

Perspective and Subjectivity in Students' Narrative Reconstructions of Classroom Activities

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学生作の教室内活動を再構成するナラティブにおける観点と主観性

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Abstract

How do university students interpret learning activities in the classroom? How can we as teachers and researchers investigate how students construct meaning of these activities? These are two questions that this article seeks to answer. In mainstream second language acquisition, in order to maintain the appearance of objectivity, surveys and statistical analysis would be the only way attempted. However, is this the only way that human beings construct meaning? In everyday life, we cherish our experiences and also transmit these to others in narrative form. With this in mind, this research seeks to use the tools of narratology and its ideas of subjectivity and perspective to analyze two student-produced narratives. It is argued that student writers use various narrative strategies to create either sympathy or identification in the reader.

Key words : discourse, modality, narrative, perspective, subjectivity

(Received September 26, 2008)

抄 録

当論文のテーマは「大学生がどのように教室内の活動を理解するか」と「我々教員や研究者はどのようにして学生がこれらの活動の意味を構成するかをどのように検討すべきか」である。第二言語学習研究の主流においては客観性を保つためには調査と統計的な分析が唯一の方法であろう。しかしそれは人間が意味を構成する只一つの方法であろうか。我々は日常生活で自分の体験を大切に物語（ナラティブ）の形で他の人に伝えるのである。それを前提として、この論文では物語学（ナラトロジー）で主観性と観点をを用いて学生が書いた二つのナラティブを分析する。これらの学生は様々なナラティブストラテジーを駆使して書き、「共感」か「同一意識」を読み手に引き起こすのである。

キーワード： 談話、モダリティー、ナラティブ、観点、主観性

(2008年9月26日受理)

Introduction

Researchers in second language acquisition (SLA) have become increasingly aware that the field needs to consider a wider range of data collection and analysis techniques in order to enrich our understanding of how humans learn second and foreign languages. Qualitative research can add a level of depth or even bring new insights to many of the central issues that SLA has tackled in its short history as an academic discipline. As with quantitative approaches, researchers who employ qualitative methods are looking at the same set of problems that have been at the core of SLA research from its infancy. These SLA researchers are now widening the scope of their inquiry to embrace a much broader range of issues in order to learn how things such as gender and identity impact upon the acquisition of another language. In addition, they are also expanding the types of data that they use including ethnographic studies, case studies, interviews, group discussions and narrative.

Adoption of qualitative data collection methods, however, must only be considered the first step toward building a tradition of qualitative research within the field. Where qualitative research in SLA has yet to mature is in its application of rigorous data analysis methods that are in line with the types of data that are being looked at. Merely collecting qualitative data does not ipso facto entail that the subsequent analysis is either qualitative or data-grounded, something which should be essential to qualitative research projects. For example, qualitative approaches in the affective aspects of second and foreign language learning often employ interview data as their primary source. When the data is analyzed, however, the data is rarely analyzed as socially produced talk between an interviewer and interviewee. Rather, more often than not the data is treated as a source of factors to be isolated and quantified and then used to predict behaviors about students in general regardless of the diverse contexts in which they are learning. Thus, many “qualitative” research projects are reduced to the established techniques of quantitative research (see, for example, Ushioda, 2001).

My research program is an effort to reunite the cultural and social aspects the study of the learning of foreign languages. I primarily focus upon collecting and analyzing learner-produced narratives using a variety of approaches inspired mainly by narratology, but also highly informed by linguistics, pragmatics, Marxist theory and psychoanalysis. Even so, I always endeavor to ensure that my analyses derive from aspects of the data and resist decontextualization to statistical discourse.

In this paper, I will discuss how we can read learner-produced narratives in order to come to a deeper understanding of how classrooms and the activities that take place in them are shaped by students as actively participating agents. First, I will consider how subjects are historically situated and in doing so problematize the view of the subject held by mainstream SLA. Second, I will discuss narrative and a narratological approach to the construction of

subjectivity and narrative point of view. Finally, I will analyze two narratives in terms of how authors construct and maintain perspective and subjectivity using narrative discourse strategies.

(Re) orienting the Subject in SLA: Toward a Materialist View of Foreign Language Learning

The goal of SLA has been to illuminate the common paths of development that learners of second languages follow toward acquisition of a target language. The focus upon the individual in the SLA literature has been likened to a lonely cactus in the desert (Atkinson, 2002), and because of this rarely does the mainstream SLA research give us a picture of learners that is rich in ethnographic detail, enjoining us to sympathize with how learners struggle to learn the target language or rejoice when they overcome obstacles and succeed in the process of learning the target language. Nor are we stimulated to consider how local or systemic economic and political factors frame and delimit the extent to which acquisition of the target language is allowed to specific learners by providing them with access to educational resources and opportunities. (See Norton Pierce, 1995 and Norton, 2000 for notable exceptions.) Despite the efforts of mainstream SLA to ally the field with cognitive psychology and empirical science (Doughty & Long, 2003), an increasingly large body of research has urged us to view foreign language learning as being situated in a number of overlapping and intersecting contexts (Williams & Burden, 1997).

