



Thank you for trying to articulate the terms of your affection, but you are using confused gender, your participle is dangling and your superlative is "like, totally" infantile.

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# Language Shapes Realities

**You won't believe what happened...**

# What We Saw Last Week

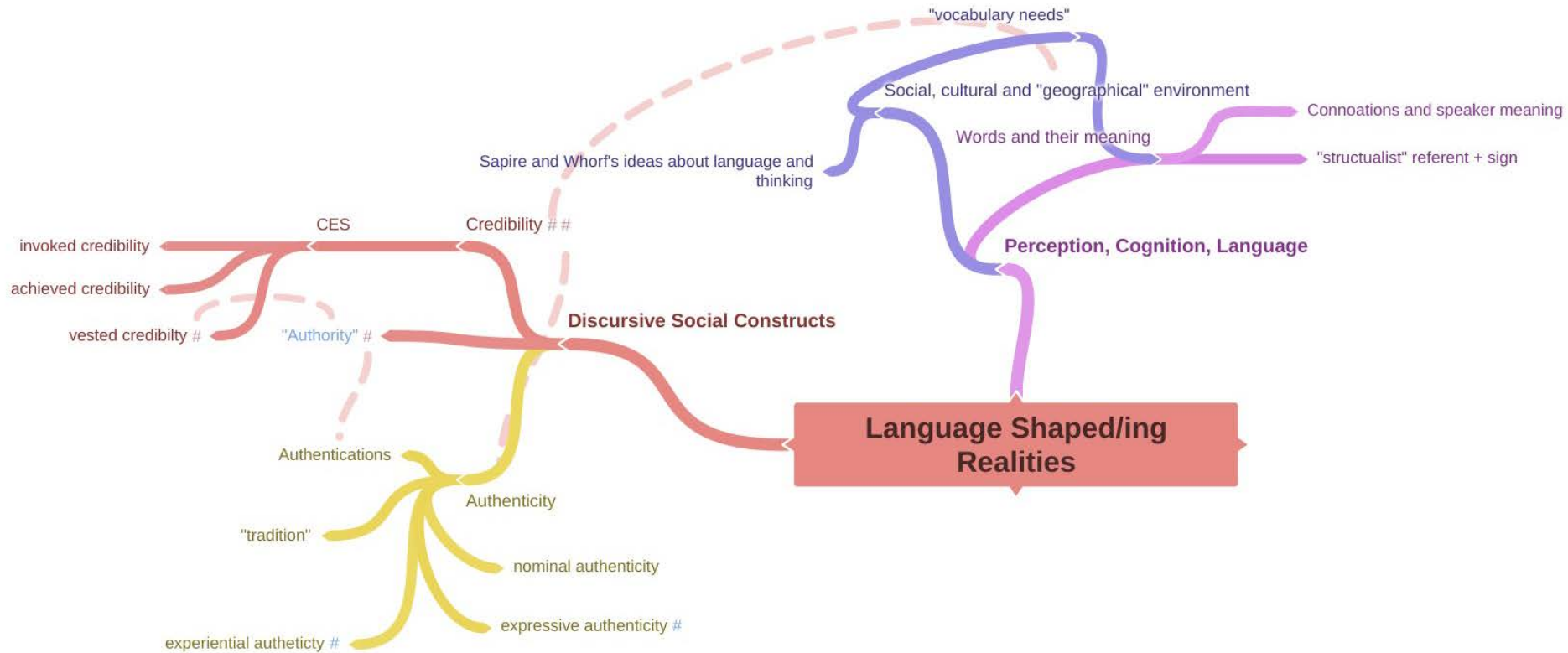
- we explored what can/can't be considered “authentic”
- developed an insight into the process of “authentication”
- considered the notions of tradition (and nostalgia) as justification of the “present”
- saw authenticity as a social construct
- discussed authenticity over time and as different types (nominal / expressive / experiential)
- identified authenticity (like credibility) as discursively constructed
- noted performances to be co-constructed with the audience

