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Unpacking the narrative-argumentative conundrum: story credibility revisited

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Abstract: Building on a view of both narration and argumentation as dynamic concepts, the aim of this paper is to argue that story credibility remains a core issue in the debate on the argumentative quality of narratives, yet one that the dynamic perspective has not interrogated in sufficient detail. To illustrate, I will draw on empirical examples from research interviews with adult migrants to Norway on their learning and using Norwegian as a second language.

1. Introduction

Since Kvernbekk's (2003) "first stab" at unpacking the argumentative quality of narratives, there has been a remarkable upsurge of philosophical interest in the topic (Govier, 2013; Govier & Ayers, 2012; Kvernbekk & Bøe-Hansen, 2017; Olmos, 2013, 2014, 2017; Tindale, 2017). Yet, argumentation scholars continue to be divided on a number of essential issues, including the very conceptual compatibility of narration and argumentation. Recently, Tindale (2017) has suggested that a dynamic sense of argument is needed if the argumentative potential of narrative is to be recognized.

On a similar note, a number of discourse analysts (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012; Ochs & Capps, 2001) have challenged the long-entrenched view of narratives as discursive events that follow a temporal ordering and a sequential structure (Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Dynamic models have instead been proposed that more accurately capture how storytelling is weaved in real-life interactional contexts and how it may serve as a platform for a discursive negotiation of social reality and identity positioning by speakers. However, with a few notable exceptions (Carranza, 1998, 1999, 2015), the complex relationship between narration and argumentation has not been thematized in any depth in this line of research.

Building on a view of both narration and argumentation as dynamic concepts, I will combine insights emerging from argumentation theory and discourse analysis to explore ways of adjudicating story credibility as a core issue in the scholastic debate on the argumentative quality of narratives. Empirical examples from qualitative research interviews with adult Polish migrants to Norway on their variable engagement in learning and using Norwegian as a second language (L2) will be used to illustrate my points. I will argue that in looking at story credibility in data of this kind, it is crucial to pay close

attention to both structural and pragmatic/contextual details, particularly how conversational storytelling gets embedded in the surrounding discourse and how the way this is discursively accomplished vis-à-vis real and imagined audiences may be reflective of broader narrative-argumentative goals pursued by the narrator[1].

In what follows I will first ground this paper in theoretical insights on the potential connections and points of dialogue between narrative and argumentation theory, focusing particularly on Tindale's dynamic view of argument, Olmos's work on the argumentative assessment of story credibility (Olmos, 2013, 2014) and Bamberg's (2004) three-tier positioning framework for analyzing narrative work. This will provide a conceptual and analytical platform against which two selected empirical data excerpts will be interpreted. This again will lead to some concluding thoughts on the narrative-argumentative conundrum and stories as evidence in argumentative discourse.

2. Philosophical scholarship on narration as argument

Is narrative and argumentative discourse of an entirely different character or are there connections and overlap and, if so, where, when, how and how much? A number of studies within the field of argumentation theory have attempted to look at these questions and unpack the "not-so-clear boundaries" between the two (Olmos, 2013, p. 13). Some of the key issues at play are necessarily of a definitional nature.

Tindale (2017) has recently argued that much existing work on narration as argument adopts a too static and narrow conceptualization of *argument as product* and sidelines the question of the *process* in which arguments get accomplished. He specifically discusses Kvernbekk's early pioneering work on the connection between narrative and argumentation (2002, 2003), where she considers the argumentative quality of explanatory narratives. As Tindale also shows, there are two key points that her own argumentation revolves around: firstly, she underscores that narratives work by hindsight whereby the conclusion is known to the narrator at the outset. Hence, the independence criterion of the premise and conclusion relation, integral to her conception of argument, is not met. Secondly, seeing story believability, in line with Bruner, as a somewhat hazy concept, she admonishes that "believability tends towards the psychological" and this in itself is not sufficient as arguments, in her view, should also be adjudicated on epistemic terms. Tindale also considers other scholarship, such as Govier and Ayers' (Govier, 2013; Govier & Ayers, 2012, p. 161), who explicitly warn against the epistemic risks involved in conflating argumentation and narration: "one can offer arguments through narratives and, in particular, through parables, but that doing so likely brings more risks than benefits, from an epistemic point of view".