Mainstream SLA's demotion of the cultural aspects of language learning to incidental importance counters many trends in the social sciences that seek to reveal how individuals are shaped by particular historical, economic and social conditions. Scientific methodology, the underlying discourse of mainstream SLA, holds to the idealist notion in Western philosophy that the individual who exists separated from the physical world, and any phenomenon, including mental phenomena, is detached from historical practice. The stated project of mainstream SLA has been, therefore, to uncover the universals of second language ability that exist beyond the individual situated in a particular time and space. The social world does surely influence the development of the individual; however, it only has limited impact to aid or hinder a developmental process that is inherent to a universal human development of second language ability.

In contrast to this, Marxist theory reverses the priority that scientific discourse has placed upon the individual mind over the external world, and instead the materialist approach argues that consciousness is the internalization of social practice (see, for example, Vološinov, 1973 and Vygotsky, 1986). Social beings are constituted by their living in the world and, as Marx argues, the individual is shaped by the material conditions that exist prior to his/her coming into being (Marx, 1998). Since these material conditions are historically produced, the

individual is inextricably linked to the economic, social and ideological conditions in which he/she finds himself/herself.

We cannot, therefore, view our classrooms and the individuals in them as isolated from society. Nor can we simply view language as a neutral object that is to be acquired. Language—including both first and second—is constitutive of our subjectivities, and the learning situation is part of the cultural context within which we interact. The economic and social structures that exist in the material world condition subjectivity since, as Marx (1998) reminds us, individuals must necessarily enter “definite social and political relations... [and] as they act, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will” (p.41).

Narrative and the Narratological Approach

The Storied Nature of Experience

The use of narrative in the study of the human sciences has burgeoned since the middle of the twentieth century. Narrative analyses now commonly appear in psychology, health sciences, policy studies, history, cultural studies and even within disciplines that have held up empirical methods as the most objective means for understanding physical phenomena. This interest in stories points to the uniqueness of narrative to humans as a language-endowed species and the importance of narrative to the way we experience the world and create shared meanings.

In discussing the relationship between language, narrative and meaning, Bruner (1986) argues that there are two types of language. The type of meaning making that he calls the paradigmatic is a mode of human thought that operates with abstract concepts, establishes truth by appealing to procedures of formal logic, and searches for the causality that leads to universal truth conditions. This is the language that is used by researchers to define, investigate and interpret phenomena, a system of meaning-making that is the foundation of traditional empirical science.

Individuals also actively use language to construct particular versions of the social world and to create and maintain their identities. This meaning making is the other type of human thought that Bruner introduces: narrative. The storied mode of human thought deals with human volition and the actions that bring about these intentions. Unlike the paradigmatic mode which makes its argument of truth by adherence to objective rules of logic, the narrative mode of thought establishes its truth by grounding itself in human experience. Where the paradigmatic seeks to establish empirical truth and functions by using logical propositions, the narrative mode of thought does not function through universal truth conditions, but through connections between events.

Narrative, as Bruner goes further to note, is constructed of two psychological realms, or two storied “landscapes.” The components of the “landscape of actions” are the arguments of action, which include the agent, intention, situation and instrument. The other realm, the “landscape of consciousness,” maps what those who are involved in the action of a story know, think or feel. This idea of a dual landscape of narrative argues for a view of narrative that is not a simple account of what happened, but implies that there is also (an) interlocking psychological perspective(s) about those events.

Narratives, are of course, cultural products. What is meant by this is that narrative as a genre has a distinctive structure and possesses recurrent elements which allow us not only to recognize narrative when we see or hear it, but also enable us to give shape to our own stories so that we can transmit those experiences to others who share in the same cultural matrix (Todorov, 1968). As language learning is a situated human endeavor, individuals do not make sense of their experiences by setting up logical hypotheses and testing them, but rather they do so by constructing stories, and these stories that we tell (as well as the stories that we listen to) inform our future interpretation of new experiences. All types of lived knowledge, we might argue then, are part of an interlocking web of storytelling and story understanding.

Narratology

The foregoing depiction of narrative points to the way in which narratives and storytelling events are complex and multilayered. Narratology is an attempt to provide a theory to help us better see the individual layers, but also to help us better understand how the layers are interwoven and complement each other and/or inhere possible tensions. It has been nearly 30 years since the first English translation of Genette's *Figures* was published under the title *Narrative Discourse: An Essay In Method*. In that time, Genette's work has spawned numerous theoretical and practical applications of his method to narrative in a variety of fields. Although there have been slight adjustments to Genette's theory of narrative, the basic ideas have remained unchallenged. For the purpose of this paper, I will consider two of the key aspects of Genette's narratological method—voice and mood—which will serve as the basis for my analysis of student-produced narratives.

Genette's reading of narrative is directly inspired by the legacy of structural linguistics. In applying the same theoretical bases to narrative, Genette argues that narrative, like language, is hierarchically structured, and each of the elements in narrative is interconnected both at the same level and across levels. This underlying structure, just like the structure of language, can be readily identified in any narrative that one approaches.

