Emotions close up: The interview, learning biographies and the language of emotion[1]

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Abstract

The emotional dimensions of learning and narrative auto/biographies have been treated gingerly or simply glossed over in qualitative interviewing for decades. While the qualitative biographical and life story interview has achieved a considerable degree of sophistication and wide use, the aspect of the language of the narrator, in particular with regard to experiences of emotion, seems to be still too seldom considered from up close. This paper seeks to suggest reasons for adjusting this imbalance.

Emociones en primera fila: la entrevista, el aprendizaje de las biografías y el lenguaje de las emociones

Las dimensiones emocionales del aprendizaje y la narrativa auto / biografías han sido tratados con cautela o simplemente pasado por alto en las entrevistas cualitativas durante décadas. Mientras que la entrevista cualitativa historia biográfica y la vida ha alcanzado un grado considerable de uso sofisticación y variedad, el aspecto de la lengua del narrador, en particular con respecto a las experiencias de la emoción, parece estar aún muy poco considerado de cerca. En este trabajo se pretende sugerir razones para ajustar este desequilibrio.

Plumilla Educativa

Emotions close up

The emotional dimensions of learning and researching lives: a neglected species? Rather, long a gingerly avoided species, and, more recently, perhaps, an increasingly courted object of attention, flirted with, yet remaining stubbornly intractable. Certainly, one contributor to a collection of papers published more than a decade ago (Williamson 1996) could state belligerently that "There is a convenient de-humanising of 'the field', into respondents, subjects and cases, which fails to take account of the fact that 'data collection' involves very real human contact, which may be troublesome and confusing and can be quite disturbing" (Williamson 1996: 29).

Auto/biographical narratives of learning, indeed, unfolding in the interaction examined in qualitative interviews, are often troubled accounts of checks, disappointments, frustrations, or failure. Stories of learning, narratives of experience framed as threatening or challenging change, are emergent, evolving accounts of motives, motivations, of choices, renunciations, blockages *and* steps 'forward'. In these auto/biographical stories which we 'collect', the learning space is a space in which fresh stories, new attempts at coherence and security can be made, and in which such attempts are or seem to be encouraged. Yet, this learning space is simultaneously hedged in by the demands of the 'reflexive project of the self', which dictate a constant attention to the wholeness and suitability of the professional/personal/emotional biography. As Schulze remarks: "The horizons of what is on offer for the individual biography and for individual options are broadening all the time, but at the same time the discrepancies between possibility and ability and the danger of being unable to cope with them is growing too" (Schulze 2002: 43-44)[3].

Change and troubles, but new insights and rich *'incidents'*, too (Formenti 2006b, Guimaraes and Sancho 2006), are voiced and constructed in narratives borne up on rich 'grammars' of told experience. These are used to 'build the theories' that emerge as ongoing effective negative or positive biographies (Capps and Ochs 1995). The life told in the interview is flooded with meaning in contested language. In fact, given its potentially coercive, challenging, and threatening force, the interview is very much a *contested* field of talk.

Working in the field of narrative elicitation, is, in Coffey's terms, "personal identity work" and fieldwork is necessarily an embodied activity. This view sees sexualised bodies and bodies framed by contexts of control, regimentation and desire contesting the research space in the interview. The estranged participants in auto/biographical research are nevertheless communicating, "talking bodies", deploying the "interactional qualities and language of the body" (Coffey 1999: 59).

All biographical accounts and all accounts of biographical research are necessarily mediated by assumptions about the subject, by conventions for representing the self, as well as for characterising the research relationship (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Under what conditions, then, can more 'reliable', or 'authentic' stories, renderings, tellings, be told, heard and communicated to others? In the research space offered by the interview, how do we cope with complex auto/biographical talk, including emotional talk?

In answer to the questions posed above, what we may need in order to make sense of the interview and the emotional dimension of auto/biographic narratives is first, some kind of "imaginative empathy". Remembering and telling is a process of "painfully joining fragments together, within and across lives" and the researcher is part of this, West reminds us (West 1996).

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3   ["Der Horizont der biographischen Angebote und Entscheidungsmöglichkeiten wächst, damit aber auch die Diskrepanz zwischen Möglichkeit und Vermögen und die Gefahr der Überforderung."]

This researcher starts from the premise that emotionality and bodily experience are indeed fundamental in learning and research. 'Incidents' drawn from a single piece of research in which individual and shared 'grammars' of emotion and learning can be encountered 'at close quarters', so to speak, will therefore be examined in this paper. First, however, I will consider the theoretical and methodological adequacy of the interview as a space in which the emotional dimensions of learning and research can be questioned, chronicled and theorised. Close analysis of the *language of emotion*, heard in the research interview as locally co-constructed and constituting the sequential emergence of meaning, will be proposed as a fruitful approach to coping with the complexity of the auto/biographical interview.