On Tindale's reading, both conceptualizations privilege the structural perspective and thus provide no room to accommodate narrative as a decidedly argumentative form of discourse. He proposes a dynamic understanding of argument where the context in which arguments come about plays a prominent role. He argues that it is not only the structural (internal) features of an argument (i.e. premise-conclusion link) but also its reception by an audience that needs to be considered: "a dynamic sense of argument sees arguments as social events, personalized by those engaged in them" (p. 25). While he explicitly leaves

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[1] For simplicity, I will refer to the discourse participant(s) who produce(s) the narrative-argumentative discourse as narrator(s) rather than arguers, narrators-arguers or arguers-narrators through most of the paper.

the issue of criterial assessments of story credibility for another discussion (see his footnote 13 on p.25), he does briefly mention the need for audience-based criteria where a contextually appropriate response to critical questions would feature as key. Additionally, with reference to Plumer's (2011) and Olmos' (2013) work, he notes that stories need to have plausibility, or "a realistic plausibility" that concurs with the audiences' experience and offers "real world credence" (p.26).

Clearly departing from both Kvernbekk (2002, 2003) and Govier (2013) / Govier and Ayers (2012) but, in crucial ways, in line with Tindale's work discussed above, Olmos (2013, 2014) deals in detail with both conceptual issues on narration as argument and criterial assessment of their credibility. In her 2013 article, she draws on ancient and classical texts to discuss what this may entail. With recourse to the medieval philosopher Agricola, she too argues that not only a structural but also a pragmatic criterion of argument needs to be satisfied. In Agricola, the pragmatic criterion entails a "successive classification of different types of exposition with an increasing argumentation import", whereby he arrives "at a real gradual theory of argument" (p.6), going in effect from mere exposition of facts to argumentation through an intent to persuade (an audience). It is here that the importance of narrative plausibility comes in: given the presentation of the different pieces of an argument, including narrative, will the audience be persuaded?

Olmos (2014[2]) takes this line of thought further and interrogates different criterial frameworks for evaluating story credibility, an exercise crucial in so far as it sheds light on the potential verisimilitude of narratives as evidence in argumentative discourse. She proposes an integrative approach that features ten specific criteria:

1. Internal plot or structural coherence
2. Internal characteriological coherence
3. Internal degree of detail
4. Story/storyteller coherence (arguer-related)
5. Coverage of relevant extra-diegetic evidence (material coherence) relative to argumentative practice
6. Uniqueness: situation of the story regarding other competing discourses
7. Independence: regarding other competing discourses (multiple-source confirmation)
8. Previous beliefs of audience relative to argumentative practice (audience-related)
9. External coherence/fidelity to the real world – narrative realism
10. Fidelity to human values: reliability and applicability of the story / degree of humanism

However, she admonishes that the list could easily be extended and is, therefore, not to be seen as definitive. She specifically notes that incorporating rhetoric and pragmatic issues would amplify the framework's complexity.

Crucially too, in both her 2013 and 2014 papers, she thematized the issue of different types of argumentative narratives and their argumentative assessment. Without aiming to provide an exhaustive list, she distinguishes between four broad categories of arguments, some of which she maps onto what she terms "acknowledged argument types". These are:

1. digressive stories – such as arguments from example and analogy

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[2] Since pages in this particular manuscript are not numbered, quotations cannot be page-referenced.

2. arguments with data in (partly) narrative form, such as narrative premises
3. arguments about narratives – termed "core narratives", the very act of story credibility evaluation is in these arguments seen as part of their analysis, understanding and assessment
4. pure narration – termed by Olmos "self-standing and self-referring arguments"

While not explicitly framed as such and without specifically developing the concept of audience, this then suggests a dynamic conceptualization of narrative where various narrative types (or formats) may play different argumentative roles.

Importantly, however, she does not necessarily see categories 1 & 2 as representing "narrative argument", even though she acknowledges that their credibility is essential for the interpretation and assessment of arguments of which they are part. Rather, she reserves the concept to "a more complex, sequential chain or compound of events that should be assessed as a whole" (2014). Does this then imply that the framework she suggests is not (or, at least, not easily) amenable to the first two categories? And if so, does the assessment of story credibility in these cases imply the employment of insights on argumentation schemes (such as example, analogy etc.) and critical questions these may generate? She does not elaborate on this point. Also, apart from criterion 8, explicitly thematizing the audience and thus, in line with Tindale, implicating audience as an element in assessments of story credibility, how are we to adjudicate the rhetoric aspect of argumentative credibility?

Given the keen interest of recent discourse-analytic scholarship in narratives constructed in interactive, conversational contexts with multiple layers of audience, real and imagined, this represents a dimension where interdisciplinary cross-fertilization may potentially be fruitful. How then does discourse analytical literature deal with definitional concerns and how are the potential ties and links between narrative and argumentative discourse conceptualized there?