# A Bit of Context...

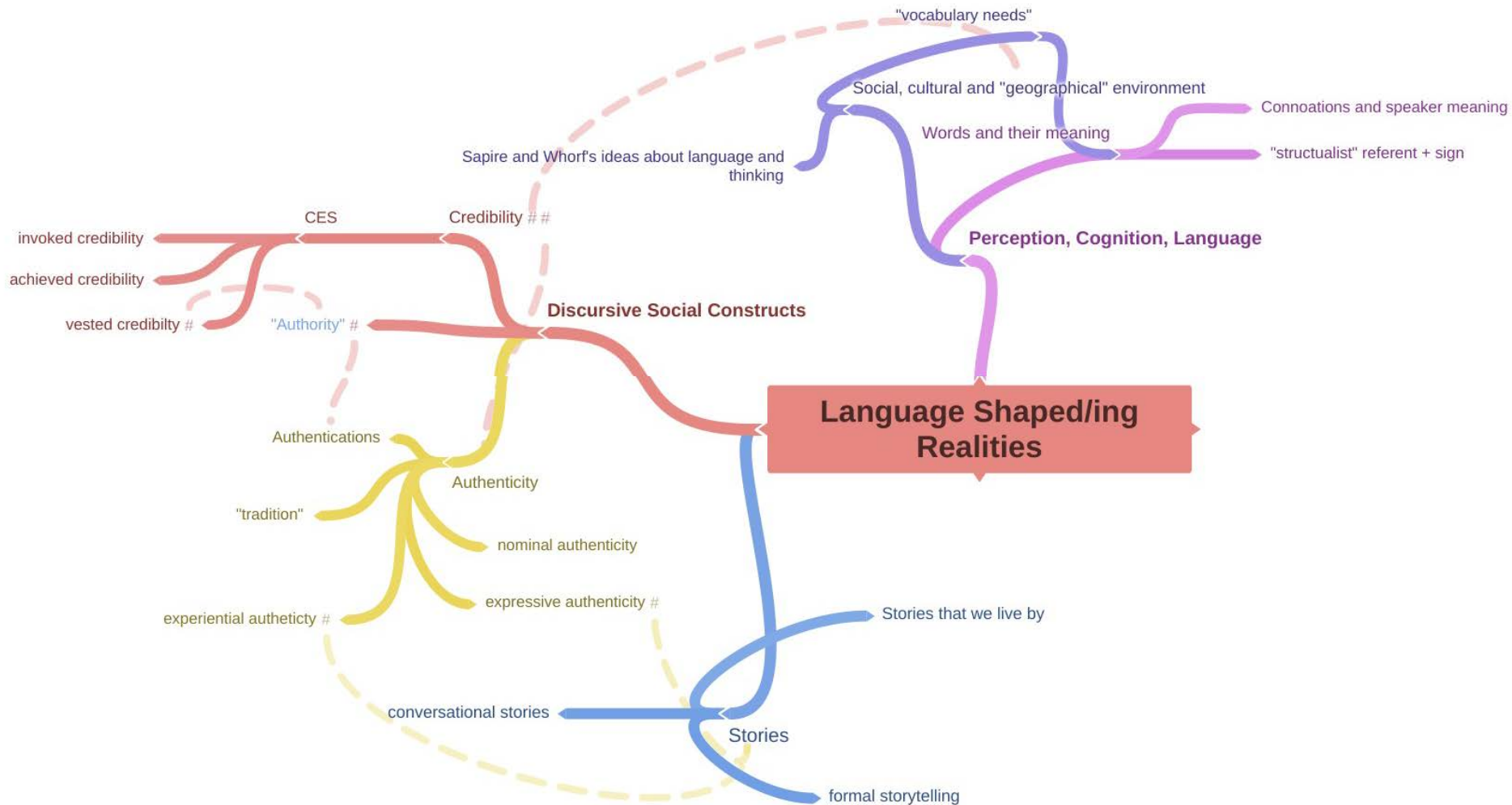
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# So What's Next



# The Plan for Today

- How we tell stories in conversation
- What stories do
- What is the role of facts and truth – or fiction
- Elements of conversational stories
- How telling stories is “staged”
- What about the listeners?

So let me tell you a story...