In order to extend his idea that there is a homology that obtains between language and narrative, Genette employs grammatical categories as a key for understanding narrative. While each of these categories will bear upon our reading of narrative, in the space here I would

like to focus our attention on two of these in regard to the questions that they answer for the reader. The first of these is voice—Who is telling the narrative? The second of these is mood—From whose perspective is the narrative told? Although it may seem to the reader that it is a matter of course that it is from the narrator’s perspective that the story unfolds, the tools of narratology help us to untangle these two concepts and reveal how in a single narrative there is always the potential for multiple narrators as well as multiple viewpoints. Thus, the work of narratology is, in the words of Genette, that of “ripping apart a tight web of connections among the narrating act, its protagonists, its spacio-temporal determinations, its relationship to the other narrating situations involved in the same narrative, etc.” (p. 215).

Voice. In our brief consideration of the question, “Who is telling the story?” we will look specifically at what Genette says about homodiegetic (i.e. autobiographical) narratives, or narratives in which the narrator and hero of the story are the same and by extension may have ontological similitude with real life authors. Genette calls the tension between the identity of the narrator and hero an isotopy, a nearly identical relationship on the surface but one that somewhat shrouds a fundamental difference. Isotopy in autobiographical narratives, such as the ones we are looking at here, is easily recognizable in the dual tense system. While simultaneous narrating (in the present tense) creates a sense that the narrator is objectively transmitting the events of the story as they happened, the use of the present tense of the narrator and the past tense of the story highlights a fundamental fragmentation of narrative—the hero in the story is not absolutely the narrator since these two entities are separated by some interval of time. As the narrative progresses there may be a convergence of these two identities (typically at the beginning and end of the narrative). This creates what Genette calls a “paradox” that is fundamental to subsequent narrating. “It possesses,” Genette explains, “at the same time a temporal situation (with respect to the past story) and an atemporal essence (since it has no duration proper)” (p. 223).

Mood. In the previous section we considered the question of who the narrator is. Here we will look at the different viewpoints from which a story can be told. Naturally both voice and mood will interact with each other for various effects, however, it is not always the case that the point of view of a narrative is exclusively filtered through the narrator, or that the point of view of the narrator is univocal.

Point of view involves a number of things. First of all, it is the distance that the narrator creates between the act of narrating (the narrating present) and the events narrated in the story (the narrated past). What this means is that a narrator can, as discussed in the previous section, make himself/herself more obviously present in the narrative with complete control of the story on one end of the continuum and the “illusion of mimesis” on the other end. Of

the latter Genette states that even the most mimetic of narratives can never directly show the reader the story in unmediated form, since it is narrative (a mediated mode) and "it is a fact of language, and language signifies without imitating" (p. 164). Narrative as diegesis is the opposite of mimesis: there is a maximum of informer with a minimum of information (about the story).

In addition to distance, there is also perspective. Genette explains this as a "second mode of regulating information, arising from the choice (or not) of a restrictive 'point of view'" (pp. 185-186). Genette notes that several studies of point of view have confused this concept with the identity of the narrator, and in order to avoid confusion Genette introduces an alternative term "focalization." For the autobiographical narrator "[t]he only focalization that he has to represent is defined in connection with his present information as narrator and not in connection with his past information as hero" (pp. 198-199). Thus, it is the narrator as source of the story, organizer of the narrative, commentator on it and guarantor, who can focalize through the hero, but this is not a given. It is a choice of the author.

Subjectivity and Point of View

The potential for polymodality ever present in the nature of narrative ensures that the oneness of the narrator and the hero does not necessarily entail that the narrative will be completely focalized through the eyes of the hero, even in purely autobiographical narratives. Minimally, the narrator can effect various alterations in the point of view of a narrative by regulating the amount of information that is given—either by giving less information than is necessary or providing more information than is necessary. Both of these are to be measured in terms of the "code of focalization," not as an absolute.

Because narrative is so essential to the way in which humans construct meaning of the world, Squires (2007) argues that we must also conclude that it is primarily through narrative that individuals create and maintain a particular perspective on the world that is essential to their subjectivity. This subjectivity includes the individual's beliefs, feelings, opinions and desires. This point of view on the world is culturally and socially constructed, and because of this is a product of ideology.

If the subject emerges within the "code of focalization," it is up to our interpretive processes to unlock this code. Bal (2004) complicates Genette's analysis of focalization by offering three shades of meaning to point of view. First of all, it can mean something like "center of interest." Basically this is the selection from among all the possible elements those which will be used in the narrative. The second aspect of meaning is "vision" or "gaze." This refers to the angle from which the narrative events are viewed. Finally, there is "presentation." The subject of the gaze is also dependent upon the object of its gaze for its existence, since there can be no gazer without an object upon which to gaze. And the pre-existence of this

object of focalization, the focalized, necessarily comes to shape how it is actually focalized through the subject of the focalizing, the focalizer. And narrative as a socially produced text must be firmly embedded within a particular historical socio-economic milieu. Thus, by the act of narrating, the narrating subject constructs a self that is intricately bound up in the specific social, economic and social relations. Furthermore, the ways of viewing events participate in the work of ideology.

Data Collection Methodology

This paper uses two complete narratives that were produced by two of the author's students in a conversation skills class. Both narratives were written by males studying in a class of 22 second-year students (19 male, three female) in an information science and engineering college at a large private university in western Japan. As part of a discussion module in an ESP listening/speaking class, students were asked to write a narrative (the teacher used the words *monogatari* and *naratibu* in the oral and written instructions) in which they retold what had happened during the class. Students submitted their narratives at the beginning of the next class.

