

Conversational devices in stories turning on
appearance versus reality

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normalizing devices; stories.

Reports of 'events' are more than neutral descriptions of fact. They are, as Edwards and Potter (1992) remind us, sites of contestation where what is at stake is (among other things) the reporter's interest and accountability. Such questions of competence and impartiality come up in all sorts of speaker roles; most obviously, perhaps, in institutionalized settings where contestation is a structural feature of the interaction and its 'activity type' as Levinson calls it (Levinson, 1992): defendant versus plaintiff, government spokesperson versus opposition speaker, and so on. There is a substantial literature on the rational construction of formally contested events, dating from studies of courtroom interactions where

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