

**Enacting Persona in “The Art of Being Fully Human”:
Storytelling & Narrative in Inspirational Lecture**

Dr. Leo Buscaglia (1979): University of California, Davis
Broadcast on PBS

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INTRODUCTION

A good story resonates. It endures. It soaks into our core and our memory and becomes part of who we are as human beings. A story, well-told, also connects us to the speaker. Recall a good story, and you recall the storyteller who created its magic.

The excerpt I analyze here is nearly 35 years old; the speaker, long gone. Through his stories, Dr. Leo Buscaglia, professor of education turned popular inspirational author and speaker in the 1970s and 1980s, reached out to a culture in search of identity: a post-sixties, post-Vietnam, post-Watergate America. The time of hippies had passed and the era of Reagan had begun. As a generation, we were label-less and disconnected. Buscaglia set out to remedy that with a sixties-esque message of love and relatedness.

Something about his message clicked. Buscaglia's books were *New York Times* bestsellers, with more than 11 million copies sold at the time of his death in 1998, and more since (Folkart, 1998). His message and expressive narrative style struck a chord among educators, students, and eventually the general public; he gained national and international popularity as PBS began broadcasting and selling video and audio tapes of his lectures. Today, Buscaglia's books and DVDs are still available for purchase, and clips of his lectures circulate widely on the internet.

Buscaglia's message was inspiring to some and insipid to others. The *Los Angeles Times* wrote in his 1998 obituary: "*Psychology Today*, while praising [Buscaglia's] recommendations for 'full-time kindness,' nonetheless said that little of his work amounted to more than

‘momentary inspiration’” (Folkart, 1998). But one thing about Leo Buscaglia was never disputed, even among his harshest critics: *the man could tell a great story*.

In this paper I will not address the nature of Buscaglia’s message. Rather, I will demonstrate how he communicates that message through a highly stylized, artistic verbal performance. Buscaglia displays what Bauman once stated: “...in artistic performance of this kind, there is something going on in the communicative interchange which says to the auditor, ‘interpret what I say in some special sense; do not take it to mean what the words, alone, taken literally, would convey’” (Bauman, 1975, p. 292).

Fundamental to Buscaglia’s performance is the construction of a distinct persona that reflexively models the purpose of his message; as Buscaglia discusses “the art of being fully human,” he also enacts the very character of a person who embraces that ideal. He does so by weaving together a series of small stories, each of which reveals a different aspect of his identity and history. Throughout the storytelling process, he repeats stylistic narrative patterns that reinforce and exaggerate the “fully human” persona. Buscaglia’s narrative extends beyond mere representation: we can pinpoint how he engages in dialogic interaction with the participants in his audiences and with those whom he characterizes and interprets—and how those participants, past and present, help to reinforce his persona. There is no doubt Leo Buscaglia could tell a great story; I will attempt to show *how* he did so.

DATA ANALYSIS

The storytelling event is excerpted from one of Buscaglia's lectures at the University of California at Davis in 1979 and was rebroadcast on PBS (Buscaglia, 1979). The speaker addresses both a live and extended viewing audience.

During the entirety of the storytelling event, Buscaglia constructs the persona of an ebullient, affectionate, passionate human being eager to connect with other human beings, exactly the kind of person he encourages his audience to be. This construction reflects Stanton Wortham's theory of interactional autobiographical narrative in which "narrators *act* like particular types of people while they tell their stories, and they relate to their audiences in characteristic ways as they tell those stories" (Wortham, 2001, p. xi) Wortham's theory expands Bakhtin's notion of dialogic interaction: such construction of self is never merely representational or one-sided; rather, there is a simultaneous parallelism taking place in the narrative. There are a multitude of interesting ways Buscaglia accomplishes this construction.

First of all, he weaves together an intricate pattern of stories (or narrated events) within the tapestry of a larger narrative. He layers one on top of the other till he reaches his final story: that of a student's suicide, an event that changed both his personal perspective and ultimately his career trajectory. As a result, the larger narrative is an illustration of who he is and how he came to pursue his particular purpose. In the sections that follow, I isolate several examples from these episodic stories to illuminate how Buscaglia uses stylistic narrative patterns and verbal artistic performance techniques that reinforce and exaggerate the "fully human" persona.

EPISODE 1: HIS NAME

In Chapter 1, Buscaglia introduces himself and immediately establishes a unique identity and connection with his audiences by virtue of his unusual name:

1 intro	BUS. 1. Um (.) f- I'd like to tell you something first before I begi:n (.) 2. ~You know~ I usually begin by telling you stories about my na:me 3. because uh it's such a wonderful name and I do love it so 4. Uh (0.1) i- it's spelled B-U-S-C-A-G-L-I-A and it gives everybody enormous problems 5. and it's a wonderful way of introducing yourself 6. and getting to know people because (h) it's an outrage (.)
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The excerpt above, and virtually all the segments in the Buscaglia interaction, are rich with examples of what Jakobson referred to as *poetics*: “what makes a verbal message a work of art” (Jakobson, 1960, p. 350). More specifically, Buscaglia’s technique reveals heavy usage of the *emotive* or *expressive* function of language, which “aims a direct expression of the speaker’s attitude toward what he is speaking about” thereby producing “an impression of a certain emotion whether true or feigned” (Jakobson, p. 354).

