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The structure of emotion discourse: from Labovian to socio-cognitive models*

Abstract: This paper focuses on how narrators convey emotion in the structure of oral narrative discourse in Spanish. To this end, the structure of personal oral narratives of highly emotional events in a sample of radio narratives is analyzed from two different approaches: *Labovian* and *socio-cognitive*. This work shows, first, how the Labovian approach to personal oral narratives of “vivid” events is applied to emotionally charged texts and, second, how the theoretical concepts of mental spaces and conceptual integration theory, as well as the latest developments within socio-cognitive theories, can help to better understand the processes that, on the one hand, enable speakers to create bonds with the listener, and on the other hand, enable hearers to make sense of the apparently chaotic information presented in these particular types of narratives.

Keywords: oral narratives; call-in radio program; emotionality; structure; mental-space semantics

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1 Introduction

Narrating a personal experience is much more than just telling a story or verbalizing a past event, a fact that is even more evident in the case of highly painful, intimate stories, where narrators have to solve the tension between the desire to

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share experiences while protecting themselves from others, that is, between what they want to say and how they can say it.

Much work has been devoted to the role of personal narratives in the construction of the self and cultural identity (Freeman 2003; Bucholtz and Hall 2005; De Fina et al. 2006), and in the performing of different kinds of interaction (Goodwin 1984; Norrick 2000; Ochs and Capps 2001; Quasthoff and Becker 2004). Within this post-Labovian tradition, and following Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (Bamberg 2004, 2007; Georgakopoulou 2006, 2007), the stories presented in this paper can be considered “small stories” as opposed to the prototypical “big” narratives. The emotional oral stories under study are clearly non-canonical due to their non-prototypical features of the discourse context – a call-in radio program in which there is no face-to-face interaction and in which all discourse participants are complete strangers talking about or listening to highly intimate stories, contextual features which strongly affect the fragmented and chaotic structure of the texts.

The present study concentrates on the existence of a distinct discursive structure in highly emotional oral narratives different from Labov’s framework, where the narrators make use of specific linguistic and pragmatic devices (profusion of details, repetitions, redoings, “expressive phonology” such as changes in pitch and loudness, clicks, among others) in order to share their emotions and create a “community of shared feelings” (Martin and White 2005: 5), as well as to attract the listener’s attention to the most salient pieces of information of the narrative (Romano and Porto 2010). We will show, on the one hand, how their highly emotional contents, their spontaneous character, and the specificities of the discourse situation influence their broken, nonlinear structure. On the other hand, we will illustrate how the analysis of this structure can benefit from the application of recent developments in socio-cognitive theories of language and discourse.

The paper has been divided into five sections. In Section 2, the corpus of Spanish radio oral narratives of emotional events is described. Section 3 presents the most significant theoretical concepts for the analysis, originating from Labovian and socio-cognitive approaches to narrative analysis. Section 4 discusses and applies the analytical notions of both frameworks to the corpus, in particular to a narrative that has been chosen as a prototypical token (SpN1 *Miriam is with a married man*), transcribed and translated in the appendix. Finally, Section 5 presents the conclusions, namely that the notions derived from mental spaces and conceptual integration theory and socio-cognitive approaches to language are more appropriate to describe and explain the “chaotic” nature of these narratives and the strategies that narrators use to guide listeners through the maze of stories, as well as those used by hearers to make sense of the stories, by integrating them into a global emergent whole.

2 The data

The data corpus consists of twelve oral narratives, six recounted by men and six by women, from the Spanish late-night call-in radio program *Hablar por Hablar* (radio station Cadena SER), in which people talk about their most intimate worries or problems in a completely anonymous setting. The program, which has been on since 1989, has an average audience of 563,000 listeners every night. As for the narratives under study, they were recorded and transcribed from the Spanish radio program between 2006 and 2007. Their length ranges from 300 to 600 words, totaling 5,612 words. The range of topics covered in these narratives is very wide, all related to highly intimate matters such as love, infidelity, illnesses, bullying, sex, unemployment, etc.

Compared to similar call-in programs, both in Spain and in other countries, *Hablar por Hablar* does not show a collaborative structure. Subjects call either to share their problems with anonymous listeners or in response to previous callers seeking advice. Listeners can only provide indirect feedback by calling back during the program or even days or weeks later. The radio presenter, in addition, is barely noticeable: she maintains a very passive attitude throughout the whole process, using continuers very rarely and only to aid narrators to proceed with their stories and decide whether they have come to an end or not. The narratives are thus delivered with almost no interruptions. This typology of narratives was chosen because they contain highly emotional and natural discourse. Speakers feel free to talk about their concerns because of the anonymous setting and, therefore, narratives are very close to spontaneous language.

Another observation worth mentioning is the fact that narrators and listeners in this discourse setting are complete strangers; listeners have no information about the place of origin, the age, or the sociocultural background of narrators. But we do have a collective, shared background knowledge that is going to help follow the stories and build a coherent global narrative. When we listen to a narrative on the radio, says Berger (1997:135), “we use our minds to visualize, to see with the mind’s eye, or imagine what the characters look like, what they are like, where they are and what they are doing.” Therefore, when listening to emotionally laden radio stories, we can infer certain general features about the narrators, such as gender, approximate age, and social class. Finally, narratives are told only once and there is no chance for listeners to retrieve lost or unknown information.