3. Discourse-analytical scholarship on narration and argumention

As with argument, there is much scholastic disagreement on how to conceptualize narrative. In discourse analysis and related disciplines such as sociolinguistics, it is particularly the seminal work of Labov and his colleague Waltezky (1972; 1967) that had long held definitional primacy. Seeing narratives as discursive events that follow a temporal ordering and a sequential structure, they identified six structural elements as constitutive of a fully-fledged narrative:

1. *abstract* – gives a summary of the story
2. *orientation* – lays out the "whos", "whens" and "wheres" of the story
3. *complicating action* – presents what has happened
4. *resolution* – presents how the complicating action has been resolved
5. *evaluation* – gives the point of view of the speaker
6. *coda* – links the story to a current situation or effect of the story.

While highly influential, this model has in the last two decades been critiqued for conceptualizing narrative as overtly static and, therefore, as inadequate to capture the multivocality and multiplicity of narrative activity that goes on in everyday discourse.

An alternative, highly influential framework, that addresses this issue, has been proposed by Ochs and Capps (2001). Essentially, they look beyond the story as a product and towards the process of storytelling. The repertoire of narrative activity analytically pursued in this line of research has thus been redefined to include both the so-called "big", canonical "Labovian" stories as well as the so-called "small" stories, produced in naturally occurring conversations and presented in a variety of narrative formats, such as hypothetical stories, story snippets, story fragments and story deferrals (Georgakopoulou, 2007). Compatible with this broadened conceptualization, Ochs and Capps see narrative through several dimensional criteria with a distinctly dynamic character:

1. *tellership* – who gets involved, how and how much in the process of telling, varying from one to more narrators
2. *tellability* – what constitutes a tellable story, ranging from highly tellable to low in tellability (e.g. degree of narrative detail)
3. *linearity* – how the story is weaved in time; whether it follows a closed chronological path or diverges from it in fluid and open ways
4. *contextual embeddedness* – the degree to which storytelling is attached to local context, discourse and social activity
5. *moral stance* – relates to the Labovian evaluation, but is conceptualized on a continuum between constant/static to fluid/dynamic

Building on Ochs and Capps and firmly grounded in social interactional approaches to narrative, Bamberg (1997) has proposed a three-tier positional framework that presents storytelling as a multi-dimensional interactional achievement involving multiple layers of potential narrative action driven forward by different characters and, crucially, audience. The core of the framework is to provide an analytical toolkit that aids in understanding how narrators position themselves in discourse vis-à-vis their audiences and how they are positioned therein by them. Bearing in mind this nuanced conceptualization of storytelling contexts as profoundly multivocal, it proceeds from the close discursive level of the constructed story towards interactional and broader societal levels in which the story is embedded:

- *Level 1- the story world* - presents a particular theme or action driven by specific characters
- *Level 2 - the interactional situation* - provides the close contextual, real-world frame within which the story world is constructed
- *Level 3 - the wider discursive context* - relates to the broader societal context that frames the very act of storytelling and provides key structural indexicals that may be variably appropriated or resisted by the narrator/s.

What then does discourse-analytical literature say about narrative as argument? While narrative accounts of experience have been framed as specifically argumentative resources, referred to as *exempla* that powerfully illustrate the discursive negotiations of meaning (e.g.

De Fina, 2003), the complex relationship between narration and argumentation seems largely theoretically underdeveloped in this line of research.

An exception in this regard is Carranza's work (1998, 1999, 2015) that, with recourse to both narrative discourse analysis and argumentation theory, unpacks some of the theoretical complexity that the narrating-arguing mode may entail. She argues that different communicative contexts place different discursive demands on interactants, participating in a dispute or a confrontation or presenting a claim on a potentially controversial issue. Her work interrogates the structural interweaving of narrating and arguing, not least how they may blend, intersect and alternate and how narrators may draw on a multitude of discursive devices, such as direct speech, repetition or negation to present persuasive arguments or back-up their local claims. Yet, she claims that "notwithstanding the potential for interrelations between them, in any single argumentative-narrative text, argumentativity and narrativity cannot be equally dominant". (2015, 73). This then suggests that she sees the two as essentially distinct discursive modes that can be dissected as such.

Also important for the present discussion, her approach is explicitly grounded in a rhetorical view of argument where the concept of audience is key. Her conceptualization of audience is broad and includes both an implicit and actual audience. Interestingly, this also includes the concept of the third party that essentially comprises "socially shared values and interdiscursivity, corresponding to the circulating discourses in society" (2015, 61). In line with Bamberg's work, though not explicitly referenced as such, she thus discusses narrative argumentation in terms of the story-world and the interactional world and offers reflections on narrative plausibility within what essentially corresponds to Bamberg's third positioning level. She argues here that "narrative plausibility, particularly concerning the world as we know it, derives from common sense" (2015, 63). This then also echoes what Olmos (2014) discusses as Fisher's narrative fidelity criterion (i.e. "does it provide a reliable guide to our beliefs, attitudes, values and actions?") or what in her integrative framework can potentially be classified under the extra-diegetic criteria 10 (fidelity to human values).