Between realism and romanticism

The fundamental development in the development of qualitative research methods after the 2nd world war saw the concentration of research on some form of naturally produced (language) data and on the perspective of the research subject (for an excellent overview see Hoffmann-Riem 1994). Silverman divides qualitative interviewing - as opposed to natural data-driven interactivist research methodologies, such as Conversation Analysis (Silverman 1998), Discourse Analysis (Hepburn and Potter 2004) or conversation-driven analyses of institutional interaction (e.g. Drew and Heritage 1992) - taken as a whole into two opposing approaches depending on the manner in which data and/or interviewee are seen and treated – 'realist' and 'romanticist' (Silverman 2000: 122-125). According to this distinction, the 'realist' approach includes much of the traditional ethnographic school (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 124-156, Spradley 1979). This approach presumes that informants'

accounts give more or less direct access to reality outside the interview setting and seeks to limit researcher 'contamination' and bias to a minimum. Silverman contrasts this with the 'romanticist' direction which rather celebrates researcher and researched reflexivity, and, depending on the intellectual provenance of the work (e.g. feminist, post-modern), may see the validity of the interaction as culminating in mutual understanding or even deep emotional feeling. Powerful arguments in favour of the 'advocacy' of co-researchers' rights (Lather 1995), of 'intimacy and trust' in the interview relationship (Finch 1993), or calling for shared reflexive relationships and researcher reflexivity (Hertz 1997, Reinharz 1997, Reinharz and Chase 2002) are some of the openings originating in gender and feminist methodological practice. The 'active' ethnographic interview (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, 1997), with its sensitivity for reflexivity in interaction, problems such as authorial 'inscription' (Gubrium and Holstein 1999), and the central importance of topic, narrative and ethnographic life story detail, seeks to steer a middle way between the manipulative techniques it believes the 'realist' tradition to be guilty of and the excesses of hyper-reflexivity and emotionalism of some 'romanticist' or gender practitioners. Nevertheless, Gubrium and Holstein discuss with marked appreciation the potential achievements of an 'emotionalist' approach as exemplified by the work of Douglas and Johnson (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997: 64ff) and situate emotional fieldwork at the centre of open questions about representation of research subjects' expressions. Thus, within the field of broadly ethnographic interviewing a tension has long existed with regard to the status of 'respondent data' and to the researcher-research subject relationship which overwhelmingly favoured distant, 'uncontaminated' research relationships and emphasis of the 'other' lives under scrutiny (Coffey 1999: 115).

Narrative and life story interviews

The narrative and life story models originating in the work of William Labov (Labov 1999, Linde 1993, 2001, Schiffrin 1996) by contrast, are more specifically aimed at the employment of unstructured interviewing to explain biographical processes. The particular value of this development of narrative analysis within the interview in my view lies in their close study of linguistic devices and in their analysis of meaning-making (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997: 114) within the bounds of the interview interactive encounter and not exclusively 'outside', 'after' or 'beyond' the interaction. Central to this form of interview and analysis is the assumption that 'self' is created and recreated in the interaction of talk. The life stories in which self and identity are produced in a 'story-world' are "a pervasive form of text through which we construct, interpret, and share experience" (Schiffrin 1996: 167). Picking up on Labov's work, Schiffrin points out a basic set of structures: the *'abstract'*, *'orientation'*, *'temporal order of events'*, *'complicating action'*, and *'evaluation'* which make up the life story and give it structure and meaning (Schiffrin 1996: 168, Schiffrin 2006b: 19-20). An important process underlying the sorts of texts she is interested in here is 'verbalization'. Schiffrin claims that verbalization represents:

the way we symbolize, transform, and displace a stretch of experience from our past ... into linguistically represented episodes, events, processes, and states. (Schiffrin 1996: 168).

This process of verbalization of stretches of experience into a linguistic representation recognisable as an oral history or oral autobiography, is, according to Charlotte Linde, a process of creation of coherence in an individual's life story. "In order to exist in the social world" she maintains, "an individual needs to have a coherent, acceptable, and constantly revised life story" (Linde 1993: 3). Such a life story is created "by interweaving many linguistic and social levels" and serves to express our sense of self and as a means of communicating our sense of self to others and negotiating 'group membership' (1993: 219). Grounded as it is in "large scale systems of social understandings" (1993: 219), Linde stresses nevertheless the element of process and change inherent in the oral life history: "As a linguistic unit, the life story is a rather odd unit: it is temporally discontinuous; and at any given telling of one of its component parts, it is incomplete" (Linde 1993: 25). The linguistic practices involved in 'verbalization', 'coherence' and 'reference' (Schiffrin 2006a) are enacted and embedded in interactive 'turns' (e.g. shared conversation, response/answer, or different-sized narrative sequences within longer sequences of interactive talk). They are, therefore, *parts* only of a narrative interview. I will return to the significance of this further on.