In this sense, and due to the idiosyncratic contextual setting of radio narratives, the oral narratives under study share characteristics of both monological and dialogical/interactive texts (Ochs and Capps 2001). For this reason, they can be placed along a “continuum of narratives,” somewhere in between monological

and interactive texts. Some features that these oral narratives share with monologues are as follows:

1. There is one single active speaker telling the story, with few verbal interruptions, commentaries or conversational enhancers from the interlocutor or conductor.
2. The recipient of the narration is not a prototypical listener, since s/he is not present and can be considered an overhearer listening to a private conversation.
3. Narrators, lacking any feedback from listeners, show an eagerness to keep the narration maximally significant for the listener and strive to keep on the same argumentative line or stance, in spite of the broken structure of the narrative.

Simultaneously, these texts display features of conversational or interactive narratives:

1. They are still interactive since listeners are “present”, the speaker feels that their presence matters, and the conductor actually inserts short remarks and responses.
2. They show a nonlinear temporal and causal organization, more typical of conversations, and, as a result, the argumentative line (seeking understanding, empathy, or even advice) is constantly broken.

These non-canonical features, we think, call for new analytical tools, those of socio-cognitive models of language and discourse.

3 Theoretical framework: from Labovian to socio-cognitive models

Narratological research has been very prolific since the 1950s, both in theoretical and methodological approaches, and has thus produced a great number and variety of ethnographic, hermeneutic, literary, structuralist, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, and cognitive studies. In this section, we first summarize one of the most influential linguistic models in the field today, the *Labovian* model (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972, 1982; Norrick 2000; Ochs and Capps 2001), and second, the *socio-cognitive* framework, which can respond to the difficulties posed by non-prototypical, “small stories” like those in our corpus (Herman 2003, 2009; Semino 2006, 2009; Dancygier 2008; Hougaard 2008). Both frameworks have been necessary for this study: Labov and Waletzky’s model has served as the fundamental basis for analysis of personal oral narratives since 1967, and it

was therefore essential as a first step. But, as will be shown, the highly emotional character of the events being narrated in the texts, as well as the non-prototypical character of the contextual setting, soon proved to require more flexible analytical concepts to account for the fragmentary structure of the texts – tools that were found within mental spaces and conceptual integration theory, in the main.

3.1 The Labovian model of oral narratives

The starting point of this model, as is well known, is the idea that a narrative is a coherent representation of a sequence of events different from any simple combination of unrelated events. The main aim of the paradigm thus is to find the higher-order structure behind each narrative. That is, the “necessary and sufficient” features of narratives in contrast to other text types. This definitional attempt can be traced back to Propp’s essay in 1928 and to French structuralism. But it is clear that Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) laid the groundwork for future research within the field. In the first place, they conceived the basic structure of oral narratives which still influences most research in the area. And, in the second, they also laid the groundwork for the interactional or contextual approach to narrative studies, which was later developed by sociolinguists (Herman 1999; Ochs and Capps 2001; De Fina et al. 2006; Bamberg 2007). As is well known, Labov and Waletzky’s basic narrative structure contains the following elements:

1. Abstract: *What is the story about?*
2. Orientation: *Who, when, what, and where?*
3. Complication: *And then, what happened?*
4. Evaluation: *And so what?*
5. Resolution: *Then, what happened in the end?*
6. Coda: *Signals the end of the story*

Of the six different elements devised by Labov and Waletzky (1967), only the four central ones (orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution) are essential parts in every narrative. Of these four, evaluation is the definitional core of an oral narrative of personal events, in particular when the events recounted are of a highly emotional nature. A narrative formed by an orientation, a complication, and a resolution contains the referential information necessary to understand the events being told, but it is in the evaluative commentaries where we find the reasons for telling the story; that is, the main point of the narrative. Let us now see a different set of analytical tools, which will help to understand the idiosyncratic structure of oral narratives of charged or emotional events.

3.2 The socio-cognitive approach to oral narratives

In general terms, the theoretical and methodological tools provided by this model, and discussed in Section 4.2, are much more flexible than those provided by the Labovian paradigm. They have helped not only to explain the structure of the narrative, but also how the listener is able to make sense of a great amount of fragmented information and construct the global meaning of the whole narrative.

For this purpose, the theoretical notions coming from Mental Spaces and Conceptual Integration (MSCI) theory (Fauconnier 1997; Fauconnier and Turner 2002), as applied to discourse (Oakley and Hougaard 2008), have been particularly useful. This theory has been extensively applied to the study of fictional narratives (Semino 2006, 2009; Dancygier 2008) and has recently been applied to oral narratives as well (Porto and Romano 2010). MSCI theory has, thus, helped to understand how the minor side stories (flashbacks, flash-forwards, commentaries, etc.) contained in a narrative would be *narrative spaces* acting as “prompts leading to a different kind of understanding of the events being narrated” (Dancygier 2008: 54). Previous work within fictional narratives has shown that the sequential presentation of events alone does not ensure the comprehension intended by the writer and, therefore, it is the links between the main storyline and the different side stories provided by the reader himself that make the construction of the final global *emergent story* possible (Dancygier 2008).

