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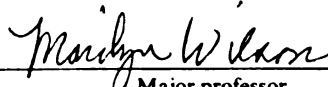
TEACHER'S PEDAGOGICAL ORAL NARRATIVES IN  
AN ESL CLASSROOM: ETHNOGRAPHIC  
INVESTIGATION AND IMPLICATIONS

presented by

Suad Ali Abdul-Hamid

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in English

  
Major professor

Date November 24, 1998

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**TEACHER'S PEDAGOGICAL ORAL NARRATIVES IN  
AN ESL CLASSROOM: ETHNOGRAPHIC  
INVESTIGATION AND IMPLICATIONS**

by

Suad Ali Abdul-Hamid

**A DISSERTATION**

Submitted to

Michigan State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Department of English

1998



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## **ABSTRACT**

# **TEACHER'S PEDAGOGICAL ORAL NARRATIVES IN AN ESL CLASSROOM: ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION AND IMPLICATIONS**

by

Suad Ali Abdul-Hamid

The study examines and describes naturally occurring oral narratives recounted by a female, American teacher of English as a second language during her interactions with eleven foreign students. The study proposes that the social meaning of oral narratives can not be discerned based solely on the language of the narratives or solely on the language of the interactions surrounding narration. Rather, like any verbal behavior, the social meaning of these narratives is essentially rooted in the participants' daily practices and their perspectives of these narratives.

The study employs two approaches: ethnography and discourse analysis. Two techniques of the former approach are employed in this study: participant/observation and interviewing. These techniques, as described in the ethnography of communication and educational ethnography, are used here to gather and examine teacher-students' interactions surrounding narration and teacher-students' perspectives of teacher's oral narratives, respectively. The strategies of the latter approach are used to elaborate and to represent the data gathered by the two techniques of the first approach. The data of the study consist of: field observations, interviews and transcripts of teacher-student interactions in eighteen, two-hour ESL lessons. Unlike previous analytic studies of the situated meaning of oral narratives, the analysis in this study takes participant perspectives as the primary point of analysis.

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The study disclosed a view of the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives and of the communicative roles they serve in teacher-student interactions as realized and achieved by both the teacher and the students. The study provided the following results. First, the taxonomy of the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives based on linguistic criteria is different from their taxonomy based on sociolinguistic criteria. Second, the study found that the participants, namely, the teacher and the students, viewed these narratives as pedagogical tools. However, they assigned the content of these narratives different but complimentary communicative purposes. The teacher assigned the content of these narratives a personal purpose whereas the students assigned them a situational purpose. Third, the pattern of the interaction surrounding narration provides complementary understanding of these two views. This pattern emphasizes the strategies the teacher utilizes to attain her personal purpose. The pattern also emerged as common to all situational purposes of the teacher's oral narratives; and a change in the situational purpose of these narratives marked a change in the routine pattern of the interaction. Finally, the study offers implications for oral narrative theorization; for pedagogy in second-language lessons in particular, and content lessons in general.

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**This work is dedicated first and foremost to my late parents.**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this doctoral dissertation has been a collective effort of many dedicated individuals. To those who assisted to see this work to completion, I wish to express my gratitude. My debt to my academic supervisor Professor Marilyn Wilson whose guidance and insights were instrumental in the accomplishment of this work.

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accomplish this work. I am very thankful to have him in life.

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Motivation and Objectives

Motivated by an interest in the nature of *oral narrative*, I decided to explore the situated meaning of naturally occurring narratives recounted by an American female teacher to her students in their face-to-face interactions in an English as a second language (ESL) classroom. My intention was to describe rigorously and systematically how both the English language teacher and the students in the classroom define narrative and how their concepts of narrative are utilized and realized in their interactions during the activities surrounding narration.

This study is an outgrowth of my encounter of diverse studies on the situated meaning of oral narrative. These studies focused on the meaning of oral narrative in terms of two parameters. The first parameter is the apparent textual features of oral narratives. The second parameter is related to the marginal features of a given social situation. Considering recent research studies that attended to the situated meaning of oral narrative in terms of these two parameters, I found an intensive debate in the works of scholars of different disciplines such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, folklore, and sociology.

The main point of this debate is centered on the elements that constitute oral narrative and at the same time are responsible for communicating the purpose for which these narratives are told. These elements are sought in various dimensions of either the narrative text itself or in the dimension of the situation in which this text emerges. Sociolinguists



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look for these elements in the syntactic structure of oral narratives (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972); in the relationship between the choice of narrative tense and the information it conveys (Riessman 1991); in the negotiation of the silent cultural assumptions upon which oral narratives depend (Polanyi 1979, 1985); and in marginal aspects of the situational context, notably a collective social status of the speaker and listener (Wolfson 1976).

Psycholinguists seek these elements in the thematic production of oral narrative structure (Gee 1991). Folklorists attend to these elements in the influence of the immediate situational context (Allen 1987). Sociologists, or more precisely, the conversation analysts, seek the elements of oral narrative meaning in conversational features (Sacks 1970-1971, 1972).

From these multi-disciplinary perspectives on the situated meaning of oral narrative, I realized that first, these studies focus on homogeneous groups. They examine mainly past-tense personal experience oral narratives, which are deliberately retrieved. Second, the meaning of these narratives is treated as autonomous and isolated from the main element of the social situation, namely the perspectives of the participants involved in the interaction surrounding narration. The problem with this autonomous perspective is that the meaning of oral narratives is essentially treated as given and is relegated to either their textual elements or to the marginal elements of a given social situation in which these narratives emerge. Consequently, the subtle social meaning characteristic of these narratives passes unrealized.

This present study examines the meaning of naturally occurring oral narratives from an ethnographic perspective. Commencing with the perspectives of those involved in the narrative act, this study demonstrates that the meaning of naturally occurring oral narratives is not necessarily compatible with its apparent content. The meaning of these narratives is rather situated by participants' shared knowledge of narrative material, which

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originates in different social activities in which the participants are involved daily. This same variable provides the sociolinguistic criteria for a taxonomy of different forms of naturally occurring oral narratives. The functions these narratives serve are mainly bound to communicating different problematic issues. The routine pattern of the interaction surrounding narration provides but a complementary contribution to situating the meaning of these narratives. A change in the function of the teacher's narrative signals a change in the routine pattern of the interaction.

My investigation of the situated meaning of naturally occurring oral narratives was carried out in an ESL classroom. This investigation examined teacher-students' perspectives on the meaning and use of oral narratives recounted by an American female teacher to her foreign students during their face-to-face interactions.

The choice to study the situated meaning of naturally occurring oral narratives in the interaction among this social group was motivated by two personal observations. First, in this community, i.e., the ESL classroom, naturally occurring oral narratives were commonplace. This second-language teacher often had recourse to use oral narratives at problematic points during classroom interactions with her students. This observation suggests that in this community, the researcher is most likely to obtain a range of oral narratives that are naturally occurring rather than deliberately retrieved. *Still doubtful*

Second, the group of adult students in this ESL classroom constituted a heterogeneous speech community. Thus the study of this speech community can add a new dimension for analyzing cultural perspectives other than the routinely investigated homogeneous speech communities. Consequently, the results can offer some insights into the meaning and use of naturally occurring oral narratives. *but in your analysis, little is said about the role of narrative in the use of narratives.*

The approach used to collect the data for this present study was mainly an ethnographic-discourse analysis. The data for my analysis are transcripts of teacher-students' interactions in an ESL classroom, observational field notes and interview transcripts. The *mostly verbal interaction*

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transcripts of the classroom interactions constitute the main data for my analysis. These transcripts represent thirty-six hours of teacher-student interactions. These transcripts are based mainly on audio recordings, of which nine hours and fifty minutes are based on both audio and video recordings. Of these transcripts, I limited my analysis to teacher-student interactions surrounding the teacher's use of oral narratives.

The data that comprise the field notes from observations and the interview material were gathered using two ethnographic techniques. The field notes were gathered using the participant/observation technique. These data provide the observations I gathered mainly about the situations in which the teacher used an oral narrative, about the types of narratives I inferred that the teacher used, about the functions these narratives appeared to serve, and about the teacher's non-verbal performance during narration as well as the non-verbal reactions of some students to these narratives on days when I only used audio equipment. These field data represent the researcher's perspective of teacher-students' activities, which contribute to the meaning of oral narratives that the teacher used during her interactions with the students.

The interview data were gathered using the ethnographic open-ended interviewing technique. These data provide the teacher-students' perspectives on what these narratives are, the types of narratives they believe the teacher used, and the reasons why the teacher recounted these narratives. The data I gathered using this technique represent the participants' perspectives on the meaning and functions of the teacher's oral narratives. The import of the information gathered using this technique is that it provides the researcher with the material necessary to identify the sociolinguistic criteria that underlay the teacher's use of these narratives.

Based on the analysis of this extensive data, the study identifies the genres of the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives and describes the stylistic features of each genre. The study also identifies the pedagogical functions that these narratives served in

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The strategy employed to examine these issues is based on the analysis of the researcher's field observations that the teacher's oral narratives routinely occurred and that the occurrence of these narratives was not an isolated incident. This strategy is rooted primarily in the research tradition of the anthropologists who attempt to represent the views of those who were studied. The strategies employed in the investigation of the transcripts of the teacher's oral narratives and the audiovisual material of teacher-students' interactions, however, are rooted in the research tradition of discourse analysts.

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## 1.2 Thesis Organization

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 2 provides a review of past literature on the situated meaning of oral narratives; specifies the rationale of the present study, purpose and importance of the study; and finally presents the theoretical framework and the questions of the study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology for gathering the data for the study. Chapter 4 contains the data analyses. This chapter provides an overview of the participants' perspectives on the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives; identifies and describes the situational contexts where the teacher used these narratives; and discloses the social rules that the teacher used in situating the meaning of these narratives. This chapter closes with a detailed interactional analysis of one of the teacher's oral narratives in one situational context. Chapter 5 provides a taxonomy of the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives and describes how the teacher used these narratives to create the students' involvement. Chapter 6 offers a detailed analytic description of the functions that the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives served in the teacher-students' interactions, and the influence of the routine pattern of the interaction on the participants' realization of these functions. Finally, Chapter 7 provides the conclusions and summary of the study,



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## 21 Introduction

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## **Chapter 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the foundation of this study in prominent research on oral narratives. Specifically, this chapter provides an overview of different theoretical perspectives on the situated meaning of oral narratives. This overview is represented in four main sections. The first section reviews the studies that focus on the textual elements in situating the meaning of oral narratives. This section is further divided into two subsections.

The first subsection provides a review of early studies on the structure and functions of written versions of oral narrative tradition. The purpose of this review is to explain the influence of early works on current canonical work on socially situated oral narratives. The second subsection deals with the canonical work on oral narrative structure and function and revisits its assumptions in light of recent theory and research. This subsection also represents a review of studies that consider the textual features of oral narratives in their categorization but exclude the sociolinguistic criteria. The purpose of this subsection is to emphasize the limitations of the canonical work it relates to the current study.

The second section focuses on the limitation of the methodological orientation of studies that deal with the meaning of oral narratives in face-to-face interaction, in two different types of conversations. The section is divided into two subsections. This first subsection addresses the meaning of oral narratives in formal conversations, mainly in interviews. The second subsection deals with oral narratives in naturally occurring conversations.

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The third section deals with ethnographic studies of oral narrative meaning that were carried out in two different social contexts, and highlights the dimension of oral narrative meaning that has not been a part of any of these studies. The first part of this section provides a review of ethnographic studies of oral narratives that were recounted in a formal setting, namely the classroom. The second part of this section represents a review of one ethnographic study, that was conducted in a non-formal setting, namely the social gatherings of a Midwestern social group. The purpose of this section of the review is to pinpoint the limitations of ethnographic studies of oral narratives as they relate to the current study.

The fourth section delineates the studies that focus on the use of language in the classroom and highlights the absence of studies on teachers' use of oral narratives. This section deals with the studies that examine the three main variables of classroom language: teacher-student interactions, teacher's talk, and students' talk. Accordingly, the section is divided into two subsections. The first subsection provides a review of studies that deal with these three variables in content area classrooms. The second subsection provides a review of studies with a corresponding focus in ESL classrooms. The purpose of this final section of the review is two-fold: first, to emphasize the absence of studies on teacher's oral narratives in classroom interactions; and second, to highlight the relevance of classroom discourse to the present study of teacher's oral narratives.

## **2.2 Situated Meaning of Oral Narratives: Textual Analysis**

Research on the meaning of oral narratives on the basis of their structural features can be traced to early works of folklorists and anthropologists. These scholars employed written texts of originally oral narratives as the primary data base for analysis. The main concern of these works is to construct a scheme of analysis that accounts for the meaning of oral narratives. To achieve this goal, these scholars attempted a detailed description of

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the linguistic components of these narratives and the rules that regulate the relationships among these components. The focus of these studies is mainly on past-tense narratives and little attention, if any, is given to the social or communicative nature of oral narratives.

### **2.2.1 Oral Narrative Tradition: Origin of Structure and Function**

Propp's (1968) work on Russian fairy tales is the pioneer in this endeavor. Propp surveyed over one hundred fairy tales. He searched for components that were perceived to be common to all tales. His conclusion was that all tales have a highly predictable sequence. This sequence essentially consists of two components, the first of which is identified as the “variable component” and the second of which is defined as the “constant component.” For Propp, these two components essentially refer to “characters” and their “functions,” respectively. According to Propp, what changes in each tale is the identity of the “character” while the “functions” they perform remain constant.

Propp's work provides the surface structure of oral narratives, or as put by Scholes, Propp's work demonstrates “the formal qualities of the tale, its basic units and the rules governing their combination” (1974: 67). However, a limitation of Propp's work is that it views narratives as autonomous, whole, and independent from any social and cultural contexts.

Drawing on the work of Propp, Levi-Strauss (1963) attempted a structural analysis of myth. In this analysis, Levi-Strauss adopted different notions from Ferdinand de Sassaure's linguistic theory and suggested that the meaning of myth is not accessible through its linguistic form. He explained that although the linguistic features provide that a given event occurred at a specific time in the past, the thoughts and ideas used to construct these features are boundless and not limited to the confines of its linguistic representation. These thoughts and ideas provide the rules that connect the apparent linguistic features. According to Levi-Strauss, a myth represents a method through which a given group of



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people attempts to arrive at an understanding of reality when their experience of reality contradicts their theory. In the context of my study, Levi-Strauss' work is limited because he took the language of narrative, not the speech community, as the main object of his analysis, even though he acknowledged its social aspect.

### 2.2.2 Oral Narratives of Personal Experience: Structural and Functional Analysis

Inspired by the work of Propp (1968) and Levi-Strauss (1963), Labov and Waletzky (1967) concluded the canonical work on oral personal experience narratives recounted by ordinary people. In this work, the researchers asked the tellers to recount a personal experience with threats to one's life. The attempt was to find an analytical formal scheme that accounts for the meaning of oral narratives, recounted in English. Based on a large body of data, several assertions were made about the fundamental structure of oral narratives.

Labov (1972) makes three assertions. First, he maintains that narrative is a function of its linguistic properties, namely clauses of simple past tense which recapitulate "past experience." These narrative clauses represent the narrator's past experience of events in an order that corresponds to the order of these events as inferred to have happened in reality. The second assertion is that the point around which the narrative clauses are structured is indicated throughout the narrative in numerous ways, including complete separate clauses. Such clauses often have complex verb phrase structure, with modal auxiliaries or negatives, describing what might have happened or did not happen, in contrast with what did. The function of these clauses is evaluative, i.e., revealing the cultural and social importance of the past events and their reportability. The third assertion is that for a narrative to be tellable, the events must be out of the ordinary course of what is expected; thus, in American English culture, usual or common events constitute untellable narrative.

For Labov, the "full-formed" narrative is reduced to six common elements: an

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abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda. These elements are structured to answer different underlying questions. Thus, the first three elements provide information that relate the events of the narrative to its evaluative function which is represented by different evaluative devices (Labov 1972: 367-393).

Labov's description of a full-formed narrative was based on narrative accounts that tellers recount of their own personal experiences. However, narrative accounts that a teller recounts of experiences that other persons lived through were considered by Labov as non-narratives. Labov referred to these accounts as *vicarious* experience narratives. According to Labov, vicarious experience narratives lack major elements like orientation and evaluation and are marked by pronominal reference that is "ambiguous" and "obscure" throughout (Labov 1972: 367). Though Labov's analytical perspective of oral narrative is widely recognized, recent research and theories challenge some of its assumptions.

Kalčík (1975) examined the forms of personal experience narratives that women in a therapeutic group shared with one another. She found that the form of these narratives often did not go beyond a phrase which captured one event. She coined the term *kernel narrative* to refer to past-tense personal experience narratives. In so doing, Kalčík questioned the restricted structure that Labov and Waletzky (1967) and later Labov (1972) provided, and emphasized the presence of structures that do not conform to the structure of fully-formed narratives.

Polanyi (1979) analyzed a past-tense personal experience narrative and provided an amelioration of Labov and Waletzky's (1967) and Labov's (1972) views on the structure of the point and the tellability feature of the narrative. This narrative was one among other personal experience narratives that was elicited by an interviewer asking a group of women the question: "Have you ever had an interesting experience on the subway?"

Polanyi's analysis of this narrative revealed that the point of the narrative was not solely a function of the teller's remarks. Instead, it included the contributions offered

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by both the narrator and the audience. The narrator and audience negotiated what the point of the narrative was to be. The narrator tried to respond to the audience's questions and comments that challenged her/his propositions about the nature and tellability of the narrator's experience. These propositions, according to Polanyi, encompassed information about the sequence of the narrative events, the aspects of the situation or characters who were involved in performing these events, and the narrator's emotional reactions to any of these elements.

Polanyi (1982) argued, based on detailed analysis of oral narratives in spontaneous conversation, that a distinction among various genres of narratives be made based upon "temporal semantic interpretation accorded the various propositions of which [these narratives] are composed" (p. 511). In her analysis, Polanyi described the linguistic dimension of these narratives, and provided a classification accordingly. Polanyi's analysis broadens Labov's linguistic description of what constitutes a narrative and suggests that the Labovian narrative is one genre of narratives among many others.

Robinson (1981) also challenges an assertion made by Labov. Robinson suggested that telling a narrative is not restricted to the telling of unusual events. What determines the tellability of a narrative are the many variables that constitute the elements of the social situation. In addition, the formal organization of the narrative is determined by the norms of the "conversational modes, the discourse structure on narrative, and pragmatic function that prompt the narration" (p. 85). All these arguments put Labov's work in perspective. For Robinson, the narrative tense, the narrative tellability, and the point of narrative are but isolated tools for the construction of narrative meaning.

Gee (1991) also departs from Labov's influential work. For Gee, the overall structure of narrative meaning has to do with the grouping of ideas into themes. According to Gee, this thematic organization is reflected on the surface of speech by intonation, pauses, and hesitations, which often can be realized as lines and stanzas, very much like those of a

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Riessman (1991) questioned Labov's assumption about the tense of the personal experience narratives. In this study, Riessman's analysis focused on personal experience narratives that she gathered in interviews with informants who went through the experience of divorce. Taking the tense as the criteria of classification, Riessman identified three genres of personal experience narratives and maintained that past-tense personal experience narrative is one among personal narratives of other tenses.

The three genres that Riessman identified were: *habitual* narratives, *hypothetical* narratives, and *approach-avoidance* narratives. Riessman designated habitual narratives as narratives that are constituted with verb tenses such as "conditional past" and "adverbs" that mark "repetitions and routinizations" (p. 53) to be about events that happen continuously; hypothetical narratives as narratives that are marked by the use of the "subjunctive" to be about events that did not happen at all; and approach-avoidance narratives as those narratives that are marked by a combination of tense features (i.e., that of the habitual and past tense narratives) to be about emotional events.

In brief, Labov identified textual features of personal experience narratives, mostly in formal interviews. Kalčik, Polanyi, Robinson, Gee, and Riessman questioned and augmented Labov's approach. These narrative analyses provided a vocabulary of crucial concepts for studying narrative. However, they were not developed on the basis of data in naturally-occurring talk.



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## 2.3 Situated Meaning of Oral Narratives in Formal and Natural Conversations

### 2.3.1 Oral Narratives in Formal Conversation

Studies of oral narratives as situated in formal conversations have focused on oral narratives that were recounted in interviews, among other formal types of conversations. The oral narratives that constituted the object of these studies were retrieved by direct questions about an issue designated by the researcher. The main concern of these studies is the information that these experiences convey about the experience per se. The values, beliefs or significance of what the informants wanted to convey through the telling of these narratives are disregarded in these types of studies. The results are homogenous data of narrative genres, mainly situated in one setting or context with primary concern with mode over context.

First, Labov and Waletzky (1967), for example, in an interview with male informants posed the question: "Were you ever in a situation where you were in serious danger of being killed? and tell me what happened?" Thus, the large body of narrative data retrieved by this question was mainly past-tense personal experience narratives. Labov and Waletzky defined these narratives in terms of their linguistic/discourse structure. Although the context is clearly relevant (e.g., in supplying the social values that are invoked by self-aggrandizing narrators), it does not constitute a part of the definition of these narratives.

Riessman's (1991) taxonomy of personal experience narratives was also based on data that were gathered during different interviewing sessions. Like Labov and Waletzky (1967) and later Labov (1972), Riessman focused on one linguistic feature of these narratives, i.e., narrative tense, in her analysis of the situated meaning of these narratives. Yet, Riessman's concern with the significance of these narratives to the teller and the manifestation of this concern in her classification system is a new development, compared

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This tradition of oral narratives analysis was addressed by Wolfson (1976). In this work, Wolfson emphasized the difference between oral narratives that appear in interview context and oral narratives in naturally occurring conversation. Wolfson made the case that analysts of oral narratives in interviews tend to ignore the effect of the interview as a speech event on the structure of the recounted narratives. For instance, conversational historical present (“Then he says . . . and I go . . .”) is one of the major features evoked by conversational, as opposed to interview, situations (Wolfson 1978, 1982).

