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# 中国大学生 英语口语叙事话语的 结构范式研究

俞洪亮 ● 著

外语教学与研究出版社

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# 中国大学生 英语口语叙事话语的 结构范式研究

An Exploratory Study of Narrative  
Structure in Chinese Tertiary EFL  
Learners' Monologic Production

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# 前 言

本书以在测试环境下英语专业学习者的口头话语作为语料,运用内容分析、叙事分析和立基理论(grounded theory method)等定性分析方法,描写英语学习者口头独白式叙事话语的结构特征,探析叙事话语结构特征与不同测试任务和测试者的口语水平之间的关系。

本研究使用的材料选自中国学习者英语口语语料库(简称 SECCL),采用了 2000 年和 2001 年全国英语专业四级口语测试中的第二项任务(即席演讲)作为语料,涉及样本 203 个。根据研究问题中的两个变量,总体样本分为两大类,一类根据描述人物和事件的测试任务分为两个不同话题组,另一类根据考生的口试成绩分成高分组和低分组。概括起来,本研究主要发现包括:(1)通过内容分析法和立基理论方法等定性研究方法,描述并抽象出中国大学生在测试环境下的独白话语中的宏观叙事结构;(2)通过叙事分析,将宏观叙事结构分解成第二层次和第三层次的微观叙事结构成分。(3)通过不同层面和不同纬度的比较,证明了中国学习者的宏观叙事话语结构具有图式化的普遍结构特征,但由于不同的话题和学习者不同的语言水平,在微观结构上存在着个体差异。

本研究填补了我国对二语学习者叙述能力研究的空白。在理论上,首先澄清了口头话语中的叙事性成分与非叙事性成分概念,提出了口头叙事话语中存在主次结构之分,并强调“次结构”中的非叙事性成分在构筑叙事结构中的组织作用。其次,从叙事内容上验证并发展了 Labov 等人关于叙事话语所指功能和评价功能的假设。再次,首次从在宏观和微观两个层面对二语学习者叙事话语的结构特征进行了翔实的描述,并有实证依据证明传统意义上的普遍叙事结构图式或“故事语法”受诸如口语环境和二语学习者本身口语水平等因素的影响会产生变异。最后,本研究还生成了学习者叙事结构图和理论范式,并对二语学习者的口语叙事结构和西方学者构建的母语叙事结构进行了比较。在教学实践上,研究结果表明,叙事话语中信息组织的有序性是观测学习者口头话语能力的一个有效指标。该项研究成果对合理设计大规模的口语测试任务和完善现行的口语评价体系具

有重要的参考价值,对我国外语教学改革、政策导向以及外语教学的总体目标等方面也有一定的指导意义。

本书成稿前受到我的导师文秋芳教授、丁言仁教授的精心指导和巨大鼓励,在出版过程中有幸得到了北京外国语大学刘润清教授的点拨和修改,他们严谨的治学精神,让我在学业上再次经历了一次洗礼,使我终身受益。此外,本书还被列为江苏省高校人文社会科学重点资助项目,并得到了扬州大学出版基金立项资助,外语教学与研究出版社为本书的出版给予了极大的支持,在此一并表示诚挚的感谢。

俞洪亮

2005年8月10日

## **List of Abbreviations**

*(In alphabetical order)*

AB	Abstract
BP	Unforgettable Birthday Party
CA	Complicating Action
CON	Consequence
EPS IL	Episode-oriented Illustration
ER	Evaluating Remarks
EV	Evaluation
EXP IL	Exposition-oriented Illustration
FT	Finished Talk
ID	Identification
IE	Initiating Event
IL	Illustration
IR	Internal Response
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
ME	Mixed Evaluation
NS	Narrative Structure
OPI	Oral Proficiency Interview
OR	Orientation
RE	Response
SECCL	Spoken English Corpus of Chinese Learners
SG	Story Grammar
TC	Topic Clarification
TR	Topic Restatement
TEM	Graded Test for English Majors
UNFT	Unfinished Talk
UT	Unusual Teacher

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# INTRODUCTION

This part is intended as an introduction to the present research. The ultimate purpose of the study is first specified, followed by the three general research questions to be addressed in this study. A number of reasons are then given to justify the need for such a study to be conducted. Finally, some theoretical and pedagogical implications are described for the investigation into L2 learners' spoken narrative discourse in both testing and non-testing contexts.