Following MSCI theory, emotional oral narratives are regarded as a series of *mental spaces* or *narrative spaces* recounted in a non-sequential manner where the narrator brings in feelings, explanations, and self-justifications, gives background information, etc. These *input narrative spaces* are not clearly set up at the offset of the narratives, so the narrator leads the hearer through incomplete, fragmented *narrative spaces* by means of (i) *space builders*: attentional markers, such as discourse markers, tense shifts, personal pronouns, adverbial expressions, as well as repetitions, sighs, clicks, breathing, repairs, etc. (Romano and Porto 2010), that signal a new or discontinuous narrative segment with respect to previous ones; and (ii) *narrative anchors* (Dancygier 2008), i.e., linguistic expressions, concepts or ideas that are repeated or re-elaborated at different points in the narrative and which help the listener link the different spaces or the different fragments of a space. Finally, it is the listener who constructs the final meaning or global emergent story by connecting the different *input narrative spaces* as the process unfolds, until the story reaches a satisfying degree of coherence by means of *emergent cross-mappings* or *projections*.

The final *emergent story* thus arises through a gradually increasing network of cross-mappings and blends that come from multiple *input* narrative or mental spaces, signaled by the different *space builders*, and from the collective, shared

cultural knowledge activated by the *generic space*. As mentioned above, the emotional oral narratives under study contain different linguistic and pragmatic means that guide the listener's attention throughout the different narrative spaces, but at the same time, listeners also make use of other socio-cognitive tools which facilitate their “journey” through the process – a shared set of scripts or “experiential repertoires” (Bernárdez 2008) crucial in the process of building the global meaning and, therefore, an empathic bond with the narrator.

4 The structure of Spanish emotional radio narratives

Following the transcription and analysis of the narratives from the Spanish call-in radio program, this study reveals that these naturally spontaneous, small stories show a structure that does not fully match those of prototypical Labovian narratives of vivid past experience. Our conclusions are based on the global analysis of the texts under study, which are illustrated with examples from relevant lines of the corpus and more specifically with the inclusion (in the appendix) of one complete narrative, which can be considered a typical one of the kind: SpN1 *Miriam is with a married man*, about a classical love triangle.

As stated in the introduction, the main aim of this paper is to show how the special, broken structure of the narratives under study, dependent on their specific, non-prototypical contextual features, can benefit from recent developments of socio-cognitive theories of language and discourse. In order to advance this argument, in Section 4.1, we present a possible Labovian interpretation of one of the oral narratives in the corpus, as well as the problems we encounter throughout this analysis for the texts under study; and in 4.2, an analysis of the same narrative using the analytical tools of MSCIT, which, in our opinion, give a more realistic explanation of the complexity of oral emotion discourse.

4.1 Labovian analysis

When applying the Labovian structure to the highly emotional radio narratives in our corpus, we found several differences regarding the number and the function of the sections. In Table 1, these differences are displayed and a new term is proposed for some of the sections.

Firstly, for the starting point of the narrative we prefer the term *offset* to that of *abstract* since, rather than “encapsulating the main point of the story” (Labov 1972: 363), this opening segment is an emotional staller or delayer that gives the

Labovian narratives	Emotional narratives	Evaluation
Abstract: <i>What was this about?</i>		
Orientation: <i>Who, when, what, where?</i>	Offset: <i>Emotional staller</i>	
Complication: <i>Then what happened?</i>	Orientation: <i>Who, when, what, where?</i>	
Evaluation: <i>So what?</i>	Complication: <i>Then what happened?</i>	
Resolution: <i>What finally happened?</i>	Rationale: <i>Why?</i>	
Coda: <i>Signals end of story</i>		

Table 1: Traditional Labovian structure contrasting a new proposal for oral narratives.

narrator time to think, get ready, take breath, and gather strength in order to recount the painful experience. Also, it serves as an opening segment framer to anchor the narrative and call attention to it. Such offset markers thus prepare the listener for the upcoming report of emotionally loaded experiences and seek empathy from the very beginning, as in narrative SpN1, which starts with a first-person-singular personal pronoun *yo* ('I') followed by a long pause. The offset is very similar in all the narratives analyzed, short and framed by different pragmatic markers (which include discourse markers, falling intonation, long pauses, repetitions, repairs, and so on). As a token, the examples that follow include underlined pragmatic markers (1) combined with internal evaluative comments (2) or with more or less canonical phrases (3):

- (1) *Nada ... resulta que ... pues* (SpN11)
'Nothing ... what happened is ... well'
- (2) *Buenas noches ... uff ... bueno, vamos a ver si los nervios me dejan, estoy un poquito nervioso ... bueno* (SpN12)
'Good night ... uff ... well ... let's see if my nerves let me, I'm a bit nervous, well ...'
- (3) *Pues nada ... mi historia es que ... ehh ... yo pues ... soy ... yo, ...* (SpN2)
'Well nothing ... my story is ... ehh ... I well ... I am ... I, ...'

