NARRATIVE AND FIGURATIVE SELF-CONSTRUCTION IN MEANINGFUL STORIES

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Abstract: The present study tests the validity of two claims foregrounded in current qualitative studies of troubled talk. First, single story-internal organizing figurative forms constitute succinct versions of troubled narrators' selves. Second, figurative clusters contribute to the construction of narrators' selves when some external or internal obstacle undermines communication. To explore this link between narrative and figurative self-construction, the study espouses a discourse-oriented approach which acknowledges the importance of Conceptual Metaphor Theory as well as a multimethods research design comprising qualitative and quantitative analyses. The analysis of a corpus of 101 meaningful stories produced by young Israeli adults supports the intriguing link between narrative and figurative self-construction.
Keywords: Self-construction. Positioning. Narrative Discourse. Figurative Structures. Discourse-oriented Approach.

1 INTRODUCTION

The present study aims at testing two evidence-based claims connecting narrative and figurative self-construction. These claims were formulated on the basis of the author's qualitative studies of telephone and cyber troubled talk between sufferers narrating and negotiating their problems with professionals (GREEN; KUPFERBERG, 2000; KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 1998, 2003, 2005, 2008a, 2008b; KUPFERBERG, GREEN; GILAT, 2002).

According to the first claim, figurative language forms such as metaphor, metonymy and formulaic phrases function as organizing 'tools' which enable narrators to present succinct versions of their narrated selves to others (e.g., the interviewers in the present study. See

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Method Section below). The idea that figurative language sometimes constitutes a summative linguistic tool has been established by discourse-oriented students of figurative language in studies of diverse discourse types such as every day conversation (DREW & HOLT, 1988, 1998; HOLT; DREW, 2005), troubled talk (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005), reconciliation talk (CAMERON, 2007), classroom discourse (CAMERON, 2003), experts' oral and written explanations (CAMERON; LOW, 2004) and political discourse (MIEDER, 1997).

According to the second claim, figurative clusters (i.e., two or more figurative forms occurring in a sequence and focusing on the same theme. See Example 2, lines 21-24, below) are produced at certain discursive junction when interlocutors experience an external or internal obstacle undermining communication (e.g., when the narrator's version of the story is countered by another interlocutor, or the narrator is in an acute emotional state, respectively (CAMERON; STELMA, 2004; KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2008a, 2008b).

Figurative clusters have been explored in face-to-face therapy (POLLIO; BARLOW, 1975), face to face, telephone and cyber troubled talk (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005, 2008a, 2008b), reconciliation talk (CAMERON, 2007; CAMERON; STELMA, 2004), classroom discourse (CAMERON, 2003), college lectures (CORTS, 2006; CORTS; POLLIO, 1999), experts' explanations (CAMERON; LOW, 2004), Baptist sermons (CORTS; MEYERS, 2002) and business media discourse (KOLLER, 2003). In the following two sections, the theoretical underpinnings of narrative and figurative self-construction are summarized.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Narrative self-construction

Current scholarship views narrative discourse as "a privileged mode for self-construction" (GEORGAKOPOULOU, 2007: p.15. Also see BAMBERG, 2006a; BAMBERG; DE FINA; SCHIFFRIN, 2007; BRUNER, 1997; MCADAMS; JOSSELSON; LIEBLICH, 2001). At times, it is unfolded in 'big' life stories where narrators distance themselves from experience (FREEMAN, 2006). At others, it is

presented in 'small' stories (GEORGAKOPOULU, 2007) relating to single past events that often "leave marks on people's lives" (DENZIN, 1999: p.96).

To explore self-construction in young adults' small stories, the present study adopts a theoretical framework inspired by a constructivist (BRUNER, 1997), discourse-oriented and functionalist approach (SCHIFFRIN, 1994) viewing narrative language resources (e.g., syntactic structures, figurative and non-figurative lexical items and phrases, pronouns, reported speech, etc.) as 'tools' used by narrators in the construction of meaning in 'big' and 'small' versions of their selves (KUPFERBERG, 2008, 2010).