Episode 1B illustrates how he specifically treats the Italian pronunciation of his name:

1B	BUS. 13. And it's the truth and and n- not only that but m- most of ~you know~ if you've read my books or anything else that (.) my name is really not (.) Leo 14. Leo comes from my middle name which is Leonardo [lay-ob-NARR-dob*] (0.1) 15. And that's nice too 16. And um my first name I really love but I don't ever dare use and I'll tell you why in a minute (h) 17. but my first name is Feli:ce [fab-LEE-chay*] (0.1) 18. And that means >peace and joy and love those of you who< speak Italian know 19. so if you see it all together it's (.) Feli:ce Leona:rdo Busca:glia [fab-LEE-chay*] [lay-ob-NARR-dob*] [boos-CAHL-yab*]
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AUD.	20. which is like a <u>Ve:rdi</u> opera <u>you know</u> (.) I LOVE it [hhh] [applause]
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To enact the emotive function, the speaker frequently uses what Labov would characterize as *intensifiers* and *expressive phonology* such as “I **LOVE** it” – Line 20 (Labov, pp. 378-379). The Italian is delivered in an almost musical performance that aligns with his reference to a Verdi opera (Line 20). Additionally, Line 18 serves to reinforce the self-construction of a persona who is centered on the ideas of “peace and joy and love” because it is an integral part of his own name. This sequence succeeds in positioning Buscaglia as an exuberant, passionate individual whose performance here alone brings the audience to laughter and applause. It is supported by Wortham’s notion that “a narrator often reinforces and sometimes re-creates what sort of person he or she is” (Wortham, p. xi).

CHAPTER 2: “BRAILLING”

In the second chapter Buscaglia uses the idea of “brailing” as a reference to the act of touching and is a launching point for his thesis on the human need to connect with one other in both a literal and figurative sense. The device draws on Silverstein’s theory of the simultaneous referential/non-referential multi-functionality of language: speech events have both referential (semantic) and non-referential (pragmatic) qualities and functions, often happening simultaneously. This is where real meaning is generated, at this intersection, but we need context to understand meaning (Silverstein, 1976).

Buscaglia gives his audience that context. “Braille” comes from two points of origin, first from a five-year-old child’s curiosity in Episode 2A:

2A	BUS.	<p>35. (h) Um last night I was talking to my nephew he’s only five and a half and</p> <p>36. he’s <u>really</u> c- curious and he’s in that stage that most of ~you know~</p> <p>37. that <u>magical</u> stage where (h) kids are running around <u>brai::lling</u> the world <u>you know</u> (h)</p> <p>38. And they’re- they’re <u>curious</u> about <u>everything</u> it’s so <u>sa:d</u> that we <u>stop</u> them <u>you know</u></p> <p>39. They want to <u>brai::lle</u> and we say <i>don’t touch that</i> >and <i>don’t</i> (*mbbrrrrmmbb*)<</p> <p>40. ~You know~ the world is not set up for <u>children</u> ↓ (0.1)</p> <p>41. Uh that’s a great <u>pity</u> because some of us could still do a lot of <u>brai::lling</u> and learn a lot (0.2)</p>
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Episode 2B and parts of Ch. 2 Transition illustrate the parallel referential indexical meaning of “braille” further:

2B	BUS.	<p>42. Perhaps one of the most <u>beautiful</u> moments in my life was when I spoke to a group of <u>blind</u> people (h)</p> <p>43. And after it was <u>over</u></p> <p>44. >it was a very< <u>la:rg</u>e group >it was a national< conference ↑ (h)</p> <p>45. One of these beautiful (.) <u>blind</u> men came up and said <i>Doctor Buscaglia may I <u>brai::lle</u> you?</i> (0.2)</p>
	AUD.	[hh]
	BUS.	<p>46. Have you ever been <u>brai::lled</u>?</p> <p>47. Uh-yuhhhh ((1.0 pause for audience laughter))</p>
	AUD.	[hhhh]
	BUS.	<p>48. I <u>know</u> you’ve been <u>felt</u> ((1.0 pause for audience laughter))</p>
	AUD.	[hhhhhh]
	BUS.	<p>49. But not <u>brai::lled</u> ↓</p> <p>50. >That’s a different thing it was like having< a- a cool <u>bree::ze</u> or electrical current running over your skin-</p>

In the segment above, Buscaglia performs the reported speech of a blind man who uses “braille” as a means of “seeing” and connecting with another person (Line 45). Buscaglia does not leave it there, however, and indexes the physical sensation of being “brilled” or touched in an entirely different way. Buscaglia continues his use of the term in the next segment:

Ch. 2
Transition

BUS.	51. And uh (.) uh first of all I'd like to (.) start by >getting us in a common frame of reference<
	52. Now some of you (.) uh I always am a little bit confused as to where to begin
	53. because I know that some of you have (.) read my books because you've written me: (h) and wonderful letters
	54. and uh (.) or you've seen tapes of mine or you've <u>own</u> ed them (.) and uh ~you know~ pretty much where my head is
	55. and others of you and it's <u>right</u> that it <u>should</u> be that way (h) have no idea (.) <u>who</u> I am (h)
	56. And that's good <u>too</u> because then we can get acquainted tonight and sorta (h) verbally <u>braille</u> each other
	57. and if you want to do <u>more</u> I'll stand down <u>here</u> and we can do more later on
AUD.	[hh]
BUS.	58. ~You know~ that I'm a big Italian <u>hugger</u> (.) uh ((0.5 pause for audience laughter))
AUD.	[hhh]
BUS.	59. Mama used to say <i>you can believe something when you touch it</i> ((.5 pause for audience laughter))
AUD.	[hhh]
BUS.	60. So if you wanna be <u>belie::ved</u> (.) <u>you know</u> ((.5 pause for audience laughter))
AUD.	[hhh]

Line 56 contains a reference for him and his audience to “verbally braille each other” and then extends the concept to actual physical touching in Line 57. In Line 58 Buscaglia directly constructs his persona by referring to himself as “a big Italian hugger” (the cultural reference already established in Episode 1B) and plays off the audience’s reaction to emphasize the point both verbally and paralinguistically, using gestural intensifiers (Labov, 1972). In Line 59 he uses the recontextualized reported speech of his mother (“*you can believe something when you touch it*”) to express an ideology he carries through in his interactions with others, as we will see in future chapters: specifically, in Episode 3E.

CHAPTER 3: CONNECTING WITH STUDENTS

In the third chapter Buscaglia narrates a series of events leading up to the turning point in his life: a student’s suicide. Throughout this chapter, using the emotive patterns established earlier (Jakobson, 1960) as well as dialogic characterization and double-voiced

“ventriloquation” (Bakhtin, 1986a), Buscaglia continues the construction of self through his narrative.