It is interesting to note how some of the narratives seem to start off with something which might be considered an *abstract* comprising the events to be recounted in the narrative (SpN3, SpN5, SpN6, SpN8, and SpN9). However, in all cases, the abstract is suddenly interrupted by a side story that contains background information and the first evaluative comments, as in example (4) below:

- (4) *Tengo una sobrina de trece años que está sufriendo un acoso escolar terrible ... ya ... hoy ha sido el último ya ... es ... hoy es que yo tengo un disgusto tremendo ...* (SpN5)

‘I have a niece who is 13 and is being terribly bullied . . . Today, it’s been the last . . . today, it’s . . . today I am so sad . . .’

As in Labovian narratives, the *orientation* provides the listener with the background knowledge necessary to understand the current state of affairs of the story. In addition to many details regarding who, when, what, and where, the orientation has a double function for the speaker: to ensure s/he is properly understood and to involve the listener in the emotional plot. This is why within emotional narratives, orientational sections tend to come to a halt abruptly, interrupted as the speaker suddenly recalls painful feelings. In our corpus, orientations typically contain combinations of discourse and pragmatic markers which, according to the Labovian model, would be expected in the more evaluative sections. This is very clearly shown in SpN1 (see appendix), where the orientation section (lines 2–30) is interrupted four times by internal evaluative comments (lines 5–6, 9–10, 17–24, and 26–30).

In the *complication* section, the one the listener is expecting as soon as the story begins (Labov 1982), the narrator has to convince the listener that the story s/he has started to recount is worth listening to. In the stories under study, it is the section where the speaker actually makes clear why s/he is calling the radio program. As in prototypical Labovian narratives of vivid events, the complication is full of narrative clauses that show more cohesion and a richer sequential organization. Nevertheless, in oral narratives of charged events, complication and evaluation are continuously mixed. Narrators incessantly overlap the recount of actual events with their feelings about such events, since it is what they feel rather than what happened that matters to them, as well as how they are trying to convey it. In SpN1, the complicating section (lines 31–65) is interrupted four times: twice by internal evaluative comments (lines 37 and 40) and twice by external evaluative comments (lines 44 and 60).

Let us now have a look at the most salient section of oral narratives of charged events, the backbone of the narrative: *evaluation*. Almost every word, silence, and line in these narratives contributes to the expression of emotion and the sharing of feelings with hearers, and this is the reason why we find evaluative elements from the very first words of the offset, through the orientation and complication sections, to the end. Consequently, evaluation is not a distinct segment in the structure of an emotional narrative, but is embedded throughout the whole narrative from beginning to end, as depicted in Table 1. Labov (1972) already accounts for the distribution of evaluation throughout narratives, as well as for the fact that it can be expressed by specific linguistic elements such as intensifiers. What we see in the highly emotional radio narratives analyzed here is that the evaluative devices used by narrators of highly painful, intimate stories are not

only contained in specific comments or linguistic elements, but also include a wide variety of pragmatic markers such as changes in pitch and loudness, lengthening of syllables or whole words, pauses, deep respiration, and clicks, laughs, sighs, etc.¹ Thus, discourse markers and other emotional devices (intensifiers, repetitions, repairs, tense switches, switches from reported to direct speech, laughs, sighs, interjections, pauses, clicks, etc.), which are present throughout the whole narrative, culminate in the evaluative comments, mostly in internal evaluations, where narrators express their innermost feelings about the events being told. In SpN1, as already pointed out, the orientation section (lines 2–4) is immediately interrupted by two evaluative comments – one external (line 5), on feelings about other characters and events, and another internal (line 8), with comments on personal feelings – which are pragmatically marked with repetitions, clicks, pauses, discourse markers, and repairs. These empathy-seeking devices seem to accumulate as soon as the emotional contents of the story appear from line 4 onwards. Other examples of the insertion of external and internal evaluative comments within the complication can be found in lines 37, 40, 44, and 60.

A fourth section has been identified in the structure of highly emotional radio narratives that does not exist in the Labovian framework: the *rationale*. This section is the expression, either overt or covert, of the main purpose of the narrative, that is, the reason for the speaker calling to a radio program to recount their story, i.e., to express his/her feelings and to let off steam while seeking for understanding and/or advice. In SpN1, the rationale, the fact that Miriam is confused about what to do about her relationship, is overtly embedded within the complication section in line 36 (5).

- (5) 36 *y a día de hoy pues estoy pues hecha un lío*
 ‘and today, well, I’m well confused’

In this case, the rationale is only expressed once, but there are examples in the corpus where the rationale appears several times throughout the narrative, as in SpN3, in which the fact that the narrator is worried because her son just won’t go out after his girlfriend’s death is repeated up to 8 times in 50 lines (Porto and Romano 2010).

1 In previous work (Cuenca et al. 2011), both the degree of emotionality and the discourse situation proved to influence the kind and frequency of the linguistic and pragmatic devices used by the narrators, as well as the structure of the narratives. Namely, those stories closer to the emotional pole of the cline and more naturally elicited showed a higher variety and frequency of markers and less linear, somehow chaotic structures.

