

Doctoral Dissertation Abstract

Title	Narrative Interactions Observed in Casual Conversations Among Acquaintances: A Comparative Study of Japanese Native Speakers' Conversations, Chinese Native Speakers' Conversations, and Japanese-Chinese Contact Situations
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This study aimed to classify the characteristics of narratives that appear in casual conversations among acquaintances in Japanese native speakers' conversations, Chinese native speakers' conversations, and Japanese-Chinese contact situations. By identifying the causes of differences observed across these situations, this study proposed items for learners about narratives handled in Japanese conversation education and suggested mutual compromise (Okazaki 1994) between learners and native speakers.

Five research questions were formulated for analysis and discussion:

1. How can the definition and criteria for recognizing narratives in casual conversations be organized? (Chapter 3)
2. What are the topics and narratives observed in Japanese Native speakers' conversations, Chinese native speakers' conversations, and Japanese-Chinese contact situations? (Chapter 5)
3. What are the types of narratives observed in Japanese Native speakers' conversations, Chinese native speakers' conversations, and Japanese-Chinese contact situations? (Chapter 6)
4. What are the characteristics of the interaction between the narrator and listener in narrative openings and preceding topics in Japanese Native speakers' conversations, Chinese native speakers' conversations, and Japanese-Chinese contact situations? (Chapter 7)
5. What are the characteristics of the interaction between the narrator and listener in narrative endings and subsequent topics in Japanese Native speakers' conversations, Chinese native speakers' conversations, and Japanese-Chinese contact situations? (Chapter 8)

This dissertation comprises ten chapters. A summary of each chapter is as follows:

In Chapter 1, I discussed the background of the study from four perspectives: “Interaction found in Casual Conversations' Narratives and Relationship Formation”, “Narratives in Native speakers' conversations and Contact Situations”, “The Need to Examine the Relationship Between Narratives and Topics in Casual Conversations”, “Casual Conversations Among Acquaintances”. Based on these, I presented the research objectives.

In Chapter 2, I provided an overview of previous research on narratives, focusing on the following five aspects: “Historical Developments in Narrative Studies (English-language contexts)”, “Research on the Functions and Types of Narratives”, “Research on Narrative Openings”, “Research on Narrative endings”, “Sequential structure in Interaction and the Units of Topics and Utterances”. While reviewing prior studies, this chapter highlighted existing research gaps and set the research questions for this study.

In Chapter 3 (RQ 1), I summarized the definitions of narratives and the criteria for recognizing them in previous studies. First, for the definition of narratives, I referred to prior studies (e.g., Labov 1972; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; Lee 2000), and defined narratives as “verbal expressions of past experiences, rumors heard from others, or imagined future events within casual conversations.”

Then, I identified five criteria that defines a narrative. Through analysis of casual conversation data from three Japanese Native Speakers' Conversations in the BTSJ corpus (USAMI 2022), the following two conclusions were drawn:

(1) The criteria for certification of narratives in casual conversations were as follows: Item (1) the narrative must describe at least one event, Item (2) it must contain two temporally or causally connected clauses, Item (3) it must include linguistic markers indicating a shift from the present conversation to the narrative event. It was judged that these three items were appropriate as required items, and that it would be difficult to certify a document as a narrative unless all three items were included.

(2) Item (4), “There are expressions that preface the narrative,” and item (5), “There are expressions that quote the speech of the characters in the event,” were judged to be optional items because they may be omitted depending on the topic and level of detail before and after the narrative.

In Chapter 4, I provided an overview of the conversation data collection and the conversation participants addressed in this study, and described the framework for the analysis of this study. Conversation data was collected for a total of 12 conversations, four two-party conversations for each of the three situations. The relationship between the participants in each conversation was that of close acquaintances with shared experiences, such as “Having participated in the same club or class activities”. In processing and analyzing the conversation data, I explained in detail the method of characterization of the conversation data, the utterances, the topics /major topics, and the criteria for identifying narratives based on the results of the analysis in Chapter 3. Then, I clarified the relationship between the narratives and the key topics examined in this study.

In Chapter 5 (RQ 2), I presented an overall picture of the topics and narratives extracted from the casual conversations in three situations, and clarified the characteristics of the narratives and the sequence of preceding topics. The results can be summarized in two main points as follows.

(1) In the Japanese native situations, topics related to university life and professional concerns were found, whereas in the Chinese native situations, topics related to personal relationships were found. Furthermore, in Japanese-Chinese contact situations, topics which involving deep discussions about university life and relationships as seen in native situations, were not observed.

(2) The narratives in succession were identified in the major topics extracted from the three situations. These narratives were classified into two types according to the presence or absence of narrator alternation: “same narrator succession,” in which one narrator presents several narratives in a row in the major topic, and “speaker alternation succession,” in which narrator alternation is observed in the narratives in the major topic. In particular, I found that the percentage of learners telling narratives in “same narrator succession” in one major topic was high in the Japanese-Chinese

contact situations.

In Chapter 6 (RQ3), I analyzed the types of narratives in Japanese native speakers' conversations, Chinese native speakers' conversations, and Japanese-Chinese contact situations. The results can be summarized in the following two main points.