Buscaglia’s comments at the beginning of Chapter 3 lay out his theme, and he does so in an explicitly poetic way:

3 intro	BUS.	<p>61. Um (0.1) <u>anyway</u> I- I’d like to get us in a common frame of reference so that we know pretty much (.) whe:re we stand and what I’m going to be talking (.) to you about tonight</p> <p>62. which is a subject that is really <u>keen</u> to my <u>heart</u> (h) and that is the <u>art</u> (0.1)</p> <p>63. literally the <u>art</u> (0.1)</p> <p>64. of being fully <u>human</u> (0.1)</p> <p>65. Uh uh I don’t know about you but I <u>really love</u> the concept that I:: am a human being (.) and have all the potential (0.1) to <u>be</u> (0.1) a human being</p> <p>66. With <u>a(b)ll</u> that this means (.)</p>
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He strategically uses rhythm and rhyme in Lines 62-64: “keen to my heart – and that is the art – literally the art – of being fully human.” He continues the emotive / expressive technique in Lines 65-66 to emphasize how he “really loves” the idea of being a human being and having “all the potential to be a human being with all that this means.”

Episode 3A begins his discussion of how, as part of “being fully human,” one of his goals is to connect with his students:

3A	BUS.	<p>76. And I had one of those <u>mandatory</u> classes <<u>you know</u>> that everybody <u>has</u> to take</p> <p>77. And I was the uh- assistant professor at the time and I <u>had</u> to teach it (.) <u>you know</u></p> <p>78. And so I got before- >It was a big< – they used Bovard auditorium a big barny place that some of ~you know~ (h)</p> <p>79. And I got in front of this audience and I thought <i>how will I ever <u>reach</u> them</i></p> <p>80. <i>How will I ever <u>touch</u> them</i> (hh) (0.1)</p> <p>81. And- and it was really a-uh- kind of a traumati:c situation to be put into (.) for your first class but that’s what <u>ha:ppens you know</u></p>
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He narrates through the use of expressive phonology and gestural intensifiers the vastness of the lecture hall and the literal and symbolic distance between him and his students. Lines 79-80 are his enactment of himself as a character, wondering how to make the connection. This particular enactment reflects a variation of Koven’s explanation of the double-voiced narrator-character role, “when the speaker simultaneously narrates a past event, with deictics that distinguish the event from the current moment of speaking, while reporting what character said or thought” (Koven, 2011, p. 160).

In Episode 3B Buscaglia introduces his notion of “kind eyeballs,” which to him as a speaker, represent a necessary element of effective dyadic interactional conversation:

3B	BUS.	82. <u>Anyway</u> I- I stood before the class >and I have many things< that I feel very strongly about
		83. (h) and one is- is that (.) the <u>first</u> thing I do when I get before an audience is I look for < <u>kind</u> eyeba::lls>
		84. (0.1) (h) When the audience is in <u>blackness</u> I’m <u>lo::st</u> (.)
		85. Uh talking to myself is not one of my <u>pa::ssions</u> (h)
		86. But- but >when I can <u>see</u> eyeballs< (if?) I know that I’m safe
		87. >And to me< kind eyeballs are the kind of eyeballs that stay there
		88. and when you get lost or you say something <u>stupid</u> or you don’t remember what you said before (h)
		89. you look at them and they say <i>come on Buscaglia you can do it</i> <u>you know</u>
		90. (h) And- and uh I’m <u>ama(h)::zed</u> at how many such eyeballs (.) there a:re (0.1)

The episode also continues his enactment of self as “fully human” by employing emotive, expressive phonology and gestural intensifiers. Line 89 (“*Come on Buscaglia you can do it*”) is a characterization of what someone with “kind eyeballs” communicates to him during their interaction.

As Buscaglia continues describing his efforts to connect with his students, he uses characterizations and ventriloquation in the next two segments. When considering such characterizations and reported speech, it's important to note the more complex and interesting idea behind it all: Bakhtin's notion that "the expression of an utterance always responds to a greater or lesser degree, that is, it expresses the speaker's attitude toward the object of his utterance" (Bakhtin, 1953/1986a, p. 92, as quoted in Wortham, 2001, p. 19). Judith Irvine makes a similar comment: "To animate another's voice gives one a marvelous opportunity to comment on it subtly – to shift its wording, exaggeratedly mimic its style, or supplement its expressive features" (Irvine, 2001, p. 149) Therefore, when analyzing others' ventriloquation, it is important to note that it is never merely representational, but situated in context of the social interaction and how the narrator wants to portray it. In Buscaglia's case, such ventriloquation offers an opportunity to contrast their behaviors with his "more fully human" kind.

As example, Episodes 3E and 3F depict the intimidation students sometimes experience with his "fully human" approach. First, 3E:

3E	BUS.	102. And uh I have a lot of things in my classes that >all of my students and all of my friends know< I call (.) <u>voluntarily mandatory</u> (0.2)
	AUD.	[hh]
	BUS.	103. And one of the things that's <u>voluntarily mandatory</u> is that everybody come and <u>see</u> me <in my office> at least <u>once</u> (.) every semester (0.2)
		104. Now <u>that</u> isn't asking too much (.)
		105. But you'd be surpr <i>ri</i> (h)sed how many people that <u>intimidates</u> (0.2)
		106. <u>You know</u> <i>what does he want to see</i> <u>me</u> for (0.2)
		107. Well I try to tell my students <u>you know</u> <i>I don't believe you until I can have you in my</i> (.) <i>close proximity</i> (0.1)
		108. <i>And also since I am a</i> (.) <i>passionate Italian</i>
		109. <i>I will believe you when I</i> <u>touch</u> <i>you</i>
		110. <i>so when you come and</i> <u>see me</u> <i>I'm gonna touch you</i> :::::

AUD.	[hhhh]
BUS.	111. <u>You know</u> and <i>if that bothers you:: take your <u>tranquilizer</u></i> ((0.5 pause for audience laughter))

