**Narrative genre**

**What is a genre?**

Certain stretches of interaction as speech events of specific kinds and we have names attached with them like meeting, interview, cross-examination and so on.

There is always a set of assumptions and expectations about what behavior is appropriate in genre about what the one thing is and what is not.

for example: A committee meeting of a formal kind follows a certain agenda which specifies the order of business with a chairperson who sees to it and controls how the discussion proceeds by selecting who to talk first and whom they addressing a chairman or the other people present.

In a political genre, the speaker get the listeners interpersonally engaged and the speaker designs what they have to say to the end. And the listeners know what to expect and respond accordingly. They know well enough what is likely to be referred to and what kind of communicative force and effect the speakers intend to achieve by what they say.

There is also single-turn genre in written language as in written communications or texts which are not jointly produced in the process of interaction. The writer seeks to engage the reader and does so by making appeal to the conventions that define particular genre which are assumed to be common knowledge.

**Definitions of narrative genre:**

Baker: narratives are public and personal ‘stories’ that we subscribe to and that guide our behavior. They are the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the world(s) in which we live. The terms ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ are interchangeable in this context.

A narrative is ‘a coherent system of interrelated and sequentially organized stories that share a common rhetorical desire to resolve a conflict by establishing audience expectations according to the known trajectories of its literary and rhetorical form’ (Halverson et al. 2011, p. 14).

Narrative theory-Mona Baker:

Narrative theory has brought new changes in viewing the formation and representation of foreign reality in translation, it is a basis for the model analyzing the representation of social identity in translation.

Baker`s narrative account (2006) is one of those cultural based endeavors that integrates Social science and Translation studies. She views translation as a kind of re-narration in which the original narrative is reframed by the translator (or narrator) in order to reconstruct the SL reality differently in TL. This reconstruction is totally context bound, and it depends on the TL sociopolitical system and ideology. She adopts a narrative analysis model to examine source texts and their translation in order to realize how reality is redefined and reconfigured in both source and target lingua-cultural contexts.

Baker views narrative from social and communication theory, treating narratives across all genres and modes rather than from narratology and linguistics that purely focus on one text.

Baker urged that “Narratives in this view are public and personal ‘stories’ that we subscribe to and that guide our behavior. Therefore, narratives have directly to do with personal performance, and identification. Narratives are the stories we tell ourselves, not just those we explicitly tell other people, about the world(s) in which we live. The terms ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ are interchangeable in this context” (2006, p.19).

Baker`s narrative account focuses mainly on narratives` function in constructing and representing of social identity. In Bennett and Edelman`s words, “narrative shapes people’s views of rationality, of objectivity, of morality, and of their conceptions of themselves and others” (1985, p.159).

Baker conducts narrative analysis in order to discover how reality (and social identity as part) of source language is constructed in target language. According to Lieblich (1998), narrative analysis has three functions: (a) to investigate research questions (functional analysis of narratives); (b) to investigate narratives themselves as research objects (componential analysis of narratives); and (c) to investigate the philosophy and methodology of qualitative research. Survey on the representation of identity in translation, from narrative analysis perspective, is a functional analysis of narrative texts.

Baker`s own approach to translation is globally recognized as “Narrative approach” (Baker, 2006). Translation is seen as *“re-narration”* in which source narrative (in different text types like scientific, historic, anthropologic, technical, literary, etc.) is reframed in another language and culture. Contemplating in the domain of social science, translation is considered as different version of an original narrative that holds different sets of values and orientations due to the socio-cultural setting in which it is produced. As each sociopolitical system follows different set of values, their promoted versions of narratives are intentionally composed. Peculiarity of narratives to their own sociocultural context entails translators to pay special attention to the sociopolitical factors affecting

The production and interpretation of narratives in the target language. Narrative approach strongly supports the idea that ideology and values determine the structure and content of –translated- narrative text. Comparatively, discursive and functional approaches simultaneously look at both communication of meaning and the socially constructed power relations.

Narrative theory concerns intercultural power imbalance, and introduces translation as a way of resistance against the dominant cultures` hegemony through configuring foreign narratives in TL so that they reflect the local values and reasoning's of dominated nations (Palestine vs. Israel, in Baker, 2006).

Baker explain the notion of narrative as elaborated in social and communication theory, rather than in narratology or linguistics, to explore the way in which translation and interpreting participate in these processes. Narratives, in the sense used here, are the everyday stories we live by.

Narratives are dynamic entities; they change in subtle or radical ways as people experience and become exposed to new stories on a daily basis. This assumption has a number of consequences. First, narrative theory recognizes that people’s behavior is ultimately guided by the stories they come to believe about the events in which they are embedded, rather than by their gender, race, color of skin, or any other attribute. Second, because narratives are dynamic, they cannot be streamlined into a set of stable stories that people simply choose from. Narrative theory recognizes that at any moment in time we can be located within a variety of divergent, crisscrossing, often vacillating narratives, thus acknowledging the complexity and fluidity of our positioning in relation to other participants in interaction. Third, because narratives are continually open to change with our exposure to new experience and new stories, they have ‘significant subversive or transformative potential’.

