*What’s on the list? An evaluation strategy in Gun-nartpa narrative discourse*

In this paper I discuss evaluative strategies within the narrative practices of Gun‑nartpa people, a Gu-jingarliya speaking network of local clan groups resident in north-central Arnhem Land, Australia. As noted by Blythe (2011), most linguistic studies of narrative in Australia have focused on formal elicited narratives, drawing upon on such narratives as data for grammatical description and discourse analysis. They rarely investigate the ways in which narrative discourse is socially situated, how it is interwoven with other discourse formats nor the social meanings of different components of narrative discourse (however see Blythe 2009, 2011; Green 2014; Klapproth 2004). This is despite the overt orientation that Indigenous societies in northern Australia have towards the importance of story telling in political oratory (Clunies-Ross 1983; Gurrmanamana et al. 2002), the socialisation of young people (Etherington 2006) and the construction of identity (Carew in prep; Morphy 1990).

I employ a broad definition of narrative and situate it as part of everyday communication practices (Ochs & Capp 2001). Narrative discourse is organised in terms of temporal and/or spatial succession of episodes (Hoffmann 2015) and an orientation towards agents where, at least in part, the identity of agents persists throughout discourse (Longacre 1983). Narrative discourse is also associated with the notion of narrative peaks or highpoints. These are marked episodes that correspond to climaxes in the “notional structure” of a story (Longacre 1983:24) and which are given prominence by a range of evaluative strategies (Margetts 2015; Polanyi 1985). Evaluative prominence is central to the notion of narrative as social practice. In developing cognitive worlds and cultural schemas, mediated as they are through narrative practice, “evaluation allows the story recipients to build up a model of the relevant information in the text which matches the teller’s intentions” (Polanyi 1985:13). Prominence is given to evaluative episodes in narrative through a range of rhetorical markings and strategies, that include reported speech, sound symbolism, code-switching and the clustering of participants, events and evaluative devices at narrative highpoints (Longacre 1983).

I focus on *listing* as one significant means of evaluation that occurs across various contexts of narrative performance (Clunies-Ross 1983). Listing sequences are clearly bracketed away from surrounding discourse through distinctive prosody. Globally the pitch of list items is raised, each item is prosodically separate, and the intonational contour is rising. Syllables are accented, and a strong emphasis placed on the final syllable of prosodic units. In affect-laden listing episodes people list items that are highly culturally valued and listing intonation can take on a distinctive rhythm and voice quality. Listing is usually displaced from participant and action-based narrative highpoints, and on a surface level may seem marginal to the narrative. However, through listing tellers cue the relationality that pertains between items of cultural value, people and events, establishing coherence in the framing of the storyworld within the wider social context and revealing relationships that may not be otherwise apparent. In this respect we can see that lists often index meanings that are central to the notional structure or schema that underpins the narrative (Klapproth 2004; Longacre 1983). In particular, listing is a strategy that validates constructs of identity, such as kin and country-based relationships, and the authority of senior people in establishing consensus. Listing, among other evaluative strategies deployed in narrative performance, is central to the everyday interactional discourse of Gun‑nartpa people, where assertions of rights and connections and the listing of signifiers of belonging is common practice. The distinctive form that listing takes are central indices of the local concepts *janguny* ‘story’ and *joborr* ‘law’; both which are underpinned by socially based negotiations of the meaning of the complex sets of signifiers that construct belonging as authentic, ethical and real in a changing world (Carew in prep).

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