In Line 106 above, “*what does he want to see me for*” is the speaker’s recontextualized interpretation of the imagined speech of an aggravated student. Line 107 shows a shift between the speaker as narrator to the speaker as a character (Koven, 2011), which is carried through Line 111. In Lines 108-110, the speaker again directly references his persona of a passionate, “touching” human being. Line 109 (“I will believe you when I touch you”) recalls his own mother’s words as we saw back in Chapter 2 (Line 59). It is in Line 111 where we experience the culmination of his attitude toward the resistant students: “*if that bothers you, take your tranquilizers.*”

This kind of Bakhtinian commentary on others is also reflected in Episode 3F, wherein he enacts the characterization of a typical student, who he fictionalizes with the name “Sally”:

3F	BUS.	112. And then when <u>you know</u> when I go out of my office and I see Sally sitting there I say <i>bi Sally</i> (0.1)
	AUD.	113. And she says <i>hello</i> . (.) <and I take her ha:nd> (.) her little sweaty pa:lm (.) [hhh]
	BUS.	114. <and I cover it with mi:ne> and I <slowly lead her into the office>
	AUD.	[hhh]
	BUS.	115. and I can sort of <u>see</u> by her eyes she’s thinking <i>my god what is he gonna do to me <u>you know</u></i>
		116. <i>I’m not going to do <u>anything</u> to you Sally I just want to relate to you (h) person to person</i>
		117. <i>I want you to know that somehow (h) I too am human</i>
		118. <i>I cry too I’m lonely too I need too (h) and that I need you just as desperately as you need <u>me</u> (h)</i>
		119. And on that level we can start communicating and (h) on that level we can start to learn °from_° each ° other ↓(1.0)
		120. Which is what a (0.1) <u>learning</u> situation a:lways is if it’s a truly learning situation (0.1)

Additionally, Lines 116-118 (self-characterization) and Lines 119-120 illuminate his point regarding humanness and connection, again using emotive and expressive poetic technique (Jakobson, Labov).

Episodes 3H-3J are critical in the entire narrative; they are the culmination of both his enactment of self and the point of his story: the loss of a student. He begins by telling the story of when the student disappeared from his class:

3H

BUS.	<p>139. >And I was eagerly waiting for this girl< to come and see me (h)</p> <p>140. because I am ego involved with my <u>friends</u> and my- my <u>lovers</u> and my <u>students</u> and I wanted them desperately (0.3)</p> <p>141. I want them to know that I am</p> <p>142. And I wanted to say to her (0.1) um (.) (*tzk*) <i>thank you (.) for being alive</i></p> <p>143. <i>Thank you for sharing (.) your enthusiasm and your eagerness and your vibrations</i></p> <p>144. Thank you for making me a better <u>tea:cher</u> (0.2)</p> <p>145. And about <u>five</u> weeks into the semester (.) this beautiful young girl (.) was not in her seat ↑ (h)</p> <p>146. And when >Monday Wednesday Friday Monday Wednesday Friday< came (h)</p> <p>147. I became curious and I went down to where she sat and asked the people around her what had happened to her (h)</p> <p>148. And do you <u>know</u> in something like °<u>six</u> ° <u>weeks</u> °of <u>school</u> they <u>didn't</u> °<u>even</u> °<u>know</u> °her na::me (0.2)</p> <p>149. It's no <u>wonder</u> that Schweitzer says <u>you know</u> we're all so much together in our world and yet we're (.) all dying (.) of loneliness and I truly <u>believe</u> it (0.2)</p> <p>150. >We need to know how to< express it nor even if we feel it (0.1)</p> <p>151. We're- we're <u>intimidated</u> by it we don't know how to reach out and say (h) <i>look (.) lonely person take my lonely ha::nd</i> (0.2)</p> <p>152. <i>We can be stronger this way</i> ↑ (1.0)</p>
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Poetic and expressive enactment turns from lighthearted humor to serious drama: Lines 142-144 again show narrator as character in the “there and then.” Line 148 reflects his anger and disappointment in the “there and then” and Line 149 enacts Albert Schweitzer as a character in the “here and now” by virtue of his quote that transcends time. Lines 151-152 enact a characterization of all human beings – the collective “we.”

Finally, in Episodes 3I and 3J the speaker describes how he learned of his student's death:

3I	BUS.	<p>153. And so I went to the Dean of Women and I asked about her (0.1) 154. And (.) Joan is a very <u>lovely</u> girl and said <i>I'm – oh Leo I'm <u>sorry</u></i> (0.5) 155. <i>Haven't I <u>told</u> you</i> (0.1) 156. This gi:rl went to Pacific Palisades which is an area (0.1) in Los Angeles that many of ~you know~ where sheer cliffs (.) fall into the sea (0.3) 157. And there were people there having a picnic on the gra:ss (0.1) and they saw her drive her car up (0.1) 158. She left the: (.) ignition running (0.1) 159. and <u>zombie</u> like she walked across the grass and without a moment's hesitation (hh) (0.2) threw herself off <u>onto the rocks below</u> (1.0)</p>
3J	AUD.	<p>160. <She was <u>twenty two</u>> (3.0) 161. It was a <u>good</u> thing that <u>happened</u> to me (0.1) in a tragedy↓ 162. >Because all of a <u>sudden</u> I asked myself< (0.5) 163. what does it <u>matter</u> that we've taught this girl (0.1) to <u>read</u> and to <u>write</u> and to <u>spell</u> and to do <u>ALL</u> of the things we think are <u>essential</u> 164. if <u>NO</u> one along the line taught her the <u>sacredness</u> of being <u>ali::ve</u> 165. and taught her the <u>dignity</u> and the <u>wonder</u> of her °own ° personal ° self ° (0.1) so that she could easily <u>take</u> it</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[applause]</p>

Lines 154-155 depict the speaker's positioning of the sympathetic, apologetic voice of the Dean of Women. Lines 156-159 are not enacted directly as reported speech, but as a summary of the Dean's story. This entire segment demonstrates a quieter, more reserved delivery style, with more frequent and longer pauses than any of his prior, highly energized narrations. Lines 159-160 are delivered quite softly as he relates the student's final act; clearly, the speaker positions himself in the "here and now" as one who was deeply affected by his student's death in the "there and then." Finally, he strategically uses Lines 161-165 to regain his vocal strength (perhaps to mirror his inner strength) and drive home the point of

his message: “No one along the line taught her the sacredness of being alive and taught her the dignity and the wonder of her own personal self”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of the narrative by the late inspirational speaker Leo Buscaglia demonstrates one man’s method in constructing a persona that reflexively enacts the type of person he feels is essential in life: one who has embraced “the art of being fully human.” By using a series of short stories, carefully crafted and woven together to tell a larger narrative and to construct this persona, Buscaglia demonstrates Wortham’s theories that narrators often construct a persona over the course of telling stories about oneself (Wortham, 2001).