# 1 Overview

This research reports an exploratory study on the structure of the Chinese English majors' free oral generation of narratives on the given topics in assessment settings, with a primary focus on the identification of structural components of L2 learners' oral narratives and a secondary focus on the structural comparisons of L2 learners' oral narratives between different topics of the oral task and different levels of oral proficiency. Qualitative methods are dominantly employed in the data analysis. On the basis of the results and discussion, a general narrative map is developed from analysis of two sets of data related to different topics. The generated structural components are eventually conceptualized into a theoretical model of the learners' oral narratives. The ultimate purpose of the research is to develop a model of L2 learners' oral narratives as a generalized chart the learners may recurrently follow in their message organizing, so that it could be worthy of heuristic use in oral language assessment and L2 learning and teaching. To be specific, three major research questions are addressed in this study:

- (1) What is the narrative structure of the Chinese EFL learners' monologues in a testing context?
- (2) How does the narrative structure vary across the different topics of the testing task?
- (3) How does the narrative structure vary across the learners' different levels of oral proficiency?

# 2 Need for the study

Narrative studies explore a range of written or spoken, literary or non-literary narratives. Literary studies are inclined to show what systematic attention to language can reveal about narratives themselves, their authorship/tellers, and those to whom they address. Linguistic studies tend to employ narrative as a means of observing social relations, cultural differences, or children's language development, or as a means of searching for universal story structures or schemata used in narrative discourse comprehension and production. However, very few empirical studies have yet been found in the literature on the investigation into structures of L2 learners' monologic narratives. Fewer still, have studies been found on the narrative structure in

L2 learners' monologic production in a testing context. Such an empirical study is necessary for at least three reasons: (1) to analyze the structures of L2 learners' spoken narratives; (2) to join in the current intellectual trends of "narrative turn"; (3) to offer insights into the assessment of the learners' oral discourse competence and thus to contribute to the development of empirically-based rating scale and rating criteria for an oral test.

## **Analyzing the structures of L2 learners' spoken narratives**

From a theoretical perspective, research on narrative is in many ways both valuable and necessary. However, most theories of narrative and the pertinent studies have looked in depth at the written stories of literature (e.g. the leading narratologists like Barthes 1977; Chatman 1978; Genette 1980, 1988; Prince 1973; Todorov 1977), and have largely overlooked the everyday narratives of ordinary people and the pedagogic issues of narrative discourse competence. Narrative has also been extensively studied by educational researchers, but these studies have almost exclusively examined various aspects of children's narrative competence and narrative development (e.g. Applebee 1978; Allen et al 1994; Bamberg 1997b; Engel 1986, 1995; Glenn 1978; Gruendel 1980; Hudson & Shapiro 1991; McCabe 1997; McCabe & Peterson 1991; Merritt & Liles 1987; Peterson & McCabe 1983; Price & Goodman 1990; Stein & Glenn 1979; Toolan 2001; Wigglesworth 1990), ignoring the possibly continued growth of narrative competence in older students. Moreover, studies along this line are most often based on the literary stories or simple written narratives.

Narrative structure has long been the focus of discourse studies. There are two major types of studies concerning the identification of narrative structure. The first type is to generalize a common discourse pattern in both spoken and written narratives (Gee 1986, 1991; Grimes 1975; Hoey 1979, 1991b, 1994a, 1994b, 2001, 2002; Hoey & Sinclair 1993; Labov & Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972, 1997; Young, Becker & Pike 1970). The second type is to develop story grammars or story schemata (e.g. Bruner 1986, 1987, 2002; Chatman 1978; Kintsch 1977a, 1977b; Kintsch & van Dijk 1975; Liles 1993; Mandler & Johnson 1977; Reinhart 1984; Rumelhart, 1975, 1977; Stein & Glenn 1979; Thorndyke 1977; Trabasso & Rodkin 1994; van Dijk 1977).