The 'biographical-narrative' interview

Related, of course, to the narrative interview of Labovian origin, but wholly unique for its elaborate design and theoretical complexity is the German 'biographical-narrative interview'. Developed initially by Fritz Schütze in a series of dense methodological articles (Rosenthal 2004, Schütze 1976, 1977, 1981) it has been deployed by a generation of social scientists and educational researchers (Alheit 1983, 2002, Alheit et al. 1992, Alheit and Hoerning 1989, Dausien 1996, 2001, Hoffmann-Riem et al. 1994). With its strict attempt to reduce researcher bias to a minimum, by adhering to the essential tripartite data-generation springs of 'structuring' of a narrative (*Gestaltschließungzwang*), 'detailing' (*Detaillierungszwang*) and 'condensing' (*Kondensierungszwang*), Schütze's *'Stegreiferzählung'* ('impromptu narrative') owes as much to the rules of

Gricean speech act theory as to Harvey Sachs' development of Conversation Analysis (Schütze 1976, 1981). Schütze and other practitioners of the *Stegreiferzählung* share the same care for uncontaminated respondent data and careful monitoring of researcher influence.

The biographical-narrative interview aims to collect a life story, allowing the perspectives of the research subject to makes themselves heard, while at the same time permitting the researcher to generate a 'text' with the aid of which past experience of the interviewee can be reconstructed and "the latent and implicit structuring rules" of a subject's life processes can be discovered (Rosenthal 2004: 62). The biographical-narrative interview's attention to the 'processuality', 'perspectivity' and 'formedness'[4] (Dausien 1996: 109-111) of interaction and meaning-making across the dual [sic] axes of present narration and past experience attest to a sensitive understanding of the richness of narrative talk and its embeddedness and connectedness in and with lived experience, related lived experience, unlived life and present-time interpretation and presentation of subject-stories. Yet, in the collection and analysis of narrated lives, this interview model privileges the "explanation of the principles of construction of the subject's relationship to world and self"[5] and to this end concentrates its prime interest in the reproduction of the logic of the whole narrated life (Dausien 1996: 112, Rosenthal 2004: 62).

While interactional aspects of the talk – and this includes the narrator's emotions during the narration as a result of the 'reliving' in talk of past experiences (Rosenthal 2004: 53) – are included in the analysis of the narrative text resulting from the interview, they are accessory only to the "basic cognitive schemata" at work in the coupling of past action/ past cons-

ciousness (Dausien 1996: 112). Thus, the co-researcher's construction of meaning in the present, her conscious/unconscious choice of words to express her thoughts, memories and feelings are re-interpreted primarily in the light of their assumed reflection of the 'original' experiences they are thought to represent or reproduce. The co-researcher, the other 'talking body' in the interview, I would argue, recedes somewhat and pales in contrast to the weight given to the theoretical construct of 'relative narrative proximity' used to interpret the logic of told past experience (Rosenthal 2004: 53). True, as Bettina Dausien pertinently remarks, we cannot "consider narrated life stories simply as the sum of interaction sequences along a biographical time-axis, rather we have to consider the 'inner logic' of the reproduction process enacted in the autobiography"[6] (Dausien 1996: 106). However, for the 'other's' voice to be heard more clearly – if we take the research interview to be a site in which the emergent construction of meaning is taking place – and for that emerging voice to be perceived in its communicative, creative, emotional fullness, the 'action' completed at close quarters during the interview deserves a more central place than as a testing template for overarching meta-interpretations, to which I feel the biographic-narrative interview tends to relegate the dialogical interaction of the auto/biographic interview.

A research interview embedded in interaction and participant reflexivity

The insights into the particular linguistic structures developed in interview inte-

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4   I use this simple rendering of *Gestalthaftigkeit* to lend it some plausible ordinariness.

5   ["Explikation jener Konstruktionsprinzipien des subjektiven Welt- und Selbstbezugs"]

6   [Wir können die erzählten Lebensgeschichten also nicht einfach als Summation von Handlungssequenzen auf einer biographischer Zeitachse betrachten, sondern müssen die 'Eigenlogik' der autobiographischen Rekonstruktionsleistung berücksichtigen"]

ractions and conversation with particular regard to the development of interactive narrative forms (Mishler 2006, Schiffrin 1993, 1996, 2006b) provide a powerful analytical alternative to the 'representational' view of language, according to which the researcher can proceed analytically from 'words to world'. Examining at close quarters stories told in interaction tells us certainly something about the way in which experience is remembered and retold, but we can also look more closely at the way narratives "emerge from both knowledge and site of practice: how does a story actually reflect both our underlying narrative competence that lies in wait and the interactional contingencies in which talk is co-constructed?" (Schiffrin 2006b: 23).