Along the way, the speaker demonstrates the use of distinct stylistic patterns that also help construct the persona. Recalling Bakhtin (1986a), Buscaglia enacts characterizations and double-voiced ventriloquation of past dialogic interactions in such a way that provides insight and commentary into his interpretation of people and situations, and how they react to and interact with that persona. He demonstrates consistent use of poetics, or what Jakobson referred to as the emotive or expressive function of language (Jakobson, 1960).

Evidence also abounds throughout the interaction to support Labov’s comments on the power of actual reported experience in narrative, in which he says effective narrators “... will command the total attention of an audience in a remarkable way, creating a deep and attentive silence that is never found in academic or political discussion. The reaction of

listeners to these narratives seems to demonstrate that the most highly valued form of language is that which translates our personal experience into dramatic form” (Labov, 1975, p. 396).

There is no denying that Buscaglia accomplishes this with a unique style. But what is *style*? Judith Irvine said that style “concerns distinctiveness; though it may characterize an individual, it does so only within the social framework (of witnesses who pay attention); it thus depends upon social evaluation and, perhaps, aesthetics” (Irvine, 2001, p. 21) – an idea that echoes Bakhtin and Wortham as well. Style may not be definable, but it is identifiable. This begs further questions about what *style* is and how speakers go about developing it.

Finally, this interaction is a timeless example of the power of storytelling. When I was a professional speechwriter and “message manager” in the corporate world, I understood the power of a well-spun yarn: empires were created or destroyed with the telling of the right story. Now I am interested in narrative and storytelling from an linguistic, verbal performance point-of-view, as well from social, cultural, and literary perspectives. In his book *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*, Jonathan Gottschall says: “How bizarre it is that when we experience a story...we allow ourselves to be invaded by the teller. The story maker penetrates our skulls and seizes control of our brains” (Gottschall, 2012, p. xv). And as Leo Buscaglia illustrates, it is indeed difficult to separate the storyteller from the story; they are inextricably linked.

#

TRANSCRIPTION

“The Art of Being Fully Human” (Part 1 of 4) by Dr. Leo Buscaglia
Delivered at the University of California at Davis, 1979

<http://youtu.be/GmfWSQspSo4>

Selected clip: 1:00-13:09

CHAPTER 1: Introducing himself via his name

Intro

Episode A: Operator

Episode B: Italian pronunciation

Episode C: Bureaucrat

CHAPTER 2: “Brailing”

Episode A: 5-year-old nephew

Episode B: Blind man

Transition

CHAPTER 3: When everything changed: the loss of a student

Intro

Episode A: Lecture class

Episode B: Eyeballs

Episode C: Disconnected students

Episode D: Kind eyeballs in class

Episode E: Voluntarily mandatory

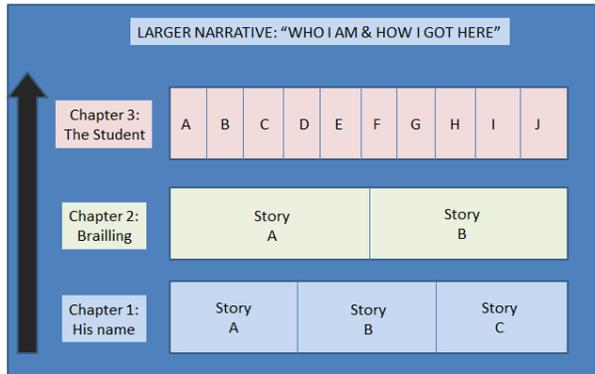
Episode F: “Sally”

Episode G: Ripple

Episode H: Student disappears

Episode I: Dean relates girl’s suicide

Episode J: Value of life and self



If one were to represent this visually, it might look like Figure A. The outer box represents the larger story (“Who I am and how I got here”). Each row represents a different thematic chapter with the episodes (or specific narrated events) comprising them.

<p>1 Intro</p>	<p>1. Um (.1) f- I'd like to tell you something first before I begi:n (.)</p> <p>2. ~You know~ I usually begin by telling you stories about my name</p> <p>3. because uh it's such a wonderful name and I do love it so</p> <p>4. Uh (0.1) i- it's spelled B-U-S-C-A-G-L-I-A and it gives everybody enormous problems</p> <p>5. and it's a wonderful way of introducing yourself</p> <p>6. and getting to know people because (h) it's an outrage (.)</p>
<p>1A</p>	<p>7. And uh th- the one I love the best is one I always tell</p> <p>8. and that is I placed a long distance telephone call (.) several years ago and the line was busy</p> <p>9. and the operator said that as soon as the line was finished she'd call me (.) and so on</p> <p>10. And so uh when the phone rang about five or ten minutes later I picked it up and she said <i>would you please tell Doctor <u>Boxcar</u> that his telephone call is through</i> [hhh]</p> <p>11. I said <i>could that be Buscaglia</i></p> <p>12. she said <i>sir it could be damn near anything</i> [hhhhhhh]</p>
<p>1B</p>	<p>13. And it's the truth and and n- not only that but m- most of ~you know~ if you've read my books or anything else that (.) my name is really not (.) Leo</p> <p>14. Leo comes from my middle name which is Leonardo [lay-ob-NARR-dob*] (0.1)</p> <p>15. And that's nice too</p> <p>16. And um my first name I really love but I don't ever dare use and I'll tell you why in a minute (h)</p> <p>17. but my first name is Felice [fab-LEE-chay*] (0.1)</p>