In the view of my work, the limitation of studies of oral narratives as situated in formal conversation is that they ignore the relevance of the rules of the interaction to the meaning and use of the recounted oral narratives.

### **2.3.2 Oral Narratives in Naturally Occurring Conversation**

Research on oral narratives as situated in naturally occurring conversation has focused on transcripts of recorded oral narrative texts, as the primary point of analysis. Conversational features characteristic of white American conversation developed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1978) are taken as operative in situating these narratives. In this tradition, the social rules of constructing the meaning of oral narratives are searched for in the organizational features of these narratives. The participants’ perspectives on the meaning or purpose of telling the narrative in question are excluded.

In his work on the organizational features of storytelling, Sacks (1970-1971) focused on the sequential features associated with the occurrence of oral narratives. He suggested that narratives in naturally occurring conversational interaction are organized and produced in turn-by-turn talk. In telling a narrative, the teller, using a story preface, signals to the participants in the interaction that a narrative will follow. This feature influences the next

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From the same perspective, Sacks (1972) examined a two-event oral narrative text told by a child to an adult. In doing so, he explained that the intonational aspects of oral narratives provide the rule for inferring the beginning and ending of this narrative. Also, he provided a categorization of the social rules that provide the hearer with the necessary information to understand the meaning of this particular narrative (pp. 332-338). This structure is meant to offer an explanation of the social foundation of inference upon which the recipient of the narrative in question would interpret these utterances as a narrative.

From the same perspective, Jefferson (1978) focused her analysis on features of "occasioned" narratives in naturally occurring conversation to show how participants situate their stories into ongoing talk. Jefferson identified and described two features of situated stories in conversations. In so doing, she attended to the relevance of preceding and succeeding talk. She contended that stories are triggered in the conversation by something that one participant said in prior talk. The narrative that appeared in the succeeding turn at talk is triggered by some features of what was said in prior talk, which reminded the teller of the narrative he told. Jefferson coined the term "locally-occasioned" to refer to this feature.

In describing the second feature of "occasioned" stories, Jefferson argued that oral narratives are methodically introduced into turn-by-turn talk. In this case, narratives are systematically introduced into the ongoing talk. Through these narratives, the teller attempts to signal the appropriateness of prior talk and account for it. Jefferson referred to this feature as "sequentially implicative."

Ryave (1978) focused his analysis on the achievement of a series of sequentially occasioned stories in naturally occurring conversation. The data consisted of four transcripts, in each of which two stories appeared in a row. In this analysis, Ryave focused

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on the interactional relationships between two stories and explained how the two speakers signal to each other the relevance of their stories to preceding talk. Ryave's goal was to provide "a developing description of a general procedure for achieving the series of stories phenomenon" (p. 122).

Ryave contended that the source and relevance of the succeeding story is embedded in the repetition of an utterance in the story of the preceding turn at talking. This utterance provides evidence that the teller realizes that a story has been told in the preceding turn. At the same time, this utterance points to the significance of telling the second story and consequently defines that the achievement of a series of stories is accomplished. The main point is that stories in conversation are "participants' phenomenon open to emergent realization" (p. 130).

In sum, Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) revealed formal aspects of narratives told in interviews. Narratives told during interviews were also studied by Riessman (1991) and Wolfson (1976). Narratives told during naturally occurring conversation were studied by Sacks (1972), Jefferson (1978) and Ryave (1978). While the examination of the situated meaning of oral narratives in formal conversation focuses on linguistic features to draw the significance of oral narrative meaning, the studies of the situated meaning of oral narratives in naturally occurring conversation focuses on the language of the interaction, instead. In both cases, the researchers' perspectives on the social aspects of the narrative act, not the participants' perspectives, takes precedence in the analysis of the narrative meaning. This orientation leaves the significance of the rules of the interaction to the participant's use of oral narratives unexamined.

In contrast, this current study takes the participants' perspectives as the point of departure in the analysis of oral narrative meaning and emphasizes the relevance of rules of interaction as a component of a given situation and as a complementary unit of analysis in the context of this meaning.



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## **2.4 Oral Narrative Studies: Ethnographic Foundation**

There are a few recent studies that examine the situated meaning of oral narratives from an ethnographic perspective. These studies were carried out in two types of social settings, namely formal and non-formal. The limitation of these studies as related to this current work is that they focused only on personal experience oral narratives.

The ethnographic studies of oral narratives in a formal setting were carried out in elementary classrooms. These studies focused on children's accounts of personal experiences in the well-known speech event, "sharing time." The main concern of these studies was two-fold: first, to delineate the influence of the sociocultural backgrounds of minority children on the structure of their narratives (Michaels 1981, 1983); second, to delineate the differential treatment these narratives receive from teachers who belong to different cultural backgrounds (Michaels 1983; Michaels and Cazden 1986).

Other studies of children's accounts of personal experience narratives focus on the relevance of children's narrative style to literacy and education (Michaels and Collins 1984; Michaels and Cazden 1986; McCabe and Peterson 1991). From a similar standpoint, other studies consider developing analytical schemes based on children's narrative accounts of personal experience. The purpose of these studies is to delineate the structure of minority students' narrative style, compared to the style accepted by the school and the implications of these features for education (Gee 1985, 1986, 1989).

The ethnographic studies of oral narratives in non-formal settings were carried out on personal experience oral narratives recounted in everyday social gatherings. The most recent of these studies is Johnstone (1990). This study aimed to provide a view of the style of personal experience narratives of one subculture of middle class white Americans, namely the narrative style of the Midwestern speech community. The main focus of this study was to offer one view of the narrative style that differs from the style of the "American cultural mainstream" (p. 4).

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It is obvious from these two reviews that ethnographic studies of oral narratives focus mainly on the stylistic aspects of mainly personal experience oral narratives of a specific social group of people. From the standpoint of the present ethnographic research, these studies do not consider the stylistic features of genres other than personal experience narratives, do not examine the influence of the routine pattern of the interaction in these settings on the communicative function of the examined genre of oral narratives. In addition, these studies do not examine the relevance of the participants' shared culture of the language and the use of the teacher's pedagogical oral narratives in classroom interactions.

## **2.5 Teacher's Oral Narratives and Classroom Discourse**

Classroom discourse has been the focal point of considerable research in both content area lessons and second language lessons. The main concern of research in content lessons is the use of language in classroom instruction and students' learning, and the implication this use has for educational and/or pedagogical questions. In ESL classrooms, however, the concern of the research is with students' achievement of learning English. The review of this research in both types of classrooms revealed an absence of studies on teachers' pedagogical oral narratives. The following is a delineation of classic and current works of classroom discourse and that relevance to the present study.

### **2.5.1 Classroom Discourse in Content Lessons**

The review of research on classroom discourse in content lessons reveals the absence of studies of teacher's oral narratives. The focus of this research is on the structure of the discourse of teacher-student interactions. Various approaches have been adopted and have resulted in a variation of the same structure. The canonical work in this endeavor is that of Bellack et al. (1966). From a sociological perspective, they studied interactions

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From linguistic and sociolinguistic sources, Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) offered a systematic analysis of teacher-student interaction in first language classrooms. In part, they reviewed Bellack et al.’s (1966) moves and suggested that these moves fall into three broad categories. These categories are *initiation*, *response*, and *feedback*. Mehan (1979) adopted an ethnographic approach to the discourse of classroom interaction and described the behavior of teacher and students to be organized into “interactional sequences” (p. 36). These sequences comprise three main moves, namely *initiation*, *reply*, and *evaluation*.

The implications of these classic works for recent studies of classroom interaction is that they provided the components of classroom interaction which were later adopted and examined in a variety of content area lessons for different educational and pedagogical purposes. In early works, these studies of classroom discourse, in particular Bellack et al.’s (1966), led to the development of quantification schemes such as the one provided by Dunkin and Biddle (1974). This scheme was used in the investigation of teacher-student verbal behaviors.

Recent research, however, has focused on specific aspects of teachers’ and/or students’ use of language. Dillon (1985) attempted an investigation of teachers’ questions in the achievement of discussion in order to explain the absence of discussion in history lessons. Rowe (1986) examined the pace of one teacher’s question asking on students’ answering behavior, and described the “pronounced changes” that resulted from the teacher’s shift to slower interactional paces (see Cazden 1988, for review).

The studies of teacher’s and students’ use of language in the content classroom initiated an ethnographic approach to the exploration of different educational issues. In their treatment of students’ learning achievements, Michaels (1986) focused on the students’

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narrative styles and their achievement of literacy. Michaels and Cazden (1986) and Cazden (1988) focused on the relationships among the cultural backgrounds of the teachers and their treatments of students' responses. Campbell (1989), from an ethnographic perspective, examined the students' interactions with the teacher in a math lesson taught in English. His description of these interactions suggested that students' understanding of math is bound to their learning of English and their fragile grasp of English presented the teacher with no central challenge in her efforts to move them toward achievement in both English and math.

In sum, the classic works on the discourse of teacher-student interaction have led to the identification of the structure and functions of the components that comprise this pattern (Bellack et al. 1966; Sinclair and Coulthard 1979; Mehan 1979). The implications of these studies were evident in the development of quantification schemes (Dunkin and Biddle 1974) and in dealing with pedagogical and educational problems associated with teachers' talk (Dillon 1985; Rowe 1986), students' talk (Michaels 1983), and teachers' treatment of students' responses (Michaels and Cazden 1986; Cazden 1988) and finally, in the relevance of the interaction in explaining students' struggle with language in the learning of mathematics (Campbell 1989). Although the classic and recent studies of classroom discourse examined fundamental issues in content area classrooms, these studies are not directly relevant to the present study.

The present study is primarily an attempt to shed some light on the use of one form of rhetorical discourse, namely oral narratives. In the investigation of this issue, the study focuses on oral narratives that an ESL teacher used during her interactions with the students, with specific concern with the influence of one component of classroom interaction, i.e., questioning-answering sequence, on the meaning of these narratives. This concern is motivated by the ethnographic perspective that the questioning-answering sequence is representative of the rules characteristic of the interaction in the classroom,



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### 2.5.2 Classroom Discourse in English as a Second Language Lessons

The review of research on classroom discourse in ESL classrooms also showed an absence of studies of teachers' oral narratives. Studies of the discourse of the interaction in ESL classrooms have been highly affected by the implications of research in content area classrooms. Influenced by the work of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), Fanselow (1977) developed a system of analyzing teacher-student interaction based on data he gathered in ESL lessons. This system was widely used in second-language classrooms as a quantitative measure to determine the frequency of teachers' talk to the frequency of students' talk (see Chaudron 1988, for review).

The attention of researchers in ESL classrooms began to focus on specific components of classroom interaction such as turn-taking, questioning-answering, negotiating teachers' feedback, and the potential implications for understanding the relevance of teachers' input to students' output. The review of the studies on questioning-answering, for example, Long and Sato (1983) and more recently Wintergerst (1994), focused on the relevance of the form of teachers' questions in the assessment of the amount of meaningful use of language in the classroom, and the impact of the type of teachers' questions on students' communicative behavior, respectively. However, none of these studies of the question-answer sequences has dealt with the relevance of this sequence to the English language teacher's use of oral narratives.

In recent research on ESL classrooms, the participants' cultural and personal perspectives become the focal point in the analysis of their language performance. Taking an ethnographic approach among others, Cortazzi and Jin (1996) examined the perspectives of Chinese students on their inactive behavior in classroom interaction and compared these

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Tsui (1996) examined the perspectives of Chinese teachers of English as a foreign language of their students' behavior. Tsui conducted this examination from the theoretical perspectives of anxiety and language learning. These investigations of the cultural and personal perspectives of learners and teachers on students' behavior in English classrooms aimed at understanding the roots of students' language behavior and formulating a remedy by developing different teaching strategies, respectively.

However, from the standpoint of this present study, this research leaves untouched the perspectives of teacher and students of any particular form of the teacher's language behavior. In addition, these studies ignore that teachers and students constitute a speech community as members of the classroom who share at least some rules of classroom communication. OK  
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In conclusion, unlike the concerns of the studies of classroom discourse in content area lessons and ESL classrooms, this current study is concerned with the relevance of specific social components of this discourse to the teacher's use of one type of rhetorical discourse: namely, the relevance of question-answer sequences to the teacher's usage of oral narratives. The study investigates this issue by focusing on one teacher's pedagogical oral narratives. This attempt has not been explored in the studies of classroom discourse, neither in content classrooms nor in ESL classrooms.

In addition, the study considers the participants' perspectives of these narratives in an attempt to identify the shared sociolinguistic foundation for the interpretation of the teacher's oral narrative forms and functions. This attempt also stands in contrast to current theoretical interpretations of these issues, the interpretations that focus mainly on one type of oral narrative and take the language of narrative or that of the interaction as the primary source for this information and exclude the perspectives of those involved in the narrative act.

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## **2.6 Rationale of the Study**

The situated meaning of oral narratives that spontaneously emerge in face-to-face interaction is a neglected issue in the literature on oral narratives. Research on the situated meaning of oral narratives, in most of the major studies, has focused on oral narratives that are mainly recounted under specifically controlled social situations, mainly in oral interviews. The corpus of these narratives, in most of the major studies, were elicited rather than appearing to serve some functions in naturally-occurring discourse. Thus our view of narratives has been skewed toward a particular type of narrative, i.e., past-tense personal experience, with a particular function. Researchers have analyzed oral narratives either in terms of the interrelationship between the linguistic elements of the narrative text or in terms of the language of the interaction surrounding narration. The social significance of these narratives as perceived from the perspectives of those involved in the narrative act has taken a back seat to the researcher interpretation of this significance.

In order to examine the social and communicative nature of oral narratives, this study focuses on a teacher's spontaneously occurring oral narratives in teacher-student interaction. The focus of this study is to examine and describe the situated meaning of oral narratives that spontaneously occur in face-to-face interaction in one institutional setting. Specifically, this study aims to examine the role that the teacher's oral narratives play in an ESL classroom interaction according to the social components of the situation in which the teacher uses these narratives: specifically, in terms of the teacher's purpose, and in terms of the purpose of the situation in which the teacher considered using an oral narrative.

The study focuses on teacher-student perspectives to provide an ethnographic account of the social and communicative nature of these narratives. That is, the purpose is to demonstrate that spontaneously occurring oral narratives are recounted not only for the

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## 2.7 Purpose of the Study

The analysis of the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives within the conceptual framework of Hymes' (1974) ethnography of communication has mainly two purposes. The first purpose is to open up new possibilities of investigating the relevance of narrative structure to social rather than linguistic components, and second, to revisit the limited view of the linguistic nature of oral narrative meaning that takes the textual properties as the main criteria for oral narrative taxonomy and relegates narrative accounts that are recounted in a tense other than the past to being not narrative at all.

## 2.8 Importance of the Study

This study addresses three neglected issues on the situated meaning of oral narratives and hence, lays their import. First, the study investigates participants' values and beliefs of the different forms and roles of naturally occurring oral narratives.

Second, the study examines naturally occurring oral narratives and provides a taxonomy guided by the participants' perspectives. In doing so, the study extends the analysis of oral narratives to include the social components of the situation in which these narratives are used, namely, in terms of the teller's purpose and in terms of the purpose of the situation in which these narratives appear.

Third, the study identifies the functions of these narratives in relation to the rules of interaction characteristic of a given situational context, and describes the relevance of the interaction pattern to the functions that these narratives serve. The study also describes how the change of the routine pattern of the interaction influences the participants' realization



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## **2.9 Rationale and Theoretical Framework of the Study**

Naturally occurring oral narratives do not appear in a vacuum. Rather, these narratives can appear in any interaction between interlocutors who share some kind of mutual interest, which brings them to participate in the first place. In any interaction, formal or non-formal, the chances that these narratives emerge is not limited to one specific variable. The many variables that may trigger these narratives range from features relevant to the topic of the interaction (Wolfson 1976) to indefinite features of something that the teller hears or sees (Jefferson 1978) to reaction to one's subliminal desire to embody one's self (Young 1989), to name a few.

Notwithstanding the nature of these variables, the meaning of the recounted naturally occurring oral narrative is anchored in the task that the teller and her/his audience manages to achieve through their interaction that takes place in a specific place and time. The task that the participants attempt to accomplish varies depending on the nature of the speech event where the naturally occurring oral narratives emerge. Thus the social and communicative nature of an oral narrative that naturally occurs in doctor-patient interaction during a diagnosis session differs from the social and communicative nature of the narrative that naturally occurs in witness-prosecutor interaction during a trial. By the same token, oral narrative that naturally occurs in teacher-student interaction during a given content lesson entertains a distinctive social and communicative nature.

The language of the interaction is very important and constitutes much of the data of this study. However, to identify the social rules that contribute to situating the meaning of naturally occurring oral narratives, the researcher cannot depend solely on the language of the interaction. The reason that the language of the interaction alone is not a reliable

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source for these rules pertains to the indefinite nature of the variables that inspire the appearance of these narratives. The impact of this indefinite feature can be captured in the difference between oral narratives that naturally occur in the interaction and oral narratives that are deliberately retrieved.

The most relevant of these differences to the point of the present study are: first, the decision of the teller to recount a narrative at a given point of the interaction is an individual decision and independent from a direct request for a narrative from her/his audience. Second, the form of the narrative through which the narrator chooses to recount a given experience is also an individual decision and the choice of this form cannot be determined by the rules of the interaction. Third, the part of the narrative experience that the narrator decides to recount is essentially relevant to the narrator's goal. This goal is difficult to identify based solely on the language of the interaction.

Taking these factors into consideration, this study utilizes Hymes' (1974) conceptual framework of ethnography of communication. From Hymes' central elements of the speech event that are most relevant to analyzing a member's verbal behavior of a given speech event, the following four elements are most relevant to analyzing the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives in teacher-student interaction, during the recognized speech event, namely the ESL lesson.

These elements and their notions as related to the purpose of the present study are: *situational context*, which refers to the social situation that is marked by a particular issue and rules of interaction; *norms of interaction*, which refers to the rules that govern teacher-student turn-taking in the classroom; *purpose*, which refers to the teacher's conscious and non-conscious decision behind the use of a particular narrative; and *function*, which refers to the role of the teacher's narratives in relation to the outcome of a given situational context where the teacher uses an oral narrative.

In this study, Hymes' notion of the norms of interaction was supplemented by

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Johnson's (1979) framework of analyzing classroom interaction. This framework of analysis focuses on teacher-student interaction in terms of the verbal acts that are classified according to their functions into solicitation, response and reaction. This framework also views teacher-student interaction as recurring cycles of question-answer sequences. The most relevant of this framework to the analysis of data in the present study are three of the eight question-answer sequences that Johnson (1979) identified and described. These sequences are: answers to *Fact A-event Unique* question; answers to *Opinion A-event Talk* question; and answers to *Opinion B-event Talk* question (p. 52).

Given that A-event and B-event are two features that characterize the information that the teacher requests as whether it is known only to the teacher or known only to the student (Johnson 1979), I will replace A and B with T and S to refer to teacher and student, respectively. The purpose for doing so is to make the discussion of this issue in the forthcoming chapters easier to follow. Henceforth, the three types of questions will read: *Fact T-event Unique*; *Opinion S-event Talk*; and *Opinion T-event Talk*.

The view that the pattern of the classroom interaction alternates between two phases (Cazden 1988) suggests the need to examine the influence of the phase of the interaction on the teacher's use of an oral narrative. Cazden (1988) suggests that teacher-student classroom interaction constitute two phases: *instruction* and *discussion*. Each phase is characterized by a specific pattern of teacher-student interaction and a specific topic. The instruction phase is marked by the teacher's concern with curriculum and turn-allocation (teacher-student-teacher). The discussion phase, however, is marked by a topic that is not necessarily relevant to the curriculum and a sequence of turns that takes the pattern (teacher-student-student . . . teacher). However, for the purpose of this study, these two notions are differentiated mainly by the shift in the topic of the interaction and the length *rather than* the frequency of the students' turns.

Hymes' (1974) conceptual framework adopts the ethnographic approach to studying

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language as a social behavior. This ethnographic approach, according to Hymes' (1980) definition, offers the researcher the opportunity to study "people's verbal behavior in naturally occurring, ongoing settings, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of their behavior." This approach employs two techniques, namely participant/observation and interviewing. These two techniques provide two complementary sources for the information necessary to understand and interpret the social and communicative nature of the teacher's oral narratives.

The first technique, namely the participant/observation technique, guided by Hymes' (1972b) initial framework, provided first hand information about the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives. This technique provided information about the nature of the speech event where the teacher's oral narratives naturally occurred, about the distribution of these narratives in teacher-student interaction in different activities in the ESL lesson, and about the pattern and the frequency of the occurrences of these narratives. The import of this last piece of information is that it substantiates that the teacher's oral narratives routinely occur and that their occurrences are not isolated incidents. In addition, this technique provides a global perspective of the communicative aspect of these narratives.

The second technique, namely the interviewing technique, provided the teacher-student perspectives on different aspects of the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives, aspects that are not accessible either from field notes gathered from the previous technique or from observations of the rules that govern teacher-student interaction. Thus teacher-student interviews provided insights into the purposes for which the teacher uses these narratives, the range of the teacher's oral narratives categories, and the significant role that these narratives play in teacher-students' interactions.

While I adopted Hymes' framework to provide the basis for an ethnographic, sociolinguistic investigation of the teacher's use of oral narratives, a multi-disciplinary perspective of oral narrative structure was required to identify the diverse forms of these narratives. To



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begin, Sacks' (1978a: 414) description of the information that an oral narrative provides was used as a theoretical assumption to provide an operative definition of the teacher's oral narratives. This definition is guided by the participants' perspectives of the nature of these narratives. (See section 4.2.2, Chapter 4).