Guided by this theoretical framework, we also espouse Labov's structural model of past tense stories (LABOV, 1972; see CORTAZZI; JIN, 2000 for a critical overview) which has often been adopted by narrative analysts (BAMBERG, 1997a). According to Labov and his colleagues (LABOV 1972; LABOV; FANSHEL, 1977; LABOV; WALETZKY, 1967) a fully-formed past-tense story often comprises the following components: an abstract summarizing the gist of the story, orientation providing the background, complicating-action, or the sequence of events creating a problem or an unexpected situation, evaluation providing the narrator's attitude toward the story, resolution presenting the solution and finally a coda shifting the perspective of the story to the present (see detailed analyses of stories in Examples 1 and 2 below).

A fully-formed story must comprise at least a problem-inducing chain of events, titles a complicating action (LABOV, 1972). The occurrence and length of the other components depends on context (LABOV, 1972). For instance, in Example 2, the narrator is unfolding a story to an interviewer who is not familiar with Indian trains – information that is significant for the understanding of the complicating-action. Consequently, the orientation component provides a detailed description of Indian trains.

Narrative evaluation "is the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative, its raison d'être: why it was told" (LABOV 1972, p. 366). Following Labov's pioneering definition of evaluation, scholarly attention has focused on evaluative linguistic devices that

narrators use interactionally when they construct the local meanings of their experience (BAMBERG, 1997a; LINDE, 1997; REINHART, 1995, SEGAL, 2008). These linguistic resources are regarded as subjectivity markers (GEORGAKOPOULOU, 1997) – "discursive self-builders that display affective, cognitive, socio-cultural, and behavioral dimensions of the self " (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005, p. 28).

For example, tense shift (SCHIFFRIN, 1981) often indicates that narrators are extremely agitated, repetition shows that they wish to emphasize certain points (BUTTNY; JENSEN, 1995), rhetorical questions constitute powerful protests (BIBER; JOHANSSON; LEECH; CONRAD; FINEGAN, 1999), pronouns enable narrators to construct individual ('I') or collective selves ('we') or distance their selves ('you') from the narrated events (MALONE, 1997). Figurative language is regarded as a central self-displaying resource (REINHART, 1995). In view of the highly contextualized nature of evaluative resources, Georgakopoulou (1997) does not advocate the study of preconceived lists of evaluative devices defined a priori of discourse analysis, but prefers to link them to the specific context in which they are produced.

A current definition of evaluation emphasizes its interactional dimensions in positioning, or locating narrators vis-à-vis others in the narrated past world as well as in the present in relation to other interlocutors listening to the story or participating in its construction (BAMBERG, 1997b, 2006b) (e.g., the interviewers in the present study and psychologists participating in troubled talk, respectively).

Discursive positioning was defined as a social activity which constitutes "a dynamic alternative to the more static concept of role" (LANGENHOVE; HARRÉ, 1999, p. 14). Positioning is dynamic because interlocutors often change their location in relation to others during the interaction. For example, a student teacher narrating her first teaching experience in an interview changed her positioning in relation to the class from being *a babysitter* to being *an enlightened queen* (KUPFERBERG; GILAT, 2001).

Following Bamberg's definition of positioning (1997b, 2006b), we developed The Four World Approach and applied it in the study of narrative discourse (GILAT; KUPFERBERG, in press; KUPFERBERG, 2008, 2010; KUPFERBERG; GILAT, in press;

KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 1998, 2003; 2005, 2008a, 2008b). The approach emphasizes the centrality of the present moment as the 'workshop' in which humans interactionally attempt to make sense of their past, and orient themselves to a better future where the insights gained from the past can be applied. It also emphasizes the researcher's construction of a fourth interpretive world of analysis where emotional, cognitive, cultural and social dimensions of narrators' selves are constructed. The methodological implications of the approach are described in the Method section below.

2.2. Figurative positioning in narrative discourse

To explore figurative positioning in narrative discourse (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005), we align ourselves with discourse-oriented approaches to figurative language which highlight the importance of figurative language as a central linguistic tool in interpersonal communication (CAMERON, 2003, 2007; DREW; HOLT, 1988, 1998; HOLT; DREW, 2005). These approaches differ from top-down Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) which downplays the role of linguistic expressions (LAKOFF, 1993; LAKOFF; JOHNSON, 1980, 1999; GIBBS, 1994), viewing them as surface manifestations of culturally-shaped (GIBBS, 1999; KÖVECSES, 2005) embodied (LAKOFF; JOHNSON, 1999; GIBBS; LIMA; FRANCOZO, 2004; for an alternative view see VERVAEKE; KENNEDY, 2004) underlying conceptual metaphors which enable humans to conceptualize abstract and inexpressible target topics in terms of more familiar source domains. CMT scholars also emphasize the role of conceptual metaphors in illuminating emotionally-charged complex experience (GIBBS, 1994; KÖVECSES, 1990, 1998).

