request permission to continue. (Allan 1990:126)

This is the case here. The orientation section constitutes a structural unit in oral narrative according to the Labovian analysis adopted here. The speaker signals⁷ the termination of this unit with the rising intonation, and the addressee gives an affirmatory response. This follows the statistically predominant pattern noted by Allan (1990:124) of a high rising terminal being followed by an affirmation. It is interesting to note that the token employed here is the full lexical item 'right', rather than simply 'mm hmm' or any of the possible 'tokens of interest' (Schegloff 1981:77). The significance of this choice will be discussed below in §4.1.

In line 19, George begins to give the details of the fault which developed in the door. Jim contributes a 'minimal back-channel response' (Schegloff 1981, following Yngve 1970) viz. 'mmm hmm'. While giving these details, George 'rushes through' (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974), not pausing or using intonational cues, e.g. line 29:

(...) the ahh warranty the installation warranty and the conditions of warranty

Lines 29-36 constitute further orientation. Having begun to tell the 'complicating action' (Labov 1972a), lines 26-28:

⁷I use the term 'signal' in a loose sense. As very little study has been done on intonation in NZE, it is difficult to claim unequivocally a specific function for any recognizable intonational contour. What is clear, however, is that the intonational contours I discuss contrast with those employed throughout the rest of this discourse.

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so ahh I rang the firm

and said

ahh righto I'd like it adjusted

George interrupts to give background about the instructions and warranty. At line 36, there is a falling final intonation, signalling the end of this background section. Jim's 'yep' of line 37 is an acknowledgement of this structural juncture. Similarly, Jim's 'heh heh heh' in line 44 is a response to the exaggerated laughing expression of George's 'ohh howee wee hold on a minute' in line 43.

Lines 47-52 constitute the continuation of the complicating action:

so I rang them

they made a service call

ahh the the umm chappy... the same guy

who installed it

came round 'n'

made the adjustment

Line 52 'made the adjustment' is also marked with a falling final intonation, signalling another structural boundary. This is recognized by Jim's 'mmm hmm' in line 53. In line 54 George commences a new structural unit with 'now', restating the price. Given that George states the price of the door several times, it would appear that he considers it to be significant for the relevance of the story. Labov (1972a:366) notes that the teller of a narrative is constantly trying to stave off the comment 'So what?' by making clear 'why the events of the narrative are reportable' (Labov 1972a:370). George expresses the cultural belief that one ought to have more after-sales support for expensive goods and services. This background underlies lines 54-55:

now the original cost was five hundred and forty

dollars that was paid bang straight away

which Jim acknowledges by his 'yep' in line 56.

Up until this point in the narrative, all has been going smoothly. George has presented the content of his narrative in chunks which show clearly Labov's structuring. He has been using intonational cues to signal the boundaries of these units, and Jim, by his affirmatory responses has shown his acknowledgement of those boundaries. In lines 56-57, there is a problem in the discourse. Having used an intonational cue to signal a structural boundary, and having received the desired 'yep', George proceeds with line 57 'I'd be'. However, this utterance overlaps with Jim's 'cash on the knocker'. It is clear from George's 'I'd... eh?' in line 58, that he had not been expecting a turn expansion from Jim. As shall be shown in §4.1, usually only minimal responses are expected from the addressee at structural boundaries.

George's next section of discourse is quite long (lines 66-82), approximately fifteen clauses (more or less depending on one's theoretical persuasion), detailing his attempts to contact the manager of the company

which had installed the door, and detailing the invoice he had received. In line 82 'or interest will accrue' is marked with a falling intonation. At this point Jim interrupts the narrative, so that he can play the news broadcast. It is significant that the news broadcast actually begins to play after the scheduled time of 1:30 pm. Despite the strong constraints of radio programme timetabling, Jim appears to delay his interruption until an appropriate structural juncture arises. Evidently the sociolinguistic constraints affecting the possible places to interrupt for a recipient of an oral narrative in NZE are strong enough to override other strong patterns of temporal organisation.

It becomes clear that Jim correctly perceived the structural boundary at the point at which he interrupted. After the news broadcast, Jim recapitulates the narrative to the point that George has told it (lines 93-95):

so you've had you've had one bill service bill for repairs
for forty-five dollars
and now you've had a... one of those shirty notes
seven days or else

At this point George resumes with his thoughts at that time (lines 96-98):

yeh well... ahh... I sort of ahh... sat on this
and I thought

ough no hang on a minute {...}

As Labov (1972a:370-372) observes, instances in which tellers of narratives cite their own thoughts or speech constitute a form of external evaluation. Although Labov (1972a:369) sees 'waves of evaluation that penetrate the narrative', it is clear that the form of external evaluation here is offset from other structural units in the narrative. Thus, while intonation, syntactic devices, vowel lengthening and certain other devices may be used to express evaluation in a way which is intertwined with the complicating action and therefore not structurally separate from it, this use of external evaluation does constitute a separate structural entity. So, Jim did indeed interrupt at a structural boundary, namely one between the complicating action and a chunk of external evaluation.