Finally, a distinctive feature of our corpus of emotional radio narratives that contrasts with prototypical Labovian narratives is that the former display no explicit signal of the narrative having finished, a *resolution* or *coda*. The reason why these stories usually remain open is because the problems being recounted are still taking place at the time in which the story is being told. Narrators do not know where to stop, or where to head to, because of the immediacy of the events, the emotions involved, and, given the contextual setting (radio program), the passivity of the listeners, etc. The end of these narratives is therefore usually evaluative and abrupt. In most narratives, we only know the narrator has finished because of a sudden silence after which the presenter decides to finish the story with a simple ‘*Thank you, is that all?*’, as in SpN1 (6). Two other examples are (7) and (8):

(6) *Y no le dijo nada* (SpN1)

‘And she didn’t say anything’

(7) “*Jairo*” (SpN4)

(A sudden move from the first and third narrative voices to a direct vocative, calling a son given for adoption)

(8) *O sea* (SpN9)

‘I mean’ (inviting the hearer to draw his/her own conclusions)

4.2 Socio-cognitive analysis

After trying to apply and fit oral narratives of highly emotional contents into the Labovian paradigm, and the description of the main difficulties and differences between both types of texts – oral narratives of vivid events and highly emotional radio narratives – we see that the last would benefit from a more flexible model to account for their fragmented, multilayered structure.

As stated in Section 3.2, within the socio-cognitive approach, an oral narrative can be seen as a series of *input narrative spaces* that the interlocutors open and close as the discourse unfolds until they finally build up a global, emergent *output space*. These input spaces are not all present at the beginning of the narrative and do not usually follow a linear sequence. As a matter of fact, they can be embedded in others and even overlap at times.

In SpN1 we have distinguished three input narrative spaces represented in Table 2 and described as follows. Space 1 deals with the plain events of the story: the narrator started a relationship with a married man, after twelve years they

1	SPACE 1	36	SPACE 2
2		37	
3		38	
4		39	
5	SPACE 2	40	SPACE 3
6		41	
7		42	
8		43	
9		44	
10		45	
11		46	
12	SPACE 1	47	
13		48	
14		49	
15		50	
16	SPACE 2	51	
17		52	
18		53	
19		54	
20		55	
21		56	
22		57	
23		58	
24		59	
25	SPACE 1	60	
26		61	SPACE 2
27	SPACE 2	62	
28		63	
29		64	
30		65	SPACE 3
31	SPACE1		
32			
33			
34			
35			

Table 2: Fragmented structure of SpN1 and comparative length of its sections.

broke up and now they have resumed their affair. This space is broken into four fragments in lines 1–4, 12–15, 25–26, and 31–35 (a total of 123 words) and is, in Fauconnier and Turner’s (2002) terms, the *base space*, i.e., the space from which

all the others derive.² Space 2 presents the narrator's feelings on the relationship, her reasons to continue, her reasons for the break-up, and her impressions about the man's attitude. It consists of five segments in lines 5–11, 16–24, 27–30, 36–39, and 61–64 with a total of 242 words. Space 3 provides information on the man's wife: her behavior toward the narrator, her suspicions of her husband's affair, and the way she accepted the situation. It appears as the most compact one, as it goes from line 40 to 60. The closing words in line 65 can also be ascribed to this space, totaling 192 words.

Table 2 shows the fragmented nature of the narrative, as well as the different length of each story or space.

It must be noted that all these spaces do not have the same salience in the text. Observe that the base space, the one which contains the actual facts, is actually the shortest one, whereas space 2 almost doubles it. This feature evidences that much more attention is attracted toward space 2, i.e., toward the narrator's feelings, justifications, and reasoning, than to the referential events narrated. Besides, the fact that it is divided into five sub-spaces or segments means that the narrator continuously goes back to it and, as a consequence, this space is maintained in constant activation in the participants' minds throughout the narrative process.

It is quite straightforward that this division of spaces can be more fine-grained, and every space can be further divided into several sub-spaces embedded in these three main ones (see Figure 1). Thus, in space 1, for instance, there is a sub-space which contains information about the beginning of the relationship seventeen years ago (space 1.1), another one about the first stage of the affair (space 1.2), a third one about their breakup (space 1.3), and so on. In the same way, in space 2 it is possible to distinguish several sub-spaces: Miriam's first expectations about the relationship (space 2.1), the reasons why she wanted to break up (space 2.2), the reasons why she continued the relationship anyway (space 2.3), and the way she talked to him after her conversation with his wife (space 2.4). Also space 3 contains several embedded ones: What the wife is like (space 3.1), what the narrator feels toward her (space 3.2), the conversation they both had (space 3.3), which can in turn be further divided into several other spaces: The narrator's words (space 3.3a), the wife's words (space 3.3b), their actions and gestures as described by the narrator (space 3.3c), her impressions on that conversation (space 3.3d), and so on.

² This interpretation follows Fauconnier and Turner's model, which is the approach commonly applied to narratives (Dancygier 2008; Hougaard 2008; etc.). Note that Brandt's (2005) and Brandt and Brandt's (2005) semiotic theory of blending displays different kinds of mental spaces that interact for the final blending.