Specifically, we adhere to Cameron's discourse-oriented (2003, 2007) which underscores the centrality of a bottom-up study of figurative language in inteactional discourse in situ and in vivo, while it also acknowledges the contribution of top-down CMT in tracing the culturally-shared 'cognitive webs' (GIBBS, 1999) tying individuals living in the same society together.

Espousing this interfacing position, and the definition of positioning language devices outlined in the previous subsection, in the present study we propose the following definition of figurative linguistic forms such as metaphor, metonymy and formulaic phrases in the study of narrative discourse. These linguistic devices enable narrators to position themselves in the present ongoing talk, in the narrated past and sometimes also in future or possible worlds (that are often unfolded in the present) vis-à-vis other interlocutors (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005). The researcher can further interpret narrators' figurative positioning and construct various dimensions of their selves.

Metaphors are defined as single words or phrases from a domain different from the target domain the narrator is trying to conceptualize which serve to highlight (CAMERON; LOW, 2004) how narrators wish to locate themselves in relation to others or the context in which they live (e.g., *a nightmare* in Example 2, line 23). A figurative form is metonymic, when the narrators' target domain and the source concept domain are taken from the same conceptual domain, and the relationship between the two is that of contiguity or proximity (KÖVECSES; RADDEN, 1998). For example, describing her positioning in relation to her divorce process, one troubled narrator defines this process as *amputating the cancerous leg* (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005, p. 49). Finally, there are formulaic expressions (e.g., idioms and proverbs) (HONECK, 1997, p. 79) which constitute summative expressions of wisdom that are "generally learned and used as wholes". For example, the narrator in Example 2 (line 23) positions herself in relation to the young men she met on a train using the formulaic expression*: We felt that we wanted to take to our heels.*

On the basis of previous studies presented in the literature review, we define organizing figurative forms (OFFs) as linguistic tools which enable narrators to organize their positioning in the past and present it to other interlocutors. When, however, narrators encounter an external or internal obstacle, they resort to figurative clusters (FCs) which enable them to experiment with different source domains in an attempt to clarify their positioning.

Following the review of the literature highlighting the role of figurative language in narrative discourse as a positioning resource, in the present study we examined the functions of OFFs and FCs in young

adults' meaningful stories by testing two hypotheses. We hypothesized that OFFs would be more frequent at the end of the story. This hypothesis is based on the claim that figurative language forms often function as organizing 'tools' which enable narrators to present succinct versions of their narrated selves to others after they unfold the whole story. We also hypothesized that there would be a relationship between FC production and narrators' emotional state of mind so that FCs would be more frequent in emotionally-displaying stories compared with non-emotionally-displaying ones. This hypothesis is based on our study of troubled talk as well as Cameron's study of reconciliation talk which showed that interlocutors use clusters at critical moments in the discourse (CAMERON; STELMA, 2004) which are emotionally-charged (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005).

3 METHOD

3.1 Participants and data collection

Participants were 101 young Israeli adults, 51 men and 50 women, university students whose ages ranged from 22 to 32 (M=27.44, SD=2.51) and whose native language was Hebrew. Data elicitation was conducted through 15-20 minute face-to-face narrative interviews (RIESSMAN, 2001) which were recorded and transcribed. The interviewers, language teachers attending a two-year M.Ed. (Master in Education) program directed the interviewees to narrate one very meaningful event in their life and intervened only when the interviewees requested clarification. The stories presented in this article were translated by a professional translator, a native speaker of English. Subsequently, two bilinguals read the Hebrew and English versions and evaluated the adequacy of the translated versions. The readers suggested several minor changes that were accepted.