Another strength of narrative theory is that unlike much of the existing scholarship in translation studies, it allows us to examine the way in which translation features in the elaboration of narratives that cut across time and texts.

**The status and effects of narrativity:**

Many scholars, especially in literary studies and linguistics, tend to treat narrative as an optional mode of communication, often contrasting it with argumentation or exposition. Approaches that treat narrative as an optional mode tend to focus on the internal structure of orally delivered or literary narratives – in terms of phases, episodes and plots, for instance – and to stress the advantages of using narrative, rather than other modes of communication, to secure the audience’s commitment and involvement. The best and most influential example of this tradition is Labov.

Labov 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’ and what he calls a ‘minimal narrative’ as ‘a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered’.

Like most scholars in linguistics and pragmatics, having defined narrative as only one way of recapitulating experience, Labov goes on to focus on oral narratives and on their structural make-up. He elaborates a structural framework that divides these orally delivered stories into six components: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution, and coda.

In social and communication theory, as well as in the work of some historians such as Hayden White, narrative tends on the whole to be treated as the principal and inescapable mode by which we experience the world. Thus, Somers argues that ‘it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities’ (1992: 600).

Hayden White similarly stresses that far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted. An important difference between literary and linguistic approaches and the narrative approach then concerns the status of narrative as an optional mode of communication or as a meta-code that cuts across and underpins all modes of communication. Narrative theory, as elaborated here, adopts the latter view.

Another important difference concerns the issue of genres more specifically. Whereas most literary and linguistic approaches tend to treat narrative itself as a genre, the view of narrative adopted in this book assumes that ‘there is no genre, including even technical discourse that is not an episode in the story of life. The issue of genre is important to address at the outset, since many readers might assume that a narrative framework can only be helpful if we wish to study the translation of literature, folktales, possibly political discourse, but certainly not scientific or technical text.

**Typology of narrative and its applications to translation studies:**

1- Ontological narratives (narratives of the self):

Ontological narratives are personal stories that we tell ourselves about our place in the world and our own personal history. These stories both constitute and make sense of our lives. Although they ultimately remain focused on the self and its immediate world, they are interpersonal and social in nature, because the person has to exist, to tell their story, in a social world – they are a situated, located self.

In concrete terms, this means that even the most personal of narratives rely on and invoke collective narratives – symbols, linguistic formulations, structures, and vocabularies of motive – without which the personal would remain unintelligible and uninterpretable.

Ontological narratives, then, are dependent on and informed by the collective narratives in which they are situated. But they are also crucial for the elaboration and maintenance of these same narratives. In the first instance, shared narratives, the stories that are told and retold by numerous members of a society over a long period of time, provide the blueprints for ontological narratives, including the blueprints for the social roles and spaces that an individual can inhabit. Ontological narratives are by no means inconsequential for the elaboration and maintenance of shared narratives. Society as a whole has a considerable stake in the stories and roles we construct for ourselves, because personal narratives can enhance or undermine the narratives that underpin the social order and hence interfere with the smooth functioning of society.

Shared narratives also require the polyvocality of numerous personal stories to gain currency and acceptance, to become ‘normalized’ into self-evident accounts of the world and hence escape scrutiny. As a good example of how collective narratives promoted by the social order require input from compatible personal narratives, we only need to remember that Germans under the Nazis and white South Africans under apartheid were both encouraged to narrate themselves as racially superior. Translating and interpreting ontological narratives is often extremely challenging. One interpreter interviewed by the Access to Justice project team at the University of Durham, UK, described the impact of a child abuse case on her emotional wellbeing: I used to want to be in tears nearly every night. It was terrible. … when he [deaf child] cried, I cried. When he shouted, I shouted. You know it’s very very upsetting – very upsetting. It’s one of the worst things I’ve ever done in my life. And it’s awful because I had no-one to share it with.

2-Public narratives:

Public narratives are very similar to but not quite the same as what I referred to above as shared or collective narratives. ‘Shared’ or ‘collective’ narratives are loose terms that tend to be used outside any specific model. They refer vaguely to any type of narrative that has currency in a given community. Somers and Gibson, on the other hand, draw finer distinctions between public, conceptual and meta-narratives. Public narratives circulating in any society can and do change significantly, sometimes within the span of a few years, even months. Public narratives about specific individuals who become symbols of a people, A typology of narrative 33 movement, or an ideology can also change drastically over time. Nelson Mandela was widely depicted as a terrorist in the 1960s through to the late 1980s for advocating the use of violent tactics to end apartheid in South Africa. As the international anti-apartheid movement gained strength in the 1970s and 1980s, he became a symbol of resistance, an international hero, and was finally awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

Studies of advertising offer numerous examples of the subtle ways in which public narratives are adapted and mediated across cultural boundaries. Munday (2004) discusses the L’Oréal cosmetics campaign, which changed its well-known slogan in 2002 from ‘Because I’m worth it’ to ‘Because you’re worth it’ in an attempt to soften the impact of the public narrative of free, democratic societies being made up of autonomous, independent individuals with unique attributes.