**An example**

# JEWISH HUMOR

**W**hat the Best Jewish Jokes  
Say About the Jews

R A B B I J O S E P H  
TELUSHKIN

AUTHOR OF *JEWISH LITERACY*





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Being obsessed with wealth makes you lose sight of fellow human beings.



© FAM





# What does the story do

## The story

- introduces two protagonists
- defines a situation
- recounts a sequence of events
- has a clearly defined ending
- entertains
- makes a point (it educates)
- may be mildly amusing

# What I just did

## As the teller of the story, I

- made a claim to the ‘floor’
- signalled that what follows was ‘out of the ordinary’
- recounted a story found somewhere
- told the story for a purpose
- attempted to make the story relevant
  - offered my telling up for evaluation
  - extracted a ‘moral of the story’
- (relinquished the ‘floor’)

# Why stories?

**functions and uses of stories**

# What do we use stories for?

- passing on information
- imparting morals and beliefs
- didactic structuring of facts
- making sense of events
- projecting a self/selves
- sharing memories
- entertainment
- keeping traditions alive
- conducting rituals
- therapy and healing

**community  
bonding**

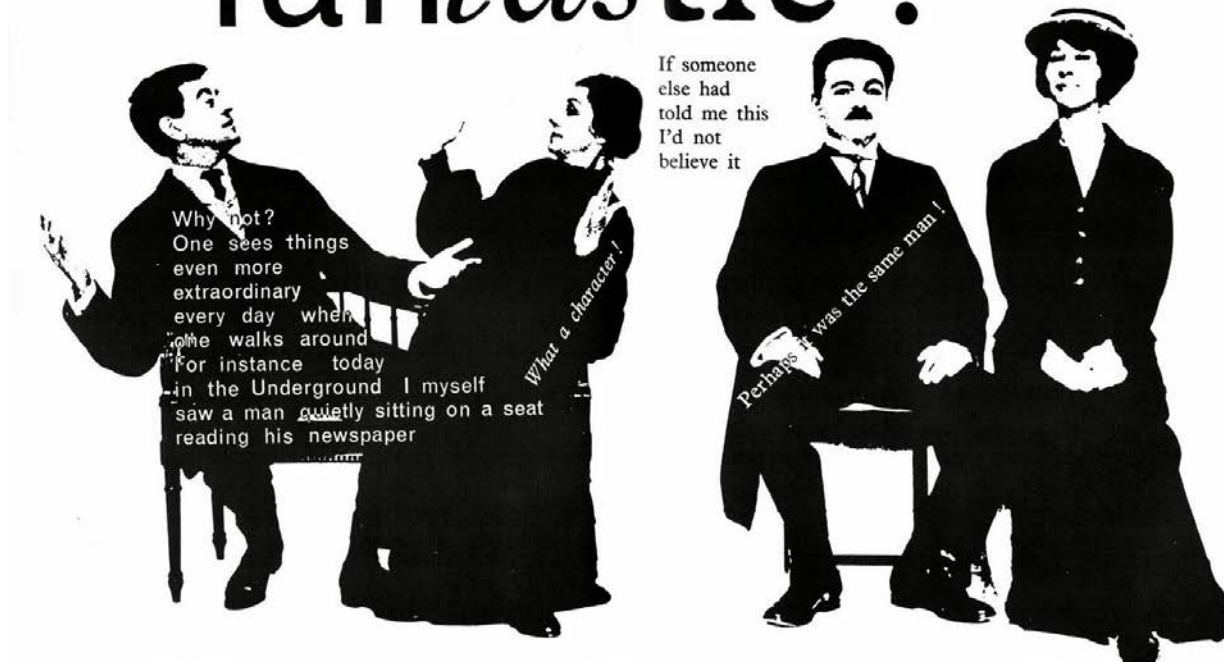
# Fact, Truth, Fiction

Selection of elements told

Extended claim to the floor

→ make it worth the audience's while

# *fantastic!*



# Fact, Truth, Fiction ctd.

- Selection of elements told
- Extended claim to the floor
  - make it worth the audience's while
- **a quandary:** 'The fundamental dynamics of narrative construction are built on the inverse relationship between **reportability** and **credibility**:

**the more reportable an event, the less credible.'** (Labov 2010:8)

**Truth?**



**The parts making up the sum**

**compositions of stories**

# Structuring Narratives a)

1. Abstract

**A**

2. Orientation

**O**

3. Complicating action / Complication

**Cp**

4. Evaluation

**E**

5. Result

**R**

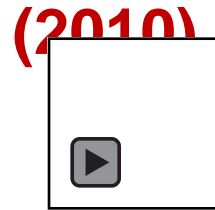
6. Coda

**Co**

**Labov and Waletzky 1967**

# Structuring events of a narrative

## Labov's 'Where Should I Begin'



$e_{-n}$  it's mainly to do with language I think

### 'Most Reportable Event'? (MRE)

$e_{-2}$  so I got my husband to do it

$e_{-1}$  so he said "OK"

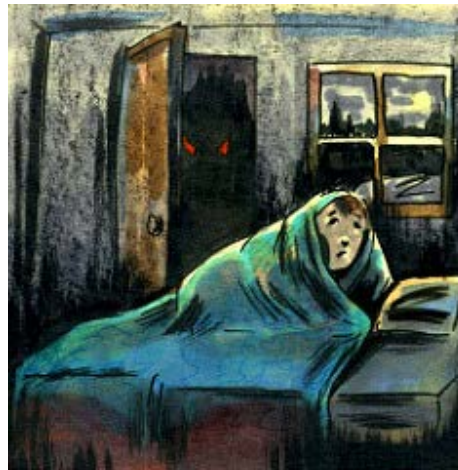
$e_0$  'he made one phone call . and he got the mortgage just like that [dental click, intake of breath]