3.2 Research design and data analysis

This study adopts a multimethods research design according to which hypotheses were tested by using qualitative data (i.e., stories) that

was quantitized (i.e., transformed into data that can be analyzed quantitatively) (TASHAKKORI; TEDDLIE, 2003). The qualitative analysis comprised four stages. The first, second and third stages were performed by two raters, M.Ed. students and language teachers acquainted with the Labovian (1972) structural model of narrative analysis and the Four World Approach (KUPFERBERG, 2008, 2010). Methodologically speaking, this approach justifies the allocation of positioning resources including figurative language to three worlds (i.e., the world of the present interaction with the interviewer, the narrated world of past experience, and sometimes also a future world). It also related to the construction of an interpretive fourth world.

In the first stage of the qualitative analysis, each story was analyzed in terms of the linear and structural Labovian model. In the second and third stages, non-figurative and figurative positioning resources were identified and located in terms of the temporal Four World Approach. In the fourth stage, two clinical psychologists read the stories and determined if they were emotion-displaying or not (see Examples 1 and 2).

OFFs are defined as story-internal figurative forms organizing the narrator's positioning in relation to others in the narrated world that is presented to the interviewers in the present. FCs comprise several figurative forms produced in a sequence and used by narrators to define their positioning when some obstacle arises during the production of the story (see Example 2).

Inter-rater reliability as tested by percentage of the agreement between the raters was 93%, 92%, 95% and 90% for component analysis, OFF and FC location and identification and emotion-assessment, respectively and cases of discrepancy were resolved by discussion. The analyses were based on utterances – speech units which are autonomous in terms of their pragmatic and communicative functions (QUIRK; GREENBAUM; LEECH; SVARTNIK, 1985). In the running text and examples figurative forms are indicated by italics, and conceptual metaphors by capital letters.

4 QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

4.1 Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis of the stories is illustrated below in Examples 1 and 2. In Example 1, a 28 year old man narrates a meaningful event that took place when his father was in hospital.

Example 1: Identifying and locating an OFF

(1) My father was in the hospital and I went to visit him with my mother and I remember that I said
(2) to myself wow how much energy *she invests in him* and how she cares and comes to visit him
(3) because *their situation was a disaster*. There was no intimacy there as far as I remember. And
(4) then we arrived at the hospital and I remember that she took his hand like this, and put her hand
(5) on his hand. And that was the only time I ever saw them touch, like, that was the only contact I
(6) ever saw between them. It's like, the proof is that I have *a strong memory* of it to this day, and
(7) that's that.

Performing the Labovian analysis, the raters identified the following components: the orientation providing the background is verbalized in lines 1-3, the complication action creating an unexpected situation is produced in lines 3-5: "And then we arrived at the hospital" and "she took his hand like this, and put her hand on his hand" and the coda shifting the perspective of the story to the present is presented in lines 6-7.

The identification of an OFF is related to other self-displaying positioning resources embedded across the boundaries of these structural components. These linguistic tools position the narrator in relation to his parents in the narrated past. For example, repetition of utterances constructing the parents' relationship is produced in lines 2, 3 and 4-6. Pronouns 'conspire' with repetition and syntax (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005) to foreground the narrator's positioning in relation to his parents, and how the parents locate themselves vis-à-vis each other. Thus, in several utterances the narrator places the mother in subject position as an active agent whereas the father is placed in object position as the passive recipient of her care: "*she invests in him* and how she cares and comes to visit" (lines 2-3) and "she took his hand like this and put her hand on his hand" (lines 4-5). The

raters determined that the OFF is verbalized in the coda: "I have a *strong* memory of it to this day". In other words, having verbalized a meaningful story the narrator finally summarizes the gist of his positioning in relation to his parents figuratively, and presents it to the interviewer in the present.

Examining the OFF from the CMT perspective, one could argue that the narrator resorts to PSYCHOLOGICAL FORCES ARE PHYSICAL FORCES conceptual metaphor when he summarizes the impact of the event on his life. This observation emphasizes that the production of the linguistic form (*strong* memory) is influenced by a conceptual metaphor – a cognitive resource available to interlocutors living in the same culture. Finally, the psychologists assessed the story as emotion-displaying. In brief, the analysis provided an explanation for the function of the figurative form in the story and at the same time illuminated the cognitive and cultural resource that the narrator may have resorted to.

The story unfolded in Example 2 was told by a 24 year old Israeli who describes a meaningful experience that took place as she was traveling in India with another young Israeli woman.

