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## **The uses of storytelling in university Engineering lectures**

The Engineering Lecture Corpus (ELC) is a growing corpus of English-medium lectures from across the world, currently including transcripts from Malaysia, New Zealand and the UK ([www.coventry.ac.uk/elc](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/elc)). Unusually, the ELC encodes functions that recur across large numbers of transcripts, using what we call ‘pragmatic annotation’. Recurrent functions in ELC transcripts have been found to include ‘storytelling’, ‘housekeeping’, ‘summarizing’ and ‘defining’. Sub-categories have been assigned to some of these functions; for example storytelling is marked as either an ‘anecdote’, ‘exemplum’, ‘narrative’ or ‘recount’ (cf. Martin 2008).

The paper argues that although engineering lecturers around the world may use a common language to deliver the same kind of syllabus for the same broad purpose, engineering lectures are likely to remain both context- and culture-specific. Lectures of all kinds often include story elements, to entertain, instruct, and make key information more memorable. The way stories are presented varies from place to place, however, and regional differences may represent a challenge both to those who attend lectures and to those who deliver them. Such variation should be taken into account when designing ESP and staff development programmes.

The analysis looks at the purposes of storytelling in Engineering lectures, and the ways in which various types of stories are realized linguistically. The discussion draws on Labov & Waletzky’s structural model for oral narratives of personal experience (1967), and Martin’s four categories of ‘story’ (2008).