# Some questions



punchline

$e_0?$



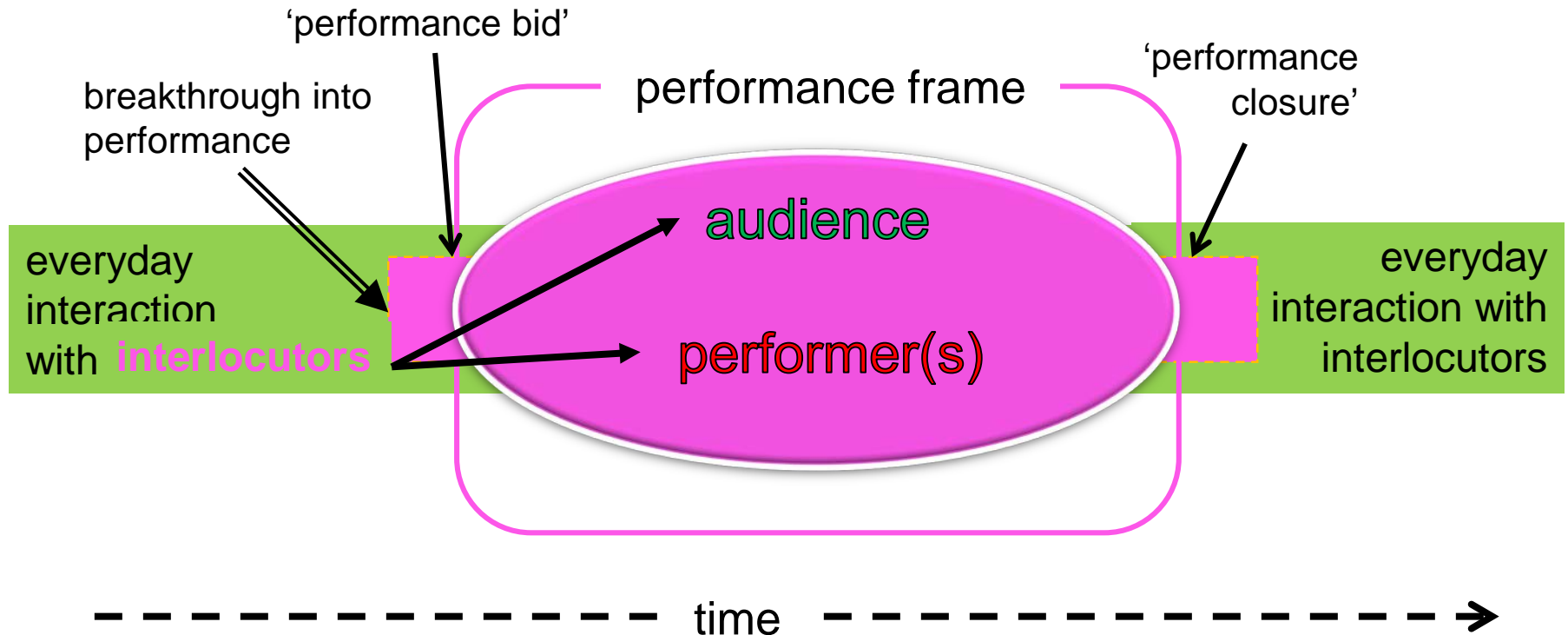
$e_0?$



# ‘Staging’ stories

**how stories are performed**

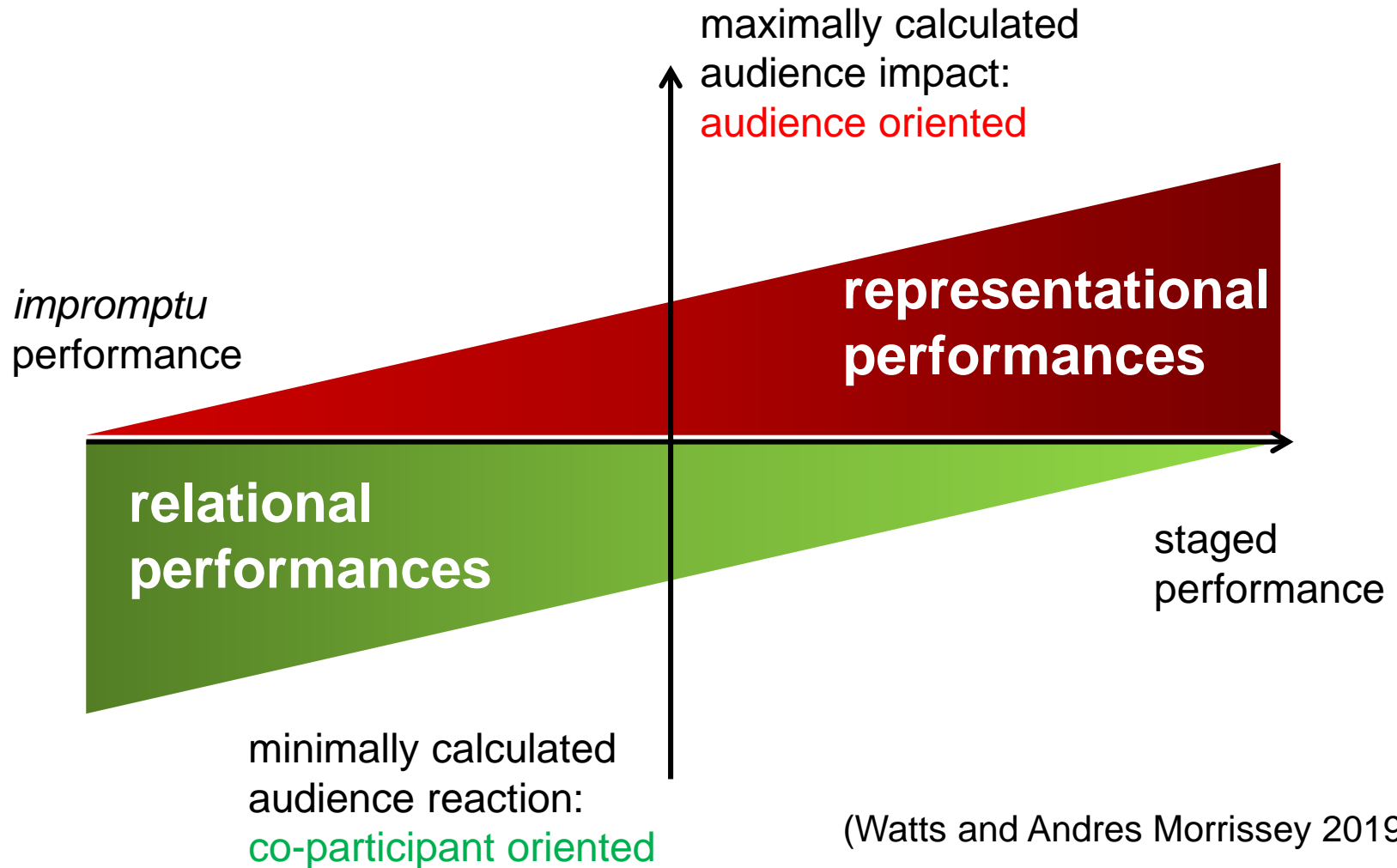
# Staging performance



**Framing (keying in and out) → ritualistic**



# Revisiting types of performance



(Watts and Andres Morrissey 2019)

## Keying in (performance bid)

You **wouldn't believe** what happened to me...

Oh well, today I witnessed **something extraordinary**. Something **really incredible**. (Eunesco)

It is really **too much**...

Wanna hear **a bit of gossip**...

Have you heard **the one about the X**

**Once upon a time** there was

**As I roved out** one midsummer morning

**impromptu,  
conversational  
relational**

**(increasingly)  
staged  
representational**

## and keying out (performance closure)

Incredible, huh?

You couldn't make this stuff up, right?

I'm never gonna try that again, I tell you

Don't tell anyone I told you ...

This is strictly between you and me...

and they lived happily ever after.

There's a little bottle, sitting on the shelf

and if you want any more, you gotta sing it yourself.

**Coda**

**Co-construction**

# Stories and context

## conversation and co-construction

# A few observations

## Telling a story

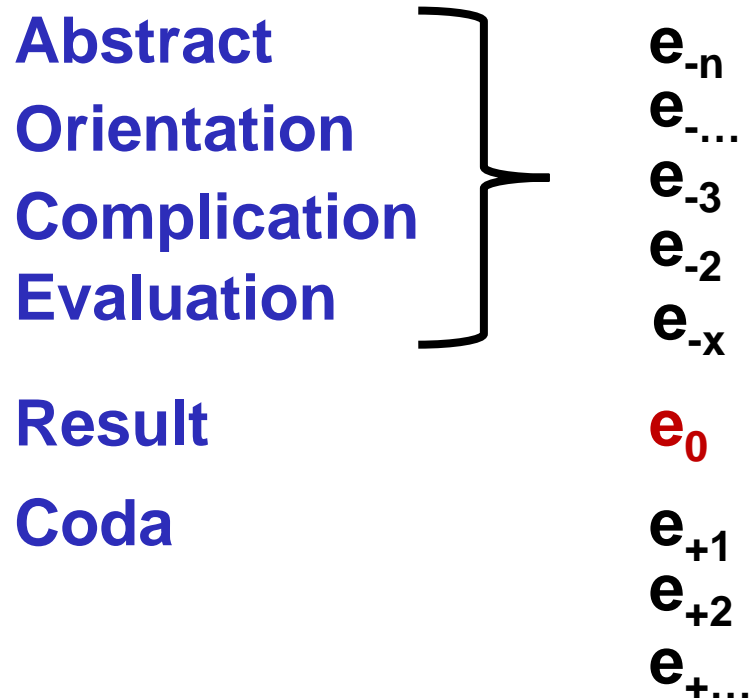
- requires a teller and listeners/a listener
- is embedded in interaction
- is not a one-way process  
→ negotiated / co-constructed
- is framed (keyed in and keyed out)
- follows ‘conventions’
- presupposes a degree of
  - staging
  - register
  - → preparation

**dialogic**

**ritualistic**

**‘marked’**

# Labov (and Waletzky's) focus





# Extensions to the model

(‘unmarked’) conversational interaction

Keying in

but →

audience  
involvement

Abstract

Orientation

Narrative events

Complication

Evaluation

$e_{-n}$

$e_{-...}$

$e_{-3}$

$e_{-2}$

$e_{-1}$

Result

$e_0$

Coda

$e_{+1}$

$e_{+...}$

Keying out

(‘unmarked’) conversational interaction

# Conversational organisation

As the teller of the story, I

- made a claim to the 'floor'
- signalled that what follows was 'out of the ordinary'
- recounted a story found somewhere
- told the story for a purpose
- attempted to make the story relevant
  - offered my telling up for evaluation
  - extracted a 'moral of the story'
- (relinquished the 'floor')

rationale for  
claiming the floor

possible need for  
face-threat mitigation

topic(s) opening  
for new claim  
to the floor

That reminds me of a similar story

I know exactly what you mean ...