Within the frameworks of Labov and Waletzky (1967); Kalčík (1975); Riessman (1991) and Polanyi (1982), the formal features of the teacher's oral narratives were examined. The most relevant notions of these frameworks to the examination of the forms of the teacher's oral narratives are the notions of *narrative events* and *narrative evaluation*. These two notions were first offered by Labov and Waletzky (1967). The notion of the *narrative events* refers to the linguistic representation of the experience in a line of events, essentially of events that happened in the past. However, the notion of narrative evaluation refers to the different devices that serve to convey the significance of these events. These devices can be observed in the repetition of certain words, in the use of verbs to convey what the characters said, what the characters thought or what the characters did.

The first notion was recently challenged by Polanyi (1982) and Riessman (1991) whose work lends support to the fact that the line of narrative events encompasses events that occurred very often in the past, of events that could happen in the future, or of events that did not happen at all.

As we will see in Chapter 5, these two notions do not quite represent the formal features of the teacher's oral narratives. In this study, I redefine these two notions to fit the corpus of the narrative data of the present study. Hence, the notion of narrative events does not necessarily refer to the experience of a line of events. Rather, this notion can refer to the experience of one event and occasionally more than one event.

The notion of narrative evaluation as developed for the purpose of this study constitutes four different types of evaluative clauses: first, clauses that convey the feelings and/or the thoughts (personal/internal dialogue) and/or the desires of the principal char-

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acter; second, clauses that convey the actions of the principle character; third, clauses that convey the characteristic features of the setting and/or of the character; and finally the words or phrases that either constitute a separate entity or that constitute a part of the other clauses to convey repetition, continuity, or emphasis of certain aspects of the experience.

I devised these four sets of evaluation clauses to provide the tool to define the ordinariness of four dimensions of the experience: namely, the *emotional dimension*; the *performance dimension*, *environmental dimension*, and the *quality* (i.e., intensity and frequency) of the experience, respectively. In contrast to the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967), this study takes narrative evaluation *rather than* the narrative events, as the representative of the experience, if not the experience per se. Also, this study adopts the view that no narrative lacks an evaluation element. Narratives that constitute only the line of events are narratives since the evaluation can be captured in the non-verbal features such as the organization of the events and/or the intonation associated with the production of the event clauses. This is not to imply that the sequence of events is not necessary to have a narrative. Rather, the sequence of events can be viewed as a function of evaluation, specifically of the non-verbal type of evaluation.

## 2.10 Questions of the Study

In the first part of this chapter, I have outlined a view of the situated meaning of oral narratives in classic and current research. Through this view, I pinpointed the limitation of the studies that treated the meaning of oral narrative mainly in terms of either the language of the narrative itself or the language of the interaction surrounding narration. I emphasized the point that the participants' perspectives are neglected factors in the construction of oral narrative meaning. I also attempted to make clear that these studies did not consider the stylistic features of genres other than the deliberately retrieved personal experience narratives, and did not examine the influence of the routine pattern of the interaction of a given social setting on the communicative functions of the examined

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In contrast, this study takes the work on the situated meaning of oral narratives a step further by focusing on the participants' perspectives and examines the meaning and use of oral narratives, accordingly. In so doing, this study attempts to emphasize the speech community over language as a primary unit in the analysis of oral narrative meaning. The goal is to provide a taxonomy of oral narratives based on sociolinguistic rather than linguistic criteria. The study attempts to achieve this goal by focusing on naturally occurring oral narratives instead of deliberately retrieved oral narratives. In addition, the study considers the relevance of the rules of the interaction characteristic of the setting where these narratives were recounted on the role these narratives play, and describes how these rules influence the communicative functions of these narratives.

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Precisely, this study attempts to explore the situated meaning of naturally occurring oral narratives that are recounted by an American female teacher to her students during an ESL classroom interaction. The study examines the social and the communicative dimensions of the teacher's use of these narratives. In so doing, the study takes the participants' perspectives, namely the teacher and students, and identifies the social rules that played a role in situating the meaning of the teacher's narratives. This study also attempts to describe the impact of the routine pattern of the interactions on the pedagogical functions of these narratives.

Specifically, this study attempts to address the following questions: How are the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives in teacher-student interaction perceived from the perspectives of both the teacher and the students and how are they defined? What are the linguistic stylistic features these narratives entertain? What are the sociolinguistic rules that determine the teacher's use of these narratives during the interaction? What are the types of sociolinguistic or communicative functions these narratives have from the perspectives of both the teacher and the students?

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## Chapter 3

# METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

A descriptive interpretive research design (i.e., ethnographic) employing participant/observation and interviewing techniques was utilized to investigate and identify the implicit rules of meaning construction contained in teacher-student face-to-face interactions during activities surrounding narration in an ESL classroom. The theoretical presuppositions of this approach take the participants' perspectives on the activities in which they are involved to be the main criteria of investigation. Unlike other observational techniques, the participant/observation technique is essentially interpretive in that the researcher makes every effort to avoid preconceived ideas in the analysis of the participants' actions (Hymes 1980; Erickson 1986). The pattern of implementing the techniques of this approach as summarized by Erickson (1986) involves: "(a) intensive, long-term participation in a field setting; (b) careful recording of what happens in the setting by writing field notes and collecting other kinds of documentary evidence (e.g. memos, records, examples of student work, audiotapes and videotapes); and (c) subsequent analytic reflection on the documentary record obtained in the field, and reporting by means of detailed description, using narrative vignettes and direct quotes from interviews, as well as by more general description in the form of analytic charts, summary tables, and descriptive statistics (p. 121)."

I use the terms 'ethnography' and 'ethnographic,' in this study, in different ways. I use 'ethnography' to allude to my concern with the culture that the participants in my study



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share as a group that makes up the ESL classroom a speech community. I use the term 'ethnographic', however, to refer to the activities in which I got engaged in an attempt to explore and describe the language and use of the teacher's oral narratives from the perspectives of this group of participants. These activities include the above techniques and strategies that I employed in collecting, analyzing, and representing the data.

This chapter describes in detail how participant/observation and interviewing techniques were used in gathering the data for the present study and the procedure of organizing, indexing, and representing the collected data. This chapter also provides a detailed description of the site and the settings where the study was conducted and a brief background of the participants involved in the study.

### **3.2 Data Collection Activities**

The data for this research were gathered during Spring 1992 school term. The classroom that was chosen for the present study was an ESL classroom which I will refer to as Mrs. Smith's classroom. This classroom is one of two C-Level classrooms located in an English language institute which I will here call the Academic Institute for English Language Teaching. The teacher is a white American female with a number of years of teaching English in American high schools, and who was relatively new to the staff of the institute. The students are from a variety of countries around the world. They enrolled in the institute to achieve English proficiency to satisfy different academic objectives.

After approval was secured from the University Committee on Research with Human Subjects (UCRIHS) and from the director of the language institute, and after consent forms were signed by the teacher and the students of the ESL class, the data for this research were gathered using two fundamental techniques that are considered exemplary of ethnographic research. These techniques are: participant/observation and interviewing (Bogdan and Biklen 1982; Peacock 1986; Hammersley and Atkinson 1990).

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### 3.2.1 Participant/Observation Technique

Participant observation was one of two techniques used in this study to investigate and identify the ways in which the meaning of the teacher's oral narratives was constructed in teacher-students' face-to-face interactions. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggest that researchers must decide whether to maintain a balance between being a full participant in the activities they investigate or remain as absolute observers of these activities. Given that the focus of the present study was in part on teacher-student verbal and non-verbal interaction surrounding narration, and the possibility that my participation in the classroom would corrupt the data, I decided to maintain a balance between these two roles.

As a participant, I limited my involvement with the teacher and students to activities outside the classroom period. During the ten-minute break that separated the two-hour classroom period, I helped the students when they needed assistance with minor grammatical or pronunciation problems or wished to share their personal experiences or problems with me. I also chatted with the teacher and gained her friendship. In doing so, my intention was to minimize my presence as researcher or an outsider and to reduce the participants' feelings of being scrutinized so that the participants' interactions retain their spontaneity.

In the classroom, I did not participate in any of the teacher-student classroom activities and I also did not elicit any of the oral narratives presented by the teacher. I was engaged in collecting observations of teacher-students' non-verbal interactions during the events when the teacher's oral narratives were introduced into the interactions. In fact, my involvement with the teacher or the students in any of these activities was nearly absent, to such an extent that I view my role in the classroom more as an observer than as a participant observer.

However, there were a few incidents when I felt that the students and the teacher

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treated me as a participant and tried to get me involved in some activities that were not related to classroom activities, although these activities occurred during the classroom period. As a participant outside the classroom, I used to socialize with the teacher and the students especially at lunch time and in a couple of occasions at dinner time. During these times, the teacher often shared with me some of the anecdotes that were relevant to some of her students' personal reactions to films which she took them to see, and their reactions to the experiences that other students share with the rest of the class in their journals. Some of the students also did share with me their impressions of some cultural issues that were brought up during the classroom interactions. My social interactions with the teacher and the students illuminated my analysis of the teacher's oral narratives. To some extent I became a member of the classroom community, which had a positive effect as evidenced by the interviewing sessions. *Field Illustration 1*

As an observer, I relied on three different tools for collecting my fieldwork observations. These tools were a notepad, audiotape equipment and videotape equipment. Although the notepad and pencil were my only means of recording observations of the first two hours of the total observation hours of classroom interactions, they remained permanent tools for data gathering along with the audio and video equipment, which I used later. The audio equipment I used was a Sanyo VQT-2550 cassette recorder with an internal microphone. I audiotaped 36 hours of classroom interactions distributed over a period of two months. I placed the cassette recorder on the teacher's table and replaced it on the students' desks during their group activities. I also used a Panasonic AG-100 video system to videotape 9 hours and 50 minutes of the total hours of the classroom interactions. On days when I videotaped the classroom, the audiotape was also used.

In the early period of being in the field, the tape recorder was turned off during the ten-minute break in the two-hour class. This technique was later abandoned as the field notes observations revealed that during this period, the teacher and students sometimes

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continued to interact about the oral narratives that the teacher had recounted during the class period or in a previous class. The information this interaction disclosed appeared at the moment to be of some significance to data analysis.

On days when the tape recorder was used, I depended on the notepad and pencil for recording observations by writing comments and notes about the teacher-student interactions. This also was the case on the days when I used the video camera. I also continued to write down my observations during the ten- minute break between the two-hour classroom period.

The procedure was to audiotape all of the classroom interactions and videotape the whole classroom period on occasions. The purpose of audiotaping and videotaping the whole period of the classroom interactions was two-fold: first, to identify the teacher's oral narratives as they naturally occurred in the speech situation; and second, to avoid any influences on the teacher's and students' performance that may result from operating the video camera only to capture their activities surrounding narration. The purpose of using the video camera was to capture the non-verbal dimension of the interactions. Since the use of videotape was less frequent than the use of the audiotape, the amount of narrative data captured by the videotape was less than that captured by the audiotape.

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### 3.2.2 Interviewing Technique

The interviewing technique in ethnographic research is used to achieve primarily two objectives (Hammersley and Atkinson 1990). First, interviews provide the researcher with information that was not accessible through the participant/observation technique. Gathering this information illuminates the hypotheses the researcher generated from the data gathered earlier in the field. The second objective is to provide the participants' perspectives on different dimensions of the activity under scrutiny. Their perspectives can then be compared with the researcher's perspective. The structure of the interview in this

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type of research is flexible in the sense that the questions are used as a guide and allow for open-ended responses. It is the responsibility of the researcher to guard the development of the interview and to put the interview conversation on track whenever necessary. The advantage of this structure is that it allows for generating data on unexpected dimensions of the investigated research topic.

The majority of the interviews for the present research were carried out in a cafeteria close by the setting where this study was conducted. I will call this cafeteria Fred's cafeteria. All of the participants were interviewed. The ESL teacher and the eleven ESL students were interviewed individually, except that two students were interviewed together. The general purpose of these interviews was to verify different issues surrounding narration. However, the particular concern was to gain insights into the participants' perspectives on the nature and the role of the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives in the classroom interactions. A list of questions was developed regarding these issues and was used to guide and direct the interview. The main questions on this list were:

1. What is a narrative from the teacher's point of view?  
What is a narrative from the students' point of view?
2. What are the characteristics of the narrative from the teacher's point of view?  
What are the characteristics of the narrative from the students' point of view?
3. What is the purpose of the teacher's narratives from the teacher's point of view?  
What is the purpose of the teacher's narratives from the students' point of view?
4. Under what circumstances does the teacher use a narrative?  
Under what circumstances do the students think the teacher uses a narrative?

Although this list was used in each interview session, the researcher did not stick to asking every single question. In the ethnographic interview, the interviewee is encouraged

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to freely share her/his values and attitudes without being directed. Consequently, many questions get answered without directly being asked during the flow of the interview conversation. Thus, the line of the interview questions was reshaped as the interview proceeded.

The interview data were gathered using a Sanyo VQT-2550 cassette recorder with an internal microphone, the same audio equipment I used for recording the classroom interactions. Each participant's permission was requested prior to operating the audio equipment. All the participants agreed to be audio-taped during the interview, except for three students. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their answers and were briefly informed about the questions to which they would be asked to provide answers.

During the interview session, I utilized various strategies to minimize any actions on my part that might affect the participants' answers or influence their perspectives. For example, I did not participate in constructing the interviewees' answers and I did not negotiate the participants' answers. My verbal reactions were limited to reiterating the participants' statement in an intonation that sometimes worked to encourage the participant to communicate more information. In interview sessions where the audio equipment was not used, I tried to minimize my writing activities using key words to help me reconstruct the interview text when the interview was concluded.

The recorded interviews were transcribed immediately after I left the site and the transcriptions were scrutinized for common patterns among the participants' answers. Assertions were constructed and outlined and detailed vignettes were written. The function of the vignettes was to capture and to describe the subtlety of contexts where these answers were made, and how they are related to observations gathered from the teacher-student classroom interactions.

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### **3.2.2.1 Teacher's Interview Sessions**

The ESL teacher was interviewed five times at three intervals: at the beginning of the field work, in the middle of the period, at the end, and twice after I left the site. The first two interviews were tape recorded and fully transcribed. The remaining three interviews were not recorded, yet notes were gathered during these interviews, and the teacher was asked to write down the answers to some of the questions she had already orally answered. In all, 4 hours and 10 minutes of teacher interviews were collected.

### **3.2.2.2 Students' Interview Sessions**

All the students were interviewed individually except two students who decided to be interviewed together. The interviews were conducted towards the end of the study, at the students' convenience. Eight of the interviews were conducted in Fred's cafeteria and the remaining three interviews were done in a restaurant close to the residential area of the remaining three students in question. In the first eight interviews, the researcher relied on both an audio equipment and on field notes to gather the students' answers. In the remaining three interviews, however, the researcher relied only on field notes. All the interviews were transcribed. The total hours of recorded interviews with the students were 5 hours and 15 minutes.

### **3.2.3 Field Notes: Organizing and Indexing**

The main source for my field notes was the classroom observations. These observations were written down in two forms: *key words* and *full texts* (see Sanjek 1990). In the classroom, I used "key words" for two purposes: first, to avoid any distraction that my conscious writing might cause the participants and second, to save the time of writing what appeared to require more time if detailed. The use of key words and full text was

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intended to remind me of what was observed and to aid in writing a full description of these observations after leaving the field. I also wrote "full texts" of observations during the ten-minute break between the two hour classroom period. These notes mostly expanded my observations of non-verbal gestures that the teacher and the students exchanged during the activities surrounding narration or during any other events I observed to be relevant to these activities. All my field notes were rewritten immediately after I left the classroom.

On days when I encountered a narrative or an interesting event that pertained to that narrative, I transcribed that narrative or event as soon as possible. The 36 hours of the classroom audio-taped material were transcribed and indexed during the period of March, April, and May, 1992. The transcribed data totaled eight hundred sixty seven (867) pages. With permission from the students, I also obtained a sample of their writings and journals. These writings and journals were one of the main sources of events around which some of the teacher's narratives were constructed.

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In rewriting the material of my field notes observations, I worked to synthesize the material by relating these notes to the transcripts obtained from audio-taping the classroom interactions as well as to the observations jotted down from the videotapes. The same was done with the field notes obtained during the interviewing session.

### **3.3 Overview of the Site and Setting for Data Collection**

#### **3.3.1 The Range of Settings Where the Data were Gathered**

Mrs. Smith's classroom was the main setting where the data for this research were gathered. This classroom was one of two C-Level classrooms among others of different levels which were formed according to a placement test administered by the institute. The interview with the Student Advisor, Mr. McCabe, took place in his office, and the location of interviews with other participants has already been described.



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### **3.3.2 The Community in which the ESL Classroom was Located**

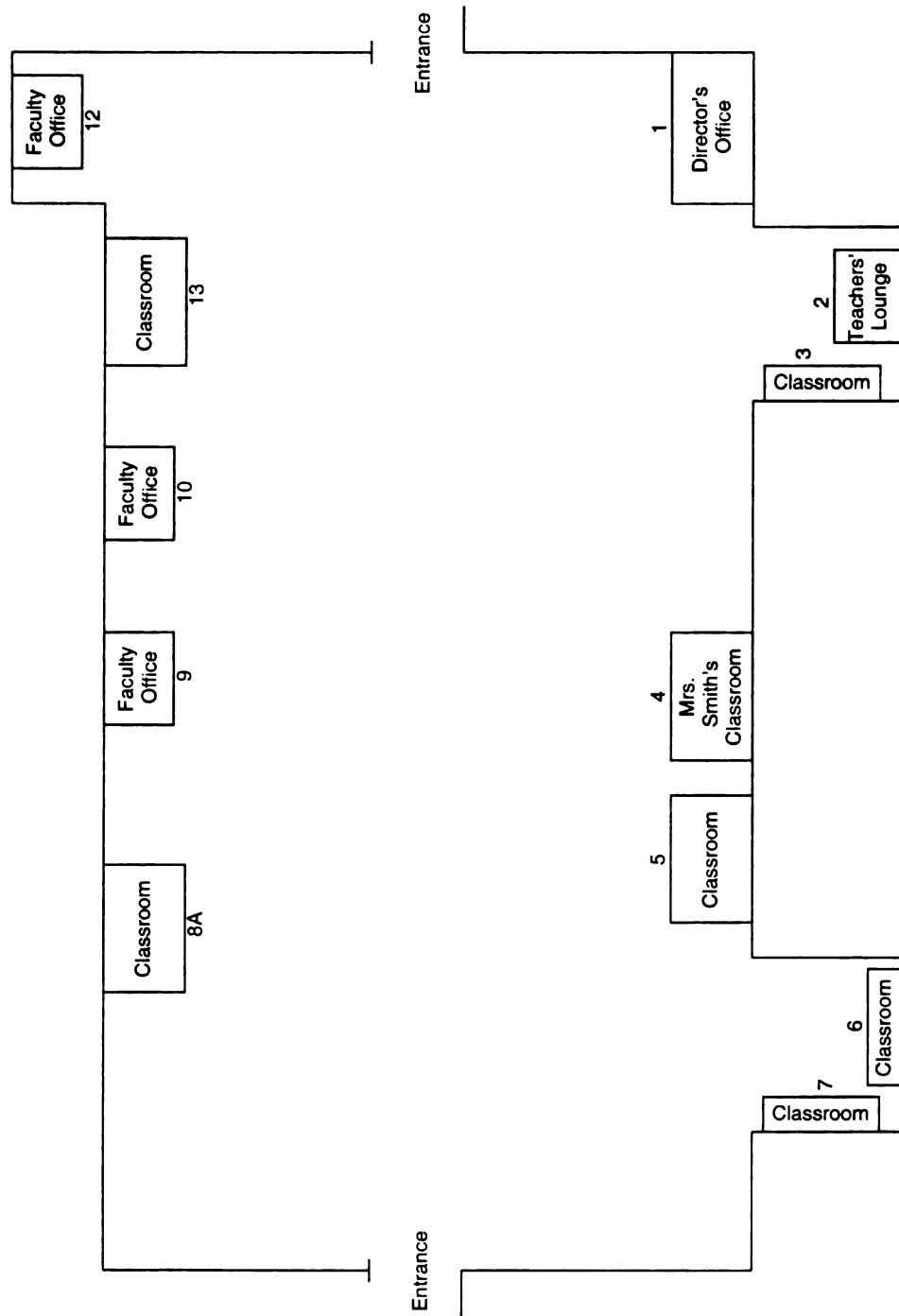
The site of my fieldwork was a second language classroom in a language institute I call the Academic Institute for English Language Teaching. This institute is located in the campus of Veteran University. Veteran University is located in the southern part of Michigan in Village Green, a city which is predominantly inhabited by students, a good fraction of whom are from different foreign countries around the world. This institute occupies a space in the basement of a multi-function, four-story building which was located on a street I will call Nelson Road.

On the top of the left side of the main entrance to this building, Foreign Students Affairs is written in protuberant dark bronze capital letters, the script that echoes the service this building offers and the kind of community members it usually serves. Through any of the four transparent doors of the building which are used as entrances and exits, and down about eighteen steps, stands another entrance. To the left, and a few steps before reaching the back entrance to the Academic Institute for English Language Teaching, and up about seven steps, a red door signals the end of the first maze and the beginning of another one.

As the red door opens, a slightly dim, long, warm and humid corridor emerges. On the right side of the corridor, there are five classrooms which are numbered backwards from seven to three. To the left of classroom number three, the teachers' lounge is found followed by the office of the director of the institute. On the left side of the corridor, two classrooms number 13 and 8A are located, and three other doors which lead to a number of faculty members' offices. The corridor ends with another red door that stands in parallel to the first one. Both doors are used as entrances and exits for the institute. For a layout of the institute see Figure 3.1.

The majority of the community in the Academic Institute for English Language Teaching is an amalgam of students from "four different continents: Asia, Europe, Latin





**Figure 3.1.** The Academic Institute for English Language Teaching was Located in the Basement of the Foreign Students Affairs Building.

