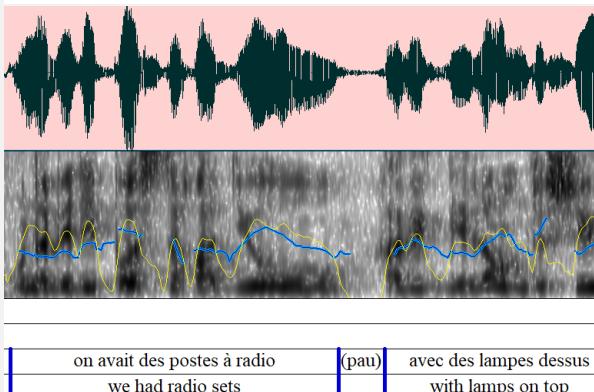


What are narrative crystals? – Short consolidated autobiographical narratives that speakers tell multiple times across interactions. These narrative ensembles contain crystallized cores that are highly stable in terms of some combination of lexicon, grammar, and prosody surrounded by more variable building blocks associated with other aspects of the recounted events.



on Sunday I always remember that there was we had radios with lamps on top you know these were the first the first devices and every Sunday afternoon / there were the Concerts Colonne at that time that's what they were called from Paris which broadcasted a concert so my father / I still see him sitting astride his chair and we were not allowed to disturb him / he was listening to his concert



**Functional uses of narrative crystals as stepping stones within conversations:** The analysis of Ms. Taylor's use of narrative crystals within a naturally-occurring conversation demonstrated their **functions at discourse topic transition points**. In these situations, the relative fixed nature of the crystal was sometimes a double-edged sword; as it frequently appeared to ease Ms. Taylor's navigation of the dyadic interaction (serving as a 'stepping stone' in the 'rushing waters' of the ongoing interaction), its **lack of flexibility** (i.e., audience design) occasionally contributed to meaning-making challenges for her conversational partner. **A prosodic analysis for articulation rate by sections** undiscovered differences between sections dedicated to past vs. present topics; articulation rate increased when narrative crystals were performed; they contribute to a perception of a greater fluency and potentially protect resources, keeping learned content accessible.

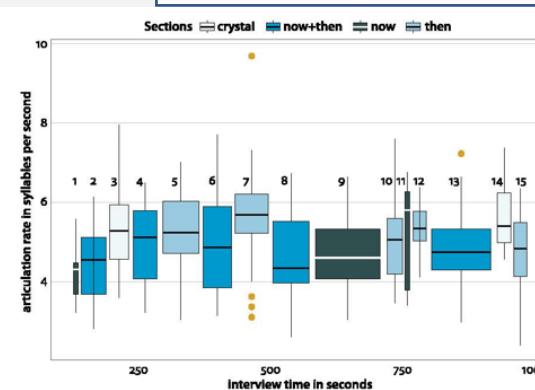


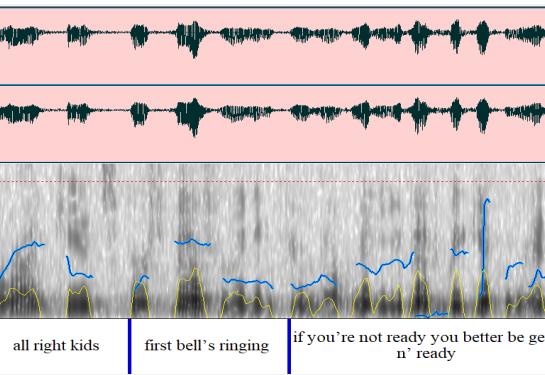
Figure 2. Ms. Moreau's articulation rate in the opening of October 2014 according to 15 sections

#### Why should we care about narrative crystals?

- Series of tellings account for the underlying narrative and its meaning even in its nuclear variants.
- The importance of scenes and their visual and acoustic reflects memory processes.
- Narrative crystals are as much a resource in discourse as other elements of formulaic language and help to identify strategies of managing challenging situations of dementia discourse.
- The prosodic shape of narrative crystals distinguishes them from surrounding discourse and gives evidence for a facilitated access to them.

Future work is to be dedicated to the process of transformation from narratives of personal experience into narrative crystals, and the onset of stable elements.

Are memory functions supported by the melodic elements of narrative crystals?



"First bell's ringing": one of nine tellings by Ms. Taylor

I can hear my mother on Sunday morning we went to a Lutheran Church in Brookfield and I can hear my mother on Sunday morning "all right children / the first bell's ringing if you're not ready / you better be gettin' ready" we knew to be ready



Conversational partner (pseudonym)	Month of conversation	BUILDING BLOCK I	BUILDING BLOCK II	BUILDING BLOCK III	BUILDING BLOCK IV	BUILDING BLOCK V	BUILDING BLOCK VI	BUILDING BLOCK VII
Ms. Arfield	Oct 2005	we went to (a Lutheran) church	on a Sunday morning	she'd hear the bell ringing	and (I'd hear her) shed yell	"all right children, (the) first bell's ringing."	we knew to be ready	and we went
Ms. Woodard	Oct 2005							
Ms. Goldman	Nov 2005							
Ms. Parton	Nov 2005							
Ms. Asmus 1	Mar 2006							
Ms. Asmus 2	Mar 2006							
Ms. Bagley	Mar 2006							
Ms. Dorton	Apr 2006							
Ms. Pagett	Apr 2006							

Figure 1. Building blocks in Ms. Taylor's *First bell's ringing* narrative crystal (n=9)

Analysis started with building an inventory of tellings for each participant, selection of the most consistently repeated tellings: 7 tellings in Ms Taylor, 8 tellings in Ms Moreau. Soundfiles were annotated in PRAAT, for repeated elements on all linguistic levels and their embedding in discourse. **Internal architecture:** as a result from iterative labelling of the individual tellings, the **ensemble** of recurring **building blocks** were identified and accounted for the included elements of stability and variability. The most stable building blocks were qualified as **crystallized core** of the tellings.

Gerstenberg, Annette & Heidi E. Hamilton. 2022. Older adults' conversations and the emergence of "narrative crystals": a new approach to frequently told stories. *Narrative Inquiry*. 1–34.

10.1075/ni.21075.ger

Special thanks to Elena Bandt for helping with the poster.