Further problems arise in the course of the discourse. In lines 116-118 for example:

ough crikey
he said
can't you read the instructions hhh heh heh

Goodwin notes:

Laugh tokens are not simply comments by the speaker on the talk being produced but rather, ... may constitute invitations to laugh, moves making relevant particular types of subsequent actions by a recipient. (Goodwin, ms.:4)

Jim, however, does not follow by producing his own 'laugh tokens'. George therefore follows with 'yih see' in line 119, then in lines 120-123:
well this... I I don't like discourtesy

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when I'm being polite

At this point Jim says 'mm' (line 122) overlapping with George's contrastive emphasis on 'I'm' in line 121. Also, after George's 'being polite' (line 123) Jim says 'right'. It is interesting to note again the occurrence of a full lexical item 'right' here, as in line 18 (see above), as opposed to the minimal 'mm' in line 122. The 'mm' occurs overlapping George's evaluative comment, whereas the 'right' occurs at a structural juncture (see further §4 below). George shifts from this evaluation to more complicating action (lines 125-130): he becomes angry and the manager speaks.⁸

George's emphatic intonational contour, with 'put' as the tonic peak in line 127-130:

ahh...he claimed (...)

I was the first one that had managed to put it over on them provides the cue for Jim's echo (line 131) 'put it over on them heh heh'. This is followed by a period of interactive evaluation of the manager of the service company. George has carefully emphasised his own noble behaviour. In line 45 he had exercised caution so as not to invalidate the warranty on the garage door by unauthorised repair. He had paid for the door as soon as it was installed. In line 96 'yes well... ahh... I sort of ahh... sat on this' he had tried to remain calm, and again in line 100 'don't do your nana yet'. Finally, in spite of his politeness towards the manager, he had been insulted in having his ability to read (or at least his ability to understand what he read) questioned. From the carefully constructed opposition of the behaviour of the two protagonists, George concludes (lines 134-136):

ough well the guy... yih know
he's not very bright apparently
/but/

At this point Jim contributes his own evaluative comment, clearly showing that he has grasped this evaluative climax (lines 137-138):

/you'd start/ the the old hairs on the back of the neck
would start to rise at that stage
I would guess

Interestingly, this comment of Jim's overlaps with George's 'but' (line 136). George had not signalled a structural boundary by means of intonation as elsewhere in this text. However, it is clear that some sort of evaluative response had been expected. The laughing in line 132, and the pausing in lines 133-134 had all failed to elicit any such response. When an appropriate evaluative response occurs here, George replies in the

⁸Arguably, George's attributing anger to himself has some evaluative function. However, his becoming angry occurs subsequent to the manager's comments, and prior to the claims of George's duplicity. I therefore consider this clause to be part of the complicating action, temporally ordered with respect to these others.

affirmative (line 139) 'yeh well it it they do yih see'. Clearly, this overlapping longer response from the addressee differs from the problematic overlap mentioned above (that occurring in lines 56-57). It may be that this overlap is less problematic because George had in fact been 'fishing' for a response here, whereas in lines 56-57 he had not. Furthermore, it is possibly the case that such evaluative response from the addressee is not subject to the same constraints with regard to the place of occurrence and length of turn as the contributions discussed elsewhere at the structural boundaries. George further casts himself in a favourable light (lines 140-158). He has had the presence of mind, based on his previous experience, to carry a cassette recorder in his pocket, with which he records as damning evidence the manager's further insults, and his own continued polite response to them.

What follows in the discourse is interesting in that Jim repeatedly attempts to bring the narrative to a close. Although it might be thought that closing a narrative is the prerogative of the teller, this text shows that the recipient of a narrative may also try to bring about closure. Lines 159-173 illustrate the continued avoidance of the name of the company involved, so as to avoid litigation. In lines 174-178 Jim begins to suggest what George could do:

...why don't you go to the
go straight up to the top
go to the people
that manufacture the doors
'nd explain everything

to which George replies that he is in the process of transcribing the tape (lines 179-180). Jim says (line 181), 'well I'd be interested to hear the outcome of that one George' on a falling final intonation. George appears to acquiesce, in lines 182-183:

well I'll ahh try
and remember /it/.