America and Africa,” said Mr. David McCabe, the Student Advisor who has been working in the institute for twenty-five years. According to Mr. McCabe, seventy five percent of these students are Asians, from the Far East; primarily from Taiwan, Korea and Japan, and with a few from Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. The remaining twenty-five percent are distributed as follows; nine percent from the Middle East: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Egypt and a few from Syria and Iraq. Eight percent are from European countries: Scandinavia, Germany, France, Turkey, Spain and very few from Italy. Six percent are from Latin America: Venezuela and Colombia. Two percent are from different African countries; Ivory Coast, Togo, Burkino Faso, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal and Zimbabwe. An average of eight hundred students are admitted each year from all these countries.

“In the sixties, eighty percent of the students were males and twenty percent were females. Now sixty percent are males and forty percent are females,” said the Student Advisor while looking through two papers laid on his desk. “Especially Asian women who are much more liberated now than before,” he added.

The students are admitted to this language institute through two different programs. The first program is called the *Intensive Program*. Through this program, the admitted students are required to finish twenty-three hours of English language instruction per year. Some of the students who are admitted in this program intend to pursue further academic studies in other universities in the United States; others are interested in learning English for different purposes.

The second program is called *English for Academic Purposes*. The students who enroll in this program have a provisional admission to one of the academic programs in the Veteran University (the university within which this institute is located), or provisional admission to an academic program in another United States university. The students’ provisional admission will be removed if the students pass the courses assigned to them

in the area of their language weaknesses.

According to Mr. McCabe, the English Proficiency Test offered by this institute measures the students' aptitude of English in five main language areas: listening, grammar, composition, vocabulary and reading comprehension. According to the results of this test, the students will be placed in six different levels that mark the degree of their proficiency in English. Students who score a total of forty or below in this test are assigned to A-Level, those who score fifty or above will be allocated to B-Level, sixty or above to the C-Level, seventy to seventy four to the D-Level and seventy five to seventy nine are either assigned to the E-Level or the S-Level. Those who score eighty or above with no sub-scores below seventy eight are out of the institute (see Table 3.1). Usually, the students in the E-Level and the S-Level are the students who have provisional admission from one of the United States universities.

**Table 3.1.** Students' Scores in English Proficiency Test Determine their English Level.

<b>E.P.T. Scores</b>	<b>English Level</b>
40 or below	A-Level
50 or above	B-Level
60 or above	C-Level
70 to 74	D-Level
75 to 79	E-Level / S-Level
80 or above	Out of the institute

In Spring 1992, the time I conducted my fieldwork in an ESL classroom in this institute, an average of two hundred fifty students enrolled to study English. They were distributed among the six levels of English language proficiency, and they were grouped in eight classes: one class in the A-Level, one class in the B-Level, two classes in the C-Level, two classes in the D-Level, one class in the E-Level and one class in the S-Level (see Table 3.2). The number of the English classes changes every term.

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**Table 3.2.** A Total of Eight English Classes in Spring 1992.

<b>Level</b>	<b>A-Level</b>	<b>B-Level</b>	<b>C-Level</b>	<b>D-Level</b>	<b>E-Level</b>	<b>S-Level</b>
<b>No. of Classes</b>	One Class	One Class	Two Classes	Two Classes	One Class	One Class

According to Mr. McCabe, the teaching faculty in this institute can be classified into two different categories: full-time teachers and part-time teachers. During Spring 1992, the total number of faculty and staff was twenty-four: fourteen females and ten males. The full-time teachers were eight: three females and five males while the part-time teachers, who were graduate student assistants, were sixteen: eleven females and five males (see Table 3.3). The number of each category of the teaching staff changes every term.

For the purpose of the present study, I limited my observations to one ESL classroom in the Academic Institute for English Language Teaching. This class, which I call Mrs. Smith's classroom, was one of the two C-Level classes which were formed according to the results of the English Proficiency Test. Mrs. Smith's class was recommended to me by an official in the institute for Mrs. Smith's distinctive teaching style. In this classroom, on the first day of my fieldwork, the students' desks were organized in a half circle, of which the teacher's table was a part. I took a seat at the end of the half circle, to the right of Mrs. Smith. Figure 3.2 shows a layout of Mrs. Smith's classroom.

For a while my presence in the classroom was not noticeable to any of the students. Yet as I revisited my initial observation, I started to see in their eyes how eager they were to know who I was and what my interests were as if I were a member of their community. This eagerness reached its peak when the activity of getting to know one another was over and Mrs. Smith started to talk about the curriculum. I could see the tide of curiosity in their eyes. It was so obvious to an extent that the teacher sensed it and apologized by leaving the floor to me to introduce myself and my purpose of being in the classroom. After the mystery of my identity was resolved, the tide of curiosity retreated and I was



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**Table 3.3.** A Total of 24 Teachers in the Academic Institute for English Language Teaching in Spring 1992.

Full-Time Teachers		Part-Time Teachers	
F	M	F	M
3	5	11	5

no longer under scrutiny. After that, the students came to know me as an observer who was interested in the communication between the teacher and the students in an ESL classroom. No one later questioned my presence or what I was doing in their classroom.

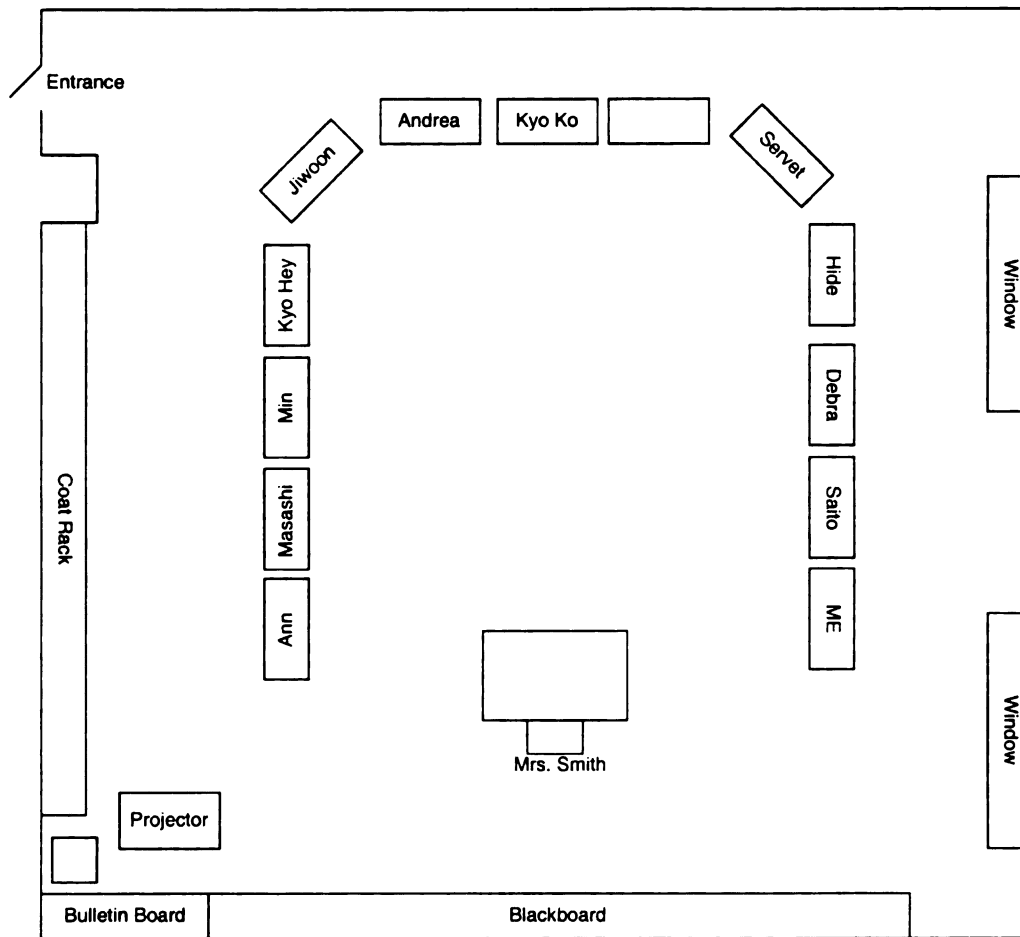
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### 3.4 Participants

#### 3.4.1 The Teacher

Mrs. Smith, an American teacher from Michigan in her early thirties, was one of the eleven part-time female teachers who taught in the Academic Institute for English Language Teaching during Spring, 1992. Mrs. Smith is a hard-working teacher who takes her role as a teacher of English as a second language seriously. She tries to exhaust every minute incident that might occur during the classroom interaction to assist her students in understanding different linguistic components of American English and concepts pertaining to American culture.

The student interview data revealed that Mrs. Smith was perceived by her students as an “intimate” teacher. Very much concerned with her students’ academic development, she provided ample time and effort to listen and offered help to the students’ language problems. She also attended to their social and personal problems and offered them her support and advice.



**Figure 3.2.** The Physical Organization of Mrs. Smith's Classroom on January 8, 1992.

### 3.4.2 The Students in Mrs. Smith's Classroom: A Brief Description

*Should be related to later analysis below*

In Mrs. Smith's classroom were 11 foreign students of English as a second language, a heterogeneous group in terms of their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. During the early stages of the study, there were 11 students: 5 females and 6 males who came from six different foreign countries. These countries were: Colombia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Turkey and Venezuela. The students included: one female student from Colombia, five students from Japan (one female and four males), two female students from Korea, one female student from Taiwan, one male from Turkey and one female from Venezuela. Two weeks later, a Kuwaiti male student joined the class. The arrival of this student coincided

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with the departure of Hide, a Japanese male student who decided to quit the program and go back to Japan to settle some family problems. Hence, the number of students was maintained and the number of countries to which they belonged increased by one. Table 3.4 shows the distribution of the students according to their number, gender and their countries.

**Table 3.4.** The Distribution of the 5 Female and 6 Male Students in Mrs. Smith's Classroom.

Continent	Latin America				Mid East		Europe		Asia: Far East					
Country	Colombia		Venezuela		Kuwait		Turkey		Taiwan		Korea		Japan	
Gender	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Number	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	1	3

The students in this classroom were grouped according to their shared level of English proficiency, as indicated by the results of a written placement test administered by the language institute. However, with regard to the degree of their participation in classroom interaction, the analysis of the field notes observation data suggested that they belong to three different groups. I labeled these three groups as: *Active Group*, *Moderately Active Group* and *Least Active Group*.

Students who belonged to the Active Group were characterized as outgoing and the most fluent participants. Their participation was evident in classroom activities, in general and in activities surrounding narration, in particular. These students did not miss any chance to question presuppositions suggested by Mrs. Smith's narratives, to make comments in attempt to assert their views on issues, to initiate discussion around controversial narrative events and to make humorous remarks when the heated argument and opposing views of narrative events took place. The students who constituted the Active Group were: the Venezuelan female, Debra, the Kuwaiti male, Hamad and the Turkish male, Servet.

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The students who were ranked as Moderately Active Group appeared timid of sharing their ideas during classroom interactions and participated with caution in classroom activities. To this group belonged: the Colombian female, Andrea, the Japanese male, Kyo Hey and the Japanese female, Masashi.

The Least Active Group, who stood in sharp contrast to the other two groups in terms of their role in the classroom interactions, were silent most of the time. The pattern of their participation did not go much beyond non-verbal communication such as nodding, smiling and exchanging eye contact with the teacher and the rest of the students. They rarely talked unless they were solicited by the teacher. This group included: the Taiwanese female, Ann, the two Korean females, Jiwoon and Min and the two Japanese males Kyo Ko and Saito (see Table 3.5).

**Table 3.5.** The Students in Mrs. Smith's Classroom Belonged to Three Different Groups.

<b>Active Group</b>	Debra		Hamad		Servet
<b>Moderately Active Group</b>	Andrea		Kyo Hey		Masashi
<b>Least Active Group</b>	Ann	Jiwoon	Kyo Ko	Min	Saito

Note: All the names that appear in the present study are pseudonyms.

All the students in this classroom were interested in pursuing further academic studies in United States universities and were accepted through the program of *English for Academic Purposes*.

### 3.5 Transcriptions

All the lessons were transcribed from the audio and video recordings from the beginning to the end of the lesson in standard orthography. The audiotaped and videotaped lessons were transcribed using both recordings. The teacher's oral narratives were checked twice and contextualized information was then added based on the observations collected while in the classroom.

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In the early stage of transcribing the data, I adopted the conventions associated with the system developed by Jefferson and described in Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1978: 7-55). This system was used to detail teacher-student verbal exchanges and to facilitate examination and analysis of retrieved data. During the stage of data analysis, I decided to adopt another type of convention. The conventions I used were those associated with transcribing in lines that correspond to “idea units” (Chafe 1980). The purpose of using these conventions was to make distinct the teacher’s oral narratives from the rest of the already transcribed data, and to make reference to the identified properties of these narratives more accessible.

The following excerpt displays most of the relevant conventions to the present analysis. This excerpt is followed by a table that explains what these conventions represent. The table also illustrates other conventions that did not appear in this particular excerpt. It is important to pinpoint that in the transcribed data used in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 only the conventions relevant to the point of analysis are displayed (see Ochs 1979).

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## Overwhelming Experience

Mrs. Smith acknowledged that the students did not understand the meaning of the new vocabulary “overwhelming” even after several attempts to test students’ understanding.

1. Mrs. Smith: I will tell you an example of one of my students, last term [0.1]
2. who went into S-level.
3. All right?
4. And he thought the university classes are going to be easy.
5. Okay?
6. and he thought his English is very good.
7. And he said, “I [0.1] I won’t have any trouble.”
8. [0.1] he promised, [0.1] “I am going to get four points,”
9. Okay?
10. [0.1] “I am sure,” he said.
11. He thought [0.1] It’s going to be easy.
12. [0.1] And after two weeks of .. in the classes, he was overwhelmed.
13. he was wa::y behind in his work,
14. he couldn’t keep up with the readings,
15. he didn’t understand the lectures, //
16. Kyo Hey: ( )
17. Mrs. Smith: Uh?
18. Kyo Hey: ( )
19. Mrs. Smith: Business
20. Debra: (( laughs ))
21. Mrs. Smith: (( exchanges eye contact with Debra )) Business Debra! Business!
22. And he was overwhelmed.
23. He thought it was going to be easy,
24. And when it began,
25. He found he couldn’t keep up with the students.
26. He was falling behind.

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**Table 3.6.** The Most Relevant Conventions Used in the Transcription of the Present Data.

CONVENTIONS	MEANING OF CONVENTIONS
Arabic numerals	The numbers that appear vertically to the left of the transcribed data facilitate the identification of lines by reference to their number.
..	Two dots indicate unmeasurable pause.
[0.1] [0.2] [0.3]	The timing of silence or hesitations in seconds.
CAPITALS	Indicate increased volume.
//	Double slashes indicate interruption.
(( comments ))	Double parentheses refer to particular actions and noise that occurred before, during or after talk.
( )	Empty single parentheses indicate that no hearing could be achieved on the string of talk or item in question.
[ ]	Squared brackets indicate overlap.
Co::lons	Indicate lengthening of a vowel.
<i>Cursive</i>	Indicates emphasis.
Comma	Indicates rising final intonation contour.
Full Stops	Indicate sentence-final intonation contour.
Different font	Emphasizes specific units of teacher-student' utterances.
[Narrative]	The word "narrative" between two square brackets emphasizes the point where the teacher uses an oral narrative.
>	Indicates that teacher-students' interaction continues and that intervening turns at talking have been taken out.

Note: The last three conventions are not part of Sacks, et. al's (1978) conventions.

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## **Chapter 4**

# **THE ECOLOGY OF MRS. SMITH'S ORAL NARRATIVES**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the problems associated with defining Mrs. Smith's oral narratives; delineate what these narratives are from the perspectives of both Mrs. Smith and the students; and develop an operative definition of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives. I describe the three situational contexts where Mrs. Smith uses these narratives and I discuss the reasons Mrs. Smith uses oral narratives. Finally, I give a detailed interactional analysis of one of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives in one situational context. I conclude the chapter with a preview of the repertoire of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives.

### **4.2 Defining Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives**

The analysis of teacher-student interaction in Mrs. Smith's classroom revealed that her use of oral narratives is a commonplace activity. These narrative activities lend themselves as an instance of what a common user of a natural language calls a narrative. However, a closer look at Mrs. Smith's routine use of these narratives in different situational contexts shows what Ervin-Tripp (1964, 1972) refers to as a discrepancy between the content, on the one hand, and the goal or function on the other hand. In other words, the content of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives appears to be told for the purpose of sharing one particular experience or the other, as in the case with personal experience oral narratives recounted

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in different conversational interactions (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Polanyi 1979, 1982; Riessman 1991). However, the content of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives plays a role in her classroom pedagogy and in cultural transmission. These narratives often appear at problematic points in the classroom interaction, points where students find it difficult to understand.

This assertion about the function of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives is substantiated by different aspects of the interactions between Mrs. Smith and the students. The most obvious of these is that Mrs. Smith's oral narratives appear to be confined to particular moments during the interactions with the students. More precisely, Mrs. Smith routinely uses oral narratives when she introduces or uses unfamiliar English words, American idioms, or American expressions, as well as when the students express their opinions about different issues pertaining to American culture or their own cultures.

Although Mrs. Smith uses her oral narratives to communicate a meaning beyond that of their content, the communicative value of these narratives and what the participants make of them remain invisible (Hymes 1967, 1972a; Ervin-Tripp 1972). This latter dimension, according to Hymes, is very crucial for any attempt at asserting the social rules of meaning construction in any social interaction. Thus, in order to identify the rules that Mrs. Smith manipulates to communicate the meaning of her narratives, and most importantly to explain *how the meaning of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives is created, realized and achieved*, the ethnographer must begin with the social group and investigate two things.

First, the ethnographer has to explain the participants' foundations of interpreting this verbal activity as a narrative and their perspectives on the purposes it serves in the interaction. Second, the ethnographer has to describe the situational contexts where this verbal activity appeared as a part of the participants' routine practices and the rules for using a narrative. Consequently, instead of imposing a definition on Mrs. Smith's oral

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narratives that may limit the scope or the nature of these narratives and reduce their social significance, I decided to define Mrs. Smith's oral narratives from the perspectives of both Mrs. Smith and the students.

#### **4.2.1 Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives' Definition: Participants' Perspectives**

The analysis of the interview data with Mrs. Smith and the students revealed that the word *narrative* is used in an almost synonymous way with the word *example*. Mrs. Smith appeared to use oral narratives routinely to communicate the meaning of unfamiliar English words and American idioms and expressions, as well as to ameliorate students' knowledge of social issues pertaining to American culture and beliefs. Although this observation lends support to the participants' perceptions of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives as examples, this generalized term is also associated in the mind of the participants with more specific terms like *illustrating* and *informing*. In other words, to the participants, Mrs. Smith's oral narratives are not mere examples, but they are examples of a specific nature and significance.

##### **4.2.1.1 Mrs. Smith's Perspective: Narrative is Illustration**

In an early interview, I asked Mrs. Smith what techniques she would employ to simplify any feature of English language that her students would find hard to understand. After a few seconds of thinking, she replied, "Examples." These examples, according to Mrs. Smith, would make "something as real, as true to life as possible." She emphasized that these examples had to be "real life example[s]." The sources of these examples could be her own life, someone else's life or real events from the media.

Mrs. Smith's philosophy behind her use of real examples was to help students relate to and identify with human emotions. She believes in the universality of "human emotions,"

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the emotions that could overcome all the barriers that might be created by ethnicity and cultural diversity. Therefore, she is determined to make the examples she uses “really human . . . Something that everybody can connect with. Not so terribly cultural-bound because [they] would exclude people.” The ultimate goal of using these “real” examples is to furnish a relatively shared background knowledge upon which she would be able to build her explanation: “I know we are going to connect with [these examples] at the same level. I know they are going to know what I mean.”

In a later interview, I asked Mrs. Smith to provide a precise definition for these examples. Instantly, with a surprising enthusiasm, she replied “Illustrations. Maybe illustration is the best word.” To support her choice of this term, she elaborated, “Something that serves the purpose of illustrating a point that creates a mental picture.” Mrs. Smith believed that when the students were able to imagine or “see something in their minds,” they will be able to “remember it.” For this purpose, Mrs. Smith went back and emphasized that “real illustrations” are crucial in L2 classroom interaction because “[She] do[es] not think that the [students’] language skills are sufficient to allow them to remember [any] cluster of [abstract] words.” Therefore, the only way to help them remember and understand a point is to use a situation that gives “context and meaning” to whatever she says.

Mrs. Smith’s answers to my two different questions offered three different pieces of information about her oral narratives that I identified in her interaction with her students. The first provided a definition for her narratives; the second explained the reason for which these narratives are used in her interactions with the students; and the third offered a repertoire of potential sources of these narratives. Accordingly, a narrative in this class context, from Mrs. Smith’s point of view, is an “illustration of something” the three purposes of which are: first, to minimize the differences among the students attributable to their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds; second, to furnish a common background according to which she could provide her explanation; and third, to create a mental image

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in the minds of these students and some sort of “emotional reaction” to compensate for their limited knowledge of the English language, especially when she is dealing with “cultural issues, semantic issues or language usage.”

However, the definition Mrs. Smith offered for her oral narratives provided only one part of the whole view of how this definition was created, maintained, and acted upon as an accomplishment. To complete the view of how this accomplishment was possible, I interviewed Mrs. Smith’s eleven foreign students and asked them how they would define Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives and what functions they think these narratives served in their interactions with Mrs. Smith.

#### **4.2.1.2 Students’ Perspectives**

In these interviews, four of the eleven students defined Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives in terms of their structural elements as *examples*. These students perceived Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives as a summary with a point (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972). However, these students contended that Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives are intended to convey the meaning of particular issues relevant to American culture. The remaining seven students defined Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives in terms of their content (i.e., what these narratives are about). In so doing, some clearly made a link between the specific content of these oral narratives and understanding the meaning of unfamiliar English words and/or cultural issues, which emerge at specific instances in specific situations during the interaction with Mrs. Smith. Others generally talked about this link. The following are excerpts from the students’ interviews to substantiate these assertions.

