THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NARRATIVE DISCOURSE IN L2: DESCRIBING EVENTS AND STORIES OF CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT AGES (FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS)

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a study about the implementation of narrative discourse in describing events or stories affecting the children’s language development in different ages (fourth and fifth grade students) and their perceptions towards a personal and a fictional narrative discourse. In all, four participants, two-low and two-high performances’ ability in different ages (10 years old and 11 years old) Minxong Elementary school, were asked to tell two narrative stories: a personal and a fictional narrative in English. Participants then answered the series of interviewed concerning what their opinions about preferring a personal to a fictional narrative discourse. The paper concludes that the sample of children in the different ages, their narratives were briefer, and less grammatical. Besides, the children at 11 years old were more able to describe events or stories than 10 years old. Then, children at 10 years old preferred using a personal narrative to fictional narrative while children at 11 years old preferred using a fictional narrative to a personal one.

Keywords: A Personal Narrative and A Fictional Narrative
INTRODUCTION

Narrative discourse plays a central role of language development for children to have expressive language that consists of the ability to describe events or stories. It is also important because of its contribution to social relations, effective communication, and literacy. There are two main types of narratives: personal and fictional. A personal narrative is a description of a past event, experienced by the speaker or by someone the speakers knows, while a fictional narrative consists of an imaginary story, either from a book or spontaneously created by speaker. Narratives of either kind typically present a chronological sequence of events within a cultural context (Level and Polirstok, 2011).

A personal narrative is important in children daily communication activities and because of the fact that they tend to be better structured than fictional narratives. Children use personal narratives frequently to describe their experiences and relate to others (McCabe and Bliss, 2003). Moving on the fact that every child has different ways or strategies in acquiring a language, and based on the previous study there were many studies only focused on the function of personal narrative than fiction narrative, therefore to find out the truth function of them, this research would like to examine the children’ perceptions of narrative discourse between a personal narrative and a fictional narrative as a way to communicate, especially what they like or do not like and would like more to improve their communication skill.

This research, then, aimed to address two questions:

1. How does an implementation of narrative discourse in describing events or stories affect the children’s language development in different ages (fourth and fifth grade students)?
2. What is the perception of the children toward a personal narrative and a fictional narrative discourse?

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

1. The Importance of Narrative Discourse

A personal narrative observes to help speaker make sense of an experience. They put into words a description of something that has
happened to them. For example, an individual who has just been in a car accident may initially describe the event disjointedly because exactly what happened in the accident may not seem clear to the person. After retelling the narrative to listeners who ask pointed questions and received answers, the narrator’s description become clearer and the component events make more sense to both the speaker and the audience. The narrator is now able to represent the events more logically. Personal narratives enable teachers and professionals to understand how a student conceptualizes an event and organizes information.

Personal narratives are critical in educational settings and are a prerequisite for full literacy acquisition. Preschool children with typical language development begin to learn narrative structure and practice this form of communication. Typical language development refers to children who gain syntactic, semantic, and discourse abilities within normal developmental stages. Narrative skills of preschool children have been shown to be good predictors of subsequent literacy achievement (Bishop & Edmundson, 1987; de Hirsch, Jansky, & Langford, 1996; Tabors, Snow, & Dickinson, 2001; Snow, Porche, Tabors, & Harrish, 2007).

School-age students often produce personal narratives when they practice writing. For example, they will describe in writing personal experiences of a summer holiday. High-stakes testing, mandated by the “No Child Left Behind” Act, often requires students to write personal narratives. Personal narratives have also been recommended as the basis for mastering writing skills so that students begin to write about what they know and in the process come to understand that their real lives are worthy being written about (Calkins, 1994). Narrative discourse is challenging because of its decontextual nature.

**METHOD**

1. Participants

This study involved four children, two were fourth and others were fifth grade participants at English Club, Minxiong Elementary School, Chiayi. The participants were selected on the basis of their abilities for example two low ability students and two high ability students in order that across section of views could be gathered. The fourth and fifth grade students were selected on the grounds that they have been studying English and have a good ability in speaking and listening skills. In addition, they
were chosen by grouping of ages between younger children (6 and 10 years) and older children (11 and 16 years). It was felt for this reason that they had experienced or were able in describing events and stories in narrative and would thus be qualified to give their views and perceptions of it.

2. Setting

A qualitative method approach was employed. Collecting the data and answering the research questions, the researcher used two instruments, first one was observation classroom supported by video recording and field note and another one was interview. It was semi-interview supported by recording and interprete the data.

3. Procedure

The participants in this study were asked to take a part in describing a personal and a fictional narrative discourse within two weeks. The first week was held on Monday, May 20, 2013. At the first week, the students were asked to tell about their experiences in celebrating mother’s day. Before the students shared their experiences to others, the teacher shared her experience first as an example so the students knew how to tell their experiences, the teacher also used power point or slides as an aid for the students.