Example 2: Identifying and locating a FC

(1) We wanted to get to Bombay from Varanasi in the easiest way possible, so of course we chose
(2) one of the most efficient ways in India: traveling by train, which is obviously nothing like the
(3) express train in Israel. The Indian train is more crowded, and has fewer facilities. It is
(4) approximately a 26-hour trip. We boarded the train, D. [the narrator's female companion] and
(5) I. And in each carriage, in each compartment, there are three bunks: the top, the middle and the
(6) bottom. It's best to choose the top bunk, of course, because if you're on it, you can't be moved.
(7) The Indians all crowd together on the bottom bunks since it is also impossible to sit on the
(8) middle ones. *To cut a long story short,* we took the middle and the top bunks. I sat on the top one
(9) and D. chose the middle one, but she sat on the bottom one for the time being. We started off
(10) on a journey of a few hours. Everything had been OK until now. And all of a sudden I said to
(11) D.: "Come and sit next to me for a second." D. climbed up, and about a second later, a crowd
(12) of young Indian guys got on the train. Really, they were all young. They filled all the carriages
(13) and all the compartments. Anyone who was sitting on the middle bunks was thrown out of (14)
(14) there, thrown down to the bottom bunks. I don't know if they were drunk, or *stoned*, or *I don't*
(15) *know what.* They were in a good mood, and in that second I said how lucky we were that I had
(16) the intuition to tell D. to climb up to the top bunk, because if she'd sat on the bottom one, I
(17) don't want to think what would have happened. They got on to the train *in a state of hysteria.*
(18) They stood facing us, and there were lots of young guys, and I emphasize guys, not a single girl.
(19) We sat on the top bunk. They looked at us *for ages,* staring unceasingly. They looked at each
(20) other and laughed. I don't know if anyone has ever felt what it is like to be stared at. No matter

(21) how much I try to explain it, I don't think anyone could understand. *You feel as if you are in some*
(22) *kind of a show, or some kind of a cage, or something like that. For a whole hour, it was simply a*
(23) *nightmare. We felt that we wanted to take to our heels and get out of there, to detach ourselves,*
(24) *to disappear. I don't know what. Shamelessly, as if we had come from another planet.* And it's
(25) very strange because there are a lot of tourists in India. So what do they want from us? What?
(26) What? Are we so different? We wanted to talk to each other in order to try and *pass the time*, and
(27) we didn't succeed. The whole time we thought only about how they were looking at us. And the
(28) fear, the *immense* fear that they'd touch us, they'd do something, because we'd already had
(29) experiences in which they also touched [us], but luckily this one was nothing more than staring.
(30) Fortunately, after about an hour, they all got OFF together. But whenever I recall the looks,
(31) *their eyes staring at us* – it was really shocking.

     Assisted by the Labovian model, the raters identified the following components. The story comprises an abstract presented in line 1. The orientation is expressed in lines 1-11 and also in other sections of the story (e.g., lines 12-13 and 17), due to the fact that context changes as the narrator is unfolding the chain of events. The problem-inducing complicating-action is in lines 11-12, 12-14 and 19: "a crowd of young Indian guys got on the train", "they filled all the carriages and all the compartments. Anyone who was sitting on the middle bunks was thrown out of there" and "they looked at us for age". The solution is displayed in line 30: "They all got off together". Finally, the coda is produced in line 31.

     The FC is located after the narrator verbalizes the complicating action in lines 21-24 and after she has emphasized that "No matter how much I try to explain it, I don't think anyone could understand" (lines 20-21). The cluster comprises similes – hedged versions of metaphoric expressions (GLUCKSBERG; KEYSAR, 1993; for an alternative view see Chiappe & Kennedy, 2001; also see KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005 for analyses of similes in troubled talk): a show, a cage and coming from another planet, metaphors: a nightmare, to detach ourselves and to disappear and formulaic expressions: to take to our heels and get out of there). These figurative forms are used by the narrator in her attempt to define the meaning of her positioning in relation to the young Indians.

     Like the narrator in Example 2, troubled narrators unfolding their past experience to professionals, often comment on the complexity of the task and subsequently produce a cluster (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2008a, 2008b). At such narrative junctions narrators are obliged to experiment with different source domains in their quest meaning. Was the narrator in Example 3 attending a show? Was she locked in a cage?

Was it a nightmare? Or perhaps she was a creature from another planet? She also lists possible means to escape from the train (i.e., we wanted to take to our heels and get out of there, to detach ourselves, to disappear).