Deborah Schiffrin notes how little we know about how experiences of various types are verbalised in our life stories. We know equally little, she argues, about "whether (or how) language will reflect the different sources of information that work their way into our stories." In order to understand told narratives more fully, then, "we need to examine the language through which we incorporate differently grounded pieces of our lives into a single narrative and the different facets of 'self' that are involved in doing so." (Schiffrin 2006b: 207).

Just as we cannot pass from 'words to world' and construct our analyses of social worlds on a one-to-one basis with the talk produced in an interview, we cannot pass from 'words to mind'. But we can see in the linguistic expressions used in interaction only once, or used repeatedly, the shifting elements of what Capps and Ochs, in their study of the linguistic construction of panic attacks by a sufferer of agoraphobia (Capps and Ochs 1995), call a "grammar" that is used in constructing and sharing relationships, identities, views. They use the term "grammar", they say, "to broadly cover how the teller puts words together in sequences (syntax), how words themselves are structured

(morphology), and the sound system (phonology) that speakers draw upon to make meaning. Grammar gives shape, colour, texture, and intensity to elements that make up the picture as a whole. It allows us to penetrate the construction of panic, stroke by stroke." (Capps and Ochs 1995: 52).

Grammar of experience

Here, then, is a selection from the 'grammatical topography' of the world view built up by the agoraphobia sufferer Meg (Capps and Ochs 1995: 57-77 and 186-191). I argue that this selection – which is expanded to include additional examples encountered in my own transcripts of interviews - can serve as an example of the linguistic resources we may expect to encounter in narratives of emotion, and in emotional narratives. The following examples are, of course, in this form only immediately valid for the British and North American branches of World English. For my own German-language transcripts I use equivalent linguistic resources identifiable in them. Other researchers are urged to consider what may be the forms of experiential grammar relevant in their own work.

a) abnormal states

1. Adverbs and adverbial phrases, describing the 'how' and the 'how much/how fast' of events, beliefs, emotions and notions. Such adverbials may be used to describe loss of control and abnormal circumstances.
The unexpected/the unaccountable/the sudden: e.g. "all of a sudden', 'unexpectedly', 'out of the blue'
2. Mental verbs facilitating internal dialogues, internal reflections, thoughts.
Heightened self-awareness, for example, appears as 'I became aware'. Silent self-communication may be formulated as: 'I remember thinking'. Internal dialogues might take the form of: 'I'll do that,

then I'll do the other thing', whereby the verb tense can make the difference between habitual, repeated 'would', to more urgent, intentional 'I will'.

3. Adverbs of place, used for situating the speaker in a place of comfort, safety, danger or emotion.

'Here', for instance, may have painful (or joyful) associations. What is denoted as 'here', however, clearly need not be the site of the narrative interaction. The shifts across both axes of time and place allow the 'here' in the narrative to be precisely set.

b) agency and helplessness

4. Choice of semantic role as agent or actor / helpless or victim. As Capps and Ochs point out (1995: 67), when an individual represents herself as "an experiencer" she uses her tacit knowledge of language to "modulate her prominence as a referent" in her speech. This colours her role in the narrative, empowering and positioning her voice as prominent. Here deixis, use of the first person, and use of personal pronouns (we, us) openly as well as possessives (my, your) fix the discourse on the narrator, the co-researcher and focus the narrative and the interaction. The switch to indirect object (me), the elision of the pronoun or the object totally by reverting to nominalized phrases ('the fear' or 'the joy' in place of 'I was afraid' or 'I was happy') is "a rhetorical strategy widely used by speakers of English to avoid mention of persons", implying de-emphasis of the personal (Capps and Ochs 1995: 69).

5. Diminshed agency can also be achieved through the use of verbs of necessity, which is also termed 'modality'. Stubbs defines modality as:

the ways in which language is used to encode meanings such as degrees of certainty and commitment, or alternatively vagueness and lack of commitment, personal beliefs versus generally accepted or taken for granted knowledge.

Such language functions to express group membership, as speakers adopt positions, express agreement or disagreement with others... (Stubbs 1996: 202).

Verbs such as 'got to', 'have to', 'can / can't' can be used to suggest obligation, impossibility, chance or opportunity. In the three short extracts I present below, the respondent Carola provides a number of interesting examples of modality used in the construction of narrative voice.

