How Folk Narratives Manage Time in Discourse

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Some Considerations and Complications on the Way to Constructing (Possibly) a Computational Model of Narrative

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tale No.</th>
<th>Recounted Time</th>
<th>Narrated Time</th>
<th>N.T. per cent of R.T.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Part of one day</td>
<td>Part of one day</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
<td>12-14 hours</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>19 days</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>20-25 years</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>0.07-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>21-22 years</td>
<td>9 days &amp; 2 nights</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>A few days or weeks</td>
<td>2 days &amp; intervening night</td>
<td>30 - 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>30-35 years</td>
<td>probably 6 days</td>
<td>0.05-0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>2.74-1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>1 year, 2-3 weeks</td>
<td>9 days, 2 nights</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>1 year, 1-6 weeks</td>
<td>19 days</td>
<td>4.8 -3.47</td>
</tr>
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Figure 1: Bill Nicolaisen's Narrated/Recounted Time Table
There was once a magician who was standing in the midst of a great crowd of people performing his wonders. He had a rooster brought in, which lifted a heavy beam and carried it as if it were as light as a feather. But a girl was present who had just found a four-leaf clover, and had thus become so wise that she could see through every deception, and she saw that the beam was nothing but a straw. So she called out, "You people, do you not see that it is a straw that the rooster is carrying, and not a beam?" The magic vanished immediately, and the people saw what it was, and drove the sorcerer away in shame and disgrace. He, however, full of inward anger, said, "I will avenge myself." Some time later the girl's wedding day arrived. She was all decked out, and went in a great procession across a field to the place where the church was. Suddenly they came to a swollen brook, and there was neither a bridge nor a walkway to cross it. So the bride nimbly lifted up her clothes, and was about to wade through it. She had just stepped into the water when a man near her, and it was the magician, called out mockingly "Aha! What kind of eyes do you have that think they see water?" Then her eyes were opened, and she saw that she was standing with her clothes lifted up in the middle of a field that was blue with flax blossoms. Then all the people saw it too, and they chased her away with ridicule and laughter.
There was once a magician who was standing in the midst of a great crowd of people performing his wonders.

Some time later the girl’s wedding day arrived. She was all decked out, and went in a great procession across a field to the place where the church was.
And Joe Natalie was a true old world Italian
And he talked Italian
English, you know, but broken English
And a lot of the kids would go over there and steal an apple or a banana or something, you know, when he wasn’t looking
And I never did think to steal. If I stole something and my grandparents found out, I mean, my butt was ... gone
They’d beat me until I couldn’t sit down
So anyway, I was over there looking at bananas and this man came up and grabbed me by the arm
And he said he said you’re the kid who stole the apple
I said I what?
He said you stole an apple. I said I never stole no such thing. He said no last Saturday
I said I have never stole anything in my life
I said if you go ask that man that works over there I usually come up and buy an apple or an orange or something—you’d get a banana for like three cents, an orange for two cents or something
You remember Golden’s Market?
Let’s say this is the block ...
this is Second Street, this Rogers, this Maple.
Well, Golden Market was on this corner
and EJ’s bakery was in there, and halfway ...
there’s a pharmacy in there now, called Value
Plus or I don’t know now.
But right in there was where that little old lady,
in her house, had this little clothing store.
He was in the excavating business, so he called me to come up and showed me the job. And we dug house basements. And that was when they were remodeling a lot filling stations, making them super service and that sort of thing, so I said, yeah, I’ll take it. So I worked there about two years and a half. And then we came back to Bloomington.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAUSE</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>PERIOD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>He was in the excavating business,</td>
<td>free</td>
<td>decades</td>
<td>decades ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so he called me to come up and showed me the job.</td>
<td>narr</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>decades ago</td>
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<td>And we dug house basements.</td>
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And, uh, it was For a long time it would kindly It’d dash me, you know. But I got till I, when I’d turn off the light I’d close my eyes real tight. But now, honestly, that light would go down in under the cover with me. It did. That light’d When I’d turn that cover down and after the light was turned off, That light’d go down under that cover as pretty as I ever saw a light in my life. And, uh, I had a quilt on my bed that I thought might be the cause of it, That … that was on his bed when Before he died. And I rolled that quilt up and sent it to the dump. Because I felt like that made that’s the reason. But I still saw the light. It didn’t make It didn’t change a thing. But the light … for a long time, well for two of three years or longer … probably than that, light would flash up. But I’ve not seen it now in a good while. (126-127)
One day me and my daddy
My daddy was sick
His stomach kept hurting him, hurting him
Every night he would lay in the bed cramped up so bad
Said there was a big old knot in his stomach
He said he just couldn’t take it
We had to sit on his legs to stretch him out
Stretch his arms out so that cramp would leave his stomach
So mama said one day ...
We had an old seventy-one Ford pickup truck
With a purple hood
So one day mama said —
My daddy’s name was Taise —
She said Taise we going to bring you to the treater

I was kind of small
So they brought me with them
And the only thing I can remember, man, is my daddy going in the house with this old lady
And I was still in the truck
Because they wouldn’t let me go in the house
So when he come outside
He threwed up snakes
Out of his stomach
Out of his mouth
I mean six seven eight nine ten Threwed them up
And when we left from there,
Daddy was fine.
Never caught a cramp again.
Thank You

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