Jim at least takes this as an acceptance of the proposed closure, with his '/yeh/' in line 184. However, George is not yet finished. He proceeds to make the point of his narrative in lines 185-196, explicitly stating its relevance in lines 188-189:

what prompted me to ring you
and put this on air was {...}

Again, Jim attempts to close the story by marking the relevance of the story to the discourse situation of the radio talkback show. Polanyi comments that

... the story recipient must engage in some talk about the story after it is completed, helping the storyteller connect the storyworld to the conversation. (Polanyi 1982:519)

If we view the talkback show as the matrix within which the narrative occurs, rather than a conversation, then Jim can be seen to be performing a bridging task which is characteristically performed at a story's termination.

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Although this talkback show is 'open talkback', Jim's talk between conversations with callers is often oriented towards constructing some sort of relevance, or providing a start for conversation. For example, he often reads newspaper editorials, or refers to items of current interest on the news or in sports. This, then, underlies his comments in lines 198-204:

well it's prob- it's probably...
you you could probably repeat your story many times over
for for all different sorts of ahh ahh... items of equipment
as well
and ahh... maybe ahh... maybe we can hear ahh... some
or maybe we can hear umm someone
that had a successful conclusion to the ahh... problems
that you've got

Even still, George does not acquiesce. In lines 205-216 George adds his final resolution to the wrangle. The manager said that they would tear up the bill and not send him another one, citing as evidence again the fact that 'you're the first one to put it over on us'. Thus, even though George is ultimately satisfied with the conclusion to the issue of the bill that ought not to have been sent, the manager's comments still rile him. Jim again echoes the evaluative climax in line 217 'put it over', and concurs with George's evaluation (lines 218-222):

Gge: I thought
you cheeky sod /(laugh)/
Jim: /yeh/ that's a bit on the nose
isn't it
Gge: yeh well {...}

From this point on, Jim begins to dominate the discourse, giving his own opinion, e.g. lines 223ff:

Jim: I mean that seems to me to be a responsibility
on the part
if there's a warranty for {...}
and they stand by their warranties
don't they?

Followed by George's final evaluative comment (lines 232-233) which appears to end his narrative:

but I'm just wondering
if this guy deserves to be manager of a franchise

Jim again heads off any potentially libellous statements in lines 234-235:

well ahh... that's a question
you raise elsewhere of course

Finally, the conversation ends in some lighthearted remarks about politicians, until the closing sequence, lines 250-257:

Jim: we don't
Gge: yeh heh that's right
Jim: alright George
Gge: OK thanks Jim

Jim: keep us posted mate
 Gge: yep will do
 Jim: bye for now ta ta
 Gge: bye

Jim's 'we don't' (line 250) is on a falling final intonation, signalling the end of the discussion and the imminent end of the phone conversation. Line 252 'alright George' constitutes a 'pre-closing' (Schegloff and Sacks 1984), i.e. the precursor to a closing sequence. It must be noted that the conclusion to the conversation is separate from and after the conclusion of the narrative proper, in view of the intervening remarks in lines 238-250.

3.2 *The cop.*

3.2.1 Text of *The cop.*

1 S: yeh...so we're s'posed to get people to tell us a few
 stories and things
 2 so we can [...] in class...
 3 Phil: Phillippa's good at telling stories.
 4 she came in today
 5 we had a traffic cop visit us
 6 and I said
 7 what's the traffic cop come for?
 8 coz I was out with the kids
 9 S: ih
 10 Phil: she came in
 11 and said
 12 ough...did you go through a red light last week?
 13 S&Pa: (Laugh)
 14 Phil: she says ummm...
 15 yeh I did actually
 16 so she had
 17 S: last week?
 18 Phil: yeh...or week before
 19 Pa: it was just lately [...]
 20 Phil: [...] yeh oh is it
 21 Pa: so he came in
 22 and he umm had a red light camera⁹
 23 and we think
 24 ough yeh they can trace the car to here
 25 S: do they get the picture of the driver?
 26 Phil: they get the picture of the umm... (Shapes rectangle
 with hands)

⁹A 'red light camera' is a camera mounted at prominent traffic junctions to record photographs of the registration plates of cars seen to fail to stop at a red traffic light.