Japanese was the language in which students were asked to write the narratives. There were two reasons for this. First, because the students English proficiency level was low intermediate (average scores on the TOEIC were roughly 450), it was felt that by allowing the students to write in their native language the students could provide much richer detail about what happened in the classroom and how they felt about it. Second, as the purpose of this research was to understand how students construct subjectivity in educational institutions, writing in the language of the native culture was felt to be more able to reflect how students' learning and desire to learn is produced.

Analysis

The data here is presented with an English gloss which is intended to accurately reflect the flavor of the original Japanese narrative, and not be a polished English translation.

Kenji's Narrative

Line	Original	English
1	今日はディスカッションをする日でした。最初に新しいグループを分けることになりました。私達は仲の良い友達と一緒になれる	Today was the day we did discussions. At first [the teacher] divided [us] into new groups. I hoped to be put into a group with close friends,
5	ようにこの日は離れて座っていましたが、カードの配り方が思っていたのは違い、あまり意味がありませんでした。	but on that day I sat apart from them; the way the cards were distributed was different than what I had thought, there wasn't much meaning in it.
10	ディスカッションを始める前に、二回練習がありました。まず、一回目の練習は新しくできたグループの人達とでした。ディスカッションの内容はこの日宿題となっていた「マイナスポイント制度」についてのものでした。私は、この宿題がまさかそのままディスカッションの内容になるとは思ってなくてだらだらと長い文章に仕上げてしまっていました。	Before we began the discussion, there were two times we had practice. The first practice time was with the people in the group that was newly formed. The content of the discussion was what we had for the homework that day, "The Minus Point System." I hadn't thought that this homework just as it was would really be the content of the discussion and so I had completed a really lengthy text. For this reason, during the ten minutes that we were given for private practice, I wasn't able to memorize it completely, and the first time [of pair practice] I caused rather a lot of trouble to my partner.
15	その為、最初に個人練習として与えられた十分間では完璧に覚え	The second time we changed seats and did it as a new pair. Since it was the second time my speed improved in comparison with the previous time. However, the length of my text and my poor ability at memorization overlapped, and I ended up taking a rather long time.
20	きることができずに、一回目の相手の人にはかなり迷惑をかけてしまう練習になりました。	Now, it was finally the real performance. My opponent was the opponent that I practiced with the second time. I was only thinking that I would have to go up in front of everyone so I was able to perform in a group pretty comfortably. Whether or not it was as a result of this, but I was able to read it rather smoothly.
25	二回目は私達が席を移動し新しいペアの人とでした。流石に二回目とあって先程よりは話すスピードがあがっていました。しかし、文章の長さ	Although class ended this week having only done discussion, rather than just listening to the lesson as usual, this week's class was a lot of fun—I had to [think about] what I could do myself—and I felt as if I could spend the time really meaningfully.
30	と私が速暗記が苦手なことも重なり、結構な時間がかかってしまいました。	
35	さて、いよいよ本番となりました。相手は二回目に練習した相手とでした。みんなの前に出てやるものだとばかり思っていたので、グループ内での発表というのは結構気楽にできました。そのおかげかどうかはわかりませんが、今までで一番スラスラと読めました。	
40	今回の授業はほとんどディスカッションだけで終わりましたが、いつものようにただ授業を聞いているだけより、自分で何かできる今回の授業のほうがとても楽しく、そして有意義に過ごすことができましたように感じます。	
45		

Takashi's Narrative

Original	English Gloss
<p>1 月曜日の5限目「応用数学」を終 えた僕は、友人と一緒に英語の教 室に向かった。教室に入ると、い つもと違う席順で友人が座っ 5 ていた。先生の話によると、ディス カッションのために新しく班 を作るために適当に座っていて ほしいとのことだった。ディスカ ッションを始める前に、何分間 10 か、練習のようなことをした。そ のおかげで英語のディスカッシ ョンの感じがつかめてよかった。 本番のディスカッションは自分 の意見を全て暗記して発表する 15 ということで自分の文章を暗記 した。本番になると、暗記したは ずの文章が出てこなかったりで 苦労した。一度ディスカッション が終わると次はペアを変えてや 20 った。色んな人とディスカッシ ョンをするということはとても良 いことだと思った。また自分がデ ィスカッションした後に他人の ペアを見ることによって、自分 25 のどこがいけないのかとかよく分 かった。今回のディスカッション は暗記がもう一つ、完璧はなかつ たので、次回はしっかり覚えてい てみたい。それがアイコンタクト 30 やイントネーションの向上にも なると思う。</p>	<p>Having finished my Applied Mathematics class in the fifth period on Monday, I headed to the English classroom together with a friend. When we entered the classroom, my friend was sitting in a different seat than usual. According to the teacher, it was that it was for discussion that he wanted us to sit wherever because he was going to make new groups. Before we began the discussion, it was for several minutes, we had something like practice. As the result of this I was glad to grasp the feeling of an English discussion. The real performance was to present giving your own opinion that you had completely memorized, and I memorized my own text. When it was time for the real performance the text that I was supposed to have memorized didn't come out and I was in difficulty. When the discussion had ended once, it changed to the next pair. I thought it was a really good thing that we had a discussion with different people. Moreover by watching other pairs after I had done my discussion, I understood well what things I shouldn't do myself. Because for my discussion this time I hadn't sufficiently memorized it, next time I want to remember it completely. That is one way to improve both eye contact and intonation.</p>