The following week was the second week for doing the research. It was conducted on Monday, May, 27, 2013. As same as the first week, the teacher gave an example before asking the students to describe some pictures. Also, gave them time to think or write some words or sentences.

4. Material

Conducting the first research, the researcher only used power point as a supplement aid to help students to have a simple description what they did. At the second week, the researcher used some picture books to do her research, for example: Who can help the cat? , Father’s day, Courtesy and Good Habits Reader 3, and Seasons. The reason why the teacher used different books was to avoid of imitating words or sentences. The pictures books were borrowed from library in National Chiayi University.

After doing the second research, at the time break, the researcher interviewed the participants by giving five questions that related to her study (the implementation of narrative discourse and children’s perception
of a personal narrative and a fictional narrative in different ages) within five to ten minutes per student, one by one. Finally, to make the data be precise, the researcher also recorded the participants’ answers and interpreted them.

5. Data analysis
   a) Grammar measure

   With an exception, prior research on the narratives produced by children with a personal narrative or a fictional narrative has used only objective measure of narrative grammar. The using of past tense used to analyze the personal narrative and fictional narrative. The reason why this measure selected was the frequency of using past tense as one of narrative characteristics.

   During the observation, the researcher found that the students were not able enough to use past tense. Actually, they knew what they wanted to say but mostly, they did not use past tense to describe the actions, for example: I go to my grandpa’s house (went), I give my mother a flower (gave), I make a card (made), I go to restaurant and eat food with my family (went and ate). Some students are studying in the library (were), etc.

Students’ Perspective: Interview Data

Janice
She is ten years old. She is fourth grade student. Her performance was high level. She revealed that she likes the teacher used narrative discourse to improve her ability to communicate to others and to enrich her vocabularies. Even though she felt this activity was useful, sometimes, she thought that she has no idea, she did not know how to say the word or sentences in English. Also, she preferred using a personal narrative to a fictional narrative. For her, a personal narrative was easier than a fictional one.

Ray
He is 10 years old. He is fourth grade student. His performance was low level. He told that he did not like the narrative discourse. He had no idea to tell his experience and to describe the story. He preferred a personal narrative to a fictional narrative.

Harison
He is 11 years old. He is fifth grade student. His performance was high level. He revealed that this activity was fun and interesting. Besides, he thought that it was useful he could share what he felt and what he thought. In addition, he might enrich his vocabularies. He preferred a fictional narrative to a personal narrative.

**Jessie**

She is 11 years old. She is fifth grade student. Her performance was lower than Harison. She felt as same as Harison. It was fun, interesting, and useful. She could improve her knowledge and enrich her vocabularies. She also preferred a fiction narrative to a personal narrative.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Overall, the results of this study were both narrative discourses (a personal narrative and a fictional narrative) and ages affect the children’s language development. The sample of children in the different ages, their narratives were briefer, and less grammatical. Besides, the children at 11 years old were more able to describe events or stories than 10 years old. They only need to practice more and more in order they get used to imply past tense in sharing or describing their story. Also, narratives were chosen as the focus of analysis because of their relevance to children’s lives. In addition, children participants as listeners and tellers of narratives everyday. Furthermore, narratives exemplify the sort of decontextualized language that both predict academic success and provides a foundation for literacy development. (L. Miller, 1990; Paul & Smith, 1993; Snow, 1983).

For the second research question, it pointed out that both ages were interested in using narrative discourse. Children at 10 years old preferred using a personal narrative to a fictional narrative, meanwhile, children at 11 years old preferred using a fictional narrative to a personal narrative.

**CONCLUSION**

Narrative is one of discourses that can be applied in teaching English to improve children’s language development in different ages. It is also an interesting way to engage children to speak, share or tell the story based on their experience or their imagination.

**LIMITATION AND FUTURE STUDY**
The time for study was not enough, only twice. If there is a chance it can be more than twice to see the significant results of study. Besides, for the future research, to get the finding data more accurate, the researcher may use other measures such as, fluency, pronunciation, etc.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION

This study can give both teacher and children contributions in language development. For teacher, it can challenge a teacher to be a creative teacher, involve teacher of developing a set of strategies to help children express and write about narrative skill. Moving on student’s contribution, it can engage students to be able to produce and comprehend narratives in their language development.

REFERENCES


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**Appendix 1**

*Questions for interview*

1. Do you like if the teacher use narrative discourse to improve your ability to communicate to others? Why?

2. Do you think narrative discourse is benefit for you?

3. Do you like to use a personal narrative in describing a story or events? Why?

4. Do you like to use a fiction narrative in describing a story or events? Why?

5. Do you prefer using a personal narrative to a fictional narrative?