(1) Narratives in the three situations were classified into four types: “a. Information transfer” to convey the content of the event and objective facts, “b. Expression of feelings” to convey feelings at the time the event occurred, “c. Expression of opinion” to express agreement or disagreement with the content of the preceding topic, and “d. Expression of encouragement” to persuade or comfort the conversation partner based on the content of the preceding topic.

Furthermore, each type of narrative was found to have overlaps and interrelationships.

(2) As a result of analyzing the frequency and percentage of occurrence in the three situations collected in this study, it was found that the types of narratives observed in Japanese native speakers' situations are more diverse.

In Chapter 7 (RQ4), I focused on narrative openings and preceding topics in Japanese native speakers' conversations, Chinese native speakers' conversations, and Japanese-Chinese contact situations, classified the narrator and listener behaviors found in these situations, and compared and analyzed their frequency of occurrence and characteristics. As a result, I first classified narrative openings into three types according to the initiator of the narrative: “those initiated by the narrator”, “those initiated by the listener”, and “those initiated by the co-narrator”.

In the “narratives' opening initiated by the narrator,” five types of narrator behaviors were observed. On the other hand, seven corresponding listener behaviors were observed. In terms of narrator behavior, three actions were commonly used at a high rate across all three situations: (1) using a sign for the beginning, (2) giving an outline of the event, and (4) indicating the situation such as time, place, and person. However, compared to native Chinese speakers, native Japanese speakers overwhelmingly tended to use (1) using a sign for the beginning with other linguistic actions.

As for listener behavior, native Japanese speakers predominantly used (2) backchannel responses, whereas native Chinese speakers showed a higher tendency to use (1) nodding or laughter. Additionally, in Japanese-Chinese contact situations, when learners acted as listeners, the variety of listener behaviors used at the beginning of the narrative was relatively limited, and silence or lack of response was frequently observed.

On the other hand, in the “narratives' opening initiated by the listener,” two types of listener behavior were observed: (1) request for information and (2) request for confirmation by the listener. However, in the Japanese-Chinese contact situations, there were no examples seen where learners tried to elicit narratives from native speakers as listeners.

In the “narratives' opening initiated by the co-narrator”, in both Japanese native speakers' conversations and Chinese native speakers' conversations, it was observed that participants who shared common knowledge and experiences tended to first express emotions or evaluative comments about the narrative before beginning to describe the details of the event. However, such opening structures were not observed in Japanese-Chinese contact situations.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the learners' lack of response and silence as listeners observed at the opening of the narratives in the Japanese-Chinese contact situations were influenced by their

Japanese language level and their Chinese mother tongue habits.

In Chapter 8 (RQ 5), I focused on the endings of narratives and subsequent topics in Japanese native speakers' conversations, Chinese native speakers' conversations, and Japanese-Chinese contact situations, classified the types of narrator and listener behaviors and their patterns of interaction, and compared and analyzed their frequency of occurrence and characteristics. First, the results showed that there were five types of listener behavior at the end of a narrative: (1) nonverbal, (2) responses, (3) comments, (4) supplementary information request, and (5) $\varnothing$ (silence/no response).

Next, from the viewpoint of the interaction between narrator and listener behaviors, the endings was classified into three patterns: "cooperative type," in which there are two or more exchanges and the transition to the subsequent topic is made; "one-way type," in which only the listener behavior is observed and the transition to the subsequent topic is made; and "zero type," in which neither the listener behavior nor the narrator behavior is observed and the transition to the subsequent topic is made. Furthermore, in the "collaborative type," three subcategories were identified: "a. Comment - approval or impression," "b. Supplementary information request - supplementary talk," and "c. responses - approval or impression." In the "one-way type", the subcategories of "d. Comment," "e. response," and "f. Nonverbal" were found.

The results of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the frequency and characteristics of the patterns of interaction between narrator and listener behaviors at the end of the narrative revealed that, at the narrative' ending of a Japanese native speakers' conversations, the listener makes responses and comments to the events narrated in the narrative, exchanges opinions with the narrator, and collaboratively constructs the end of a long interaction, and then talks about similar experiences. On the other hand, in native Chinese-speaking contexts, listeners tended to first engage in "(4) supplementary information request" regarding the narrative before making "(3) comments." Additionally, not only did listeners provide "(3) comments" on the speaker's narrative, but they also shared their impressions of similar personal experiences as "(3) comments" and subsequently introduced their own similar experiences as follow-up topics.

In Chapter 9, based on the characteristics of the interaction between narrator and listener in Japanese native speakers' conversations, Chinese native speakers' conversations, and Japanese-Chinese contact situations, a comprehensive examination was conducted from two perspectives: the topic content and types of narratives in the casual conversations, and the collaborative construction of the narrator and listener in the opening and ending. Based on these findings, I made recommendations for learners, native speakers, and Japanese conversation education, considering the mutual adaptation between learners and native speakers.

Chapter 10 summarizes the conclusions of this study. As potential future research questions, it includes 4 points

(1) Analyze nonverbal behaviors other than nodding and laughing that narrators and listeners use to construct narratives.

(2) Collect data on face-to-face conversations to analyze the characteristics of interactional behaviors observed in narratives involving learners of different levels of Japanese and native speakers with different experiences of contact.

(3) Analyze the characteristics of narratives found in different conversational situations.

(4) Implement the concept of "Linking research and practice" (Nakai, 2012) by incorporating findings from previous studies and this research into Japanese conversation education activities, making learners aware of these insights.

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