Each of the stories is structured in similar ways. Both begin by setting the stage for the events that follow in which the authors present the context in which the discussion took place and how the teacher had reorganized the class into groups for the activity. Kenji's paragraphing makes the division of the narrative clearer, however, even in Takashi's single-paragraph story the division of the narrative into shorter episodes is easily identifiable by his use of various discourse markers and transitional phrases. Following the setting, the narratives recount the three steps in the discussion activity: silent practice, round one, the final discussion. Both the silent practice and round one were, as the narrators tell us, intended to be practice for the actual discussion performance (*homba*). In the conclusion, both narrators remark upon how the activity was beneficial to their ability to have a discussion in English and/or how they would use this experience to improve their performance in the future.

While both of the narratives appear quite similar at the story level, when we look closer at how they narrate the same events we sense a difference precisely because these are two separate “narrating acts” produced by two different “authors.” In essence, the difference between the acts of narrating must be located not only in how each individual author select and sequences the elements in the narrative, but how each author constructs a unique perspective upon the events as filtered through the eyes of the narrator. The process of creating a perspective is, as I will demonstrate, the site where subjectivity emerges and how experience is given social meaning through narrative processes.

From Sympathy to Identification: Positioning the Reader

Earlier I argued that narratorial point of view was primarily important for the construction of subjectivity of the narrator, who in the case of homodiegetic (autobiographical) narratives, is ontologically linked to a real world author. Thus, in creating narrative point of view, not only does the position(s) from which the narrator chooses to narrate the events of the story impinge upon his/her subjectivity, but they also necessarily involve the reader's subjectivity, as the reader is positioned in specific ways and manipulated by how the events are revealed to him/her and ultimately effecting how the process of interpretation takes place.

This understanding of point of view helps bridge the gap between how we witness the writer's work of narrating and how we are enjoined by the narrative to relate our own subjectivities as readers to the narrative which is part of the work of reading and interpretation. This narrative strategy of manipulating relationships between narrator and narratee on the one hand and writer and reader on the other is part of what Currie (1998) calls “positioning,” and it includes the combination of all the structural and rhetorical devices that are used by the writer to position the reader in relationship to the characters in a narrative.

Currie argues, following Althusser's (1971) idea of interpellation, that narratives must be considered to create mutual subjectivity not only by creating bonds of sympathy between the reader and characters, but also narratives can call upon readers to see themselves in the narrative by identifying with the characters. Thus, through identification rather than sympathy narratives can delimit the hermeneutic space in which the reader can exert freedom to attach meaning to the narrative. Because of the historically-situatedness of the writer and reader, there can only be certain culturally and socially prescribed ways of reading of self into a narrative.

I would suggest that writers mediate the narrating process using various linguistic and pragmatic devices to position real world identities in relationship to those created in their narrative worlds. These modal aspects of language combine to fashion distinct narrative styles with specific narrative points of view and implicate ways in which students approach

language learning contexts and how they perceive that learning takes place. Those narratives in which there is less intrusion of the narrator (more closely approaching mimesis) rely more upon sympathy and invite the reader to build mutual understanding with the characters (in particular the protagonist of autobiographical narrative) without calling upon them to identify with any one character or point of view. These narrators present the mind of the narrator in a less overtly mediated form and rely upon a set of narrative strategies that leave the narrative freer to interpretation. Sympathetic narrative style is less distanced in that the narrative positions the reader within the narrated past (one in which the reader may or may not have existed) rather than in the more immediate situation of the narrating present. On the other hand, identification places the reader at a distance from the narrated past. Instead of distancing the reader from the immediacy of the narrating situation, the author calls upon the reader to view the events through the lens of real life socially prescribed roles.

The importance of this duality in narrative is a reflection of the duality present in the Japanese language. As many authors have argued, Japanese depends more heavily upon context than languages such as English. One important way in which context is made meaningful is through the organization of experience through the distinction between *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside). The importance of this distinction can be seen in many aspects of Japanese culture, including language, social hierarchies, rituals and rites of passage, and socialization. This is not to say that the *uchi/soto* distinction is inflexible, rather it is a dynamic means for structuring experience to which Japanese culture gives high importance. *Uchi/soto* is not in itself an ideology, but the binary opposition imparts a logic to many of the ideological configurations that are present in the culture. As ideology serves to create legitimacy for the existing modes and relations of production and how individuals construct themselves as cultural subjects, *uchi/soto* dynamics will always be at play.