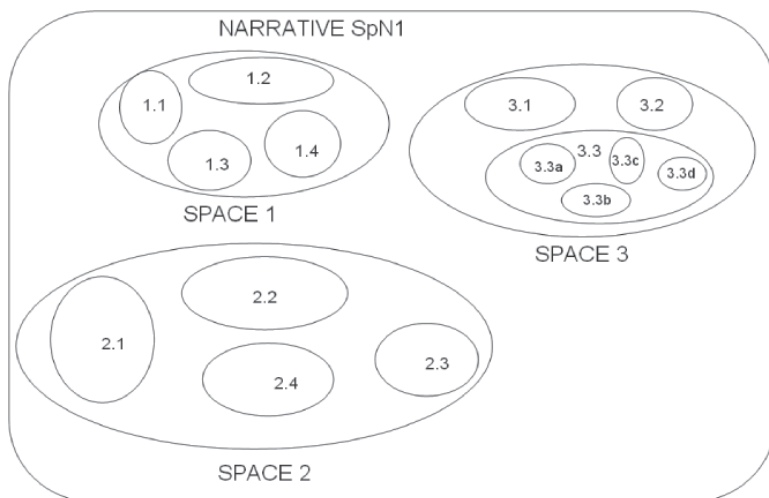


Fig. 1: Cluster of mental spaces that make up SpN1.

Given such an intricate network of spaces, different *space builders* are provided by the narrator in order to guide the listener through the different *mental* or *narrative spaces* created for the narrative. Thus, for instance, the openings of the *input narrative spaces* are usually strongly marked by both discourse markers (y ‘and’, *claro* ‘of course’, *pues* ‘well’, *porque* ‘because’ . . .) and other attentional markers such as breaths, clicks, or repairs. In SpN1, the narrative is first opened by a first-person pronoun *yo*, not necessary in Spanish but which serves as a *space builder* and as an attentional marker signaling that a story about the narrator herself is about to start. Then, there is a long pause, followed by a new start for the story, a canonical one setting the time when it all started (“this goes back to sixteen years ago”). The first fragment is then closed by another pragmatic marker, a click, in line 4 and resumed again in line 12 with a discourse marker that warns of a shift in the spaces, *pues* ‘well’. The next shift in line 16 is pragmatically marked by a change in the intonation and then space 1 is retrieved in line 25, as signaled both by markers (y, y *bueno* ‘and, and well’) and by the lexical item *la cosa* ‘the thing’ referring to the relationship, which is the topic in this space. The same item is used for the next retrieval in line 32, after answering the presenter’s question – “But was he still married?” in line 31 – finally closed in line 35 with a deep breath.

Also, in order to make the narrative fully coherent, several *anchors* are provided. Narrative anchors (Dancygier 2007) are concepts or ideas repeated in various narrative spaces that help the listener perceive how they all are connected

and how they can merge into a final, global blended space. Thus, in line 18 there is a first advance toward the idea underlying the whole narrative (“because I started to see what he was like”), and this idea emerges again in lines 27, 37, 49, and 65, but it is only fully explained in lines 27–30. As a matter of fact, the idea expressed by these lines, i.e., the man does not love her enough so as to leave his wife, is the motivation underlying the narrative, the reason why the woman calls the radio program and so, the listener’s attention is actually conducted to focus on it by scattering the idea through the whole story, so as to make sure it remains active during the whole narrative process. We could even say that the rest of the input narrative spaces are only contributing to explain this idea by adding some marginal information on the background, on the characters’ feelings, and so on.

Finally, for the blending of the spaces to be possible, a *generic space* is necessary, a space of reference that is not explicit in the discourse but which speaker and hearer share. It comprises information abstract enough to be common to all the input spaces, and which makes them meaningful and coherent, therefore helping to construct the output space of the blending. In narrative discourse, the generic space usually includes a sociocultural model that underlies the narrative and makes sense of the story. In SpN1, the generic space entails the common western cultural belief that “people can only be in love with one person at a time.” This model is projected onto every input space and so it explains the narrator’s confusion in her present situation, where she loves a man that already has a family and who is not willing to leave either his wife or terminate his relationship with the narrator. In addition to the abstract cultural information present in the generic space, each input space is also framed by its own more specific socio-cultural frames. Thus, input space 1 is linked to the common western belief that “relationships have beginnings and ends and these can be discontinuous.” In space 2 we find the frames “relationships with married men are usually short” and “people shouldn’t keep a relationship if they feel mistreated.” And input space 3 reflects the frame “people do not normally share their partners in a relationship.”

In short, in this approach, the structure of the narrative can be seen as being composed of (i) a cluster of three main *input narrative spaces* (plus several sub-spaces) that are built by the interlocutors in the interaction as the discourse unfolds, (ii) *narrative anchors* integrated in the spaces that serve as a link and provide the motivation underlying the story, (iii) distinct *space builders* that guide the listeners (and also the speaker herself through her emotions) and help them construct and link the spaces, and (iv) a *generic space* that is not made explicit in the narrative story but which is part of the common ground of the interlocutors and is the key for the final construction of the output space. The listener finally