	<p>18. And that means >peace and joy and love those of you who< speak Italian know</p> <p>19. so if you see it all together it's (.) Feli:ce Leona:rdo Busca:glia [fab-LEE-chay*] [lay-ob-NARR-dob*] [boos-CAHL-yab*]</p> <p>20. which is like a Ve:rdi opera you know (.) I LOVE it [hhh] [applause]</p>
1C	<p>21. And uh several years ago I- I was asked to take a tour - uh</p> <p>22. Touring around in Asia (.) and speaking to groups and so on</p> <p>23. And I had to get federal clearance because I would be going into army camps and (h) navy camps and air force camps and >so on and so forth<</p> <p>24. And (h) and I- I was in a large room in Los Angeles in the federal building about half the size of this one</p> <p>25. (h) filling out little forms and giving it to a little man behind the ca::ge <you know> who checks you out and makes sure that everything's okay (h)</p> <p>26. And uh then he- when- when he's ready for you he calls your name over a microphone</p> <p>27. And I knew this was going to present a problem because if you think of (.) Feli:ce Leona:rdo Busca:glia [fab-LEE-chay*] [lay-ob-NARR-dob*] [boos-CAHL-yab*] it may be good for Verdi but it's not so good for Mister Smith you know (0.1) [hhh]</p> <p>28. And so uh I- I knew that he had reached mine he had no trouble with Sally Jones and Jo-James Brown and everything else (h)</p> <p>29. But I knew he reached mine when he sort of picked it up and looked at it and did a double take like <i>what freak could have a name like this</i></p> <p>30. (h) and then he took a deep breath and he started with my first name</p> <p>31. and he said <i>Phyllis?</i> [hhhhh]</p> <p>32. (uh-hh) And I swear I'll answer to anything but Phyllis [hhhhh]</p> <p>33. Not that I don't like the name Phyllis it's lovely but it doesn't suit me</p> <p>34. Not not quite ↓ (0.1)</p>
2A	<p>35. (h) Um last night I was talking to my nephew he's only five and a half and</p> <p>36. he's really c- curious and he's in that sta:ge that most of ~you know~</p> <p>37. that magical stage where (h) kids are running around brai:lling the world you know (h)</p> <p>38. And they're- they're curious about everything it's so sa:d that we stop them you know</p> <p>39. They want to braille and we say <i>don't touch that</i> >and <i>don't</i> (*mbbrrrrmmbb*)<</p>

	40. ~You know~ the world is not set up for <u>children</u> ↓ (0.1)
	41. Uh that's a great <u>pity</u> because some of us could still do a lot of <u>brai:ling</u> and learn a lot (0.2)
2B	42. Perhaps one of the most <u>beautiful</u> moments in my life was when I spoke to a group of <u>bli:nd</u> people (h)
	43. And after it was <u>over</u>
	44. >it was a very< <u>lar:ge</u> group >it was a national< conference ↑ (h)
	45. One of these <u>beautiful</u> (.) blind men came up and said <i>Doctor Buscaglia may I <u>brai:lle</u> you?</i> (0.2) [hh]
	46. Have you ever been <u>brai::lled</u> ?
	47. Uh-yuhhhh ((1.0 pause for audience laughter)) [hhh]
	48. I <u>know</u> you've been <u>felt</u> ((1.0 pause for audience laughter)) [hhhhh]
	49. But not <u>brai::lled</u> ↓
	50. >That's a different thing it was like having< a- a cool <u>bree::ze</u> or electrical current running over your skin- (break in the video)
Transition	51. And uh (.) uh first of all I'd like to (.) start by >getting us in a common frame of reference<
	52. Now some of you (.) uh I always am a little bit confused as to where to <u>begi:n</u>
	53. because I know that some of you have (.) read my books because you've written me: (h) and <u>wonderful</u> letters
	54. and uh (.) or you've seen tapes of mine or you've <u>ow:ned</u> them (.) and uh ~you know~ pretty much where my head is
	55. and others of you and it's <u>right</u> that it <u>should</u> be that way (h) have no idea (.) <u>who</u> I am (h)
	56. And that's good <u>too</u> because then we can get acquainted tonight and sorta (h) verbally <u>brai:lle</u> each other
	57. and if you want to do <u>more</u> I'll stand down <u>here</u> and we can do more later on [hh]
	58. ~You know~ that I'm a big Italian <u>hugger</u> (.) uh ((0.5 pause for audience laughter)) [hhh]
	59. Mama used to say <i>you can <u>believe</u> something when you <u>touch</u> it</i> ((.5 pause for audience laughter)) [hhh]

	60. So if you wanna be <u>belie::ved</u> (.) <u>you know</u> ((.5 pause for audience laughter)) [hhh]
3 intro	61. Um (0.1) <u>anyway</u> I- I'd like to get us in a common frame of reference so that we know pretty much (.) whe:re we stand and what I'm going to be talking (.) to you about tonight 62. which is a subject that is really <u>keen</u> to my <u>heart</u> (h) and that is the <u>art</u> (0.1) 63. literally the <u>art</u> (0.1) 64. of being fully <u>human</u> (0.1) 65. Uh uh I don't know about you but I <u>really love</u> the concept that I:: am a human being (.) and have all the potential (0.1) to <u>be</u> (0.1) a human being 66. With <u>a(h)ll</u> that this means (.) 67. Which we'll get into tonight as far (.) as some of the things that I believe ↓ (.) 68. But (h) uh people always want to know like (.) <i>when did this (.) begin</i> 69. <i>When did you begin to become (.) really <u>interested</u></i> 70. I don't <u>know</u> (h) (0.1) 71. But I <u>do</u> know that there was a <u>moment</u> in my life that was most significant 72. >And <u>everywhere</u> I go< I always start by telling that moment because (h) 73. to me <it's- it's> very significant and made a <u>difference</u> 74. And maybe it's responsible for my being here tonight (0.1)
3A	75. Um it- it was about 12 or 13 years ago when I first started at the University of Southern California (h) 76. And I had one of those <u>mandatory</u> classes < <u>you know</u> > that everybody <u>has</u> to take 77. And I was the uh- assistant professor at the time and I <u>had</u> to teach it (.) <u>you know</u> 78. And so I got before- >It was a big< – they used Bovard auditorium a big barny place that some of ~you know~ (h) 79. And I got in front of this audience and I thought <i>how will I ever <u>reach</u> them</i> 80. <i>How will I ever <u>touch</u> them</i> (hh) (0.1) 81. And- and it was really a-uh- kind of a <u>trauma:tic</u> situation to be put into (.) for your first class but that's what <u>ha:ppens</u> <u>you know</u>
3B	82. <u>Anyway</u> I- I stood before the class >and I have many things< that I feel very strongly about 83. (h) and one is- is that (.) the <u>first</u> thing I do when I get before an audience is I look for < <u>kind</u> eyeba::lls>