This distinction and its subtle manipulation as a principle for the construction of self and society is closely related to Hendry's (1993) analysis of Japanese culture through the metaphor of wrapping. Material as well as self and the way in which it is wrapped are in many ways as important as what is being wrapped. In fact, it may be argued that the wrapping and wrapped are indivisible and are equally important in the construction of cultural and interpersonal meaning. Unwrapping, then, ought to be considered an act of interpretation, and following the lead set by Genette's narratological project, we need to understand how narratives are wrapped in numerous interlocking layers by the expressed intention of the author in creating narrative perspective.

As the creation of perspective through the act of narration is the focus here, we need to recognize that it is through the narrator of homodiegetic narratives that the subjectivity of the narrator-hero (i.e. the narrator of an autobiographical narrative) is produced. The narrative taking shape through the text and its cohesive devices, both linguistic and pragmatic, reveal

the subjectivity of the narrator-hero and obliquely its author. The coalescence of the text and its cohesion focuses the narrator as subject. Cohesion is effected by what Maynard (1993) calls "discourse modality." She explains what this is as,

information that does not or only minimally conveys objective propositional message content. Discourse modality conveys the speaker's subjective emotional, mental or psychological attitude toward the message content, the speech act itself or toward his or her interlocutor in discourse. Discourse modality operates to define and foreground certain ways of interpreting the propositional content in discourse; it directly expresses the speaking self's personal voice on the basis of which the utterance is intended to be meaningfully interpreted (pp. 38-39).

Maynard argues that understanding of how the speaking subject expresses himself/herself requires that our linguistic analysis, or unwrapping of discourse, recognize two levels: the propositional content level and the discourse modality level. This may be likened to Genette's division of discourse into the story (*histoire*) level and discourse (*discours*) level. The propositional content never surfaces directly but is always filtered by discourse elements. Thus, while a simple sentence such as "The dog barked." may not seem to have any discourse or psychological attitude toward the proposition, given the context of the utterance, the way it is embedded into the ongoing text and how the sentence is uttered, will change the meaning of the sentence.

The different ways that a proposition can be entered into discourse are produced by what Maynard calls discourse modality indicators. These include paralinguistic indicators, syntactic indicators, independent indicators, complex indicators and multi-phrase indicators. These indicators are not necessary from the viewpoint of adding referential meaning to the utterance, and the motivation for their use is in the speaker who uses them to qualify the information contained in the proposition (manipulating perspective, status of information, epistemic modality, and discourse cohesion), declaring and qualifying the speech act, controlling participation, and making interactional appeals. In addition to these indicators, discourse modality can also be manipulated by lexical choice and sentence structure.

Perspective or positioning in the two narratives reveals two distinct ways of constructing student subjectivities. How this is done can be seen in the way that narrative strategies of distance are manipulated through three discourse modality indicators: information manipulation, the *desu/masu-da* style choice, and the expression of public and private self through the use of personal pronoun choice.

Perspective and Subjectivity in a Narratological Approach

Information manipulation: Metalepese. In both narratives we can clearly see the dual temporal situations: the narrating present and the narrated past. Both Kenji and Takashi's narratives

end in the narrator's present, or at the "extradiegetic level." Each of the narrators brings us out of the world of the story in the final section in order to make a direct statement upon the meaning that the narrated events have for him. The intrusions of the narrator in the manipulation of the sequence of narrated events highlights the degree to which writers can display their control over the narrating and access to the narrated past. It would be expected, therefore, that in less distanced narratives—those that anchor the reader in the narrated past—follow the logical order of events without disturbances in the flow of narrative time, and in more distanced narratives—where the emphasis is on the reader-author relationship—inversions of narrative time might be more common.

In Kenji's narrative, for example, there are at least two of these violations of narrative time. The first of these occurs in Lines 7 and 8 where the narrator makes a comment upon the meaning of the distribution of cards. Although the actual realization of the inconsequentiality of the act comes at the end of the discussion, the narrator intrudes into the story to comment upon it. Similarly the narrator also transposes a past event into the narrative (an example of "analepsis") in Lines 17 through 19 when he refers to his preparation for the discussion activity. In narrating the events of the discussion class, Kenji disrupts the temporal flow of events and backshifts the narrative at a time well before the narrative to comment about how his misunderstanding of the homework affected his performance in the class (Lines 16-18).

In his explanation of metalepses, Genette states that it is the "introduc[tion] into one situation, by means of a discourse, the knowledge of another situation" (p. 234). Metalepses are a strategy to draw the reader closer to the narrator and the narrator's point of view of the story. These intrusions into the narrated past serve to maintain the relationship between the real life author and reader surrogated by the narrator and narrate, respectively, and are built and maintained by the way in which the narrative is mediated. More overly mediated narratives can be seen to be attending to the relationship with a real life reader whom the writer wishes to convince of the veracity of the story and the effect that the story had upon his/her life. The writer is in effect reassuring the reader not only of the truth of the events, but the way in which the events have repercussions in the real world.

Desu/masu-da style alternation. While all of the 22 students' narratives shared many features at the structural and content levels, there was a clear distinction between authors who chose a plain *da*-style of narration versus those who used the formal *desu/masu*-style. One possible interpretation of this style choice might simply be that some students were expressing politeness toward the teacher as the implied reader of their stories. However, if this was the case, then it would also have to be concluded that students who did not use the *desu/masu*-style were acting in a culturally inappropriate way, something which I had not witnessed in the previous ten months during which I had taught these students. In other words, the style

choice of students had to have been conditioned by some other aspect of how the task was interpreted by them, or that the difference in style choice signaled some key difference in narrative strategy.