While power relations in the asylum context are historically and politically distinctive depending on the country of origin, [an] attempt is made to present applicants’ accounts of persecution based on the socio-historical conditions of their countries. In asylum interviews, it is fairly typical to hear comments such as, ‘This is what rape means over there, society does not accept it’, ‘In my country, the police cannot be trusted’, ‘In my country, there is no social order’. On the other hand, applicants may also present rationales for particular actions based on the perceived values of the host country in a ‘transcultural’ gesture of awareness and assimilation of their ‘strategic’ relevance. Translators and interpreters play a crucial role in disseminating public narratives within their own communities and ensuring that all members of a society, including recent migrants, are socialized into the view of the world promoted in these shared stories. But translators may also be loyal to dissident ideologies internal to a culture, or to affiliations and agendas external to a culture’ and this may lead them to position themselves differently in relation to domestic public narratives. For example, in 2004 the Israeli activist group Gush Shalom translated one of its brochures, Truth Against Truth from Hebrew into Russian specifically to appeal to the Russian community in Israel. This was an attempt to ‘break … the national consensus’, in other words to challenge internal Israeli narratives about the history of the region and the causes of the current conflict.

3-Conceptual (disciplinary) narratives:

As social theorists, Somers and Gibson (1994: 62) define conceptual narratives as ‘concepts and explanations that we construct as social researchers’, and go on to argue that the conceptual challenge that narrativity poses is to develop a social analytic vocabulary that can accommodate the contention that social life, social organizations, social action, and social identities are narratively, that is, temporally and relationally constructed through both ontological and public narratives. Every discipline, including translation studies, elaborates and thrives on its own set of conceptual narratives.

As with public narratives, translators and interpreters can choose to accept and promote or contest and challenge a given conceptual narrative. St André (2004) describes how Sir George Staunton’s English translation of the Qing penal code in 1810 argued directly with James Barrow’s claims in his Travels in China, published in 1806, that the Chinese are ‘fundamentally unjust both in their dealings with each other and with foreigners’ (St André 2004: 4), ‘sell their children into slavery’, ‘practice homosexuality’, and ‘smoke opium and gamble’ (2004: 5). Staunton’s interventions included adding footnotes that directly refuted Barrow’s accusations, rearranging and editing tables that detailed types of punishment, fines and degrees of mourning in order to make them more comprehensible to an English reader, and introducing various subtle changes to the syntax and lexis that cumulatively served to make the laws sound more positive and universal.

Example of a highly influential conceptual narrative, is what is known in the advertising world as the ‘Nag Factor’, ‘a brilliant new marketing strategy that takes manipulation of children to the extreme’ (Bakan 2004: 119). As Bakan explains, advertisers who sell products to adults through their children (for example, packaging a toy with a 24-pack of Labatt Blue beer) rely on conceptual narratives elaborated for them by child psychologists who ‘developed a scientific breakdown of different kinds of nags that children use and the differential impacts they have on different kinds of parents’ (2004: 119). These narratives describe a world in which children can nag in two main ways: ‘with persistence’, constantly whining about wanting a certain product without explaining why, or ‘with importance’, giving strong reasons for wanting the product. Parents on the other hand fall into four categories. ‘Bare necessities’ parents are well-off but not responsive to their children; they require ‘nagging with importance’. The other three groups are ‘kids’ pals’, ‘indulgers’, and ‘conflicted’ parents. Kids’ pals are younger parents who buy products such as computer games for their children and themselves; ‘indulgers’ are working parents who buy products for their children to make up for the fact that they don’t spend much time with them; and ‘conflicted’ parents are usually single mothers who claim that they don’t like indulging their children but do it anyway.

4-Meta- (master) narratives:

Somers and Gibson (1994: 61) define meta- (or master) narratives as narratives ‘in which we are embedded as contemporary actors in history … Progress, Decadence, Industrialization, Enlightenment, etc.’. Somers (1992: 605) explains that metanarratives can also be ‘the epic dramas of our time: Capitalism vs. Communism, the Individual vs. Society, and Barbarism/Nature vs. Civility’.

Meta- or master narratives are not to be confused with ‘masterplots’. For example, the well-known narrative of Cinderella has many variants in different cultures, but they all share basic constituent events as well as themes such as injustice and reward; these articulate a masterplot which can be evoked in other narratives and contexts. The notion of ‘masterplot’ in this sense is closer to that of ‘canonical script’ and is an important element of particularity, one of the features of narrativity.

The effects of invoking established meta-narratives, with their own specific histories, to promote new ones can never be predicted, because these histories can release different associations and details in the minds of one’s immediate audience as well as the opponents that the evoked meta-narrative is meant to subdue or discredit. It goes without saying that narratives do not travel across linguistic and cultural boundaries, and certainly do not develop into global meta-narratives, without the direct involvement of translators and interpreters. It is also worth pointing out that growing numbers of professional and non-professional translators and interpreters are now actively setting out to elaborate alternative narratives that can challenge the oppressive public and meta-narratives of our time, an issue I have taken up at length elsewhere.