We submitted the cluster to CMT analysis which showed that the attempt to make meaning can be parsimoniously defined in terms of one conceptual metaphor,

Indicated by capital letters Difficulties are containers into which one gets in and from which one wishes to get out. This cognitive generalization indicates that the thinking process that the narrator may have experienced is not arbitrary but is tied to previously learned and culturally-shared experiences.

4.2 Quantitative analysis

Following our qualitative analysis of the stories, a coding sheet was constructed to measure the independent (i.e., age, gender, OFF and FC location and emotion-assessment) and dependent (i.e., presence or absence of OFF and FC) variables in each story.

The frequencies of OFF and FC producers were computed. The results showed that 43% of the narrators produced a single OFF. A Chi Square test revealed that there were no significant gender differences related to OFF production. Sixty three percent of the narrators produced FCs. The number of FCs per story ranged from 1 to 12 (M= 2.9, SD= 2.6). In view of the skewedness of FC distribution, a dichotomous measure (i.e., presence vs. absence of FCs in the stories) was chosen for the quantitative analysis. A Chi Square test revealed no significant gender differences.

To test the first hypothesis, the frequency of OFFs according to their location in the story was computed. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1– Distribution of OFF producers

by their location in the story (n=43)

Location	OFF (%)
Abstract	2
Orientation	5
Complicating-action	9
Solution	19
Coda	65
Total	100

A Chi Square test yielded significant results ($\chi 2$ (4) = 58.00, p <.01) showing that that narrators tended to produce OFFs at the end of the story in the coda (65%) and solution (19%) components

To test the second hypothesis, the relationship between the type of story (emotion-displaying or not) and the occurrence of OFFs and FCs was examined by a Chi Square test. The results showed a significant connection ($\chi 2$ (1) = 3.45, p<.05) resulting from a higher occurrence of FC among emotion-displaying stories (72%) compared with non-emotion-displaying ones (55%). As for OFFs, no significant relationship was shown between the occurrence of the form and emotion as shown by a Chi Square test.

To examine the production of FC as a function of their location in the story, we computed the percentage of narrators who produced FCs in each component of the story. The results are presented in Table 2. The percentage in the table does not add up to 100% because narrators produced more than one FC per story:

Table 2 – FC producers and non-producers

in each location of the story (N=64)

Location	FC (%)	
	Produced	Not produced
Abstract	2	98
Orientation	22	78
Complicating-action	70	30
Solution	18	82
Coda	32	68

The results reveal that narrators used FCs in different locations: the orientation (22%), complicating-action (70%), solution (18%) and the coda (32%).

To examine if there was a relationship between the occurrence of OFFs and FCs, a 2 (OFF produced/not produced) X 2 (FC produced/not produced) contingency table was computed and a Chi Square test was used. Table 3 presents the percentage of narrators as a function of OFFs (present/absent) and FCs (present/absent). The results revealed a significant relationship ($\chi 2$ (1) = 8.03, p<.01).

Table 3 – Percentage of OFF and FC producers (n=101)

FC			
		Present	Absent
OFF	Present	19.8	22.7
	Absent	42.6	14.9

The table shows that 65.3 % of the narrators produced one of the figurative forms but not the other, 19.8 % produced both forms and 14.9 % produced none.

5 DISCUSSION

The quantitative analysis showed that OFF producers tended to produce organizing figurative forms at the end of the story, as predicted by the first hypothesis. We interpret this finding as indicating that OFF producers were able to deliver a summative version of their positioning in relation to the meaningful experience they unfolded in the story *after* they had verbalized previous detailed parts of the story. In this way, the present study provides additional empirical evidence supporting the first claim formulated at the beginning of this article regarding the cognitive and organizing function of OFFs in troubled talk (Kupferberg & Green, 2005, 2008a, 2008b). Accordingly, we propose the following definition of OFF in narrative discourse: OFFs are story-internal devices encapsulating the narrator's positioning in the story.

The results also show that narrators tended to produce FCs in different narrative locations, mainly during the verbalization of the complicating action. In addition, FC production was related to emotions as predicted by the second hypothesis. We interpret these findings as showing that perhaps narrators' emotional state of mind constituted an internal psychological obstacle undermining the formulation of their positioning as they were making an attempt to clarify the meaning of their positioning in the meaningful experience that they unfolded. The fact that most clusters were produced during the verbalization of the problem-inducing complicating-action further suggests that this component may have been more difficult to verbalize than the other components.