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- 27 S: yeh
28 Phil: but even if...
29 they've put through a law in parliament now that yi
driver...
30 the owner of the car is responsible
31 for whoever's driving it.
32 S: ough
33 Pa: ough is that right?
34 Phil: yeh yep so if you lend the car to someone
35 and they speed
36 and they get away
37 but they get the number down
38 S: mm
39 Phil: it's your responsibility to make sure
40 that the mug that was driving it
41 pays the fine
42 Pa: what about if it was stolen?
43 Phil: ough if it's stolen
44 it's not [...]
45 Pa: but it wasn't
46 S: (Laugh)
47 Phil: yah well I...[...]
48 Pa: he was trying to trace /somebody down/
49 Phil: /the guy down/
50 Pa: he couldn't find him
51 Phil: but it wasn't a good sight
52 watching this cop
53 and thinking
54 ough this is funny
55 and then he backs up
56 and goes straight to our house
57 I thought...
58 S: so was it you they were after?
59 Pa: no...somebody else
60 Phil: they were after a house out the back of the church
61 so [...]
62 S: ough...ough
63 Phil: out the back of the police station?
64 or the back of the church?
65 Pa: back of the old police station
66 [...] back of the church behind the old police station.
67 Phil: ...we've got a house
68 that fits the description

3.2.2 Discussion

This narrative has many factors in common with *The door* in §3.1.1 above. What I shall focus on in the discussion here, is the way in which Phil and Phillippa, a husband and wife, together tell the narrative, with further interaction from myself.

In line 3, Phil begins to tell a story:

Phillippa's good at telling stories.

she came in today {...}

Although he indicates Phillippa's skill in narration, he begins to tell the story himself. However, it becomes clear that he is not attempting to exclude her in the storytelling. Rather, by mentioning Phillippa's skill, Phil seems to include her as a co-storyteller. So, Phil begins the complicating action (lines 5ff): a traffic officer came looking for someone who had driven through a red light. He came while Phil was outside.

In line 17, 'last week?', Simon questions the time of the traffic offence. In other discussion Phil had claimed that he had not committed any traffic offences for some time now (see for example *Reckless driving*, lines 44-47). In reply, both Phil and Phillippa state the time of the occurrence, although with somewhat less specificity than before, lines 18-20:

Phil: yeh... or week before

Pa: it was just lately [...]

Phil: [...] yeh oh is it

At this point Phillippa continues the story by resuming the complicating action in line 21, 'so he came in', giving some background in lines 22-24:

and he umm had a red light camera

and we think

ough yeh they can trace the car to here

Simon questions the prior events in line 25, 'did they get the picture of the driver?', which leads to a discussion of the liability of the driver (lines 26-45). This discussion seems to constitute further background to the story, since Phil alone has knowledge about the legal liability of the owner of a car.

In lines 48-68, Phil and Phillippa continue to tell the story jointly. In lines 48-50, Phil overlaps with Phillippa's sentence, providing material of equivalent semantic content:

Pa: he was trying to trace /somebody down/

Phil: /the guy down/

Pa: he couldn't find him

Although Phillippa has provided the continuation of the complicating action, with Phil overlapping, Phil goes on to provide some evaluation, in citing his thoughts at that time, lines 51-54:

but it wasn't a good sight

watching this cop

and thinking

ough this is funny

He then goes on to provide further narrative action:

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and then he backs up
and goes straight to our house

In line 58, Simon questions the relevance of the story, 'so was it you they were after?'. Again, as mentioned above in §3.1.2, hearers search for relevance in a narration. It turns out that the traffic officer was not looking for Phil. Thus, Phillipa replies in line 59, 'no... somebody else'. The point of the narrative is summed up in Phil's comments in line 60 and 67-68:

68: they were after a house out the back of the church...
we've got a house
that fits the description

3.3 Reckless driving.

3.3.1 Text of Reckless driving.

Phil tells how he had been fined for reckless driving and doing ninety kilometres per hour in a fifty kilometre per hour zone. He protested that he accepted the reckless driving charge, but could not possibly have been doing ninety kilometres per hour, since his car was only in second gear. The Ministry of Transport decided to drop the reckless driving charge, which required a court hearing, but to keep the speeding charge which is a simple fine. This is agreeable to Phil, who is nonetheless amused at their response to his complaint.

- 1 Phil: 'cause quite frankly I was driving recklessly
2 S: why...
3 what were you doing?
4 Phil: ahmm...
5 do you know Stanley Street?
6 S: ahhm I could
7 Phil: you know ahhm it's really...
8 you will know it
9 it's the one with the big tennis stadium on it down
10 S: oh yeh yeh course /yeh/ yeh yeh
11 Phil: /yeh/ and you come up Stanley Street on to the north
western
12 S: yeh yeh
13 Phil: and we'd just had a big game of indoor cricket
14 and I was quite hyper¹⁰
15 and my mate had a mark... two Jag
16 and I was in my Valiant /hhh/
17 S: /hhh/
18 Phil: and I'd run out of CNG¹¹

¹⁰To be hyper' is to be excited or euphoric.

¹¹CNG is 'Compressed Natural Gas', an alternative fuel for automobiles.