4. Story credibility in selected empirical examples

In the following, I will attempt to combine some of the theoretical insights, presented above, as a lens on analysing and interpreting empirical data. Taking as my vantage point Tindale's dynamic view of argument where the concept of audience features as central and a dynamic view of "a living narrative" (Ochs & Capps, 2001), occasioned in specific contexts and thus situationally contingent, I will draw specifically on Bamberg's insights on speaker positioning in narrative discourse. A particular attention will be paid to how research interview participants employ various discursive devices to construct rhetorically persuasive narrative-argumentative discourse in which they actively engage with a multi-layered audience, real and imagined, and how this may serve situationally conditioned argumentative ends.

I will also draw on Olmos' integrative framework of argumentative assessment of story credibility. However, rather than strictly applying or considering each and every criterion listed, a practice Olmos herself warns against, I will expand only on those deemed relevant vis-a-vis the nature of the available empirical examples (i.e. narrative-

argumentative discourse constructed in research interviews). The following inter-related concerns will guide the analysis:

1. What is the narrative/story presented?
2. How is it embedded in the immediate discursive context?
3. Is there an argument being put forward / what is it?
4. How credible is the constructed narrative as argument vis-à-vis the narrator's multi-layered audience?
   a) Imagined / storied (story characters – Bamberg's level 1)
   b) Actual interactional (interviewer – Bamberg's level 2)
   c) Imagined / societal (Bamberg's level 3)?

4.1. Preliminary methodical notes on the empirical data

The empirical data is based on 19 research interviews with adults of Polish ethno-linguistic heritage who have resettled with their families from Poland to Norway in recent years. They were collected in 2015 and 2016 as part of a discourse-analytic study on bilingual education policy in Norway. I acted as the researcher-interviewer and used Polish with all my interview participants. A detailed description as well as an extensive analysis of the data set has been presented elsewhere[3].

It is nonetheless of special note here that the interview participants are primarily labour migrants to Norway and hence explicitly or implicitly implicated in the wider societal discourse on migration. Suffice it to say, that in Norway, as in other national contexts, this discourse has in recent years become increasingly polarized and steeped in deeply divisive anti-immigrant, ultra-nationalist rhetoric (see e.g. Andersson, 2012).

It is equally important to bear in mind that research interviews, as other types of interviews, are a specific discursive practice that raises certain expectations as to the particular roles that interview participants are to adopt in the unfolding discourse, including the ordering of turns: while it is the researcher-interviewer who normally poses questions to the interviewee, the interviewee normally acts on the assumption to answer the posed questions rather than posing one's own.

In what follows, only excerpts relating to the overarching thematic category "narratives on second language learning" will be considered. Data categorised under this theme provide rich grounds for exploring how the study participants engage in constructing their experiences with why they may or may not engage in learning and using Norwegian as a second language (L2).

4.2. L2 learner as a parent

A prominent leitmotiv in the data is the interviewees' frustration and difficulties with parenting pre-schoolers and school-goers without being able to communicate with the pre/school authorities in L2 due to their self-reported, insufficient L2 fluency and confidence. The following is an excerpt from an interview between me as an interviewer and a mother of four who, a few years prior to the interview, reunited in Norway with the

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[3] See for, example, Bubikova-Moan (2017a, 2017b, 2017c)

family breadwinner - her husband and the children's father - after a prolonged period of his periodic commuting between a job in Norway and his family in Poland[4]:

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01:    Int:    Right, so what do you think? How is it to parent a bilingual child –
02:            ehmm – a multilingual child?
03:    M01:    That's really fascinating and stressful @
04:    Int:    Oh, I see, why?
05:    M01:    because there was this funny situation when we came here and my Danny
06:            who did not speak much he started preschool. in some two months Danny
07:            started to speak but in Norwegian! and I sat in a bathtub – we were having
08:            a bath of course and he tried to say to me what they did in preschool and
09:            he started to speak in Norwegian. and I started to cry. people say that kids
10:            speak the language of the mother. but in what language did he start to
11:            speak to me? in Norwegian! it was not my language. I could not speak it
12:            except for hi bye-bye –
13:    Int:    right! you did not understand him –
14:    M01:    nothing! nothing! I started to cry. Pete ((husband)) comes in
15:            and asks "what's wrong?"
16:            and I say "Pete tell me what is my kid trying to say to me? (..)
17:            help me Pete! what am I supposed to do?"
18:            and then I said "no Pete I have to start a Norwegian course.
19:            I have to be able to speak with my child.
20:            I have to understand what my child is saying to me".
21:            that was a very frustrating experience.
22:    Int:    And when you talked Polish to him ((son)) than he would –
23:    M01:    He would speak Norwegian! –
24:    Int:    Always?
25:    M01:    He could not say anything ((in Polish))
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((the conversation continues with the mother reflecting on why this may have been the case, providing several storied accounts from the son's kindergarten))