However, these studies are almost unexceptionally about the researchers' attempts to identify the narrative structure of English as the first language,

and most of them are concerned with the narrative structure of written discourse (e.g. Halliday's [1985] and Brown & Yule's approaches [1983a] to information structure, rhetorical structure and topic structure). There are only a very limited number of studies on the structure of oral narratives, but they are confined to naturally occurring narratives from a particular perspective (e.g. Labov & Waletzky's sociolinguistic approach proposed in 1967; Labov 1972, 1997, 2001). Another line of research on narrative structure pertains to the sociological study of oral narratives, focusing on narrative as a large section of talk located in conversations or in the course of interviews (e.g. Hermans 1997; Riessman 1990a, 1990b, 2001; Polanyi 1982, 1985a, 1985b; Mishler 1986a, 1986b, 1997, 1999). This type of narratives refers not just to formal storytelling performances but also to the routine accounts of incidents and events that permeate everyday conversation: the content of narratives, the aspects of the narrative form, the use of linguistic structures to describe the sequence of events, and the role of the narrative in encoding descriptions of life experience.

There are a few studies related to the learners' narratives such as the studies by Rumelhart (1977), Thorndyke (1977), Gee (1986), Richmond (2000, 2002), Stein & Albo (1997) and Stein & Glenn (1979), which are more concerned with the cognitive structures involved in L1 learners' narrative discourse processing. Very few studies reported in the literature, however, are related to the structuring of L2 learners' oral narratives. Fewer still, have studies been found on the narrative structure of L2 learners' oral compositions in a testing context, at least, to the present researcher's limited knowledge. Therefore, there is an urgent need to investigate what patterns of narrative discourse could possibly emerge from the Chinese EFL learners' monologic production in testing settings, in which the learners would normally try to do their best and their production is the best indicator of their oral proficiency.

This study attempts to give a detailed description of the narrative structure in the Chinese tertiary L2 learners' monologic production in a testing context. By categorizing the data, the study develops the macro-level narrative structures that the Chinese EFL learners implicitly follow in fulfilling their oral task, and describes the micro-level internal structures of each identified category within the macrostructure. Though the developing of the narrative structure in this study is inspired in one way or another by the general theories of narrative, the present study describes and interprets the



interlocking complexities of structural elements of the learners' spoken narratives. This is the first attempt ever made in China, providing an overall picture of the Chinese tertiary EFL learners' oral narratives. The possible findings of this study are expected to shed some light on the general theory of discourse and to encourage further research along similar lines.

## **Joining in the “narrative turn” by investigating L2 learners' oral narratives**

The rapidly increasing literature on narrative research has touched upon almost every discipline and profession in the last two decades. No longer the province of literary study, the “narrative turn” in human sciences has invaded fields as diverse as history, anthropology and folklore, psychology, sociolinguistics and sociology. The professions, too, have embraced the narrative metaphor, along with investigators who study particular professions: law, medicine, nursing, occupational therapy and social work. In social sciences, storytelling is what we researchers do with research materials, and what informants do with us (Riessman 2001; Abbott 2002). Methodologically, the “narrative turn” is also reflected in the qualitative approach to narrative which does not assume objectivity but, instead, privileges positionality and subjectivity (Atkinson 1997).

In various areas of applied linguistics, the “narrative turn” can also be obviously felt (e.g. Bamberg 1987, 1997a, 1997b; 1997c; Bardovi-Harlig 1992b; Butler & Bentley 1996; McCarthy 1991; Oller 1983; Raymond 1997; Richmond 2002; Toolan 2001). Most of these studies consider coherent structuring as an important factor in determining the quality of narrative writing since structure has traditionally been accepted as a component in writing research and writing instruction (e.g. Bamberg 1983, 1984; Witte & Faigley 1981; McCulley 1985; Neuner 1987; O'Brien 1992; Fleckenstein 1992). Regarded by linguists and other researchers as a vital part of writing quality, coherence is a virtual guarantee of writing quality (Stein & Albro 1997; Shapiro & Hudson 1997; Hoover 1997; Grabe & Kaplan 1996). In these studies, coherence is related to structure and considered to be equated with the quality in writing that helps to attain a logical narrative.

Occasional references are also made to the scanty research that exists in applied linguistics showing that the structure of narrative texts may be represented in the learners' oral recall of events and provide opportunities for the learners to engage in real communication such as the researches by