- 19 and it's real grunty¹² on petrol...
 20 really went for it...
 21 so we're having this drag up Stanley Street...
 22 I don't know where the cop came from...
 23 and then we...
 24 yeh we were doing about ninety all the way up it...
 25 no we're doing...
 26 we weren't going that fast on the way up
 27 but then once we hit that bit
 28 that's almost the motorway
 29 /we/ went through... coming round there
 30 S: /hmm/
 31 Phil: and I didn't realize it
 32 but it does a real doggly¹³ around where ahmm ...
 33 where Parnell Rise goes through or something...
 34 ahmm no not Parnell Rise
 34 S: Grafton Road
 35 Phil: yeh Grafton Road goes through
 36 and so I (rrru rru) to get around that then (whee
 whee)...
 37 S: (laugh)
 38 Phil: yeh... that was pretty reckless
 39 I thought
 40 'cause I had a car on the inside of me
 41 and it wasn't my mate at that stage...
 42 /pretty close.../
 43 S: /heh/
 44 Phil: that's all yonks¹⁴ ago
 45 I haven't had...
 46 since this last one I haven't had one for yonks...
 47 before that I should say

3.3.2 Discussion.

This narrative provides an excellent illustration of 'recipient design' (Polanyi 1981). Polanyi (1981:315) uses this term to refer to the way in which narrators manipulate variables in a narration according to 'the recipients'. In this narrative, there is sensitivity to Simon's state of knowledge. In answer to Simon's question in lines 2-3:

12. 'To be grunty' is to be powerful, or to have a lot of 'get-up-and-go' (to use another idiom).

13. 'Doggly' is a variant of the colloquial 'dog leg', meaning an acute angle or sharp bend.

14. 'Yonks' means 'a long time'.

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why...

what were you doing?

Phil does not begin with an account of the complicating action. Rather he attempts to ascertain Simon's knowledge of the geographical location of the incident that he is about to describe. In line 5 he asks 'do you know Stanley Street?'. Following Simon's uncertain 'ahhm I could' in line 6, Phil attempts to clarify in lines 8-9:

you will know it

it's the one with the big tennis stadium on it down

Following Simon's vigorous affirmatory response indicating that he has achieved identification of the place Phil is referring to, 'oh yeh yeh course yep yeh yeh' in line 10, Phil proceeds to identify more exactly the place at which the incident took place, in line 11, 'yeh and you come up Stanley Street on to the north western'. Following Simon's 'yep yeh' of line 12, Phil continues with the background to the actual incident. Having established that Simon knows the geographical location Phil is able to move on to a description of how he and his friend came to be driving on Stanley Street.

The importance of the geographical location of this incident becomes apparent when Phil comments in lines 31-33:

I didn't realize it

but it does a real doggly around where ahmm...

where Parnell Rise goes through or something... ahmm

no not Parnell Rise

The precise identification of the place Phil is having trouble referring to is important in order to understand why it proved difficult for him to take the corner at speed. Simon's comment in line 34 'Grafton Road' identifies the place Phil is referring to. Simon's appropriate identification makes it clear that he is following the story, and serves to help overcome Phil's problem in identification. Phil acknowledges this contribution and comes to the climax of the narrative in lines 35-36:

yeh Grafton Road goes through

and so I (rru rru) to get around that that

and then (whee whee)...

The following excerpt from a narrative told by Phil illustrates the same point. {Phil has been describing an old van of his which was very rusty}

- 1 Phil: and twice in...
- 2 on one occasion I was...
- 3 there were all these cars getting pulled up in Par...
- 4 in this one...
- 5 you know Ponsonby?
- 6 S: yeh
- 7 Phil: all that t(...)
- 8 S: yeh vaguely
- 9 Phil: you dive down the back of it to get..

- 10 to get past /it/
 11 S: /yeh/
 12 Phil: it's the one way this way
 13 and you have to go that way...
 14 to get down it
 15 S: ahh yep
 16 Phil: and ahmm... so it's one way
 17 there's nowhere...
 18 nothing you can do
 19 you can't even do a U turn
 20 and all these cops were pulling these cars /over/
 21 S: /heh/
 22 Phil: and I'm thinking
 23 argh I haven't got a warrant of fitness...
 24 but they missed me... amazing

{Phil goes on to tell how he then got a Warrant of Fitness, and was pulled up and checked soon after}

Simon claims by his 'yeh' in line 6 to know Ponsonby. However, this is a suburb, covering a large geographical area, so Phil proceeds to specify more exactly where he means. Simon's 'yeh vaguely' in line 8 makes it clear that he does not know the exact place that Phil is describing. Similarly his 'yeh' in line 11, and 'ahh yep' in line 15 are minimally affirmative responses (cf. the vigorous affirmation in *Reckless driving*, line 10). It seems that since Phil is not convinced that Simon knows the precise location, he switches tack to a more general identification (lines 16-19):