What is happening in this passage from an argumentative-narrative point of view? The mother is initially asked to reflect on the issue of parenting bilingual children. Providing only a short evaluative response, she is specifically prompted to elaborate on the reasons for her evaluation ("why" - line 04). It is at this point (line 05) that she embarks on narrating a story that relates a personal experience. The main claim put forward during her largely uninterrupted narration in lines 05 – 21 is explicitly stated by the mother herself towards the end of the story (lines 18 – 20) and can be rephrased as follows: "I need to learn Norwegian, so that I can speak with and understand my own child/ren". By extension, the narrative itself can be seen as an exemplum (argument by example) that serves as evidence for her overarching claim (line 03 – i.e. parenting bilingual children is both fascinating and stressful). Is her narrative argumentatively credible vis-à-vis her multi-layered audience?

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[4] Note that both excerpts follow simplified, discourse-analytic transcription conventions. See Appendix 1 for details. Note also that all translations from Polish into English are my own.

Zooming in on Bamberg's level 1, the action of the story world revolves round a brief, yet emotionally charged conversation between three characters: herself, her young son and her husband. In re-constructing it, we see that the mother draws on a number of discursive devices that enhance its urgency, drama and rhetorical appeal, most importantly: 1) direct and indirect speech (line 08, lines 15-20), 2) inner speech (lines 10-12), 3) repetitions (line 14), 4) restatements (lines 19-20) and 5) intimate visual details of the physical location of the narrative (bathroom/bathtub – line 07-08). Already in the story world, the mother engages an imagined, anonymous audience ("people" - line 09) to voice a claim about children's mother tongue competence. From a discourse-analytic perspective, this lends it a status of a generalized, communally shared knowledge that potentially sanctions her linguistic choice expectations. The fact that the son's response does not cohere with the suggested normative behavior is pivotal in her story. The ensuing orchestration of her own voice in dialogue with the mostly narratively silent voice of her husband serves to dramatize the resolution of her dilemma which she closes in a final restatement of her initial claim (line 21). In Ochs and Capp's terms, through its dramatic appeal, the story itself can be considered highly tellable in everyday conversational terms, even if it is brief and plot-wise not elaborate. It follows a linear, sequential order and, while embedded in and clearly linked to the immediate discursive context, it is also fairly self-contained. The mother's evaluative (moral) stance remains stable and, thus, seemingly intra-diegetically coherent. In these ways, it seems to satisfy Olmos' criteria for structural and characteriological coherence as well as vividness (criteria 1,2,3).

In looking at the close interactional context (Bamberg's level 2) and bearing in mind the genre expectations, the excerpt presents a type of positioning typically adopted in research interviews (Labov, 1972; Wortham & Gadsden, 2006): the mother engages in answering the question, while the researcher- interviewer remains mostly an attentive listener throughout the main part of her narration, tuned into the situational context and interrupting only briefly to confirm attention (line 13). However, the exchange following the immediate story closure in line 21 is significant as it clearly signals audience-initiated opposition to one of the pivotal claims, namely that of the child's non-existent command of Polish. Questioned twice by the interviewer, albeit briefly (lines 22 and 24), the story-world credence of the mother's account is thus challenged, if not undermined. This occurs despite the fact that, as argued above, she builds up to it in inter-diegetically potentially plausible ways. Crucially, rather than leaving the issue at rest, the narrator accepts the questioning as a bid for defending her claim (lines 23 and 25) and engages in strengthening it through subsequent narration. This too is discursively significant as it underscores the argumentative potential of the narrative.

What then occurs at Bamberg's third positioning level? Highly abstract and theoretically complex, it calls on wider societal discourses voiced by heteroglossic, yet only imagined audiences. While narrators may sometimes explicitly draw on these macro-discourses as their broader interpretative frames, often, one may need to resort to considering implicit textual cues that may index their relevance in tacit ways only[5]. In this very passage, for example, the mother places her story chronologically only vaguely at the

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[5] This paper does not provide room to go into this very issue. Suffice it to say, however, that it has provoked fierce scholastic debates among several prominent discourse analysts, representing, roughly speaking, the ranks of critical discourse analysis (CDA) on the one hand and conversational analysts (CA) on the other (see on this e.g. Billig, 2016; Schegloff, 1997; Wetherell, 1998).