6. Hypothetical past constructions (such as 'if I wanted to', 'if I could have') can indicate lack of "volitional control over actions and emotions by talking about them as taking place in a hypothetical past world" (Capps and Ochs 1995: 70).

7. 'Try' constructions ('I was trying to', 'I tried' – but it was no use!) can be used to diminish agency or initiative, suggesting helplessness. Equally, the positive use would suggest determination, ambition, doggedness, etc.

8. Negation generally has an obvious overall effect on the shade and colour of a narrative.

9. Intensifiers (such as 'really', 'a lot of') and deintensifiers or hedging ('like', 'kind of/sort of', 'maybe', 'just'). Carola, below, layers her narrative, in fact, with approximations, hesitations, hedging qualifications and silences. This active negotiation of meaning through circumlocution is the site where the speakers' mutual relationship is established and where positions of certainty, necessity, opinion, belief and factuality are adopted. Anna Wierzbicka draws our attention to the cultural idiosyncrasy and semi-'untranslatability' of such hedging particles. While difficult to translate, they are, she points out, ubiquitous as "Their meaning is crucial to the interaction mediated by speech ..." and these meanings "are often remarkably complex" (Wierzbicka 1991: 341).

c) prosody

10. Emphatic stress, increased volume of speech, stretched or drawled sounds, raised pitch, repetition, halting delivery or hesitation and voice qualities (desperation, hope) are 'prosodic devices'. Prosodic effects in speech refer specifically to those 'staging' devices used to heighten the dramatic significance of utterances. They may include hyperbolic use of adverbs or quantifiers, vowel-lengthening and rising-falling tone as markers of indignation, surprise, etc., positive or negative affective marking of lexis, inclusive-exclusive use of direct or indirect speech. These prosodic elements of the speakers' discourse may aim to engender solidarity with the researcher or with absent others, to heighten interactional reciprocity as an approach to greater understanding, or alternatively to enhance the speaker's status or authority (Günthner 1997: 189-192). The use of prosodic hyperbole, emotive exaggeration, and intonation can function as vehicles of group cohesion.

In the interview extracts examined below, the researcher most decidedly was faced with 'unknowables' in the talk. Both parties negotiate their way around these 'gaps' in the biographical work, in a rite of unspoken constraints. Yet these very constraints are evidence of the joint work of the biographies, the telling and the told, the hearing and the interactive work of recognition. The field of narrative, is "personal identity work" (Coffey 1999: 40) and establishing field relations involves working rapports and trust, commitment and personal investment, genuineness and reciprocity (Coffey 1999: 39-42). The talk issuing in co-production from the participants in a biographic interview or indeed any situation in which the life-story in some form is told, is not a 'head thing', mental and intellectual, but very much embodied and mediated inter-relationally, physically, just as the physical also hinders and filters elements of understanding and recognition (Sieder 1999: 251-252). Carola, below, enacts an embodied narrative. Her talk enacts and envisions her social worlds, from the microcosms of her momentary emotions to her embeddedness in the issues confronting her as student, woman, young adult, German, etc. The many strands of her narration encompass her selves and her interlocking identity frames.

Carola[7]

Carola develops a narrative of change accompanied by impressive physical and prosodic presence. Her voice overcomes considerable barriers, and her narrative connects different worlds – the family, teenage sexuality, learning accomplishment and knowledge claims.

The transcription is given in both German and English, in order that the richness of the language used to give voice to her sense of transition and to surmount a complex web of narrative problems, starting with the difficulty of telling this story to the interviewer. The left hand columns of the transcript table provide information regarding her use of modal particles.

Her parents, as she related and as became increasingly central to her learning biography, possessed only basic school

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7   **Transcription Key**

The following markup is used in the interview transcript extracts below:

xx:: =	word-lengthening
(.)	Pauses (audible breaks in flow of speech)
(1.0)	Pause timed in seconds (to nearest second)
hh	Out-breaths/laughter
.hh	In-breaths
°xxx°°	Quiet speech
+xxx++	Rapid speech
(ESp)	Embedded speech = speech of others
(xxx)	Indistinct speech
Pro / MP	Prosodic device / Modality

education, her father a lathe-operator and her mother a housewife. Carola was the first in her family (she has one sister) to have any contact with the university. Carola left school at 16 to take an apprenticeship as an office clerk with the chemicals giant Bayer in Leverkusen, where her father was also employed. On completion of the apprenticeship, she stayed on at Bayer for three years.