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**Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives: "They are not stories. They are just examples."**

Among the students who directly referred to Mrs. Smith's oral narratives as examples were Masashi and Jiwoon. When I asked them to define Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, they directly declined the use of the word *narrative* and used the word *example*, instead. Masashi, for instance, delineated specific features of oral narratives in general and then explained the relevance of these narratives to learning about American culture. To Masashi, Mrs. Smith's oral narratives are "examples . . . a short talk about anything. It is not conversation; but it is part of it. It has one meaning from beginning to end."

To Masashi, Mrs. Smith's oral narratives are examples of a specific form that are not limited to one specific issue. These narratives appear in the conversational interaction essentially as a part of this conversation to convey one specific meaning from beginning to end. Masashi's answer implied that Mrs. Smith's oral narratives are intended to communicate specific messages, the meaning of which is bound to specific issues that may appear during the conversational interaction with Mrs. Smith. When asked to specify what functions these narratives serve, Masashi contended that these narratives "help us understand American culture."

Jiwoon voiced a similar perspective to that of Masashi about what Mrs. Smith's oral narratives are. Yet the manner in which she answered this question reflects a more rigorous attitude than that of Masashi. When I asked Jiwoon to define Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, she was puzzled, at the beginning. I figured that she did not understand the meaning of the word 'narrative' so that I used the word 'story' as an alternative to simplify the meaning of the word narrative. Jiwoon responded with surprise in her facial expression. And in a challenging tone she said, "What kind of stories, I never heard?"

At the beginning, her unexpected reaction suggested that she might have a different label or a different perspective for what I referred to as story. To not influence her answer,

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I reminded her with some of the narratives that Mrs. Smith recounted during the classroom interaction. Jiwoon answered, stressing every syllable of every word in her answer, “They are not stories. They are just examples.” Jiwoon did not elaborate any further until she was asked about the function of these narratives. At that time, Jiwoon’s answers suggested that Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives are useful to help her think about American culture, its different “customs and different ways of thinking.”

Although to the other two students, Hamad and Ann, Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives are examples, neither one used the word example when I asked each one to define these narratives. Instead, these two students alluded to the function of these narratives as examples. Hamad, for instance, defined these narratives in terms of their structural features to suggest the relevance of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives to specific goals. He maintained that these narratives are about “something that happened in a short time . . . who are the actors . . . who did what.” He added that these narratives must be told to convey some sort of a goal. This goal, according to Hamad, is embedded in “what you expect others to know from the story.” When I asked Hamad about the functions of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives, Hamad maintained that Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives are meant to clarify some information about American culture. He contended that these narratives are useful because they clarify different issues about “the culture of the United States and the Americans; how they think, do and believe.”

Ann relied on similar features in defining Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives. Yet, she went a little further and specified a variety of potential functions of oral narratives. To Ann, Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives are about “anything . . . about people . . . cultures.” To Ann, the main function of a narrative is “to surprise, entertain or give special information.” When asked indirectly about the functions of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives, Ann responded that Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives are useful in that they provide “information and knowledge about American culture.”

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**Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives: "I can identify with, sympathize with, feel it because it is reality."**

The second group of students I asked to define Mrs. Smith's oral narratives alluded to the connection between the content of a particular narrative and the reason for which it is told in particular situations. The students included in this group are Kyo Hey, Debra, Servet, Andrea, Min, Saito and Kyo Ko. The first three students focused upon the significance of narrative content and its relevance to specific issues that emerged during the interaction. The remaining four focused upon the effect of the emotional feature of narrative content and their understanding of the issues that emerge during the interaction.

I asked Kyo Hey about the definition and functions of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives. Kyo Hey suggested that Mrs. Smith used oral narratives to convey the meaning of certain issues of American culture. He believes that these narratives coincide with the appearance of issues that students do not understand because their cultural background is different from Mrs. Smith's. He maintained that ". . . sometimes [Mrs. Smith] poses a problem about culture . . . so she uses cultural stories because we can't understand . . . because of different culture."

In order to support his view, Kyo Hey referred to Mrs. Smith's oral narratives in which she told the students about adoption. These narratives appeared during the discussion of Kyo Hey's presentation about the social programs for the underprivileged in Japan, Kyo Hey's country. He explained the relevance of these narratives to understanding and learning about an issue that he never thought existed, namely the issue of adoption. He said, ". . . for example, adoption . . . I've never heard in my town . . . my town is very small so I have no idea about adoption." Kyo Hey did not know about this issue until it was brought up during the interaction and Mrs. Smith explained using oral narratives. Kyo Hey also believed that Mrs. Smith's oral narratives were important for learning the meanings of new English words. However, he did not mention specific narratives to support this view.

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Debra, however, when asked to describe and identify the functions of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, indirectly substantiated a link between the significance of the content of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives and the cultural information they provide in making the meaning of certain expressions easy to learn and understand. In so doing, Debra made reference to a particular situation where Mrs. Smith and the students were involved in a discussion surrounding the cultural dimension of the questions of the English Proficiency Test. Of this situation, Debra pinpointed the issue that she and her classmates initiated about their failure to provide the correct answers to some questions in the test because these questions were loaded with cultural concepts. Then she added that Mrs. Smith's oral narratives were useful means to understanding these cultural issues. For such a reason: "I need the knowledge about American culture."

Unlike Kyo Hey and Debra, Servet's perspective on the description and the functions of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives appears to be mainly restricted to conveying the meaning of words. Although Servet contended that the content of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives was useful in terms of revealing the meaning of particular cultural issues that emerged during the interaction, he gives little heed to these issues, especially when these narratives are used to convey the meaning of new English words "I don't care about cultural ideas because what I need is to learn [the meaning of] vocabulary."

The remaining four students, namely Andrea, Saito, Min and Kyo Ko, perceived the relationship between the meaning of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives and the functions they communicate in terms of the emotional effect they experienced while listening to her. To these students, the emotional dimension of Mrs. Smith's narratives helped them to connect with the content of her oral narratives. This connection enables them to create mental images which help them understand words and issues for which these narratives were told.

Andrea, for instance, argued that the oral narratives Mrs. Smith used during the discussion surrounding social issues made her feel good about herself, especially when

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they touch upon real life issues. She contended that Mrs. Smith's oral narratives like the ones about adoption, "I like it because it touches upon my life; I can identify with, sympathize and feel it because it is reality." The emotional dimension of these narratives helps Andrea understand the meaning with which these narratives were intended because as she put it "it make me imagine" the factor that would help her "participate" in classroom interaction.

Saito reflected Andrea's answer. He argued that when Mrs. Smith uses real life narratives to explain the meaning of new English words, these narratives help him feel and imagine, "if the teacher said that or explained that in a true or real story . . . I can imagine and understand." He emphasized that such real narratives are "important for [his] understanding." To Saito, the import of real narratives to his imagination and understanding is mediated by the fact that his verbal ability in English is not sufficient to help him grasp the meaning of words easily so that he said: ". . . every story I like because I don't know English [well]."

Min and Kyo Ko share a similar view of the relationship between Mrs. Smith's oral narratives and their need to rely upon them to create mental images and understand the meanings of words. However, neither of these two students go beyond stating this link. While Min maintained that Mrs. Smith's oral narratives "help [her] imagine and create a story," Kyo Ko maintained that these narratives "help [him] imagine . . . create an idea in [his] mind."

In conclusion, this analysis clarified that Mrs. Smith's oral narratives convey the meaning of specific issues that emerge during the interactions. Mrs. Smith defined these narratives as "illustration." She suggested that her goal of telling these narratives is to clarify the meaning of abstract concepts of words, for which the students' level of English does not account. In order to achieve this goal, Mrs. Smith explained that she depends on a repertoire of sources for real narratives. She also explained that she manipulates the

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affective dimension of oral narratives to stimulate students' involvement and consequently their understanding of different issues.

As participants in the classroom interaction surrounding narration, Mrs. Smith's students are aware that these narratives are illustrations or as some of them put it these narratives are "examples." Students' descriptions of these narratives in terms of their structure and content, in terms of their functions and/or in terms of the situation in which they occur, suggest that the students do not perceive the meaning of these narratives as autonomous or isolated from their context. Rather, students' perspectives suggest that the meaning of these narratives is intended to link narrative issues to specific issues that appear during the interaction in specific situations. This deductive view also explains students' verbal and non-verbal behaviors during the interaction.

#### **4.2.2 Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives: An Operative Definition**

Despite the absence of an agreement on the issue of what constitutes a narrative and what does not, narrative remains a mode of expression that is almost always realized in a given conversational interaction. The recognition of a narrative in conversation is essentially constrained by the social aspects of the situation in which they appear, mainly by the reasons for which they are told (Stein 1982). From this angle, both Mrs. Smith and the students perceived Mrs. Smith's oral narratives to be more than a recapitulation of events (Labov and Waletzky 1967). In so doing, they focused on narrative content and structure as constrained by the presence of a problematic issue during the interaction. And both suggested that the relevance of these experiences to the issue at hand is the reason why Mrs. Smith tells these narratives.

Thus the term narrative as it is applicable in the present study is rooted in the perspective of Sacks' (1978a) view a narrative of narratives in conversational interaction. Sacks states that people in reporting on some events "report what we might see to be,

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not what happened, but the ordinariness of what happened" (p. 414). Building on Sacks' view, I defined the narratives with which the present study is concerned as *discourses that sequentially represent the ordinariness of one event or more than one event. These classroom narratives rely on common shared evaluations which allow the student audience to infer and understand the ordinariness as it is related to a specific issue and a specific situation.*

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This definition emphasizes that the teller, namely Mrs. Smith, recounts the 'ordinariness' of the events, i.e., how the events transpire in every day life. In doing so, she recounts the most common course that these events take. Given that the experiences of these events originate from the life of persons known to Mrs. Smith herself and to her students, the tellability of these narratives is a function of their familiarity. This familiarity substantiates teacher-students' solidarity and allows them, as participants in the interaction, to share the evaluation of these narratives. Consequently, Mrs. Smith holds her students accountable for the significance of these narratives.

#### 4.3 Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives: Three Situational Contexts

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From the analysis of transcribed data for the present study, the interaction between Mrs. Smith and her students appeared to be organized around three different activities. These activities constitute the main parts of the major event of the interaction, namely the ESL lesson. I will refer to these activities as 'Language Activities.' This term encompasses the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity, the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, and the Student-Presentation Activity. As the titles of these activities suggest, the teacher-student interaction during these activities is centered around different issues of English language. At most, two of these activities may occupy Mrs. Smith's two-hour class, and sometimes one activity would last the full two hours. The organization of these activities satisfies Hymes' (1974) definition of a social situation, in that each activity was centered around

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one specific issue, and the distribution of the interaction rules during these activities is predictable.

#### **4.3.1 Context One: Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity**

The Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity was centered around one of three different questions of grammar, namely verb tenses, idioms and prepositions. To make the interaction less rigid, Mrs. Smith suggested that the students read an article from an American magazine so that she could then organize her grammatical questions around the content of this article. The rule of interaction during this activity appeared to dictate that only two persons could participate at one time and that Mrs. Smith must be one of these two participants. The dynamic of this interaction could be captured by the well known sequence Solicitation, Response, Reaction (Johnson 1979).

The interaction during this activity begins when Mrs. Smith calls a student's name and asks the student to listen carefully to her question in order to provide an answer. Mrs. Smith's question requires that the student correct the grammatical aspect of verb tenses or give a sentence using a particular English idiom or fill in the blank with an appropriate preposition. The expected answers to this type of question fall into three different categories with each resulting in a different response from Mrs. Smith.

First, if the student provides the right answer, Mrs. Smith would compliment her/him. She then has two options: either to explain why the answer is the right answer or to select another student to answer the following question. Sometimes when she decides to explain the right answer, Mrs. Smith uses an oral narrative. Second, if the student provides a wrong answer, Mrs. Smith might either repeat and explain the question or identify the source of problem and elaborate using a narrative. Another option Mrs. Smith has for wrong response is to address the question to another student. Third, if the student provides no answer due to lack of understanding, Mrs. Smith explains, paraphrases and then repeats

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Mrs. Smith used oral narratives that relate to students' right or wrong answers to explain the appropriate usage of a given idiom or a given verb tense. These oral narratives were addressed either to the student who provided the answer or to all the students in the class. The narrative was often constructed around common shared experiences that show or reveal the usage of the grammatical rule in question. During the time of telling these narratives, students responded with subtle non-verbal participation and fewer verbal interruptions.

#### **4.3.2 Context Two: Vocabulary-Explanation Activity**

The Vocabulary-Explanation Activity is structured around introduction of new English words. It is the duty of Mrs. Smith to retrieve and prepare a list of new English words from different sources. The primary source of these words is the students' reading book followed by words collected from any American film that both Mrs. Smith and the students attended. Included also in this list were other words that Mrs. Smith had used during the interaction and deduced the students did not know. This last source for the English words renders the vocabulary-explanation activity a recurring event across all language activities of this classroom.

The rules of the interaction for this type of activity include a requirement that Mrs. Smith begin by announcing that she is introducing new vocabulary. After this brief interaction, she announces the first word on her new-words list, identifies this word's grammatical category, and in a deliberate manner, pronounces this word. Then on the blackboard, Mrs. Smith turns to provide the orthographic representation of this word.

When this phase is over, the interaction continues with Mrs. Smith's asking the students if any one knows the meaning of the word. To this question, there are two distinct

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type of students' responses. The students either remain silent or one of the students may self-select and provide an answer. This latter type of possible response may begin a sequence of students' attempts to guess the meaning of the new word. Mrs. Smith uses an oral narrative when she receives one of the following responses: a complete silence, or wrong answer(s), or right answer accompanied by silence from the rest of the students.

Sometimes towards the end of the interaction during the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, especially when the words were taken from an American film that both Mrs. Smith and the students attended, Mrs. Smith would solicit her students' opinions about specific dimensions of American culture as projected in the film. This move marks the shift from the instruction phase to the discussion phase. In reaction to her students' opinions to her solicitation move, Mrs. Smith would use an oral narrative to illuminate her students' perspectives on the issue in question.

Mrs. Smith's oral narratives that appeared in this phase of the interaction were often constructed around American social practices and cultural beliefs. These narratives appeared in reaction to the opinion of students who either self-selected to share an opinion or were selected by Mrs. Smith to give an answer. While Mrs. Smith is recounting these narratives, students' verbal interaction is limited to questions about the meanings of unfamiliar words or to requests for a confirmation of conceived presuppositions or to comments on the narrative situation.

### **4.3.3 Context Three: Student-Presentation Activity**

Interaction during the Student-Presentation Activity is established around students' oral presentations of a topic that Mrs. Smith suggested for their writing assignment. The student in charge of the presentation is expected to have thought about a topic and to have prepared a written outline before giving the presentation. A sample of topic headlines around which this presentation revolved are Compare and Contrast the Social Class System

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in Your Country, Tell Us about the Social Programs that Exist in Your Country for the Underprivileged, Compare the Child Rearing Practices in Your Country and in the United States, and Choose Your Own Topic.

Unlike the other two activities, interaction during the Student-Presentation Activity is achieved in three distinct phases. The first is when Mrs. Smith asks the student in charge of giving the presentation to stand in front of the classroom and present her/his topic. Mrs. Smith assumes the role of an audience and sits with the students. During the presentation time, everybody remains silent except Mrs. Smith, who sometimes interrupts this student to request a repetition of some mispronounced words. When the presentation is over, a second phase begins, namely the discussion phase.

The second phase begins when Mrs. Smith turns towards the students and says, "Okay. Any questions for [the name of the student]?" This solicitation for the students' response is intended to begin the discussion. If the students show no response, i.e., remain silent, Mrs. Smith begins the cycle herself. Usually this is done when Mrs. Smith's declares, "Okay. I have one," after which she poses her question to the student in charge of the presentation. When this student completes her/his answer, the students in the audience begin to ask their questions.

The third phase of the interaction in this situational context is established around the new words that the student in charge of the presentation used. The pattern of the interaction in this phase is very similar to the pattern of the interaction during the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity.

The occurrence of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives in this activity is mainly confined to the discussion phase and occasionally in the phase of illustrating the new vocabulary words that the presenting student used. In the discussion phase, Mrs. Smith may ask the student in charge of the presentation for her/his cultural opinion about a specific issue for which Mrs. Smith's own cultural beliefs fail to account. If this student remains silent or responds

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by a question to verify the requested information, or provides a concise answer, Mrs. Smith then responds using an oral narrative. Mrs. Smith's oral narratives that appeared at this point of the interaction delineate her own American perspective on the issue in question. Thus at the end of these narratives, Mrs. Smith repeats her question and asks the student about her/his opinion, "So what do you think [the name of the student]?"

#### **4.4 Ecology of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives: Social Interaction Analysis**

*discourse analysis*

##### **4.4.1 Rules in Situating the Meaning of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives**

From the previous description, it is evident that Mrs. Smith uses oral narratives in different situational contexts. The purpose is to address a particular language issue that emerges at some point during the interaction. The meanings of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives appear to depend upon the type of narrative material that Mrs. Smith manipulates to construct the meaning of the language issue. Three different interaction rules (Johnson 1979) appear to have an impact on the construction of Mrs. Smith's narrative meaning.

The first rule is that Mrs. Smith must recognize and accept students' verbal and non-verbal reactions as evidence for the presence of a problem. Second, if Mrs. Smith decides to perform a reaction move using oral narrative, she must choose, from the repertoire of narrative material, the material most relevant to the problem at hand. Third, in telling a narrative, Mrs. Smith must directly address the problematic issue in question. She does that by using a narrative situation that is either known to the students or that corresponds to a situation with which the students are familiar, so the students can draw upon and understand the problematic issue. To further communicate the meaning of her narratives, Mrs. Smith relies on different features of narrative performance, verbal and non-verbal (Wolfson 1978, 1982).

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#### 4.4.2 Christmas

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The following is a social interaction analysis of one of Mrs. Smith oral narratives to demonstrate how Mrs. Smith integrates these rules to communicate the meaning and usage of the idiom “angry with.” This analysis was told to the students during an interaction in the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity.

#### **4.4.2 Christmas Knives: A Narrative in Context**

On January 16, during the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity, Mrs. Smith decided to change the focus of the activity from practices with verb tenses to practices with prepositions. She started distributing copies of some exercises about the use of verb tenses, prepositions, and articles. When she finished, Mrs. Smith went back to the front of the classroom and asked them to turn to page fourteen. Then she asked the students to complete the exercises on that page for their homework assignment. “Each page has exercises for verb tenses, and also for articles and prepositions. Do them. Do these exercises for articles and prepositions, all right?” While she was looking at these exercises, and after a few seconds of silence, she decided that she wanted to check the students’ knowledge about the proper use of these prepositions so that she told the students, “I want you to look at these for just a minute. Let’s see how many of these you know, all right?”

Then she began calling each student by her/his name, telling her/him which sentence number she/he had to answer by filling in the blank with a suitable preposition:

Mrs. Smith: Hamad! Number two?

Hamad: (( reads from the paper in front of him )) These girls are absent  
from (       )

Mrs. Smith: Good. Absent from. Okay.

After Mrs. Smith continued with this technique for a while, she seemed dissatisfied with this technique of testing the students’ knowledge of the correct usage of prepositions, so she decided to give each student an idiom (i.e., a verb or an adjective plus a preposition) and asked her/him to use it in a sentence.

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When it was Andrea's turn, Mrs. Smith called her name and asked her to use the idiom "angry with" in a sentence. Andrea leaned forward, and then answered, "I am angry with m . ." Three seconds later she leaned backward, then answered, "I am angry with no one." Andrea's answer did not seem to satisfy Mrs. Smith. After she had repeated the last part of Andrea's answer, and complimented her, Mrs. Smith asked Andrea to think of something else for "no one." Mrs. Smith said, "No one, that's nice, okay. Make something up." Mrs. Smith was trying to encourage the students to use more complex sentences and at the same time she wanted to check whether Andrea understood the usage of the idiom in question.

Andrea was thinking deeply with a puzzled look on her face. She was looking at Mrs. Smith, who was standing in front of Andrea's desk waiting for an answer. Mrs. Smith recognized the expression on Andrea's face, so she gave Andrea a clue. "Think of the last time you were angry." In an interrogative tone, Andrea answered the question while leaning forward and nodding with her head to point at herself, "Me. [0.2] Okay?" nodding more while she was asking, "That's okay?" Andrea's answer and question were incoherent. But Mrs. Smith understood that Andrea meant that "she was angry with herself." Accordingly, Mrs. Smith answered, "Yeah! You are angry with yourself. Is that what you meant?" Andrea replied, "Yes!"

Mrs. Smith realized that Andrea did not know how to use this idiom properly because she substituted "me" for the first person reflexive pronoun "myself." Hence, she began to explain to Andrea this rule without referring to the rule itself, and with careful enunciation, she said:

Mrs. Smith: We would say I am angry with myself.  
Not angry with me. I am angry with myself.

To make sure that Andrea understood the meaning of this idiom, Mrs. Smith asked Andrea to explain "why" she was angry with herself. Andrea looked puzzled for two

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seconds, and then she burst into laughter, and then fell silent. To keep the conversation phatic (Coulthard 1988) and to encourage Andrea to prove her understanding of the meaning of this idiom, Mrs. Smith said while smiling, “Just because, just because huh?”