initial stage of their resettlement ("when we came here" - line 5). Given that the broader Norwegian discourse on migration underscores L2 learning as a key path to social, professional and educational integration in the new society (see Djuve et al., 2017), the temporal marking is discursively salient in so far as it may justify her largely limited command of L2 in the eyes of her imagined as well as interactional audience and, relatedly, enables her to position herself as a "good migrant" ready to put effort into learning L2 from early on. In fact, this would potentially lend her resolution to learn L2 more real-world credence (Olmos' criterion 9) than the actual claim put forward through her story world. As also hinted at by the interviewer, this very claim can easily be critically questioned and, with recourse to empirical research on children's bilingual development (Grosjean et al., 2013), potentially explained as a temporary developmental phase, if not simply a situational whim or an attempt by the young child to tease his mother. The lack of insistence on further elaboration on the part of the interviewer should therefore not be taken at face value as it is necessarily conditioned by the genre constraints as well as situational power dynamics. Indeed, any further probing could have been potentially face-threatening for the narrator.

In summary, is the story credible vis-à-vis its multi-layered audience? Does it provide plausible evidence for argumentative purposes? I would argue that despite its rhetoric appeal and, as argued above, at least some degree of inter-diegetic coherence as a short conversational narrative, the extra-diegetic plausibility of the narrative is clearly open to doubt vis-à-vis several of Olmos' criteria (8, 9 and, possibly also, 10).

4.3. L2 learner as a citizen in the new society

In the following passage the issue of learning and using Norwegian as L2 is also central. However, unlike in the first example, where the need for L2 competence is framed within the private bounds of the interviewee's home and related to parenting duties, here it is thematized explicitly as a skill that enables immigrants to function as citizens in the new society. The exchange involves three interactants – the interviewer as well as a mother (M07) and a father (F07) in one of the interviewed families. It is specifically prompted several conversational turns earlier by the interviewer through the question: "how is it for you to speak Norwegian?". The couple then engages in a vivid collaborative deliberation on their use of English versus Norwegian in different situations, with the former being their preferred choice:

01:	F07:	well, it's really a questioin of their xenophobia, or I don't know,
02:	Int:	ehm ehm –
03:	F07:	tolerance or intolerance. there is definitely a big difference (...)
04:		– when one goes anywhere, say to a public office or a shop
05:		and one starts to speak in Norwegian, even if it's stilted –
06:		because if you start in English –
07:	M07:	I remember how my husband sent me to set up a bank account for myself.
08:		When I started to work I had to have an account.
09:		I say «you will go with me to set up an account».
10:		he says «no! you go alone!»
11:		I say «no, not in a thousand years! such a serious thing
12:		as setting up a bank account! I won't understand!».

13:		and at that time my Norwegian was really not good.
14:		it was real beginnings and he says «no. you go alone!». so I went.
15:		there was this really lovely lady in the bank, in X ((name of bank))
16:		and she asks me «and where are you from?
17.		I say «well, from Poland»
18:		and she says «but you Poles, you don't speak Norwegian!
19:		and you are doing really well!».
20:		and I say «really?» @ because there is this opinion about us –
21:	Int:	ehm ehm –
22:	F07:	but if I went with you then you'd always think
23:		«and my husband needs to come along always because» –
24:		and well now you know you can go not just there –
25:	M07:	yeah, only that I would like to defend Poles who don't speak Norwegian
26:		– daddy, peeing again –

(the mother points at their young son who appears in the doorway, clearly indicating that he needs help with going to the bathroom; the father leaves with him and the conversation is resumed between the interviewer and the mother)

19:	Int:	Right. So it was difficult at the beginning?
20:	M07:	Right, for sure, at the beginning yes! But it's a question of daring
21:		a bit too…

(the conversation continues on the theme of how it is to speak L2 at present with the mother providing several storied accounts from her workplace)

In this passage, the narrative-argumentative activity is structurally more complex than in the first passage, as different subordinate (local) claims are being put forward by the two interviewees and feed into each other in a swift succession of conversational turns. What do we get on disentangling it?

Embedded in a broader argument on their L2 learning and use, as noted above, the excerpt itself starts off with the father's claim that socially sanctioned linguistic choices (i.e. speaking Norwegian rather than English in public spaces) have to do with Norwegian xenophobia or intolerance. Drawing on a discourse with clear racial undertones, the father self-interrupts and then immediately launches into what may be seen as an initiation into a storied justification of his claim. Here he first draws on a generalized, anonymous character ("one" – lines 04 & 05) who opts for Norwegian rather than English in conducting his or her everyday business in public spaces. Again, the pronominal choice lends it both more rhetoric and epistemic weight as a collective rather than purely personal experience. However, before providing any further details, he is interrupted by his wife who offers a more elaborate story in the rest of the passage.