- and ahmm... so it's one way
 there's nowhere...
 nothing you can do
 you can't even do a U turn

4 The marking of structural phenomena in spontaneous oral narrative.

One of the claims in the discussion of the narratives in §3 above is that various linguistic devices have been used to mark the boundaries of Labov's structural units of narrative. Two questions arise with respect to these claims:

- i) Are these devices used solely for this purpose, or is their usage part of a more general phenomenon?
- ii) Are there any independent means of verifying the status of the structural entities which I have claimed are being marked?

In the following two subsections I shall attempt to provide some answer for these questions.

4.1 Back-channel responses.

Of the various back-channel responses mentioned in the discussion in §3 above, it has become clear that 'mm hmm' (or variants) may overlap with discourse, as well as occurring at structural boundaries. Schegloff (1981) discusses the function of 'uh huh' and other such devices as signalling the addressee's understanding of the current state of talk, and in signalling continuing interest. While I do not have any instances of 'uh huh' in my texts, it seems that 'mm hmm' serves a similar function to this. In signalling continuing interest and understanding, 'mm hmm' seems to function like the revivalist congregation's interjected 'hallelujah's during a sermon, in encouraging the speaker to continue. Clearly, there are other nonlinguistic means of performing this task. Goodwin (ms.) for example, discusses the function of gaze and other body language on the part of participants in discourse. Laughing or 'laugh tokens' (Goodwin, ms.:4) also often overlap with the narrator's discourse.

The other back-channel responses mentioned (e.g. 'right') seem only to occur at structural boundaries. As has been noted in §3, such tokens often occur after the narrator has employed a special intonational contour. It could be said that these tokens are produced in response to the intonational contour, and therefore do not serve primarily to mark a structural boundary. However, this still leaves the question of why the narrator should choose to produce such a contour at this place. What I claim is that the narrator may employ, as one device, a special intonational contour to signal a structural boundary and solicit a response from the addressee that the unit has been received or processed, as Schiffrin notes:

a speaker can solicit affirmation of information reception as well as evidence of shifts in the interactional alignment.
(Schiffrin 1987:281)

The addressee, in producing a back-channel response recognises the soliciting function of the intonational contour, and thereby the boundary of the structural entity.

Although we may observe these various devices occurring elsewhere in discourse, this in no way weakens the claim that their occurrence in narratives is determined by the presence of structural boundaries according to a Labovian analysis.

4.2 Independent means of identifying the structural boundaries.

For the linguist, the analysis of such boundaries to structural entities occurring in discourse is potentially circular and *post hoc*. There is not much value in observing that a boundary between two structural entities in narrative has occurred as evidenced solely by the occurrence of these tokens and intonational contours. Such an identification, if not augmented by other means of identifying these structures, would run the risk of circularity: structural boundaries are marked by back-channel responses of

this type. We can see that there is a structural boundary here, given that a back-channel response has occurred.

Labov (1972a) details a number of principles for identifying the various structural components which he postulates. For example, the complicating action is identified by the temporal ordering of events and by various syntactic properties. The abstract is identified by its function in providing a summary of the narrative which follows it. Evaluation, which has 'the effect of suspending the action of the narrative' (Labov 1972a:374), may also be identified by the presence of certain linguistic features, e.g. expressive phonology and the use of complex syntax. In addition to all these means of identifying the various components, Labov proposes that:

We can look at narrative as a series of answers to underlying questions:

- a. Abstract: what was this about?
- b. Orientation: who, when, what, where?
- c. Complicating action: then what happened?
- d. Evaluation: so what?
- e. Result: what finally happened?

(Labov 1972a:3-70)

Although I do not propose to verify the status of the structural units which I have discussed in §3, it seems clear that there is no basic conflict between the units as I have identified them and an identification by Labov's criteria.

Finally, it must be noted that the back-channel responses which I have discussed are limited in length. Problems were discussed in *The door*, lines 56-57, arising from an unexpected turn expansion at a structural boundary, when only a minimal back-channel response was expected. Similarly, the evaluative expansion in *The door* (lines 136-138) was discussed in §3.1.2 above. The maximally brief responses are possibly a reflection of Grice's maxim 'Be brief' (Grice 1975:46), concerning the manner of an interlocutor's contribution. However, even these obligatorily brief responses support the claim that oral narrative is not to be viewed as monologic.