Funny you should say that.

Yep, been there ...

The same thing happened to ...

# Serial punning

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## 1 PING-PONG PUNNING

A domestic sitting-room. Evening. Janet and John are in the middle of a conversation with Peter and Jane. Janet is telling a story about what happened when their respective cats met in the street.

JANET: . . . And so there was a sort of confrontation between Crumble and Splash –

JANE: Catfrontation, you mean. (*Laughs.*)

JANET: Well, all right, catfrontation, if you insist – and they stood by the –

PETER: Near cat-astrophe, if you ask me. (*Groans all round.*)

JANET: I wasn't asking you, Peter!

PETER: Sorry, I didn't mean to be categorical. (*More groans all round.*)

JANE: This sounds like it's becoming a catalogue of disasters. (*Peals of laughter.*)

PETER: I don't think John approves of all this jocularly, when Janet's trying to tell us a perfectly serious story.

JANE: You know what John's being, though, don't you.

JANET: What?

JANE: A catalyst! (*More laughter all round.*)

PETER: I thought that was what happened to moggies when they'd drunk too much. (*Further groans.*)

JANET: Oh, that's Christmas-cracker standard.

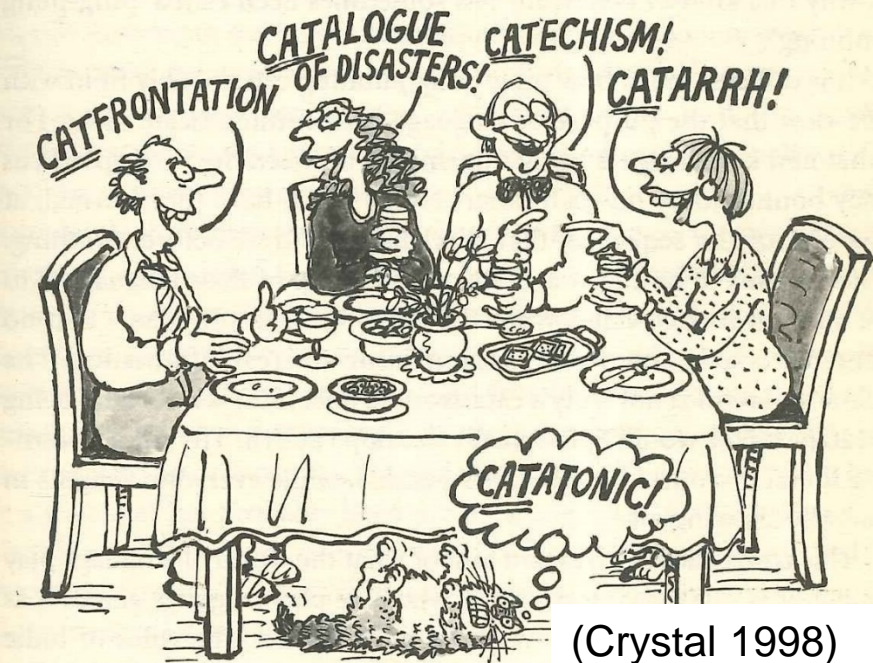
PETER: Of course, you know what Splash would get if he stayed outside for too long?

JANE: What?

SUSAN: Catarrh. (*More laughter all round.*)

JANET: Anyway, to get back to the point . . .

JOHN: Yes, get on with your catechism, Janet. (*Mock cheers.*)



(Crystal 1998)



# Rehearsing and (re)telling a story



## Things to remember:

- man chooses an *animal* not a *sheep*
- “Management consultant”
  - come without being needed
  - answer a question nobody asked
  - gave information already known
  - no clue about this business

That's it for today...

See you next week when  
we will have a look at



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**Once Upon  
a Time...**