In the following sample, seamless transitions between narrative and purportedly verbatim speech or internal speeches are given. The 'frivolous embedding' Goffman speaks of (Goffman 1981) seems effortless. Cardinal learning experiences are framed and re-constructed and inserted into an interview narrative, jumping any number of hurdles in time and place. The discourse of learning 'tapped' in each case establishes a sense of continuity of self or of understanding, and can be read as a moment of reflexion on the (narrated) present.

CAROLA: "I never thought about it"
Extract 1

1	CO:	ich hatte in der Realschule einen Durchschnitt von	in the secondary school I had an average of 3.5
2		drei komma fuenf war eigentlich sehr schlecht (.) und	was really pretty bad and I just couldn't be bothered
3	➔MP	ich hatte einfach keine Lust es war so ein Zwang	anymore it was just this pressure there that I had to
4	➔MP	da dass ich zur Schule gehen musste und ich hab	go to school and I just did nothing (.) I never thought
5		+einfach Nichts gemacht++ (.) ich hab dort nicht in	that I wasn't perhaps so stupid I thought more like
6	➔MP	Erwaegung gezogen dass ich vielleicht nicht dumm	<ESp>I can't do so much I'll do an apprenticeship I
7		bin ich dachte also eher so <ESp>ich kann nicht	didn't I never even thought ((bangs on table)) of going
8		so viel mache ich meine Lehre ich hab gar nicht	to a museum to the theatre or something like read a
9		mir kam es gar nicht in den Sinn ((bangs on table))	good book just didn't think of it
10	➔Esp	auch mal ins Museum zu gehen ins Theater zu	
11		gehen irgendwie ein gutes Buch zu lesen kam mir	
12		nicht in den Sinn	
13	➔Pro		
14			
15	➔MP		
16			

The flow of the narrative, which is prosodically driven by repeated modal devices (èMP) 'eigentlich'/'really', 'einfach'/'just', 'einfach'/'just', 'irgendwie'/'like' and by the affective table-banging (èPro), is enriched and warranted by the èESp insertion. The frame is shifted, Carola's position is asserted.

Reference has already been made to prosodic effects in speech. One passage from the data presents an interesting example of the dramatic staging of the speaker's position vis-à-vis an alternative - and opposed - order of discourse. Carola builds up a powerful frame of prosodic language in recounting the work involved in breaking out of her family's influence:

Carola: massive problems
Extract 2

1	CO:	ich hatte drei Wochen massive Probleme aber (.)	I had really massive problems for three weeks but (.)
2		meine Mutter hat nie mit mir darueber gesprochen	my mother never talked to me about it never asked me
3		mich nie gefragt <ESp>was ist? sie hat gesehen wie	<Esp>what's the matter? she could see what I looked
4		ich ausgesehen habe (.) aber es gab nur halt die	like::: (.) but all she was worried about was (.) always
5	➔1	Sorge so (.) immer das Essen und weil man irgendwie	just food and because somehow it just wasn't possible
6		ueber Gefuehle und dergleichen nicht ((strikes table))	to speak about feelings and things like that ((strikes
7		reden konnte (.) auch nicht ((strikes table)) ueber	table)) (.) not even ((strikes table)) in any way even
8		irgendwie das Befinden (.) gar {nicht	about how you feel (.) absolutely nothing
9			
10	➔2		
11			
12	➔3		
13			
14			
15	R:	mhmm}	
16	CO:	=und deswegen ist es bei meinen Eltern halt so es	and that's why with my parents it's just like it is
17		muss einfach alles geordnet sein (.) die Nachbarn	everything has to have its place::: (.) the neighbours
18		((strikes table)) die muessen denken ((strikes table))	((strikes table)) they've got to think ((strikes table)) that
19	➔4	dass alles ok ist (.) man muss gepflegt aussehen (1.0)	everything's just fine (.) you've got to look smart (1.0)
20	➔5	und Geld ist sehr wichtig (.) kann man sich Essen	and money is really important (.) you can buy yourself
21		kaufen und Kleidung (.) und ein Auto (.) {es sehen	food and clothes (.) and a car (.) {the neighbours see
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27	R:	(???)}	
28	CO:	=doch auch die Nachbarn und uhm es ist einfach ein	everything and uhm uhm it's just a system of things
29	➔6	System was ich (1.0) eigentlich was ich sekundaer	that I (1.0) I think it's really not important
30		finde	
31			

Carola here employs a thick web of modal adverbs ('halt', 'eigentlich'/'kind of', 'actually') and moves through hesitations and an obvious search for the 'texture' of the complaints still in her ears to a damning (and accomplishedly rhetorical) list of commandments punctuated by her peremptory emotional raps on the table top (made loud by a mass of heavy rings) which provide a percussionary accompaniment to the telling (è2-5). She completes this biographized vignette with a personal crescendo of triumph and self-confirmation (è6). Interestingly, atè1 she proposes the parental concern and interest that never came in the form of an imagined utterance, another fascinating employment of layer-ing and laminating. Context is created and potential discourse is roughed in.