5 The interactive nature of spontaneous oral narrative.

From the above discussion, it should be clear that spontaneous oral narrative ought to be viewed as interactive in nature rather than monologic. In §4 and in the narratives in §3 it has been established that the narrator may mark the boundaries of a structural unit in a narrative, thereby soliciting a minimal response from the recipient of the narrative. In addition, in the discussion of the narratives in §3, it has been claimed that evaluation may be interactive, with the narrator and the recipient of the narrative both contributing to an evaluative section (as in *The door*, lines 134-138). It has also been shown that the recipient of a narrative may attempt to end a narrative (as in *The door*), even though this is usually

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considered to be the prerogative of the narrator. It has been shown that oral narrative exhibits 'recipient design' (Polanyi 1981), as for example in the development of the orientation. Finally, it has been shown that two people may cooperate to produce a narrative, with a third person acting as the recipient, and interacting with both co-narrators (as in *The cop*). On the basis of this discussion, I do not accept views of narrative such as that of Schiffrin (following Sacks's unpublished lecture notes 1971), that ... if a storyteller is to situate and complete the story, turn exchange has to be temporarily suspended. (Schiffrin 1987:16)

While it may be that the normal turn-taking conventions of conversation (such as those outlined in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974) do not seem to apply to narrative, there is not a complete suspension of turn exchange. From these texts, I define two major types of turn exchange operative in spontaneous oral narrative: 'minimal' turn exchange and 'cooperative' turn exchange.

By *minimal turn exchange*, I refer to the soliciting of back-channel responses. It seems, as shown by the problematic turn expansion in *The door*, lines 56-57, that such responses are usually expected to be short - typically, from this data, not more than a single full lexical item. All English speakers are aware of the range of ways of rebuking narrative recipients for exceeding this constraint. There are such formulæ as 'Let me finish, will you?', 'Do you mind?', 'Anyway, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted...' Unfortunately, none of these familiar devices occur in any of the stories I have analysed to date, so I am not able to do any more than note them, and leave further study of their function in narrative for a later date.

By the term *cooperative turn exchange* I do not mean to imply that minimal turn exchange is in any sense non-cooperative. Clearly it is cooperative. Rather, what I hope to express is the manifestation of a principle like Grice's 'Cooperative Principle' (Grice 1975:45ff). Phil and Phillippa in *The cop* cooperate to produce a narrative. Similarly, Simon in *Reckless driving*, line 34, cooperates in the production of the narrative by supplying details of the place whose name Phil has trouble remembering.

Although these two principles which I have briefly outlined may not be peculiar to spontaneous oral narrative, their applicability to such narratives serves to further strengthen the interactive view of oral narrative adopted here.

It is still the case that linguists and recipients of narratives often have some 'intuitive' feeling during the production of a narrative that one person is speaking. Certainly, there is often clearly one person who is narrating. Perhaps it would be better to view bids for the floor (e.g. George in *The door*, lines 7-11) or abstracts as a request to dominate in the subsequent discourse, yielding only minimal turns to the addressee until the completion of the narrative. This seems to be Yngve's view, when he discusses a participant in a discourse taking a turn while someone

else has the floor (Yngve 1970:575). That Jim in *The door* attempts to bring George's narrative to a close is possibly due to the asymmetric power relationship which holds between the talkback host and a caller to the show.

6 Recipient design.

In examining the various narratives above, I have made occasional reference to 'recipient design'. In *The door*, George takes care to avoid naming the service company involved, adhering to the radio station's policy of avoiding anything which might prove litigious. As George notes, however, he has told this story before, to a group of friends (*The door*, lines 190-196). It is likely that at that time he would not have felt the same need to avoid litigation, or to monitor his own speech in order to avoid legal complications for his friends. He can thus be seen to be sensitive to the speech situation within which he presents his narrative (a radio talkback show). Similarly, Phil, by questioning Simon in *The cop* and in *Reckless driving*, is sensitive to Simon's knowledge of the geographical location of the incident he is about to narrate. His specification of the general area, and then more precise location, is engineered according to how much he perceives Simon knows of the location.

7 Spontaneous oral narrative vs. literary narrative.

Pratt (1977) argues against the view of the Prague School and the Russian Formalists that oral narrative as a genre differs in essence from literary narrative. Pratt argues that the consequence of this view was an unfavourable conception of 'ordinary' language, as somehow of lesser value than 'literary' language. Rather, in considering oral and literary narrative, she argues that

at some level of analysis they are utterances of the same type... their identity goes beyond minimal narrativity. (Pratt 1977:69).