	<p>84. (0.1) (h) When the audience is in <u>blackness</u> I'm lo::st (.)</p> <p>85. Uh talking to myself is not one of my <u>pa:ssions</u> (h)</p> <p>86. But- but >when I can <u>see</u> eyeballs< (if?) I know that I'm safe</p> <p>87. >And to me< kind eyeballs are the kind of eyeballs that stay there</p> <p>88. and when you get lost or you say something <u>stupid</u> or you don't remember what you said before (h)</p> <p>89. you look at them and they say <i>come on Buscaglia you can do it</i> <u>you know</u></p> <p>90. (h) And- and uh I'm <u>ama(h)::zed</u> at how many such eyeballs (.) there a:re (0.1)</p>
3C	<p>91. And in this class I looked around frantically for eyeballs (h) and <u>since</u> it was a class that was in there because they didn't <u>want</u> to be mostly (h) I didn't <u>see</u> too many eyeballs</p> <p>92. I was seeing <u>this</u> ((<i>paralinguistic enactment of looking down with hand over eyes</i>))</p> <p>93. Or they were looking at their (.) <u>you know</u> pencil ready to take down anything I said ((<i>paralinguistic enactment of writing on hand as if on paper</i>)) [hh]</p> <p>94. That's something we've conditioned you- you write <u>ev</u>erything down ((<i>paralinguistic enactment of writing on hand as if on paper</i>))</p> <p>95. I can say <u>drop dead</u> (0.1) everybody writes it down (*merrheh*) ((<i>paralinguistic enactment of furiously writing on hand as if on paper</i>)) [hhhhhhh]</p> <p>96. It's gonna be a <u>trick</u> question on the <u>exa</u>m (*merreheh*) [hhhhhhh]</p>
3D	<p>97. <u>Anyway</u> I <u>did</u> find these eyeballs and I found them in a very <u>exciting</u> young lady about five rows back (h)</p> <p>98. And I <u>knew</u> they were <u>my</u> eyeballs because (.) <u>whatever</u> I said she <u>lit</u> up and had a response</p> <p>99. She may not have <u>agre::ed</u> (0.1) but I could tell that she was <u>feeling</u> something and I knew there was at least <u>ONE</u> <u>alive</u> person in this class of something like (.) 600 people</p> <p>100. And I knew that she could sa::ve me (h)</p> <p>101. (.) and I was <u>delighted</u> (0.1)</p>
3E	<p>102. And uh I have a lot of things in my classes that >all of my students and all of my friends know< I call (.) <u>voluntarily mandatory</u> (0.2) [hh]</p> <p>103. And one of the things that's <u>voluntarily mandatory</u> is that everybody come and <u>see</u> me <in my office> at least <u>once</u> (.) every semester (0.2)</p> <p>104. Now <u>that</u> isn't asking too much (.)</p>

	<p>105. But you'd be surpr<u>ri(h)sed</u> how many people that int<u>imidates</u> (0.2)</p> <p>106. <u>You know</u> <i>what does he want to see</i> <u>me</u> for (0.2)</p> <p>107. Well I try to tell my students <u>you know</u> <i>I don't believe you until I can have you in my (.) close proximity</i> (0.1)</p> <p>108. <i>And also since I am a (.) passionate Italian</i></p> <p>109. <i>I will believe you when I touch you</i></p> <p>110. <i>so when you come and see me I'm gonna touch you:::</i> [hhhh]</p> <p>111. <u>You know</u> and <i>if that bothers you:: take your tranquil::lizer</i> ((0.5 pause for audience laughter)) [hhhh]</p>
3F	<p>112. And then when <u>you know</u> when I go out of my office and I see Sally sitting there I say <i>hi Sally</i> (0.1)</p> <p>113. And she says <i>hello</i>. (.) <and I take her ha:nd> (.) her little sweaty pa::lm (.) [hhh]</p> <p>114. <and I cover it with mi:ne> and I <slowly lead her into the office> [hhh]</p> <p>115. and I can sort of <u>see</u> by her eyes she's thinking <i>my god what is he gonna do to me you know</i></p> <p>116. <i>I'm not going to do anything to you Sally I just want to relate to you (h) person to person</i></p> <p>117. <i>I want you to know that somehow (b) I too am human</i></p> <p>118. <i>I cry too I'm lonely too I need too (h) and that I need you just as desperately as you need me (h)</i></p> <p>119. And on that level we can start communicating and (h) on that level we can <u>start</u> to <u>learn</u> °from_° each ° other ↓(1.0)</p> <p>120. Which is what a (0.1) <u>learning</u> situation a:lways is if it's a truly learning situation (0.1)</p> <p>121. (h) >And <u>you know</u> sometimes< when I'm before an audience like this (h) it makes me feel <u>fru(h)strated</u> as well as humble (h)</p> <p>122. Because I know that everybody in this audience has something to <u>teach</u> me</p> <p>123. That if I were able to be (.) ° close ° to ° <u>you</u></p> <p>124. you could <u>give</u> me (.) as no one else in this world can ↓ (1.0)</p> <p>125. And so I don't want to miss at (.) least from my students (0.1)</p>
3G	<p>126. And so I have this voluntarily mandatory thing</p> <p>127. And it's <u>incredible</u> as I said how it (.) <u>intimidates</u> people</p>