In Japanese narrative discourse, an author must make a choice between using the *da*-style or *desu/masu*-style. At the level of oral communication, the *desu/masu-da* alternation is generally a matter of politeness. Brown and Levinson (1978) define politeness as a pragmatic strategy whereby the speaker attempts to maintain face; and according to this theory, the *desu/masu-da* style choice functions within the Japanese politeness system. A typical use of the *desu/masu*-style in this theory of politeness is to encode relative status differences between the interlocutors and also to maintain distance between interlocutors who are not socially close.

However, when the narratives in this study were examined more carefully, it was found that a "face-saving strategy" interpretation did not fully explain the data. If it did, then it would have to be concluded that the majority of the students were misreading the relationship between the teacher and student. The key for understanding the author's choice of style was to be found in a closer examination of how these modals are employed by authors in narrative discourse to manipulate the distance placed between the reader and the events of the story, and in doing so, create interpretive space for the reader.

As one of the indicators of discourse modality, Maynard (1991) argues that narrators use the *desu/masu-da* alternation as a manipulating device to organize narrative. The *da*-style encodes a perspective that is internal to the narrative. The writer gives the reader more direct access to the events in the story by vividly presenting these events as the speaker experienced them. The *desu/masu*-style, on the other hand, heightens the narrator's role as a mediator of the information to a narratee with whom he/she has a specific social relationship.

In homodiegetic narratives, the use of the *desu/masu* forms can be seen as an authorial move to create an explicit level of communication between the author and the reader. Moreover, it encourages readers to "disregard...textual boundaries and view 'real' world and 'fictional' world as an unbroken continuum" (Fowler 1992, p.7). "Fictional" here is to be understood as a constructed or created narrative world that has similitude with the real world. By making these affinities explicit the *desu/masu*-style the author leads the reader closer to the world of the narrative by guiding him/her through the perspective of the narrator as author. Thus, by using the *desu/masu*-style, authors create narratives that encode a particular relationship between the narrator and the narratee that resembles the relationship between a real life author and reader. This suggests that issues of status, authority and formality should be considered in any interpretation of *desu/masu*-style narratives.

I would further argue that the *desu/masu*-style by constructing an overtly present reader embeds the narrative deeply within institutionally demarcated social structures with

ideologically established subject positions directly into the practice of reading. By this it is meant that the *da*-style constructs a greater distance between the events of the narrative and the social relations between the reader and writer, whereas the *desu/masu*-style clearly establishes a relationship between reader and writer—the author not only creates a narrator subject but the projected narratee. In doing so, the reader is guided into a subject position in which his/her interpretational freedom is limited. The *desu/masu*-style as both a form of discourse modality and a politeness marker impels the reader into a certain ideologically circumscribed interpretative framework.

Seeing how these two narrative styles are plotted on the continuum between *uchi* and *soto* also helps us to understand the two perspectives constructed by their fictional worlds. In contrast to the ways in which the *da*-style and *desu/masu*-style are deployed in conversation, the distinction takes upon more subtle meanings when used as a framing device in narrative discourse. As *uchi* can denote familiarity between interlocutors or informal distance between individuals, it can also by extension refer to enclosed or shared experiences as well. Thus, I would argue, authors who use the *desu/masu*-style do so as a narrative strategy to place boundaries upon the interpretive field. By forcing the reader to view the narrative from a position external to the narrated events, the reader can only witness the story from specific socially prescribed subject positions. The reader is overtly positioned within a historically-bound framework in which an ideologically licensed subjectivity, one through which he/she must view the narrated past, pointing outside of the narrated world, and making gestures toward the real world of the author and reader. This narrative strategy of identification (in contrast to sympathy) positions us and others as subjects in the world, but also it structures the way that we think about ourselves and attach meaning to our experience (Althusser, 1971). The ways in which we narrate our stories to others, therefore, can serve to maintain the power of certain groups and the institutions that legitimate them. Narrative enables us to speak, but it always undermines our efforts at pinning down an unchanging self. Genres, after all, function in part to create ideological closure and thereby limit the potential that a given text has for creating meaning.

The *da*-style conversely denotes ideas of openness, or being unshared or uncontrolled. The experience conveyed to the reader through the use of the *da*-style is presented in a way that emphasizes that what the author underwent is not part of the reader's experience, it is personal and private for the writer, and although it is being shared with the reader through narrative, the reader is given more latitude in the way that he/she constructs meaning.

Personal reference an subjectivity: Lexical indicators of discourse modality. The final element to be considered in the code of focalization is how lexical choice also contributes to the creation of a unified perspective in narrative. Of key importance for reading homodiegetic

narratives is understanding how the “speaking I” takes shape in the hands of the narrator and how focalization through that “I” is maintained while straddling the boundary between the diegetic world and the narrating act.

As has been extensively written upon, personal pronouns are commonly omitted in Japanese. This does not mean, however, that the language lacks any way of referring to oneself and others. When speaking of one’s “public self” *watakushi*, *boku*, *atashi* indicate the speaker’s social position *vis á vis* the addressee. One’s private self, on the other hand, does not require any marking of social hierarchy, and is indicated by the use of *zibun*.