The relationship between FCs and emotions highlighted in the present study, is also supported by previous discourse-oriented studies of naturally occurring and troubled talk (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2005) and reconciliation talk (CAMERON; STELMA, 2004). In such speech situations, interlocutors often find themselves at emotional narrative junctions created by external or internal obstacles where they are obliged to experiment with different source domains in their attempt to elaborate cognitively on the conceptualization of their positioning.

A current study further emphasizes that FC production is associated with a process during which narrators encounter an obstacle (KUPFERBERG; GREEN, 2008b). In the study, thirty two interviewees were unexpectedly requested to summarize the meaning of an event which constituted a potential threat to their professional future. In response to the directive, which must have been an external obstacle, eighteen interviewees produced chains of figurative forms that may have reflected their thinking process at this discursive junction when they were trying to define meaning. In light of the theoretical and empirical evidence presented in this article, we propose the following definition of FCs in narrative discourse: FCs are produced when some external or internal obstacle undermines communication and obliges narrators to explore different source domains in their quest for meaning.

As for the relationship between OFF and FC occurrence in the same story, the results show that narrators participating in the present study could be classified into four groups: OFF producers, FC producers, FC and OFF producers and narrators who did not produce

any of the forms. We interpret this finding as showing that the four groups of narrators are probably located at different junctions in their quest for meaning. OFF producers may have succeeded in constructing their positioning. FC producers are engaged in an ongoing process of meaning making, and FC and OFF producers both make an attempt and succeed in expressing their positioning as they are unfolding the story. The fact that most of the narrators (65%) belong to the first two groups (i.e., either produced an OFF or a FC) supplies empirical support to the different functions of OFF and FC in the process of meaning making.

What about the fifteen narrators who did not produce any of the forms? Eleven narrators were men narrating a professional story (e.g., a pilot who parachuted from a burning plane, a fire brigade employee describing how he tried to rescue people trapped in a burning car, and a doctor describing how he saved the life of a child). Is it plausible to relate the paucity of figurative language to professional experience? Future research could further probe this possibility.

In conclusion, the present study validates the claims regarding the connection between narrative and figurative self-construction. Specifically, it shows that there were narrators who produced two interrelated versions of their experience: a detailed story as well as an OFF – a succinct figurative form summarizing the essence of the narrator's positioning. When, however, narrators encountered some unexpected obstacle, they resorted to FCs in their attempt to verbalize their positioning.

The study has several limitations. First, it focused on a small sample of a homogeneous age group and the stories were elicited in a research design that prohibited intensive interaction. Future studies should expand the study and focus on different age groups in naturally occurring settings in which professional experience will also be taken into consideration.

What are the implications of the study? Theoretically, it provides additional evidence in support of the link between narrative and figurative thinking that is constructed via language tools. In other words, figurative language probably constitutes a significant landmark showing where the narrator is located in his attempt to make meaning. Methodologically, the study shows that a multimethods design enhances

the understanding of the complexity of meaning making processes. Practically, the identification of organizing and process-oriented figurative forms may assist practitioners (e.g., psychologists, counselors, social workers, media professionals and educators) in better understanding troubled narrators.

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Título: Autoconstrução narrativa e figurativa em histórias significativas
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Resumo: Este estudo testa a validade de duas asserções correntes nos atuais estudos qualitativos sobre fala com problemas. Primeiro, formas figurativas organizacionais de história interna constituem versões sucintas dos 'eus' desses narradores com problemas de fala. Segundo, blocos figurativos contribuem para a construção das identidades dos narradores quando algum obstáculo interno ou externo solapa a comunicação. Para explorar essa conexão entre autoconstrução narrativa e figurativa, o estudo adota uma abordagem de linha discursiva que reconhece a importância da Teoria Conceitual da Metáfora, assim como um desenho multimétodo de pesquisa envolvendo tanto análises qualitativas quanto quantitativas. A análise de um corpus de 101 histórias significativas produzidas por jovens adultos israelenses confirma o intrigante laço entre autoconstrução narrativa e figurativa.
Palavras-chave: Autoconstrução. Posicionamento. Discurso Narrativo. Estruturas Figurativas. Abordagem Discursiva.