In the next Extract, Carola fills out the negative picture of her home and family life and its role in hindering her development and ultimately its place in her learning and personal achievement with the help of emphatic table banging (è1, è3). More importantly, at è2 Carola searches for a formulation for her own conception of values and aims to confront the affectively difficult one left imprinted in her talk by the home. She finds her way to this at è2 with the long drawn-out resolution ('wie wie wie'/'like like like') of finishing something you start ('durchgezogen wie wie wie man

einfach alles zu Ende fuehrt'/finshed like like like you simply finish things'). Like she will finish her studies, too, she asserts. This is a significant use of affective marking to establish an own – hard-won – learning discourse and she leaves no doubt about its importance for her.

Carola: "I just did it"
Extract 3

1	R:	ja aber wenn man dann Geld fuer Buecher von Sartre	yeah, but if you go and spend money on books by
2		oder so was ausgibt	Sartre or the like ...
3			
4	CO:	das ist Unsinn (.) das ist Unsinn (.) ich kann mich	but that's rubbish (.) that's rubbish (.) I can remember
5		daran erinnern dass (.) wenn ein Buch von mir	(.) when a book of mine lay on the floor in my bedroom
6		im Zimmer vor meinem Bett lag da wurde ich	I used to get screamed at because (.) uhm nothing
7		angeschrieen weil (.) uhm es darf nichts rumliegen	was allowed to lie around on the floor (.) not even a
8		(.) es darf auch kein Buch [strikes table] vor dem Bett	book was allowed [bangs table] to lie next to the bed
9		liegen was man liest oder so was (.) weiss ich nicht	if you're reading it or anything like that (.) I don't know
10		es war (.) so dass meine Eltern haben auch nicht so	it was (.) my parents never really read that much like
11	➜1	viel gelesen wie es	
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17	R:	{ok aber es	ok but that is
18	CO:	wurde also so}	so it was like that
19	CO:	ich hab' das einfach ich hab' das einfach (.)	I just I just (.) did it like like like you just finish something
20		durchgezogen wie wie wie man einfach alles zu Ende	you've started exactly like the way I going to finish my
21	➜2	fuehrt was man angefangen hat genauso wie ich	business admin degree [bangs table]
22		jetzt mein Wiwistudium auch beende ((strikes table))	
23			
24			
25	➜3		

Voice and evoking different selves: the teller and the told

Apart from methodological and analytical problems associated with the presentation of data and the selective illustration from transcripts of this kind, the very plurilingual conduct of the research relationship, casual communications, written data and interviews guarantees a thick layer of linguistic detail enriching and complicating the research description proper. Plurilingual elements are present from the moment the dialogue is taken up, and linguistic routines and lexical-syntactic choices are inevitably influenced by the presence of the other(s). The voice of the researcher, pregnant with intentions and in the process of formulating successive questions mixes with the various timbres of respondents, each one a voice coping with the risk of the unknown in the interview situation.

In its textual form, Carola's pithy, vehement story of achievement in a difficult family and learning environment leaps from the printed page, so full it is with the creative energy of a story unfolding against the normal grain of relationships. The proof of this was experienced shortly after,

when she participated in a joint-interview with another student, male, quieter than she, exuding gravitas (Evans 2004: 179). This second time she appeared deflated, her voice reduced, her prosodic energy toned down from table-rapping to indecisive puffing.

Emotions and the narrative

Emotions are present in the interview used here. Much of the emotion felt is suppressed, controlled, redirected, repaired and deflected. Little or none of the emotion evident in the short extracts I have used here was referred to or acknowledged on its happening. And yet the language employed by Carola as well as her table rapping - all of these evocations of difficulty and trouble are hearable and analysable in their sequential unfolding. As much as we must recognise the presence of emotions in interview situations, it is equally important to understand their anomalous character, their dangers, even. Certainly, the room for emotion was no less difficult in the field relationship with the student Carola. The interview site was partly neutral, yet invested with institutional authority (a vacant Professor's office). Emotions, or even a suspicion of them, behind closed doors and between a teacher and his student, are threatening, for both parties.