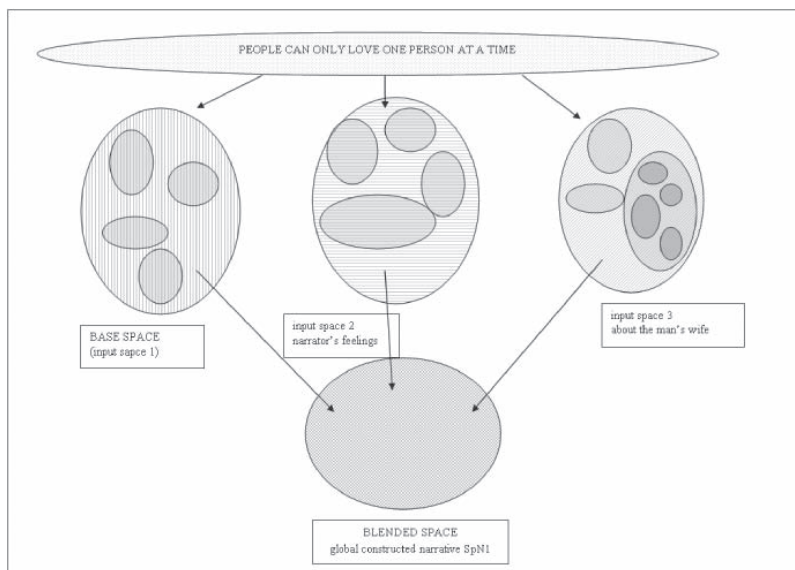


Fig. 2: Conceptual integration in SpN1.

puts together all these pieces in order to construct a global emergent space, where all the information provided by the input narrative spaces is compressed (Hougaard 2008) together with the shared cultural knowledge (Bernárdez 2008) that is needed for the interpretation of the narrative (see Figure 2). The final structure emerges, thus, by constructing a new entity which is unique to the blend.

5 Conclusions

In the highly emotional oral narratives analyzed in this paper, the main purpose for calling the radio program, what matters most is not the events being narrated, but rather the narrator's feelings and the need to share them. This purpose, together with the highly painful, intimate contents and the specificities of the contextual setting of the stories, are reflected in the linguistic and pragmatic devices used by the narrator, more specifically, in the structure of the narratives, that is, in their apparent chaos and temporal and causal nonlinearity. For this reason, the traditional Labovian model of narrative structural analysis is not enough to account for the overall structure of these texts. The highly fragmented structure of the emotional narratives analyzed calls for new, more flexible theoretical and methodological tools of analysis.

This paper shows that the understanding of emotional oral narratives can benefit from the theoretical concepts of MSCIT and socio-cognitive models of language and discourse. On the one hand, the tools of MSCIT have helped to explain the structure of the narratives as a dynamic and synergetic process, in which the different *narrative input spaces* continuously compete for the listener's attention by means of *space builders* or attentional markers which signal the shifts from one space to another, directing the hearer's attention through the apparent maze of spaces and subspaces. And, on the other, we have seen that it is the *shared* collection of *cultural* and *social beliefs* that enables their integration in a final global meaning.

In short, this study wishes to contribute to the “new” turn in narrative studies toward non-canonical or “small” stories, as well as to the idea that conceptual integration is a general and ubiquitous operation, central to language, discourse, and human thought.

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Appendix

SPN1: *Miriam está con un hombre casado* (Labovian segmentation)³

- 1 (OF) Yo . . . ,
- 2 (OR) esto se remonta a hace diecisiete años,
- 3 y es que me separé del padre de mi segundo hijo
- 4 y, y empecé una relación con una persona que estaba casada
(click).
- 5 (EE) Esa persona pues yo, en principio, pues pensaba que era el típico
¿no?,
- 6 que va a echar una cana al aire y, y adiós muy buenas.
- 7 (OR) Pero no fue el caso de que, de que
- 8 bueno pues nos eh nos fuimos enamorando
- 9 (IE) y, y como a mí me trataba bien,
- 10 me cuidaba y (click)
- 11 me, me sentía a gusto y feliz con él,
- 12 (OR) pues la cosa se fue prolongando a punto pues de que (click)
- 13 yo entré en la familia como una amiga,
- 14 luego como socia, montamos un negocio juntos
- 15 y así pues, eh, estuvimos doce años y, y doce años.

³ Narrations are presented in a structured format, roughly one idea and intonational unit per line. Key to symbols and other annotations: OF (offset); OR (orientation); EE (external evaluation); IE (internal evaluation); COM (complicating action); RAT (rationale); P (radio presenter).