She argues that features which have been identified as signs of 'literariness' occur in novels not because they are novels, but because they are members of a more general category of speech acts. She notes, further, that Labov's structural analysis of oral narratives can be applied equally well to 'literary' narratives:

[Labov's] subdivision of the narrative into six main components corresponds very closely indeed to the kind of organization we are traditionally taught to observe in narrative literature... That novels and natural narratives both have a structurally similar "narrative core" is not so surprising, since both are attempts to render experience. (Pratt 1977:51)

In contrast to this view, Hjelmquist (who is not particularly discussing the issues Pratt is concerned with) claims:

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There are many reasons to believe that oral and written discourse are psychologically different. (Hjelmquist 1982:35)

Hjelmquist notes that oral discourse leaves no trace, is always accompanied by meaning-bearing nonverbal activities, and is more context-bound than written discourse (Hjelmquist 1982:26). Furthermore,

... as a listener, one cannot control the speed of information presentation, but this is possible for a reader. (Hjelmquist 1982:27)

A reader can turn back to review part of a narrative. The recipient of an oral narrative, on the other hand, can only request clarification occasionally, while still appearing to be polite, intelligent, or interested. Furthermore, the relative status of the participants in an oral narrative will determine whether the recipient of the oral narrative is able explicitly to request a slower rate of speech, for example, one can well imagine a parent telling an excited child to speak more slowly and clearly, but it would be quite unusual for the child to make the same request of the parent.

Written texts also lack many of the features of oral discourse, such as false starts and fillers (Hjelmquist 1982:27). Finally, written texts may be written with a particular kind of audience in mind (*ibid.*), e.g. English speakers from a Western culture interested in science fiction, but this is not manifested in the same ways as in 'recipient design' in oral discourse, which is more sensitive to the exact identity of the interlocutors, and to aspects of the context.

Granted then, that there are differences in essence between oral and written discourse generally, it is interesting to consider the ways in which oral and literary narratives might differ. It is not sufficient to identify certain features which occur in oral narratives, and then to suppose that these are typical of oral narrative, for this can lead to precisely the kind of error that Pratt (1977) argues against. Nor is it sufficient to identify some features in oral narrative and to see if they occur in a sample of literary narratives, since there is always the problem of representativeness. Rather, what I claim is that the discourse marking of structural boundaries in oral narrative cannot, by its very nature, occur in literary narratives. Similarly, the cooperation of two co-narrators is not possible.¹⁵ If we accept that the interactive aspects of spontaneous oral narrative which I have identified above are not merely true of spontaneous oral discourse in general, there are differences in essence between oral and literary narratives. This is not

¹⁵One could possibly conceive of some unusual situations in which written narratives could be interactive, such as interactive messages sent between people seated at computer terminals, or communication with a deaf-mute person by means of writing on a slate. Such situations are rather rare, and would in any case not be considered 'literary'.

to deny Pratt's claim that oral and literary narrative are members of a more general class.

8 Conclusion.

Having examined several narratives in NZE, I have shown that spontaneous oral narrative is best viewed as an interactive speech event. This view is contrary to that implicit in some studies of Labovian narratives, in which oral narrative appears to be viewed as essentially monologic. The occurrence of various phenomena in oral narratives can be seen to provide further proof of the validity of Labov's analysis of narrative as consisting of various components. Finally, it has been shown that there are differences in essence between oral narrative and literary narrative, in terms of intonational and interactive devices employed, and in terms of specific 'recipient design'.

Appendix.

In transcribing the data here, I have endeavoured to achieve a compromise between a clean, easily read transcription, and one which is true to the various phenomena of oral discourse (e.g. pauses and false starts) which occur in the tape recordings. The transcription conventions employed are outlined below.

The proper names of some of the participants in the narratives have in some cases been abbreviated in the transcriptions. Thus *Gge* is short for George, *S* is short for Simon, and *Pa* is short for Phillipa.

As far as possible, I have used standard (British) English orthography to transcribe the discourse. Extralinguistic vocal noises, such as laughing or onomatopoeic effects are noted in parentheses '()'. Unclear sections of discourse are noted by three dots enclosed in square brackets '[...]'. Overlapping speech is enclosed in forward facing slashes, '/ /'. The curly braces enclose external comments about the text. Three dots are used to indicate pauses. No attempt has been made to measure the duration of these pauses, given the interest in the large-scale structural units of narrative. The pauses are those which I, as a speaker of NZE, perceive as significant. Vowel length has, in a few places, been marked, e.g. 'waaay', but only where this was exceptionally exaggerated. The question mark indicates a 'question intonation'. Apart from this, intonation is not marked, but is discussed in the text where appropriate.

Finally, the transcription *ough* represents the sound [ɒ]. The transcription *oh* would not have been appropriate, given the social meaning of 'high social status' associated with the usual Received Pronunciation [o:] of this transcription.

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