The story itself (positioning level 1) revolves around her visit to the bank. The focus is now firmly on the mother's emotional discomfort and lack of confidence in having to rely on her own L2 skills in a formal institutional context. Rather than through an elaborate plot, it is driven forward by three different story characters: the mother, her husband and a bank clerk. Similarly to the narrator in the first example, she draws on a variety of

discursive tools to enhance the persuasiveness of her story, most notably 1) direct speech in which two different short exchanges are orchestrated (lines 09 – 14; 16 – 20), 2) hyperbole ("not in a thousand years" – line 11), 3) adverbial amplification ("really" – lines 13, 15, 19) and 4) contrastive descriptions (lines 18 & 19). Because of the multiple interruptions in the interactional context, it is not until the last line (28) that her story transpires as an analogy that she presumably wishes to draw between her own experience and the wider experience of Polish migrants to Norway in using L2 in public contexts. Because of the interruptions, the claim begins with a false start in line 20 and a completion in line 28. Despite being somewhat disjointed, we can assume it to be: "for the Polish migrant, it is a question of daring to speak rather than not being able to speak L2 in public spaces". As a whole, her narration clearly contains much descriptive detail that adds to its vividness and, on Ochs and Capps' terms, tellability. While the interactional interruptions make it open for a certain degree of fluidity and chronological disjunctions, it nonetheless follows a fairly linear path and offers a clear moral stance. Again then, as a short conversational story, it may be said to be inter-diegetic coherent (Olmos' criteria 1, 2, 3).

In the interactional context (positioning level 2), there are in this case two real-life audiences between lines 07 - 28: the interviewer and the father. The former once again aligns with the expectations of the genre and adopts a fairly passive stance of a listener throughout most of the passage. No critical or other questions are asked until line 27, where, rather than an elaboration of the mother's interrupted chain of thought, the overarching theme of the passage (i.e. that of the couple's experience with L2 learning) is brought back on board. As an interrogative yes/no speech act (line 19), this then serves as a bid for a summary or a closure which the mother accepts. The father, on the other hand, assumes a more active interactional involvement. Firstly, he prompts the story with his own, albeit unfinished, narrative. Secondly, he interrupts the narration and elaborates on the orchestrated exchange in the story world where he himself features as a voice (lines 22-24). However, he does not challenge the credence of the narration as a whole. Rather, he only engages in backing up the position that he has been assigned there: through direct speech, he voices the mother's inner speech that affirm his moral stance in the storied world as legitimate. Resuming the interactional floor, the mother does not challenge this but affirms it briefly before she proceeds towards formulating her main claim. While the son cannot be considered an active audience in the exchange, his silent presence is nonetheless also salient interactionally as a pause/interruption initiator.

How then does the imagined audience on the third positioning level come in? As in example 1, the narration is also specifically placed at the initial stage of resettlement, a fact that is underscored several times by the mother herself (lines 13, 14, 28) but also the researcher-interviewer (line 27). Once again then, this provides a subtle, yet important contextualization cue in so far as it justifies the mother's limited command of L2 as well as her inner unrest and lack of confidence in having to use it in an institutional setting. This is, however, a minor point here. Most importantly, the mother explicitly draws on a wider discourse on Polish migration to Norway and argues against what she perceives as an ethnic stereotype. That the ethnic dimension is key in this passage gets backing through additional cues: 1) multiple framing through explicit references to ethnic categories (Polish versus Norwegian); 2) assumed links between linguistic preferences and xenophobic attitudes grounded in ethnic membership (lines 01-06) and 3) lack of L2 command generalized to the Polish people as a group (lines line 15-20). This echoes a divisive us-and-them

discourse, increasingly salient also in the broader societal, particularly political and media, context in Norway (Andersson, 2012; Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). As such, we can argue that through her narrative argument by analogy, in which she resists the ethnic stereotyping, she also clearly resists the voice of this very (imagined) audience.

The passage has also clear gender undertones with the father being positioned as dictating the state of the affairs and the mother as aligning with the marginalized positioning assigned to her by him. It is, however, of note that this is so in this specific situated context, which necessarily raises expectations on what can and cannot be said. For example, a discursive resistance by the mother, or a more-less open dispute between the couple on this very issue during the interview, could be considered as highly situationally inappropriate. In fact, one may also argue that the mother's abrupt interruption of the father's racially motivated narrative in line 07 can, in fact, also represent a face-saving act vis-à-vis what she may perceive as situationally acceptable by their interactional audience (interviewer).