- 16 *Los nueve, o sea, primero los tres primeros bien,*
 17 (IE) *pero a partir de los tres primeros yo ya me sentía mal,*
 18 *porque ya empecé a ver cómo era él*
 19 *y . . . pero bueno, yo seguí porque le quería mucho*
 20 *y, y, y tenía el medio del trabajo con él,*
 21 *me sentía un poco en la obligación de estar con él por, por el trabajo*
 22 *y porque le quería*
 23 *y porque me creía en, en la obligación de, de apoyarle,*
 24 *porque él también se había quedado sin trabajo.*
 25 (OR) *Y, y bueno, la cosa se prolongó pues hasta, hasta los doce años*
 26 *y, y de ahí, a partir de ahí ya decidí yo de cortar,*
 27 (IE) *porque ya no soportaba más (click),*
 28 *no maltrato psicológico,*
 29 *pero sí la desesperación de querer a una persona*
 30 *y no sentir que esa persona te quiere.*
 P: *PERO ¿ÉL SEGUÍA CASADO?*
 31 (COM) *Y sigue casado, y sigue casado.*
 32 *Y el tema es que después de (respiración profunda) separarnos ah eh*
 33 *pues otra vez volvimos a reencontrarnos (click)*
 34 *y de esto, de esto que te estoy hablando*
 35 *ya han pasado cinco años (respiración profunda)*
 36 (RAT) *y a día de hoy pues estoy pues hecha un lío,*
 37 (IE) *porque la sensación es que se,*
 38 (COM) *sigue en la misma línea eh (click).*
 39 *Aparte de que no quiere dejar a su mujer,*
 40 (IE) *y que yo tampoco quiero que la deje,*
 41 *porque yo a ella la quiero y la aprecio (puff)*
 42 *porque se ha portado muy bien conmigo,*
 43 *de hecho, yo sospecho que ella sospecha que, que estamos juntos.*
 44 (EE) *Lo que pasa que es una mujer que es una santa*
 45 *y no dice nada,*
 46 *y hemos eh, es que es así como una familia,*
 47 *porque igual yo me iba a su chalet con los, con mis hijos, con mi*
 48 *madre, con el perro.*
 49 *Y una familia en dos o dos familias en una.*
 50 (COM) *Pero claro eh me dijo que no.*
 51 *Y luego ya pues me dijo pues*
 52 *“no se ay yo es que estoy un poco con la mosca detrás de la oreja*
 53 *y quería preguntarte si te acuestas con mi marido” (click)*
 54 *Yo, la respuesta que le di pues fue tal y bueno pues,*

- 54 *sin decirnos mmm claramente las cosas pues mmm,*
 55 *nos lo dijimos todo con la mirada.*
 56 *Dice “tú ponte en mi lugar”*
 57 *Y digo “y tú en el mío”.*
 58 *Nos dimos un abrazo*
 59 *y ahí se quedó la cosa.*
 60 (EE) *Yo deduje que las pocas palabras sobran.*
 61 (COM) *Y, y cuando le, bajé abajo le dije a él*
 62 *“mira esto es lo que ha pasao”,*
 63 *digo, “si ahora cuando subas te dice algo,*
 64 *pues que sepas por dónde van los tiros”.*
 65 *Y no le dijo nada.*

P: GRACIAS. ¿ES TODO LO QUE NOS QUERÍAS CONTAR?

SPN1 *Miriam is with a married man* (English version)

- 1 I. . ,
 2 this goes back to sixteen years ago,
 3 and I separated from my second son’s father
 4 and, and, I started a relation with a person who was married (click).
 5 That person, well I, at first, well I thought he was the typical, no?
 6 that he was just going to have an affair and, and goodbye.
 7 But it wasn’t the case that, that
 8 well we eh we fell in love
 9 and, and as he treated me nicely,
 10 took care of me and (click)
 11 I, I felt fine and happy with him,
 12 well the relation went on to the point well that (click)
 13 I entered the family as a friend,
 14 later as a business partner, we started a business together
 15 and then well, eh, we were together for twelve years and, and twelve
 years.
 16 Nine, that is, first the first three good,
 17 but from the first three onwards I already felt bad,
 18 because I already started to see how he was,
 19 and . . . but well, I continued because I loved him very much
 20 and, and, and I shared my means of working with him,
 21 I felt a bit in the obligation of being with him for for my job
 22 and because I loved him
 23 and because I, I felt in the obligation of, of supporting him,
 24 because he had also lost his job.

25 And, and well, the thing went on well for, for twelve years
26 And, and from there, from there I already decided to cut,
27 because I couldn't bear it any longer (click),
28 not psychological abuse,
29 but yes the desperation of loving a person
30 and not feeling that this person loves you.

P: BUT WAS HE STILL MARRIED?

31 And he's still married, he's still married.
32 And the thing is that after (deep breath) separating ah, eh,
33 well we met again (click)
34 and this, this that I'm telling you
35 happened five years ago (deep breath)
36 and today, well, I'm well confused,
37 because the feeling is that he-,
38 continues in the same line eh (click).
39 Besides he doesn't want to leave his wife,
40 and I don't want him to leave her either,
41 because I love her and I appreciate her (puff),
42 because she has behaved very well with me,
43 in fact, I suspect that she suspects that, that we are together.
44 What happens is that she is a woman that is a saint
45 and doesn't say anything,
46 and we have, eh, it's like a family,
47 because I went to her country house with the, with my children, with my
mother, with the dog.
48 And, a family in two or two families in one.
49 But, of course, eh, she said to me no
50 and then well she said to me well
51 "I don't know oh, I'm a bit suspicious
52 and I wanted to ask you if you are sleeping with my husband" (click)
53 I, the answer I gave her was well that, and well that,
54 without saying clearly mmm things well mmm,
55 we told each other everything with our eyes.
56 She says "you stand in my place".
57 And I say "and you in mine".
58 We gave each other a hug
59 and things remained there.
60 I deduced that the few words were unnecessary.
61 And, and when I to him, when I went downstairs I told him
62 "look, this is what has happened",

- 63 I mean, “if now when you go upstairs she says something to you,
 64 well you need to know what it’s all about.
 65 And she didn’t say anything.

P: THANK YOU. IS THAT ALL YOU WANTED TO TELL US?

Bionotes

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