	<p>128. Probably the funniest thing that ever happened</p> <p>129. was one girl that came in and (h) sat across from me and I <u>knew</u> there was something wrong because</p> <p>130. her- her eyelids were shutting and her head was falling forward <u>you know</u></p> <p>131. And finally I said (.) uh uh <u>you know</u> <i>are you all ri:ght</i>↑</p> <p>132. And she said ^ <i>ob doctor Buscaglia I can't stay with you any more</i>^ she said</p> <p>133. ^<i>in order to get up enough guts to come and see you I drank a bottle of ripple and I'm gonna be sick</i>^ ((1.0 pause for audience laughter)) [hhhhhh]</p> <p>134. <u>Imagine</u> (.) stooping to <u>Ripple</u> ((1.0 pause for audience laughter)) [hhhhhh]</p> <p>135. I'm happy to say that things have cha::nged (1.0) [hhh]</p> <p>136. But nevertheless (0.3) one of the big things is that I don't believe that anything can transpi(b)::re (0.2) unless we can <u>learn</u> (.) this <u>marvelous</u> process of somehow or other (.) coming together</p> <p>137. Human being to human being (.)</p> <p>138. However we (.) defi:ne it (0.1)</p>
3H	<p>139. >And I was <u>eagerly</u> waiting for this girl< to come and see me (h)</p> <p>140. because I am ego involved with my <u>friends</u> and my- my <u>lovers</u> and my <u>students</u> and I wanted them <u>desperately</u> (0.3)</p> <p>141. I want them to know that I am</p> <p>142. And I wanted to say to her (0.1) um (.) (*tzk*) <i>thank you (.) for being <u>alive</u></i></p> <p>143. <i>Thank you for sharing (.) your <u>enthusiasm</u> and your <u>eagerness</u> and your <u>vibrations</u></i></p> <p>144. <u>Thank</u> <i>you for making me a better <u>tea:che:r</u></i> (0.2)</p> <p>145. And about <u>five</u> weeks into the semester (.) this <u>beautiful</u> young girl (.) was not in her seat ↑ (h)</p> <p>146. And when >Monday Wednesday Friday Monday Wednesday Friday< came (h)</p> <p>147. I became curious and I went down to where she sat and asked the people around her what had happened to her (h)</p> <p>148. And do you <u>know</u> in something like °six ° weeks °of <u>school</u> they <u>didn't</u> °even °<u>know</u> °her <u>na::me</u> (0.2)</p> <p>149. It's no <u>wonder</u> that Schweitzer says <u>you know</u> <i>we're all so much together in our world and yet we're (.) all dying (.) of loneliness</i> and I truly <u>believe</u> it (0.2)</p>

	<p>150. >We need to know how to< express it nor even if we feel it (0.1)</p> <p>151. We're- we're intimidated by it we don't know how to reach out and say (h) <i>look</i> (.) lonely <i>person take my lonely ha::nd</i> (0.2)</p> <p>152. <i>We can be stronger this way</i> ↑ (1.0)</p>
3I	<p>153. And so I went to the Dean of Women and I asked about her (0.1)</p> <p>154. And (.) Joan is a very lovely girl and said <i>I'm – oh Leo I'm <u>sorry</u></i> (0.5)</p> <p>155. <i>Haven't I <u>told</u> you</i> (0.1)</p> <p>156. This gi:rl went to Pacific Palisades which is an area (0.1) in Los Angeles that many of ~you know~ where sheer cliffs (.) fall into the sea (0.3)</p> <p>157. And there were people there having a picnic on the gra:ss (0.1) and they saw her drive her car up (0.1)</p> <p>158. She left the: (.) ignition running (0.1)</p> <p>159. and zombie like she walked across the grass and without a moment's hesitation (hh) (0.2) threw herself off onto the rocks below (1.0)</p>
3J	<p>160. ≤<u>She was twenty two</u>≥ (3.0)</p> <p>161. It was a good thing that happened to me (0.1) in a tragedy↓</p> <p>162. >Because all of a sudden I asked myself< (0.5)</p> <p>163. what does it matter that we've taught this girl (0.1) to read and to write and to spell and to do ALL of the things we think are essential</p> <p>164. if NO one along the line taught her the sacredness of being ali::ve</p> <p>165. and taught her the dignity and the wonder of her °own ° personal ° self ° (0.1) so that she could easily take it</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[applause] /</p> <p style="text-align: center;">~ End of transcription ~</p>

Transcription Coding Key

The following codes appear in the transcription above and are based primarily on coding conventions retrieved from

<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/TranscriptionProject/index.html>.

- (.3) Pauses: length of time in tenths of a second in parentheses
- :: Lengthening of a sound; more colons indicate additional length
- ↓ falling intonation
- ↑ rising intonation
- _: inflected “falling” intonation contour
- : inflected “rising” intonation contour
- cut-off utterance or stuttering
- ^ higher pitch than rest of sentence (reported speech)
- we underlining indicates emphasis
- we** underlined and bolded indicates stronger emphasis
- WE** Bolded capital letters indicate strongest emphasis and/or louder than surrounding speech
- hello dotted underline indicates quieter than surrounding speech
- you know double-underlining indicates discourse marker, primarily *you know*
- ~you know~ you know within ~ indicates second person verb tense *to know*
- (hh) speaker aspiration outside of word or phrase
- (h) speaker breath or aspiration within word or phrase (*hhh*) extended for longer episodes

- [hh] **audience** laughter or murmuring, shown on line beneath speaker transcription
- (()) transcriber interpretation or explanation
- > < quicker than surrounding speech
- <> slower than surrounding speech
- (?) transcriber doubt
- (x*) Italian pronunciation transcriber is attempting to spell out phonetically
- Italics* reported or enacted speech
- (.) indicates a “micropause,” a silence hearable but not readily measurable; less than 0.1 second
- staccato
- (*mhn*) Indecipherable sound or other performed or expressive utterance, indicated as close to sound as possible
- Love** highlighting indicates highly expressive words that reinforce self-character and message
- / end of transcription selection

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