But is the mother's narrative credible as an argument? The anxiety she describes as an adult L2 speaker, her a-priori marginalized position as a member of an ethnic minority and her attempt to resist it in the interactional world may potentially cohere with a sense of moral sympathy and solidarity on at least some part of her audience (criterion 10). Taking into account also its inter-diegetic coherence, as argued above (criteria 1,2,3), the story seems also plausible as something that could have in fact happened (criterion 9), although this is, as Olmos warns a complex issue in itself and should therefore be approached with caution. Lastly, the actual audience does not explicitly dispute the mother's main thesis, suggesting at least some alignment with its previous beliefs (criterion 8), notwithstanding certain genre constraints.

5. Concluding remarks

What can we draw from this? How did the combined application of Olmos' integrative framework for the argumentative assessment of narrative credibility and Bamberg's positioning framework work on examples of short, conversational narratives constructed in research interviews?

First of all, building on Tindale (2017), I note that rather than operating with too strict definitions that a priori close the semantic field and thus preclude one discursive form from being compatible with another, one should instead look at how particular utterances with narrative-argumentative potential get constructed in a particular discursive context and how the multi-layered contextual particulars may signal and discursively index the narrator's argumentative-narrative goals. A dynamic view of both argument and narrative accommodates such concerns and, as Tindale (2017, p.11) suggests, invites "a broader range of discourses to qualify".

Relatedly, Tindale's (2017) dynamic view specifically calls for an audience-perspective. Drawing on a concept of a multilayered audience operating across the three positioning levels suggested by Bamberg (1997) allowed for an (arguably) contextually relevant analysis of what audience-grounded questions regarding the constructed narratives may arise, where and when. In so doing, it became apparent that it is crucial to pay attention to potential contextual and situational genre limitations (Carranza, 2015) as they will affect what critical questions may realistically be asked, by whom and when. Additionally, I note

a tension between the situational rhetoric appeal of short conversational stories and keeping a critical distance as an audience and thus assuring that one is not swayed away by the drama and vividness of the story itself but rather, as an interactional audience, remains on critical guard. This may concern particularly our moral judgements (criterion 10). It is also important to bear in mind that, as also Olmos (2014) underscores, the very process of assessing story credibility represents an actual argumentative practice in itself that too has its audience. While this has not been specifically addressed in this paper, it is a position necessarily adopted in the actual analysis and its presentation. Indeed, applying the assessment criteria necessitated normative interpretative decisions on the degree of credibility of the constructed story worlds, interactional worlds but also the highly abstract worlds of circulating macro-discourses assigned to the imagined audience.

Furthermore, in assessing the argumentative potential of narratives, the issue of narrative formats transpired as key. As the analysis showed, conversational stories, constructed by just one narrator in a linear chronological fashion, with few interruptions and with much narrative detail (example 1), may be more easily amenable to inter-diegetic assessments of their argumentative potential. It does not, however, necessarily imply that they will work as plausible evidence vis-à-vis their audience.

On the other hand, more interactive stories with a broader tellership, including several co-narrators and a wider audience, are necessarily more dynamic and fluid (example 2). Hence, they are also more structurally challenging to decompose as arguments. Indeed, through a quick succession of conversational turns and interactional frames, the analyst faces a very real challenge of drawing clear boundaries not only between one story and next but also in terms of what argument is being put forward, how it is defended and how it fits in the overall argumentative structure. Such highly dynamic discourse may in fact contain only story snippets or fragments, serving more local claim-backing purposes. It may also be replete with multiple interruptions, false starts at formulations of an argument and unfinished formulations. This then seriously complicates any attempt at assessing its narrative-argumentative potential. It also underscores and extends Tindale's point of critique against the static view, that even if the narrator may have the advantage of hindsight, the audience does not; in fact, given the interactional demands, the narrator may derail from a linear narrative telling in a myriad of ways and thus lose not only hindsight but also sight of his/her main narrative claim.

This then suggests that, on a dynamic view, a rigid application of any criterial framework may not be particularly useful. Instead, contextual relevance should always be addressed and assessed carefully. In fact, echoing Olmos (2014), any attempt at constructing an all-embracing theory of story credibility, also one that would take into account the rhetorical aspects of arguments, may be a daunting task indeed. Not only because of "the unexpected in human affairs" (Olmos, 2014) but simply because of the ever-changing contextual parameters, embedded in the dynamic view. Discursive-analytic insights on how arguers-narrators draw on a wide range of resources to make what they say plausible at a particular point in time, in a specific context and for specific real and imagined audiences may shed more light on this complex endeavour.

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Appendix 1: Discourse-analytic transcription conventions

.   Falling intonation
?   Rising intonation
!   Animated tone of voice
(.)   Micro-pause
« »   Direct speech
@   Laughter
(( )) Transcriber comment / description
-       Self- or other-interruption