#### **PSYCHOLINGUISTICS 101**

# METAFICTION & THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 'CURRENT TRUTH' ABOUT ONESELF

#### PURPOSE & TAKEAWAYS

- Show how a literary device—metafiction—helps explain the way people build day-to-day identities.
- Demonstrate why an identity can be both <u>false</u> and functionally <u>true</u>.
- Offer practical questions for self-reflection and for helping others test their "current truth."

# WHAT IS METAFICTION?

- *Self-aware fiction* that keeps reminding the audience "this is a story."
- Typical moves: breaking the fourth wall, overt narration, shifts between author and character.
- Goal: force readers to notice how all stories—even "true" ones—are constructed. [50]
- Patricia Waugh's classic definition: "fictional writing which self-consciously ... draws attention to its status as an artefact."

#### IDENTITY AS PERSONAL METAFICTION

- We curate a narrative -self the same way an author edits a manuscript.
- The resulting story may not be factually accurate, yet it works because we and our audience agree to treat it as real.
- In effect, each of us is both author and protagonist

#### THE "FALSE-SELF / TRUE-SELF" LENS

- True-Self (Winnicott): spontaneous, authentic experience.
- False-Self: <u>protective mask</u> that satisfies outside expectations— "the polite façade."

# PERFORMATIVE IDENTITY (BUTLER)

- Identity isn't a fixed essence; it's an act repeated until it feels natural.
- Each performance rewrites the script of who we are.
- A "current truth" is the latest draft of that script.

# NARRATIVE SELF-CONSTRUCTION

- Personal stories stitch together memories, hopes, and social feedback.
- People favour condensed, linear plots—ignoring messy contradictions.
- Result: an elegant tale that is only <u>partially factual</u> but <u>wholly</u> <u>persuasive</u>.

#### TEMPORAL & CHALLENGEABLE TRUTH

- Identity statements hold only <u>"for now"</u>; they can be revised like any text.
- New evidence, contexts, or relationships invite edits.
- Healthy identity = <u>willingness to update</u> the manuscript.

# POSTMODERN VIEW OF TRUTH

- Postmodernism treats truth as constructed within discourses
   not discovered outside them.
- Therefore a personal "current truth" is one more social construct —powerful yet provisional.

# THE METAFICTIONAL PARADOX

- Self-awareness: I know I'm presenting a story.
- 2. Efficacy: The story still shapes my feelings and choices.
- 3. Revision -ready: I can rewrite when the plot no longer serves.

# PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- Therapy / Coaching: Treat identity claims as narrative drafts; invite clients to author new versions.
- Leadership & Branding: Organizations craft "current truths" that galvanize culture—yet must stay open to revision.
- Social Media Hygiene: Recognize curated personas as metafiction; consume (and post) with critical literacy.

# MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

What defensive purpose does this narrative serve?	Reveals unmet needs.
Which audiences validate the story?	Maps power dynamics.
Is truth best seen as correspondence or coherence?	Tests moral grounding.

#### SELF-AUDIT CHECKLIST

- 1. Title Your Story: Summarize the identity claim in one sentence.
- 2. List the "Scenes" supporting it.
- 3. Ask, "Who benefits?" from this version.
- 4. Draft an Alternate Ending that feels more authentic.
- Rehearse the new narrative in small, safe contexts.

# DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- 1. When does a protective story become self-sabotage?
- 2. Can shared identities (e.g., national myths) survive perpetual revision?
- 3. Where's the line between authentic transparency and narrative over-sharing?

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Every self-description is a work of metafiction—crafted, provisional, and effective.
- 2. Owning the author role enables conscious revisions.
- Real growth lies in balancing narrative coherence with factual integrity.