After a few seconds of silence, Hamad answered, “Because I hurt my finger.” Mrs. Smith looked at Hamad and said, “Because you hurt your finger. All right! That’s true!” To explain to the students the usage and meaning of the idiom “angry with,” Mrs. Smith told a personal experience narrative which I call Christmas Knives. In this narrative, Mrs. Smith told the students about her experience with “a set of new knives” that her husband gave to her for Christmas. She liked these knives, but later she decided to abandon them for her old knives. The following is the narrative as it was told:

### Christmas Knives

1. Mrs. Smith: For Christmas, all right,
2. My husband got me a new set of knives.
3. (( non-verbally demonstrating by her two hands facing each other
4. with some distance between them ))
5. [0.1] *BEAU*tiful knives,
6. Oh! No knives like this. Ooo.
7. Debra: ((( laughs )))
8. Mrs. Smith: And for two weeks oh! [0.1] all of my fingers are bandages.
9. Kyo Hey: ((( laughs )))
10. Mrs. Smith: My new knives are *beautiful*,
11. And they cut off all of my fingers just off.
12. [0.1] Okay?
13. I was *VERY* angry with myself
14. *Every* time I took one of my new knives I am bleeding.
15. It’s too awful.
16. I had to go back to my old knives
17. You know.
18. The new knives are dangerous.
19. Good, good sentence. All right.

[Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity, Wednesday, January 16, 1992]

Through this narrative, Mrs. Smith attempted to explain the usage of the idiom “angry with” not only to Andrea but also to the other silent students. Mrs. Smith started by performing an evaluative move, repeating Hamad’s answer “because I hurt my finger”

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as one possible reason for one to get “angry with” oneself. According to Mrs. Smith, the choice of her narrative material is mainly intended to focus on “real life events” that are known to students so that they can connect with and understand the meaning of abstract words.

Acting upon this principle, Mrs. Smith manipulated Hamad’s answer, which appeared common enough and apparently was understood by the students. She then incorporated Hamad’s answer “because I hurt my finger” and started to tell the students about a personal experience with a set of knives, the experience that was intended to connect the usage of “angry with” to the use of first person reflexive pronoun “myself.” By matching the narrative situation with a situation that is known to the rest of the students, Mrs. Smith emphasized the connection between her narrative and the meaning and usage of “angry with myself.”

To further situate the meaning of her narrative and elicit the students’ involvement and participation in the construction of this meaning, Mrs. Smith integrated different features of performance narratives (Wolfson 1978, 1982), namely, intonation and acting with the verbal activities. When she started telling the narrative, she was standing in front of her table, facing all the students (see Figure 4.1). In a rising intonation and while maintaining eye-contact with the students, Mrs. Smith began, “For Christmas,” to announce the beginning of her narrative and that she will cease the floor for a period of time (Sacks et al. 1978). This phrase was directly followed with the discourse marker “all right?” in a question intonation to get her students’ attention so that she can proceed with her narrative.

She put the papers which were in her right hand, under her right arm, as she continued (line 2), “My husband got me a new set of knives.” And simultaneously with the last part of the sentence, i.e. “set of knives,” she demonstrated what a set of knives looks like. In so doing, she brought her hands facing each other with some distance between them. Then

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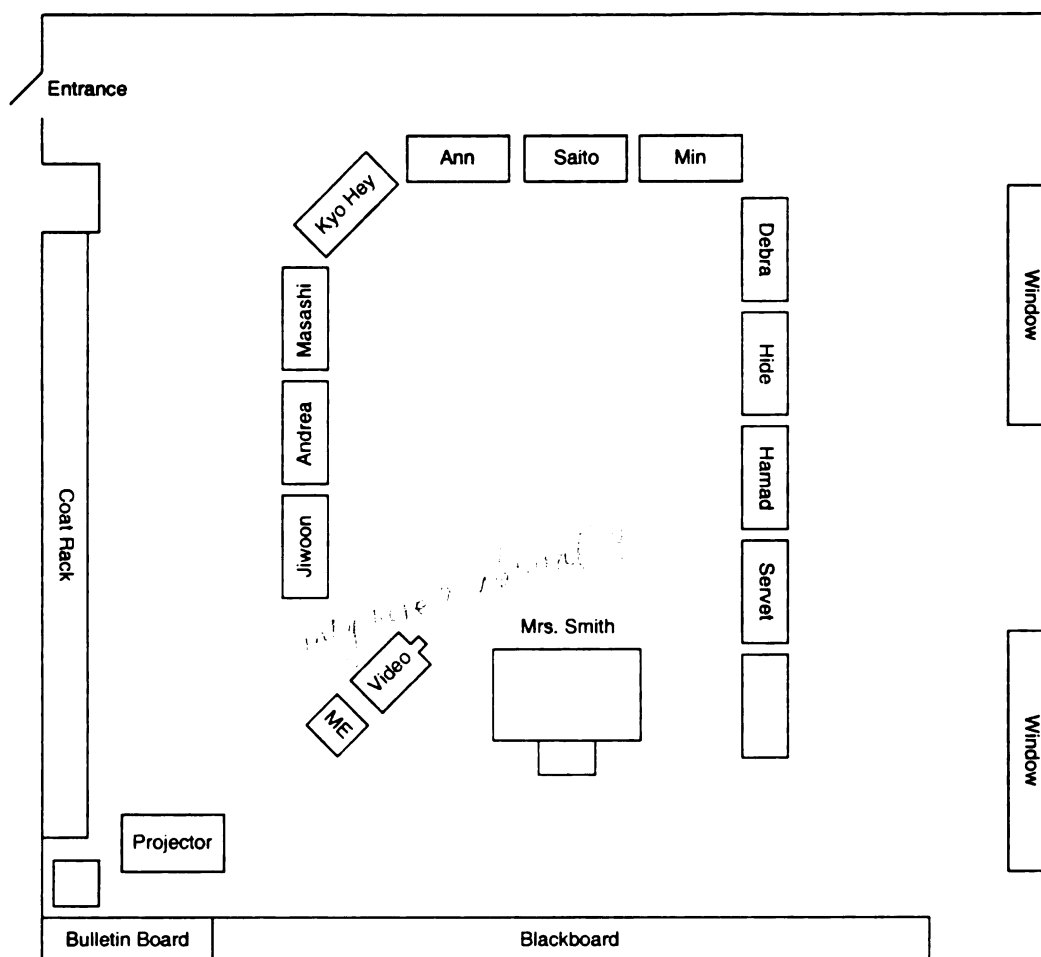
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**Figure 4.1.** Layout of the Classroom During Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity, Wednesday, January 16th, 1992.

in a rising intonation to indicate that what she was about to say is news to the students, in (line 5) she said, “*Beautiful knives. Oh!*” To maintain the students’ involvement, and to help them connect with what she attempted to say about these knives, Mrs. Smith not only emphasized the first syllable of the word “beautiful” in (line 5) but also followed that with her emphasis on the utterance of “Oh!” in (line 6). This last emphasis was delivered with an exhale and was simultaneously accompanied with Mrs. Smith placing her right hand on her chest and moving her head slightly backwards with her eyes wide open and then closed, in a fraction of a second.

This non-verbal reaction was directly followed by the verbal utterance “no knives

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like this” in falling intonation and the discourse marker “Ooo.” These two moves further emphasized Mrs. Smith’s impression of these knives and enabled the students to view these knives through the eyes of Mrs. Smith. At this point, (line 7) Debra’s overlapping laughter was unrecognized by Mrs. Smith because Mrs. Smith herself was too involved in the act of telling this narrative. Yet Debra’s reaction was in itself a sign of involvement.

In (line 8), Mrs. Smith gave a glimpse of what using these knives did to her fingers. She said, “And for two weeks, Oh!” pointing to her fingers and in falling intonation “All my fingers are bandages.” This view suggested an attempt on Mrs. Smith part to assist the students in recognizing the effect of using these knives. In a different tone, meant to signal the students that the narrative was about to end, Mrs. Smith summarized the previous two events and said, “My new knives were beautiful, and they cut all of my fingers just off.” She then paused for a second and in an interrogative tone she said “Okay?” to check whether the students understood what she was saying to this point. Although there was no verbal reaction to affirm this question, Mrs. Smith continued in a different tone, “I was *VERY* angry with myself.” She stressed the intensifier “very” with an emphasis and a louder pitch to draw attention to what follows (Coulthard 1988).

Then she elaborated as she explained the reason for being “angry with herself.” In rising and falling intonation she said, “*Every* time I took one of my new knives, I am bleeding.” To further enhance the reason for being angry with herself, she added her personal view of the incident when she said in a slightly lower volume, “It’s too awful. I had to go back to my old knives.” She followed this last utterance with the discourse marker “you know” in falling intonation. In so doing, she attempted to elicit the students’ cooperation in accomplishing a conversational task (Schiffrin 1987). The students’ non-verbal reaction led Mrs. Smith to explain the reason why she wanted to go back to her old knives, “My new knives are dangerous.” The narrative ended with Mrs. Smith evaluating Hamad’s answer in (line 19) “Good, good sentence.”

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In brief, the above illustration represents an analysis of Mrs. Smith's use of an oral narrative during teacher-student interaction in the instruction phase of the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity. From this interaction, it becomes obvious that Mrs. Smith began to tell an oral narrative after she acknowledged the students' silence that followed Hamad's right answer to her question, about the usage of the idiom 'angry with myself.'

The narrative that Mrs. Smith recounted at this point was "locally occasioned" (Jefferson 1978) by Hamad's answer, which Mrs. Smith acknowledged as a right answer to her question. Mrs. Smith chooses to recount a familiar experience from her personal life to clarify the meaning of 'angry with.' In so doing, Mrs. Smith focused on the ordinariness, i.e., the common shared attributes, of an experience she had with a new set of knives that she received from her husband. In this narrative, she recounted her first impression of these knives, and her feelings when she had a "finger cut" every time she picked up a knife from this set. Mrs. Smith's usage of this experience, along with the non-verbal performance features, substantiated the meaning and the usage of the problematic idiom, i.e., "angry with myself."

#### **4.5 Origin of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives: Repertoire of Narrative Experiences**

When Mrs. Smith considers recounting an oral narrative at any point of the interaction, her personal goal is to create the students' involvement. In doing so, Mrs. Smith draws upon three forms of oral narratives. These forms are *personal* experience narratives, *known-other* experience narratives, and *potential-other* experience narratives. While the forms of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives appear to include some features of narrative structures as described by Labov and Waletzky (1967); Labov (1972); Kalčik (1975); Polanyi (1982); Riessman (1991), these forms were examined and described based on the data retrieved from this present study. Hence, I adopted the first term, i.e., personal experience narrative,

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from the work of (Labov and Waletzky 1967) and I coined the remaining two terms to capture the participants' perspectives of the sources and the range of material that these narratives incorporate.

Accordingly, the material of the *first type*, namely Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives, originates from Mrs. Smith's life. These narratives are mainly about the ordinary everyday activities in which Mrs. Smith got involved.

The material of the *second type*, i.e., known-other experience narratives, originates from three different sources. The first source is the students' classroom journals in which the students share their personal experiences with Mrs. Smith and their classmates. The second source is the experiences of others with which Mrs. Smith and/or the students are familiar. The third source of this type of narrative is the media which includes American films that Mrs. Smith and the students attended together, well-known shows that Mrs. Smith saw on the television, or local news that she heard over the radio or read in American public magazines.

The material of the *third type*, i.e., potential-other experience narratives originates from the students' personal and academic experiences that they share with Mrs. Smith in their interactions, in and outside the classroom. Mrs. Smith treats the material of these narratives as common, well-known experiences that can happen to any one under specific circumstances.

According to Mrs. Smith, the students' interests in these narratives stem from the students' familiarity with the material of these narratives. However, Mrs. Smith's choice of the narrative experience from any of these sources is not predetermined. Rather, it is often occasioned by the conversation in which the narrative is told (Sacks 1970-1971; Jefferson 1987). According to Mrs. Smith "I don't have a kind of formula that I follow. Just whatever . . . whatever comes to my mind." This suggests that Mrs. Smith makes spontaneous decision of what the source of narrative material she would draw upon in

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## 4.6 Conclusion

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relation to the issue that occurs at a given point during the interaction, in a given situational context. A detailed description of these narratives and Mrs. Smith's goal will be provided in Chapter 5.

## 4.6 Conclusion

In summary, from the analytic description of Mrs. Smith's naturally occurring oral narratives presented thus far in this chapter, it is necessary to consider the participants' viewpoints of these narratives to gain some perspective of the different social aspects of this verbal behavior. The examination of these viewpoints makes apparent the invisible communicative value of these narratives and what the participants make of their content. For both the teacher and the students these narratives are tools to spur the students understanding. However, for the teacher, the content of these narratives creates student involvement. For the students, the content of these narratives communicates the meanings of difficult vocabulary words and difficult issues pertaining to American culture.

The identification of the situational contexts where the teacher-student interactions surrounding narration occurred emphasized that the teacher's use of an oral narrative is associated with the presence of specific pedagogical problems which the teacher deemed to need further elaboration. This observation lends support to the assertion that the meaning of these narratives is not autonomous or isolated from any of the contexts in which they narratives appear. Rather, the meaning of these narratives is an integral part of these contexts.

Through the analysis of one of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives in one situational context, the role of these narratives and the social rules of situating their meaning as described by the teacher and the student become clear. The brief description of the range of the teacher's oral narratives, presented at the end of the chapter, suggested that these narratives fall into three different categories. These categories are: personal experience narratives, known-

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other experience narratives and potential-other experience narratives. The theoretical foundations that underpin their identification and use will be addressed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 5**

### **TAXONOMY OF MRS. SMITH'S ORAL NARRATIVES**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The preliminary analysis of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives presented in Chapter 4 resulted in the identification of three categories of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives and the rules that function to situate the meaning of any of these forms. Through this preliminary analysis, it became apparent that Mrs. Smith's goal of using oral narrative is to create the students' involvement and eventually their understanding. However, the ways in which Mrs. Smith attains this goal when she uses one specific form of her oral narratives remain to be elaborated.

In light of this brief review, this chapter provides a close examination of the linguistic forms of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, and attempts to elaborate the sociolinguistic foundation that underlies the usage of these forms in the interaction. The chapter also attempts to focus on Mrs. Smith's goal and to describe how she achieves this goal using each form of her oral narratives. In so doing, this chapter is divided into three main sections.

The first section focuses on the structural features of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives and attempts to identify the forms of these narratives. This section also describes the problems encountered in this attempt and the procedures used to overcome these problems, which lead to a categorization of these forms based on current theoretical frameworks of oral narratives. The second section reconsiders the participants' perspectives and identifies the sociolinguistic criteria that underlie the categorization and the usage of these narratives.

The final section establishes the connection between Mrs. Smith's decision to choose a narrative to recount and Mrs. Smith's goal to create students' involvement. The section then describes how Mrs. Smith uses each type of her oral narratives to create the students' involvement, including the verbal and non-verbal activities associated with the telling of these narratives.

## 5.2 Towards a Taxonomy of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives

To establish a taxonomy of any verbal behavior, the researcher begins with a description of the properties of the form with the ultimate objective of relating these properties to the social and cultural significance the participants involved assign to this form (Gumperz 1964, 1985). Accordingly, I first examined the written transcripts of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives. Through this examination, the structural features of these narratives were analyzed in an attempt to identify their forms.

At this early stage, the task of analyzing these narratives was difficult. On the one hand, part of the difficulty involved the lack of one framework of oral narrative analysis that can capture the wide range of Mrs. Smith's oral narrative forms. On the other hand, the theoretical orientations of traditional and current frameworks are mainly centered around the structure of one form of oral narratives, namely personal experience narratives Labov and Waletzky (1967; Labov 1972; Kalčik 1975; Riessman 1991; Polanyi 1982).

Upon examining the features of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, the features of some forms appeared to fall within the category of personal experience narratives as described by Labov and Waletzky (1967; Labov 1972), but the features of other forms in light of the same framework appeared as non-narratives. By the same token, the features of yet other forms of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives appeared to fit the tense features of habitual and hypothetical personal experience narratives that Polanyi (1982) and Riessman (1991) identified, but occurred out of sync when it came to the structural organization features.

To further complicate the matter, the features of a limited number of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives appeared to resist all features designated by the restricted descriptions of narratives of all the above frameworks and yet again to emerge as non-narratives. The most apparent of features that prevented this latter group of the teacher's narratives to fall in any of these frameworks was the absence of a sequence of verbs to represent the narrative events. This latter form of the teacher's oral narratives, however, appeared to finally correspond to Kalčík's (1975) formal description of kernel personal experience narratives. Nonetheless, for apparent cultural reasons relevant to Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, this form of her oral narratives cannot be identified as narratives of personal experience. The most obvious of these cultural reasons is that none of these narratives represent an experience of any member in Mrs. Smith's classroom, including Mrs. Smith.

### **5.2.1 Forms of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives**

In an attempt to overcome the above difficulties in the task of identifying the forms of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, I decided to proceed heuristically, as Hymes (1974) suggested, as though "all speech has formal characteristics of some sort as manifestation of genre" (p. 65). Accordingly, following the sociolinguistic tradition in the analysis of the linguistic forms, I proceeded to examine the collected forms of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives.

First, I examined the formal features of these narratives in terms of their event clauses and evaluation clauses as well as the linguistic elements that comprise the main character of each of these narratives. I found an affinity with the tense of event clauses between some of these narratives and the event clauses of personal experience narratives described by (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972; Polanyi 1982; Riessman 1991).

On the level of the evaluative clauses, I found an affinity in the structural features of Mrs. Smith's evaluative clauses and some of the features of the evaluative clauses as

delineated by Labov and Waletzky (1967; Labov 1972) and further elaborated by Polanyi (1979). However, the evaluative clauses of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives appeared to be limited to one specific theme that brings about the attribute of the experience of one specific event. Accordingly, I classified the evaluative clauses based on the attributes they communicate about a given experience, and I coined the term *dimension* to refer to these attributes. I assigned these dimensions to four categories: *emotional dimension*, *performance dimension*, *enviromental dimension* and *quality*. See Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1.** Four Dimensions of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives.

<b>Emotional</b>	<b>Performance</b>	<b>Environmental</b>	<b>Quality</b>
Clauses that convey feelings and/or thoughts (personal/internal dialogue) and/or desires of the principal character.	Clauses that convey actions of the principle character.	Clauses that convey characteristic feature(s) of the setting or of the principle character.	Words or phrases that convey repetition, continuity, or emphasis of certain aspects of the experience.

Prior name mentioned later, what's the deal with this table?

Second, I isolated Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives that possess some features of Labov and Waletzky's (1967) and Riessman's (1991) narratives. I also examined the remaining group of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives. I found that except for the element that represents the principal character, some narratives of the remaining group would have become a part of the range within which Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives fall. While in Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives the first person singular and/or first person plural pronouns refer to the principal character, i.e., Mrs. Smith, in the remaining group of her oral narratives, other linguistic elements appeared to refer to a person other than Mrs. Smith as the principal character.

I classified these linguistic elements into two categories: *pronominal references* and *generic references*. Examples of the former category are the second and third person singular/plural pronouns, and examples of the latter category are marked by the use of generic pronouns, gender, social identity, or ethnic background or both. Accordingly, given these elements, it was possible to see that Mrs. Smith's oral narratives fall into two broad categories of narrative texts: *personal experience narratives* and what I call *non-personal experience narratives*.

The use of pronominal reference constitutes a subtle significance in the definition of narrative discourse. In some frameworks, the identity of the principal character is emphasized as a distinctive feature of certain types of narrative discourse (Polanyi 1982). In others, this element is treated as indispensable from the definition of oral narratives (Labov and Waletzky 1967). However, in this study and at the level of the formal analysis, the pronominal reference is treated as the linguistic criteria that differentiates the teacher's personal experience narratives from the teacher's non-personal experience narratives.

Thus, I restrict the term *Personal Experience Narrative* to refer to narrative experiences where the pronominal reference 'I' and/or 'we' refers to Mrs. Smith as the principal character of the recounted narratives. I restrict the term *Non-Personal Experience Narratives* to refer to narrative experiences where the pronominal references 'he/she' or 'they' or 'you' or other generic references, refer to someone else as the principal character other than the teller, i.e., Mrs. Smith. See Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2.** Two Main Categories of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives Substantiated by Linguistic Criteria.

<b>Personal Experience</b>	<b>Non-Personal Experience</b>
1st Person Singular (I) 1st Person Plural (WE)	2nd Person Singular (YOU) 3rd Person Singular (SHE/HE) 3rd Person Plural (THEY) Generic Reference



In so doing, the examination of the formal structure of these narratives became feasible when examined in light of the early identified frameworks of oral narrative analysis. Capitalizing on the narrative tense as the major theoretical point that underpins the structure of personal experience oral narratives, I found that this feature not only functions to distinguish the forms of personal experience narratives (Riessman 1991) that Mrs. Smith recounts but also functions to distinguish the forms of her non-personal experience narratives.

On this final note, it was possible to identify different forms of each category of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives. Accordingly, among Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives, there appeared to be three forms: past-tense narratives, habitual narratives and hypothetical narratives. By the same token, it was possible to identify four forms of Mrs. Smith's non-personal experience narratives: past-tense narratives, habitual narratives, kernel narratives and hypothetical narratives. See Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3.** Sub-Categories of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives Substantiated by Linguistic Criteria.

Personal Experience			Non-Personal Experience			
Past Tense	Habitual	Hypothetical	Past Tense	Habitual	Kernel	Hypothetical

#### **5.2.1.1 Mrs. Smith's Personal Experience Narratives**

Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives constitute eleven out of a total of thirty-five narratives. The principal character of these narratives is Mrs. Smith herself. The most obvious dimensions of the experience of this group of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives is the emotional dimension and the cultural dimensions which convey Mrs. Smith's personal feelings, thoughts and beliefs about this experience. This group of narratives fall into three different formal categories: six of these narratives are past-tense narratives; four are habitual narratives; and one is a hypothetical narrative. See Table 5.4. The following is a linguistic description of each form of these narratives, respectively.

**Table 5.4.** Mrs. Smith's Personal Experience Narratives Encompass Three Formal Categories.

Total Narratives	Past-Tense	Habitual	Hypothetical
11	6	4	1

### Past-Tense Personal Experience Narratives

There are six past-tense personal experience narratives. This group of narratives has a combination of past tense narrative features such as orientation, complicating actions (or what I choose to call quasi complicating actions) and resolution (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 1972). The following is an example.