As Genette’s narratological approach argues, all of the elements of a narrative combine to create a unified perspective through which the author manipulates the way in which the events can be viewed by the reader. We have seen that the *desu/masu*-style creates an interpretive space in which both the author and reader are guided into specific ideologically-prescribed roles. The act of reading these types of narratives is, therefore, a process through which the reader is called upon to identify with a historically-bound subjectivity. In contrast, the *da*-style leaves the narrative space open. Thus, the reader is allowed more direct access into the mind of the author. By using this narrative strategy, the reader creates a space in which sympathy can develop in the process of interpretation, but the reader is given more freedom to construct specific meanings from the events recounted in the narrative.

In both of the narratives under examination here, we can recognize two differing ways of using personal reference that conform with the interpretation of *da-desu/masu* style choice. Based upon our knowledge of Japanese, we would expect that a *da*-style narrative, which employs plain forms of verbs, would employ personal reference that was less formal, such as *boku*, whereas *desu/masu*-style narrative would conversely use *watashi*, or more formal types of predication. When we look at the two narratives, we see that this expectation holds true. In Kenji’s narrative he combines his strategy of creating a narrative world in which real world social positions are encoded in the *desu/masu*-style with the use of *watashi*. In contrast, in Takashi’s *da*-style narrative, he begins by using the more informal personal referent *boku* which severs the real world relationship between the reader and writer, and instead constructs a fictive relationship between a narrator as distanced experiencer and narratee as similarly distanced reader.

In addition to the personal referents *watashi* and *boku*, we also notice that self is referred to as *zibun* by both Kenji and Takashi. Unlike *watashi* and *boku*, *zibun* does not reflect either person or gender; referential identity is determined by the text itself. *Zibun* is bound to the subject with which it is coreferential (Kuno, 1973; Shibatani, 1990). Hirose (2002) argues that *zibun* expresses both personal and situational viewpoints. The first of these is logophoric *zibun*. This *zibun* is the “private self” which is an aspect of the speaker as the subject of thinking or consciousness. Viewpoint *zibun*, on the other hand, is the “objective self,” or

the self that the speaker dissociates from his or her consciousness and can be projected on another person. This ability of *zibun* to be projected on another is what Hirose refers to as the “duality of objective self.” This allows for the individual to view self as other and conversely view others as self. Often *zibun* is used to create emphasis or to indicate a shift in the speaker’s perspective (Nariyama, 2003).

Summary. Within the texture of a narrative, I would argue that there will be a tension, what Genette calls isotopy, between these two viewpoints. No narrative will be either [+/- distant] (to borrow the language of structural linguistics), rather there is a continuum. Each narrative, as Genette reminds us, needs to be judged upon the specific code of focalization which it develops. Between the extremes of identification and sympathy there may be various types of narratives in which greater tensions are present in the way that the author allows access to the events of the narrated past. All of the elements, not only the three that we have looked at here, contribute to the particular code of any narrative.

Conclusions: Narrative as a Research Method for SLA

At the beginning of this article it was argued that collection and analysis of qualitative data must be matched with appropriate research methods. In this paper we saw how the principles of narratology can provide a firm grounding from which to read student-produced narratives. Although in many ways this article was intended to outline how non-empirical methods can be employed to analyze qualitative data, it was also hoped that by doing so it would be clearer how classroom activities are very much tied to students subjectivity and how they perceive of the learning process, educational institutions and their roles in them.

How then can the approach to analyzing learner-produced narratives presented in this paper enlighten some of the perennial issues within SLA? As language learning impacts directly upon subjectivity, the classroom must be understood as the social arena in which these subjectivities are formed, maintained and contested. Where that classroom is located, the culture in which it is situated and the individuals that inhabit that classroom all interact with each other and influence the way in which subjectivities are constructed and how language is acquired.

Both of the student-authors whose narratives were presented in this article conclude that the discussion activity was challenging and beneficial to their learning of English. How the process of learning impinges upon subjectivity, however, contrasts significantly in the two narratives. Takashi, in drawing the reader into the narrated past, decouples the reader from the real life reader-author relationship and frees the reader to sympathize with the narrator-hero. Takashi by reducing the distance between the reader and story makes his own feelings

about the discussion activity public. By extension the reader feels that the author approaches the learning context as a place in which he can develop his own language ability through interacting as an individual with others. Kenji, on the other hand, resists allowing the reader to have direct access to the narrated past, and maintains the real life reader-author relationship that forces the reader to identify with that reader position. The narrative becomes, therefore, a private conversation between institutionally-situated subjects. The discussion activity has greater impact on Kenji as a institutionally defined student, and his language ability is bound with that identity.

In addition to the investigation of tasks, narratives can also be used to create a richer and more complex knowledge of various SLA processes. For example, Squires (2007, 2008, forthcoming) has shown how motivation to learn a foreign language is created by educational institutions and specific ideologies that these institutions support. More specific topics within SLA, such as acquisition of grammar or vocabulary, acquisition of communicative competence could also be areas of narrative research in the future.

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