Embodiment and the subject

Interview participants invariably experience the beginning, at least, of a long interview as difficult, threatening, even, and normally adjust to this anomalous situation in the process of 'learning the ropes', one might say. That is, narratives are started, false starts are coped with and sequential turns follow one another. The experience, on the face of it, remains highly individual. Yet the narratives, the talk issuing in co-production from these 'talking bodies', is complex, layered,

referential, rich in connotation and inference (Formenti 2006a: 24-27, see also Koller 2002) and invariably plurivocal. Formenti, in fact, characterises such shared interaction as a dance: "made up of actions, words, intellectual moves, emotions …" (Formenti 2006a: 29).[8] Researcher and respondents, in this view, are engaged in a dialogic voicing of their mutual change process. Each is filled or "flooded" with the dialogue(s) of/with others, of the near and distant contexts in which the narrated lives are embedded, discursively, temporally, locally/globally.

What, it is legitimate to ask, does such an extensive micro-analysis of language in talk contribute to our understanding of the biographical narrative?

As a research methodology, the understanding of discursive-auto/biographical interviewing as a branch of qualitative research assumes that the autobiographical research interview is interactive, co-constructed, flooded with inter-textuality, and that it constructs and constitutes local action and meaning-making. It contributes to the construction in situ, of social reality.

As a method it lays bare the turn by turn shared construction of selves and identities (i.e. how dialogic and interactive individuals make meaning of themselves, make themselves understood, and are made understandable by the joint process of 'experiencing othered-experience' (see Luckmann 1981). The detail at the micro level serves to document openly how this meaning making takes place, how this is affected by group belonging, ethnic or cultural discourses (Pavlenko 2007, Wierzbicka 2003), gender, age, professional and educational positioning, and so on. The detail won in the close analysis is generalizable over the length of a complete biographical narrative, and generalizable to potential other narratives and talk of the same person(s). The analysis, docu-

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8   ["fatta di azioni, parole, mosse cognitive, emozioni"]

mented and directly linked to the transcript, is falsifiable, as is the interview transcript and the theoretical and practical criteria drawn upon in its making (Ochs 1979, Wengraf 2001).

This is arguably not the case with extensive theoretical interpretations which are developed beyond the 'text'. While in such cases the interest is centred on the force behind the theoretical analysis, here, with detailed linguistic-discursive analysis of the life-story, the focus is directed to the culturally-known and socially-embedded parameters of meaning-making in spoken interaction. The strong argument of the 'objective' approach (Bertaux 2005, Bourdieu 1993, Schütze 1981, Wengraf 2001) that the emergent-contingent language of the interview interaction - the 'told life' - attains generalizability only through comparison and contrast with the 'lived life', runs the risk of reducing the processus of narrative parts of a biographical-narrative interview to an informational mask against which the 'content' of a life course is compared. Protagonists of this approach mention the language in passing, to move on effortlessly to the second order analysis of the social significance of the biographical narrative as a whole[9].

We have considered the argument above that simply because all interaction is observably made up of innumerable 'bits' of language-mediated communication that does not mean we must, or can, consider every single one (Dausien 1996). Our conclusion was, it will be recalled, that the recognition of the processual nature of interaction is useful and productive in our sense; the statement that not all examples of interaction can be taken into account is evidently true; but to draw the conclusion from this that the mass of individual bits or their sum is therefore secondary to an act of generalization which passes over the detail of the interaction in order to achieve a higher order of abstraction based on meta-analysis seems problematic.

In any case, a black and white choice between objectifying, generalizing approaches and over-particular micro analyses for the analysis and interpretation of life history data is not really the point at issue. Just as a total biographical life story cannot be collected (Bertaux 2005), neither realistically (nor usefully) can one single narrative be totally analysed for every detail of the language use. Indeed there would be little point is such an exercise, precisely because of the massive repetition that must be expected. This is the vindication of applying the discursive-linguistic approach to parts of the told life story. Language phenomena found in one part of the biographical account will be encountered elsewhere.

This, then, is the point at issue. The detailed linguistic analysis of parts of a biographical narrative provides evidence of the local construction of social action. Further, the comparison of specific language phenomena across the whole told life (i.e. the whole current narrative) with phenomena observed in other narratives (same or other narrators), i.e. a corpus–based approach (Bauer and Aarts 2000, Evans 2004), is able to provide documented, generalizable and falsifiable data relative to potentially large cohorts. Lives, and the communicated, languaged, form their telling takes, are observable and understandable.

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9 Bourdieu's massive Misère du monde (Bourdieu 1993) is a case in point. The interview texts are literary artefacts, very far removed from the first order phenomena of the actual interviews. The interview artefacts are not falsifiable as examples of spoken language, i.e. (some kind of) naturally occurring talk. The linguistic characteristics of the told life are not documented. However, it may be unfair to judge the Misère by the criteria we are adopting here. The massive work is, as Bertaux rightly says, an example of the presentation of narrative-biographical data with the aim of providing a large canvas of social life (Bertaux 2005).

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