#### Christmas Knives

- Mrs. Smith: For Christmas, all right,  
My husband got me a new set of knives.  
(( non-verbally demonstrating by her two hands facing each other  
with some distance between them ))  
[0.1] *BEAU*tiful knives,  
Oh! No knives like this. Ooo.
- Debra: [(( laughs ))]
- Mrs. Smith: And for two weeks oh! [0.1] all of my fingers are bandages.
- Kyo Hey: [(( laughs ))]
- Mrs. Smith: My new knives are *beautiful*,  
And they cut off all of my fingers just off.  
[0.1] Okay?  
>

[Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity, January 16, 1992]

### Habitual Personal Experience Narratives

Mrs. Smith's habitual personal experience narratives consists of four out of the total number of personal experience narratives. These narratives are of two types. The first type contains verb tenses that are mainly present. They are characterized by a repetition of certain words as well as adverbs that indicate repetitions and routinization. This form of Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives depicts the experience of an event that continues to occur. Three out of four habitual narratives exhibit these features. Here is an example:

### Christmas Blues

Mrs. Smith: Every December,  
I feel overwhelmed,  
Because I have to buy Christmas gifts for everybody I know.  
Okay?  
Weeks and weeks and weeks in the mall,  
You know,  
[0.1] And shopping in every store in the town  
And it is exhausting [0.1]  
You get so tired,  
>

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 4, 1992]

The second type of Mrs. Smith's habitual narrative experiences is characterized by the use of "used to" plus a verb (Polanyi 1982, Riessman 1991). This type of narrative describes the experience of what used to be in the past. There is only one narrative of Mrs. Smith's habitual personal experience narratives that substantiates this type. Here it is:

### "Grandmothers have some funny ideas!"

Mrs. Smith: You know something,  
We have a kind of oil [0.1] that comes directly from the fish  
without cooking.  
We call it,  
(( Mrs. Smith moved away from the students, went to the  
blackboard and wrote "cod-liver oil," then she pronounced  
the name of this oil ))  
Cod-liver oil.  
And our grandmothers [0.1] used to make us drink that.  
>

[Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity, January 16, 1992]

### Hypothetical Personal Experience Narratives

There is only one narrative amongst Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives that can be labeled a hypothetical narrative. Hypothetical narratives are very often recognized as narratives about events that did not happen (Riessman 1991). However, from the perspective of this study, hypothetical narratives are defined as experiences related to events that are apt to happen under the circumstances described by the teller. This description

of hypothetical narratives is rooted in Mrs. Smith's identification of these narratives as *potential scenarios*. Unlike Riessman's hypothetical narratives, Mrs. Smith's hypothetical personal experience narratives are marked by the use of the present perfect and the present tense. The following is an example:

### Resurrected Bicycle

Mrs. Smith: Let's say,  
 In the attic of my house, I have a bicycle  
 [0.1] that no one has used many years,  
 And it is rusty,  
 And it is old,  
 And it does not work very well.  
 But my husband goes up there,  
 And he gets this bicycle,  
 And he brings it back to down stairs,  
 And he cleans and paints it,  
 And he makes it work very well,  
 And we can say he has resurrected the bicycle.

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 4, 1992]

#### 5.2.1.2 Mrs. Smith's Non-Personal Experience Narratives

Mrs. Smith's non-personal experience narratives make up twenty four of the narrative experiences total. These narratives stand in contrast to Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives on the formal ground that the principal character of these narratives is a person other than Mrs. Smith. The most obvious dimensions of these narratives are mainly the emotion and the performance of an experience of someone other than Mrs. Smith. However, like Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives, these narrative experiences fall into different formal categories, namely, *past-tense* narratives, *habitual* narratives, *kernel* narratives and *hypothetical* narratives. See Table 5.5.

**Table 5.5.** Mrs. Smith's Non-Personal Experience Narratives Encompass Four Formal Categories.

Total Narratives	Past-Tense	Habitual	Kernel	Hypothetical
24	10	2	3	9

### **Past-Tense Non-Personal Experience Narratives**

This group of Mrs. Smith's non-personal experience narratives contains ten out of twenty four non-personal experience narratives. Like Mrs. Smith's past-tense personal experience narratives, these past-tense non-personal narratives are marked by past tense and historical present tense event clauses. The following is an example.

#### **Killing Korean Girls**

Mrs. Smith: Some cultures,  
 I guess someone wrote this to me in their journal,  
 About ancient [0.1] ancient [0.1] Korean cultures.  
 They wanted boys,  
 They wanted sons,  
 And the Korean girls are born,  
 They kill them in the ancient Korean culture.  
 >

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 3, 1992]

### **Habitual Non-Personal Experience Narratives**

The habitual non-personal experience narratives make up three of Mrs. Smith's oral non-personal experience narratives. These narratives are marked by the use of the present tense or a fragment of conditional present and present tense. Unlike Mrs. Smith's habitual personal experience narratives, these habitual non-personal experience narratives depict events that reoccur over a period of unspecified time in the present. The following is an example of one of two that exhibit this formal feature.

### New Amish Generation

Mrs. Smith: You know,  
 They have a percentage of children leave the community  
 and don't come back.  
 The children are free to leave if they want to.  
 And I don't remember,  
 I read once, how many of the Amish children want to leave,  
 Mostly the sons not the daughters.  
 They leave.  
 They go to a big city,  
 They like it,  
 And they leave.  
 >

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 3, 1992]

Only one narrative of Mrs. Smith's habitual non-personal experience narratives is marked by the use of a combination of the conditional present, the present tense and adverbs that mark repetitions. Below is the narrative:

### American Household

Mrs. Smith: For the Americans [0.1],  
 Very often, the children will misbehave during the day,  
 And the mother will threaten the child and say:  
 "Wait until your father gets home."  
 Masashi: [Um hum]  
 Mrs. Smith: As soon as the father gets home, the mother  
 tells the father what the child did,  
 And the father will discipline the child.  
 >

[Student-Presentation Activity, February 19, 1992]

### Kernel Non-Personal Experience Narratives

Among Mrs. Smith's non-personal experience narratives emerges a limited number of distinctive narratives in which the traditional features of narrative structure and narrative tense are not operative. This form can best be referred to using Kalčik's (1975) labeling of "a brief reference to the subject *namely the principal's character*, or the central action *or both* from a longer *narrative*" (p. 7, italics are mine).

However, unlike Kalčik's kernel narratives, Mrs. Smith's are non-personal. In ad-

dition, they tend to occur within an interrogative question. With regard to this feature, these narratives can be seen as potential long narratives, on the condition that the students convey their need for further details. Here is an example:

**“. . . these guys who go into restaurants with guns”**

Mrs. Smith: Do you know these guys who go into restaurants with guns,

Hamad: [Yes, yes.]

Mrs. Smith: And they shoot like thirty people,

Debra: Yes.

Mrs. Smith: These are mass murders.

>

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 3, 1992]

Even when these narratives are detailed, they do not develop beyond their kernel form. Below is the only kernel non-personal experience narrative which Mrs. Smith had to elaborate.

**“Like this woman”**

Mrs. Smith: Like this woman,

You could see how simple she was,

Students: (( silence ))

Mrs. Smith: Nothing fancy,

No Jewelry,

No fancy clothes,

>

[ Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 3, 1992]

## **Hypothetical Non-Personal Experience Narratives**

There are a total of nine narratives in Mrs. Smith's hypothetical non-personal experience characterized mainly by historical present tense. Like Mrs. Smith's hypothetical personal experience narratives, I define the hypothetical non-personal experience narratives as narratives about events that are likely to happen given the circumstances that Mrs. Smith directly states after the orientation to these narratives. The following is one example:

### Loving Your Adoptive Child

Mrs. Smith: Lets' say,  
 You get married,  
 And for some reason, you are unable to have a child,  
 All you think about is a child,  
 You want a baby *so much*,  
 Okay?  
 If you wait ten years,  
 Finally, someone gives you a little baby,  
 and says: "This is yours,"  
 >

[Student-Presentation Activity, February 7, 1992]

In summary, focusing on the formal features of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, I was able to isolate the "totality of the linguistic forms" (Gumperz 1985) of the narratives that Mrs. Smith uses during the classroom interaction. These forms appeared to fall into two broad categories: personal experience narratives and non-personal experience narratives. While the former encompasses past-tense, habitual and hypothetical narrative forms, the latter constitutes past-tense, habitual, kernel and hypothetical narrative forms. However, **it** is the identity of the principal character that defines the linguistic bounds of these two **categories**. These two categories of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives represent all the possible **forms** that Mrs. Smith uses to formulate her message during her interaction with the **students** in the classroom.

Up to this point, I left out the ways in which both Mrs. Smith and the students realize **these** narratives and the social constraints that influence their usage. I turn to this point in **the** following section.

### 5.3 Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives: Insider's Criteria for Categorization

To establish a repertoire of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives as realized by the participants **and** to identify the sociolinguistic criteria that underpin their usage, one has to take the **speech** community, not the language, as the primary point of analysis (Hymes 1974). In so

*Sociolinguistic Description*



doing, I considered the participants' perspectives and my observations as the foundation in analyzing and describing these narratives as well as their usage in classroom interaction. This strategy is assumed in order to avoid the tendency to superimpose one's own analytical category or what Hymes (1972) refers to as the observer's "habit of imputation" on what the insider imputes (p. 18).

### 5.3.1 The Perspectives of Mrs. Smith and the Students Revisited

From the review of the perspectives of Mrs. Smith and her students, two aspects of her narratives can be identified: the subject matter and the persons whose experience is involved. On the subject matter of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, there was a consensus among Mrs. Smith and the students that the contents of these narratives are not limited to **one** specific subject. Rather, they are about various subjects.

In an early interview, Mrs. Smith elaborated on the variety of subjects in these **narratives** in relation to the sources upon which she drew. According to Mrs. Smith, the **main** sources of the subject matter of her narratives are the various experiences from **real life** ("I would prefer real-life stuff . . . something as true to life as possible"). In these real life experiences, Mrs. Smith suggested that she finds endless sources for a variety of subjects familiar to her students.

Mrs. Smith explained by alluding to stories from the television programs and to **experiences** from the life of her students as potential sources for her narratives. At one **point** during the interview, Mrs. Smith pointed to a popular television show narrative that **she** told her students about and said: ". . . I told them about a man who appeared on **Oprah** Winfrey or Phil Donahue or something . . ." Later she added "like the day we **talked** about Andrea's refrigerator . . ." These two examples of narratives were among **many** others that Mrs. Smith mentioned as narratives from real life experience. In a brief **statement** in a latter interview, Mrs. Smith sums the sources of these narratives by saying

that “I would prefer to use examples from my life, someone else’s life or from the media.”

The students described the subjects of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives in terms of problematic issues they encounter during the classroom interactions. Because the cultural issues were most problematic to the students, almost all the students identified the life and culture of American people as the dominant subject of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives. Only a few students, however, clearly made a connection between the subjects of these narratives and/or the persons whose experiences were the subjects of these narratives and/or the sources from which these experiences originate. The most accurate of these accounts were those of Hamad and Min.

Hamad maintained that Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives are about “American people . . . and lot of [these] narratives were about American culture.” Reiterating his perspective, Hamad said that these narratives convey the various cultures of “people in the United States, how they think, do and behave.” From Hamad’s view, although the cultural issue dominates the subject of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives, he acknowledged that in some of these narratives, Mrs. Smith “speaks about herself . . . her personal experiences.” Hamad not only perceived that these narratives are from the life of American people and the life of Mrs. Smith but also that none of these narratives is unreal or what he referred to as “imaginative narratives.”

Min’s perspective on the subjects of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives corresponds to the perspective of Hamad. Min maintained that these narratives were about “American people and American culture.” Min observed that the subjects of these narrative experiences vary. Thus, she attempted to list the subjects. She said that Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives were about “adoption,” “fat people,” “politics” and that, occasionally, these narratives were about experiences that Mrs. Smith herself lived through. Min suggested that the sources of these narratives were “magazines, [the life of] American people and the life of Mrs. Smith herself.”

Before moving into the purposes for which Mrs. Smith tells any of her oral narratives, it is important to distinguish between two types of purposes. According to Hymes (1974), any verbal behavior has mainly two different purposes: *situational* purpose and *personal* purpose. He coined the term *outcome* to refer to the former type, and the term *goal* to allude to the latter type. To Hymes, the two purposes are not identical. While the achievement of the situational purpose is conventionally recognized and expected, the achievement of the personal purpose varies and is bound to the participant's strategies (p. 61).

From the analysis of the interviews with Mrs. Smith and the students in Chapter 4, it was obvious that the purpose of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives was to communicate the meaning of linguistic and cultural issues that her students find difficult to understand. Mrs. Smith explained the purpose of her narratives when she said "I use a narrative to help the students understand isolated, abstract American English words and cultural issues." However, when she decides to tell a narrative, Mrs. Smith maintained that her goal is to help the students connect the abstract English words with a mental picture. "When I use a narrative I want [the students] to see things in their minds . . . I think if they can connect these English words with that mental picture it's going to work," said Mrs. Smith.

Towards the achievement of this goal, namely creating the involvement of the students, Mrs. Smith maintained that she uses a narrative situation that is familiar to the students. Mrs. Smith believes that the emotional side of any narrative provides for a familiar situation. Mrs. Smith explained that "We all know what it means to be embarrassed. We all know that feeling. So if I am explaining a vocabulary word, and I used it in the context of embarrassing situation, everybody is going to connect with that feeling . . . and I know it is going to work."

The import of focusing on the emotional dimension of a narrative, argued Mrs. Smith, is that it breaks the barriers created by the diverse ethnic backgrounds of the students.

Hence, to further the involvement of the students, Mrs. Smith explained that she tries to create in the students the emotions that all human beings experience ("We all have the exact same emotions . . . so I try to tie into them how we feel about something . . . and I know we are going to connect at the same level").

The review of the students' perspectives on the purpose of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives alluded to the conventional purpose, namely the outcome of Mrs. Smith's usage of these narratives. Almost all the students described this purpose in relationship to the different types of pedagogical problems that they routinely encounter during their classroom interaction with Mrs. Smith. According to the students, the purposes of these narratives are to clarify the meaning of difficult American English vocabulary and/or to explain unfamiliar issues pertaining to American culture. Only a few students elaborated the ways in which Mrs. Smith's oral narratives impact their comprehension of these problematic issues and lead to their understanding. These students are Andrea, Saito, Min and Kyo Ko (see Chapter 4).

In brief, there is a consensus on the ways that these narratives are realized and differentiated. Both Mrs. Smith and the students realize these narratives in terms of their subject matters and both of them distinguish between these narratives in terms of the sources from which these narratives originate.

However, on the issue of the purpose for which these narratives are recounted, a slightly different picture emerges. Although neither Mrs. Smith nor the students associated a particular narrative with a particular type of purpose, they disagree on the type of purpose that these narratives serve. While Mrs. Smith described the usage of these narratives in terms of her goal, i.e., primarily as a tool to create the students' involvement, the students described it in terms of the outcome, i.e., as a tool to clarify the difficulties of different pedagogical problems.

#### **5.4 Sources of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives: Repertoire of Narrative Experiences**

From the above brief review of the participants' perspectives, there appeared to be a shared view on the variation of the subjects of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives and a complementary perspective on her use of these narratives during classroom interaction. These perspectives suggest the existence of shared values and a potential regular pattern of the usage of this verbal behavior, namely, Mrs. Smith's oral narratives. However, because the participants' usage of any verbal behavior is non-conscious (Gumperz 1974), their perspectives must be considered in light of an empirical investigation.

Accordingly, the examination of the written transcripts of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, coupled with the analysis of the data from the observations, suggests that the subject matters of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives vary and that these subjects originate in the life experiences of different persons. These persons are known to both Mrs. Smith and/or the students. They are Mrs. Smith herself; one of the students in the classroom; a person whose identity is known to both Mrs. Smith and the students from the media (mainly, from American films, broadcasting news, popular television shows or public American magazines); and finally, a person whose identity is known only to Mrs. Smith.

The students become familiar with the material that makes up the life experiences of these persons through their participation in a variety of social activities outside and inside the classroom. For example, the students become familiar with the material that makes up Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives by virtue of living in America and participating in the different social activities around which most of Mrs. Smith's personal oral narratives are structured. Examples of these social activities are shopping for Christmas gifts; watching American entertainment shows on television; traveling the states as tourists and learn about life in different states.

However, the students' familiarity with Mrs. Smith's narratives about another person's experience emerges from their participation in different classroom activities such as writing and sharing their personal journals; from their participation in different social activities like watching American films with Mrs. Smith; from reading American magazines that Mrs. Smith recommends; and from listening to the radio. Through all these activities, the students not only get acquainted with the experiences that Mrs. Smith recounts during the classroom interactions, but also with the persons whose experiences are the topics of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives.

Examples of narrative experiences that originated from students' personal journals include students' experience of different aspects of American life and culture; students' personal problems with their parents, friends and partners which they share with Mrs. Smith during a private interaction; and students' personal experience that they share during the classroom interaction. Examples of narrative experiences that originated from other sources, namely the media, are popular scenes from some American films such as those from *Kramer vs. Kramer* and the scenes from *The Witness*; narratives of killing such as the gruesome crime of Jeffery Dahmer, from broadcasting news; narratives of wrong-doing like the American students' misconduct in American public schools; and experience of well-known American actors from American public magazines.

The students' familiarity with the experiences of persons known only to Mrs. Smith stands in a sharp contrast with their familiarity with the experiences described above. This contrast is related to the sources of these narratives. The sources can be either the classroom discussions that precede Mrs. Smith's telling of this type of narrative experience or a private interaction during which one student shares her/his experience with Mrs. Smith. Thus, the former source provides all the students with a partial familiarity with the content of this type of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives. However, the students' familiarity with narratives of the latter source is limited to a few number of the students, namely, those

who happened to know about these experiences from the teller herself/himself.

Examples of the experiences that originate from a classroom interaction are the ones about the rights of the handicapped in America, and the one about the disciplinarian in an American household. Examples of the experiences that originate from a private interaction are the ones about the feelings towards adoptive children, and the ones about the actions of justifying one's behavior to an authoritative figure. Mrs. Smith treats the subjects of these narratives as common and well-known experiences that can happen to any one under specific circumstances. She refers to them as *potential scenario narratives*.

From this analysis which is not only substantiated by field observations and socially relevant regularities that are derived from the interview data but also supported by the analysis of the written transcripts of these narratives, the sources of the material of Mrs. Smith's oral narrative experiences emerge as the criteria that define the social bound among these narratives. Given that the sources of this material are the experiences of different persons known to Mrs. Smith and/or to the students, it is possible to classify these narratives into three different categories.

I use Labov and Waletzky's (1967) term *personal experience narratives* to refer to the oral narratives that Mrs. Smith recounts of her personal experiences. However, I coined the terms *known-other experience narratives* and *potential-other experience narratives* to refer to narratives that Mrs. Smith recounts with reference to the experiences of persons known to herself and/or to her students. See Table 5.6.

**Table 5.6.** Repertoire of Mrs. Smith's Oral Experience Narratives.

<b>Total Narratives</b>	<b>Personal Experience Narratives</b>	<b>Known-Other Experience Narratives</b>	<b>Potential-Other Experience Narratives</b>
35	11	15	9

The following is a description of each category.

#### **5.4.1 Personal Experience Narrative**

This category of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives represents the experiences of Mrs. Smith herself. In these narratives, Mrs. Smith is the principal character as well. As the teller of this type of an experience, Mrs. Smith recounts the ordinariness of the event that she herself lived through or the ordinariness of an event that she occasionally lives through; or the ordinariness of an event that could happen and which she could experience given the circumstances that she describes. The source of these narratives is mainly the routine daily activities in which Mrs. Smith, like any ordinary person, gets engaged. Examples of these activities are: shopping for Christmas gifts; watching an entertainment show and seeing, for the first time, an interbreed of an animal; and living in New York city and seeing beggars for the first time.

#### **5.4.2 Known-Other Experience Narrative**

This narrative category represents the experiences of different persons who are known to Mrs. Smith and/or known to the students. The persons who make up the principal character of these narratives are either real individuals or fictive characters. If the principal character is a real individual, the source of this experience can be either the students' journals or the broadcasting news or American magazines. If the principal character is a fictive character, the source of this experience can be traced to American films that both the students and Mrs. Smith attended. In these narratives, Mrs. Smith recounts the ordinariness of the events that any one of these characters lived through, or the events in which any of the characters occasionally live through, or the events in which any of the characters could have lived through in real or fictive worlds.



### 5.4.3 Potential-Other Experience Narrative

The narratives in this category represent the experience of a person known only to Mrs. Smith. The identity of this person, however, is not revealed. Rather, her/his identity is masked by Mrs. Smith's use of a second person singular pronoun, which takes over the role of the principal character. However, the source of this narrative is either a discussion that preceded the telling of this type of narrative or a private interaction in which one person shares with Mrs. Smith her/his personal experience. In these narratives, Mrs. Smith recounts the ordinariness of events that can happen in the life of any person given the specific circumstances that Mrs. Smith describes.

These categories of oral narratives make up the repertoire of narrative experiences upon which Mrs. Smith draws to tell a narrative to her students during the classroom interaction (see Table 5.7). At this point, it is of import to mention that these narratives become a part of the students' repertoire through their participation in the activities associated with the sources of these narratives. Thus the repertoire of these narratives is not an individual repertoire. Rather, it is a repertoire of narratives that is characteristic of the shared cultural background of this speech community, namely Mrs. Smith and the students. (On the description of verbal repertoire of a given speech community, see Hymes (1972, 1974)). This observation supports the assertion that when Mrs. Smith recounts a narrative from the repertoire, she relies on the students' familiarity with the narratives.

The import of the students' familiarity with Mrs. Smith's oral narrative experiences is that, when Mrs. Smith considers an oral narrative, her purpose is not to convey one experience or another. Rather, the purpose is to create student involvement and to communicate different pedagogical and cultural issues. In other words, the meaning of these narratives is bound to Mrs. Smith's personal purpose, namely, her goal as well as to the purpose of the interactions in the situational contexts, namely, the outcome (on the situational contexts, see section 4.3., Chapter 4). The discussion in the remainder of this chapter will

**Table 5.7.** Three Categories of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives Substantiated by Sociolinguistic Criteria.

<b>Personal</b>	<b>Known-Other</b>	<b>Potential-Other</b>
<b>Sources of Narrative Material</b>		
<p><b>Mrs. Smith's Personal Experience.</b></p> <p>The material of this narrative originates from her experience of everyday activities in which, as an ordinary person, she gets involved.</p>	<p>An experience of a real or fictive person known to both Mrs. Smith and her students.</p> <p>The material of the former experience originates from: students' personal journals, broadcasting news, and American magazines.</p> <p>The material for the latter experience originates from: American films.</p>	<p>An experience of a student or of someone known only to Mrs. Smith.</p> <p>The material of this experience originates from: the classroom interactions or from private interaction with Mrs. Smith.</p>

be confined to the analysis of the meaning of these narratives as it is related to the former variable, namely, Mrs. Smith's goal.

### **5.5 Mrs. Smith's Oral Narratives and Mrs. Smith's Goal**

In the previous sections, I have dealt with the following: forms of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives in light of current frameworks of narrative analysis, first, in isolation from the perspectives of the participants, and, then, in light of the perspectives of the participants. I have also substantiated a repertoire of these narratives based on observable, social regularities that are most appropriate for the data. In terms of the usage of these narratives, it is clearly suggested that there is no one-to-one relationship between Mrs. Smith's usage of a specific category of an oral narrative and the achievement of a specific purpose.

Apart from the students' familiarity with these narratives and the ways through which

they get acquainted with them, it was clear that Mrs. Smith's usage of a narrative from any category is non-conscious and that this usage is mainly motivated by her goal to create student involvement regardless of the narrative form or category. In order to describe the social significance of these narratives in teacher-student interaction, a description of the strategies that Mrs. Smith employs to achieve this goal and the relevance of some contextual clues are needed.

According to the interviews with Mrs. Smith on the purpose of using an oral narrative, Mrs. Smith clearly stated that the emotional aspect of the narrative experience is one fundamental strategy that she emphasizes to create student involvement. To Mrs. Smith, this aspect can overcome the barrier that is created by the ethnic diversity of the students "no matter what culture we come from, we all have the exact same emotions." The examination of the field observations of the interaction, coupled with the examination of the written transcripts, suggests that Mrs. Smith uses other strategies as well. The most obvious of these strategies can be captured in the performance of the narratives. The most relevant to the present study are: repetition, gestures, asides, intonation and comments (Wolfson 1978, 1982).

These strategies, however, are not independent from the rules that govern the interaction of the different phases of the three situational contexts. Rather, these strategies are influenced by these rules, among which are the pattern of the students' answers to Mrs. Smith's questions, and the topic that dominates the interaction during the instruction phases and the discussion phases. For the purpose of the three subsections, I focus on Mrs. Smith's goal as the primary point of analysis, and I describe the strategies that Mrs. Smith uses to create the students' involvement when she recounts each type of narrative. In so doing, I consider this description at three points of Mrs. Smith's telling of an oral narrative: the point of introducing a narrative, the point of telling a narrative and the point of closing a narrative.

### 5.5.1 Involvement Strategies at the Point of Introducing a Narrative

Mrs. Smith's goal to create student involvement at the point of introducing a narrative can be captured in the preface to each one of the three types of her oral narratives. To illustrate, a *preface*, as I define it, is *an utterance that precedes the telling of an oral narrative*. The function of this utterance, according to Sacks (1970-1971) is to ask for "the right to produce an extended talk, and *to promote that talk as interesting*" (p. 10, italics are mine). What the speaker expects to receive at the completion of this utterance is what Sacks calls "a ticket" (Goffman 1974: 508), i.e., permission to deliver a long talk and that talk would take a relatively long turn to complete.

This procedure of introducing a narrative is necessary for two reasons. First, a narrative is a long speech event and telling a narrative will usually take more than one utterance. Second, turn allocation of ordinary conversation necessitates that, when the speaker wants to hold the floor for quite a long period of time, she/he must get permission from her/his interlocutors (Sacks et al. 1978). Accordingly, Young (1982) suggests that the attempt to get the floor and to tell a narrative takes either "three utterance turns" or "two utterance turns" (Young 1982). According to Young, the former takes the sequence 'preface, response, opening' while the latter takes the sequence 'preface (serving as a request and a ticket) and opening' (p. 289).

Based on the differences between the organization of turns in ordinary conversation and in classroom discourse (Mehan 1979; Cazden 1988), as well as the examination of Mrs. Smith's prefacing strategies, I define preface as the *formula that Mrs. Smith uses when she attempts to introduce and to fit an oral narrative into the flow of classroom interaction*. Accordingly, I identified three forms of this formula (from most to least frequently occurring form): *Pseudo Preface*; *Incomplete Preface*; and *Complete Preface*. These forms are differentiated based on the following variables: first, the number of turns each prefacing takes to be achieved; second, the form of the utterance that constitutes each

turn; and third, the coherence of the move in each turn. Below are descriptions of how Mrs. Smith constructs each one of these prefacing formulas.

### Pseudo Prefacing Formula

The first and most occurring prefacing formula is the one I call *Pseudo Preface*. I coined this term to refer to two-utterance turn prefaces, where the first utterance of the two turns (verbal or non-verbal) is realized by the teacher as both an indirect request and a ticket for telling a narrative while the second utterance is performed to carry out this request and to open up a narrative. This prefacing formula is of three different types. They are: pseudo prefacing type one, pseudo prefacing type two, and pseudo prefacing type three. The realization of any one of these types can be captured in Mrs. Smith's treatment of the utterance in the first turn, namely, the students' problematic answers to any of her questions, as an indirect request and a ticket to tell a narrative. In the second turn, Mrs. Smith performs a reaction move and begins to tell a narrative. The second turn of each type of this prefacing formula takes one form of three possible utterances to open up a narrative.

The most occurring type of this prefacing formula is pseudo preface type one. This type is made of two turns. The first turn denotes a problematic answer (i.e., silence or unacceptable answer) to a preceding question asked by Mrs. Smith. This turn is followed by Mrs. Smith's turn in which she performs a reaction move and directly begins to tell an oral narrative, starting with an orientation.

The second most occurring type is pseudo prefacing type two. The first turn in this type consists of an answer from the students that is problematic (i.e., silence, or wrong answer, or uninformed answer.) Following this utterance and in the second turn, Mrs. Smith opens up a narrative after the use of either the phrase 'let's say' or the discourse marker 'you know.'

The third and least occurring form of pseudo prefacing formula is pseudo prefacing type three. Although this prefacing formula is achieved in two utterance turns, it emerges as different from the above two types in terms of the form of the utterance that constitute the first turn and the second turn as well. For example, the first turn of this type constitutes a problematic answer from the students, which takes the form (silence or right answer accompanied by silence). The second turn, however, constitutes two possible utterances: either the teacher provides the right answer or repeats the right answer that the student provided in the former turn. In both cases, the silence or the silence that accompanied the students' right answer in the first turn is treated as a request and a ticket to tell a narrative. This is evidenced in the second turn when Mrs. Smith follows the right answer she provides or repeats the right answer that a student provides as a familiar line from a longer familiar experience, which, in this case, functions as an abstract preceding an orientation to the narrative that follows.

### Incomplete Prefacing Formula

The second prefacing formula that precedes Mrs. Smith's telling of an oral narrative is the one I call *incomplete preface*. This term refers to prefaces that are achieved in incoherent three utterance turns. The utterance in the first turn begins with a problematic answer (silence or uninformed opinion) that Mrs. Smith receives to any of her questions. Although Mrs. Smith treats this utterance as both an indirect request and an indirect ticket to tell a narrative, she does not proceed to tell one. Instead she begins the cycle of prefacing and in a declarative statement, Mrs. Smith states that she will utter an unspecified speech event "I will tell you this" and follows up with an utterance like "This is too weird" or "This is too interesting" to describe the speech event she will tell. Although such an utterance requires a pose to receive a 'ticket' from the audience (see Goffman 1974), it does not necessarily in classroom discourse. Accordingly, with no pause to receive confirmation, Mrs. Smith continues with an orientation and begins to tell an oral narrative.

### Complete Prefacing Formula

The third prefacing formula that precedes Mrs. Smith's telling of an oral narrative is what I call *complete prefacing*. This term refers to prefaces that are achieved in coherent three utterance turns: preface, ticket and opening. Unlike any of the above two prefacing formulas, the *complete preface* is the closest to that of Sacks (1970-1971) in terms of form of utterances that constitute each turn and closest to Young's (1982) description of the number of the turns this type required to produce this type of preface.

The first turn of this prefacing type begins with Mrs. Smith's declarative statement in which she states "I'll tell you something" followed by (the name of one student). In this statement, Mrs. Smith directly requests the floor from one student and announces that she will utter an unspecified speech event on the condition that at the completion of the speech event, the student gives her/his opinion. In the turn that follows, the students perform a response move providing Mrs. Smith with a "ticket" to pursue. In the third turn, Mrs. Smith begins with an orientation starts to tells a narrative.

When Mrs. Smith attempts to tell an oral narrative, from any of the three categories of her oral narratives, her goal is to create the students' involvement. To arouse the students' attention and interest in the narrative which she is about to recount, Mrs. Smith routinely begins with different prefacing formula to introduce each one of her narratives and to signal that a narrative will be told.

#### 5.5.1.1 Introducing a Personal Experience Narrative

The examination of the situational contexts where Mrs. Smith recounted a narrative from her personal experience narrative category showed that these narratives occurred during the instruction phase of both the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity and the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity as well as in the discussion phases of both the

Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity and the Student-Presentation Activity. In these two phases, Mrs. Smith attends to the students' problematic answers to the different questions that she poses during the interaction.

When Mrs. Smith introduces a personal experience narrative during the instruction phase, Mrs. Smith appeared to use two prefacing formulas: the pseudo prefacing formula (the three types) and the incomplete prefacing formula. These two types of prefacing appear to be associated with Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives that Mrs. Smith recounted only during this phase of the interaction. In this phase, Mrs. Smith addresses these narratives to all the students in the classroom. The following are examples of these formulas.

### Pseudo Prefacing Type One

Mrs. Smith: (( after an extended explanation of the meaning of the word 'overwhelming', Mrs. Smith posed the following question )) Do you understand overwhelming?

Students: (( silence ))

Mrs. Smith: Every December,  
I feel overwhelmed.  
Because I have to buy Christmas presents for everybody I know.  
Okay?  
Weeks and weeks and weeks in the mall,  
>

[Christmas Blues, Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 4, 1992]



### Pseudo Prefacing Type Two

- Mrs. Smith: Resurrected is a verb ((she wrote the word 'resurrected' on the blackboard)) and you know about this [0.2] one right?
- Debra: *Only* resurrected for the people going  
(( she moved her two extended hands from down up and laughed ))
- Mrs. Smith: No, no, no. We don't just use it for people like Jesus resurrected [0.2], no. We use resurrected in a lot of other senses um [0.3] the language is more figurative.  
Let's say,  
In the attic of my house, I have a bicycle,  
[0.1] that no one has used so many years,  
And it is rusty,  
And it is old,  
>

[Resurrected Bicycle, Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 4, 1992]

### Pseudo Prefacing Type Three

- Mrs. Smith: We would say I am angry with myself.  
Not angry with me. I am angry with myself.  
Why?
- Andrea: (( looked puzzled for two seconds, then burst into a short laughter, then fell silent ))
- Hamad: Because I hurt my finger. [Students: (( silence ))]
- Mrs. Smith: Because you hurt your finger. That's right.  
For Christmas, all right,  
My husband got me a new set of knives.  
>

[Christmas Knives, Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity, January 16, 1992]

To create the involvement of the students at the point of introducing a personal experience narrative using a pseudo prefacing formula type one, Mrs. Smith treats the students' wrong answers or the students' silence not only as an indication of the presence of a problematic issue (Johnson 1979), but also as both an indirect invitation to telling a narrative. Mrs. Smith's performance of a reaction move beginning with an orientation to introduce a personal experience narrative simultaneously emerges as an acknowledgment of this problem and an acceptance of this problem as an indirect request to telling an oral narrative. This move attracts the students' attention to the relevance of the narrative to the problematic issue that occasions it.

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When Mrs. Smith uses the pseudo prefacing type two to create the students' involvement, Mrs. Smith achieves her goal in the same ways that she does when she uses the former type. The difference in this case is Mrs. Smith's usage of the imperative phrase "Let's say." The literal meaning of this phrase suggests that understanding what follows requires suspension of judgment and acceptance of the proposition of what follows, as possible. Using this phrase prior to an orientation to telling a personal experience narrative, an experience that is apt to occur under certain circumstances, Mrs. Smith tries to bring the students' attention and agreement to accept that this experience can occur given the circumstances which she discloses. The absence of students' questions about the truth value of these narratives suggests students' involvement and acceptance of the potentiality of this experience.

However, when Mrs. Smith uses pseudo prefacing type three, she creates the students' involvement by treating a right answer that she receives to her question as a line from a familiar narrative experience, and, consequently, as an abstract to introduce this experience. In doing so, Mrs. Smith repeats this answer and then proceeds with an orientation to tell an experience that she reckons is familiar enough to warrant her treatment of this answer as an abstract and indirect request to telling this narrative. The students do not recognize Mrs. Smith's repetition of their classmate's answer as an abstract to telling a narrative until Mrs. Smith begins with an orientation to tell this narrative.

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### Incomplete Prefacing

- Mrs. Smith: Interbreed . . weird science word.  
It is when two animals from different species . .  
like a horse and a donkey interbred and make a mule.  
(( to the blackboard, Mrs. Smith turned to write the word  
'interbreed' and its definition and pronounced the  
definition while she was writing )) Two species create //
- Debra: A cow and a buffalo.
- Mrs. Smith: (( Mrs. Smith stopped writing and faced the  
students in the classroom and performed an  
acknowledgment move to Debra's answer ))  
Really?
- Debra: Yes, this real [[[ Debra and all the students laughed ]]]  
Yes. It is in America. It is an experiment, a cow and  
a buffalo because cow [0.1] [Mrs. Smith: Oh!] because  
the cow eats everything. Okay, and the buffalo is very good  
meat because (( in Spanish, she continued )) bettello . . this is real.
- Mrs. Smith: I'll tell you about this. This is too weird.
- Students: (( silent and attentive ))
- Mrs. Smith: There was an animal on Johnny Carson show called a cabbit  
(( on the black board she wrote the word 'cabbit' ))  
>

[“It was the weirdest I ever saw,” Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 4, 1992]

To create the students' involvement using an incomplete prefacing formula, Mrs. Smith begins with the utterance “I'll tell you about this” followed by a description of what she is about to tell as ‘interesting’ or ‘weird.’ In the example above, Mrs. Smith uses the utterance “This is too weird.” These two utterances signal an attempt to hold the floor and to tell a narrative (Sacks 1970). Using an incomplete prefacing formula, Mrs. Smith ignores the utterance of the turn which constitutes the students' problematic answer to an indirect request to telling a narrative, and attempts a direct request. Given the nature of classroom interaction during the instruction phase, Mrs. Smith does not seek permission to tell a narrative but rather, she attempts to arouse the interest of the students and gain their attention. This is evident in Mrs. Smith's telling of a narrative directly after this utterance.

However, when Mrs. Smith introduced a personal experience narrative during the discussion phase of both the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity and the Student-

Presentation Activity, she appeared to use different types of prefacing formulas. These prefacing formulas are: pseudo prefacing type two and complete prefacing formulas. The examination of the data of the present study showed that the former type appears to be associated with Mrs. Smith's personal experience narratives that she recounts in the discussion phase of both situational contexts. However, the latter type appears exclusively during the discussion phase of the Student-Presentation Activity, and with the telling of personal experience narratives only. The following are examples of the two formulas.

### Pseudo Prefacing Type Two

- Servet: In Turkey, we sometimes drink fish oil,  
 Mrs. Smith: Cod-liver oil?  
 Servet: No. (( non-verbally Servet brings his two hands facing each other to form a shape of a circle, and with his right hand he pointed to the center of the circle which he maintained with his left hand )) Fish oil  
 Mrs. Smith: Oh! And when the fish is done you drink that oil?  
 Servet: (( nods ))  
 Mrs. Smith: (( clicks or makes a fricative sound ))  
 Y'know something,  
 We have a kind of oil [0.1] that comes directly  
 from the fish without cooking,  
 >

["Grandmothers have some funny ideas!" Grammatical Rules-Practices Activity, January 16, 1992]

Mrs. Smith's usage of the pseudo prefacing type two occurs after her acknowledgment of one student's statement of opinion about the cultural issue that dominates the interaction in this phase. To gain students involvement using this type of prefacing, Mrs. Smith uses the discourse marker 'you know' in a falling-rising intonation. The usage of this marker has two functions: interactional and informational (see Schiffrin 1987).

Based on Schiffrin's description of these two functions, the interactional function, in this classroom, allows the transition from the current student speaker to herself. This smooth transition maintains the students' attention. The informational function signifies that the information that follows is new (Schiffrin 1987) and ensures the students'

involvement

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### Complete Preface

Mrs. Smith: I'll tell you something Min  
 And you give me your opinion.  
 All right?  
 Min: (( nods ))  
 Mrs. Smith: Maybe ten years ago um [0.1]  
 Some Korean parents asked me to tutor  
 their children [0.1]  
 Two little girls in elementary school [0.1]  
 >

[Tutoring Korean Girls, Student-Presentation Activity, February 19, 1992]

Mrs. Smith's usage of the complete prefacing formula occurs only during the discussion phase of the Student-Presentation Activity. How to create the students' involvement using this type of prefacing can be captured in the ways in which Mrs. Smith constructs this formula. Like all the above prefacing formula, Mrs. Smith's achievement of the complete prefacing is influenced by the rules of the students' answers to her questions that are characteristic of the phase in which she recounts a personal experience narrative.

In so doing, Mrs. Smith begins with a direct attempt to take over the floor from the student in charge of the presentation using the utterance 'I will tell you something' followed by the name of the student in charge of the presentation. Then she continues with a second utterance in which she requests that the student tells her/his opinion after she finishes. In so doing, Mrs. Smith requests a clear confirmation to pursue the telling. An expected response to this attempt can be observed in the non-verbal reaction (i.e., the nods) in the example above. Mrs. Smith attracts the attention of this student by not revealing directly what she is about to say so that the student has to pay attention before she states her opinion.



### 5.5.1.2 Introducing a Known-Other Experience Narrative

The examination of the situational contexts in which Mrs. Smith used a narrative from the known-other experience narrative category showed that these narratives occur during the instruction phases of both the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity and the Student-Presentation Activity and during the discussion phases of all three situational contexts, i.e., Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity; Vocabulary-Explanation Activity; and Student-Presentation Activity.

When Mrs. Smith introduces a known-other experience narrative, she uses pseudo prefacing type one, pseudo prefacing type three, and incomplete prefacing formulas. Mrs. Smith's use of pseudo prefacing type one and incomplete prefacing appeared prominent when Mrs. Smith recounts a known-other experience during the instruction phases of the above mentioned situational contexts. However, her use of pseudo prefacing type two is restricted to introducing known-other experiences narratives during the discussion phases of the activities named above.

#### Pseudo Prefacing Type One

Mrs. Smith: Has anybody heard . . . ever heard of infanticide?

Students: (( silence ))

Mrs. Smith: Some cultures,  
I guess somebody wrote this to me in their journal,  
About an ancient [0.1] ancient Korean cultures,  
>

[Killing Korean Girls, Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 3, 1992]

### Incomplete Prefacing

- Mrs. Smith: Overwhelming. Overwhelming is an adjective. (( she turns to the blackboard and writes the word 'overwhelming' )) Overwhelming means too much to handle or accept. You know overwhelming?  
>
- Debra: Yes! When I pass that day [Mrs. Smith: Um hum] finish the term. [Mrs. Smith: Okay. Right.] I think I know English [0.1]
- Mrs. Smith: Okay.
- Debra: That I learned English, maybe [Mrs. Smith: Okay! Okay!] and when the test . . I don't pass the test, [Mrs. Smith: Okay] my feeling is overwhelming.
- Mrs. Smith: Yes. That's okay.
- Students: (( silence ))
- Mrs. Smith: I will tell you an example of one of my students. Last term [0.1] who went to S-level. All Right?
- Students: (( silence ))
- Mrs. Smith: And he thought the university classes are going to be easy,  
>

[Overwhelming Experience, Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 4, 1992]

### Pseudo Prefacing Type Two

- Mrs. Smith: What's your opinion about these people live in this time and in this society?  
>
- Servet: I think everybody likes very different life( ) and that sometimes people like a change. But it is boring to live your life like that,
- Mrs. Smith: Y'know something, They have a percentage of their children leave the community an don't come back,  
>

[New Amish Generation, Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 3, 1992]

Mrs. Smith's use of these prefacing formulas to introduce known-other experience narratives involves the students in ways similar to the usage of them when she introduces a personal experience narrative. The only difference however, in the orientation to known-other experience narrative, is that Mrs. Smith routinely pronounces the origin or the source of the experience (see the highlighted lines of the first two examples above). However, in the third example, the origin of the experience that Mrs. Smith recounts is shared, namely the life of the new Amish generation. Hence, after Mrs. Smith uses the discourse

marker ‘You know,’ she commences with an evaluation of the experience of a group of known-others who have left leave the community and do not return.

With regard to the limited number of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives that I identified as kernel known-other experience narratives, the prefacing to this kind is quiet different. Because of the distinguishing structure of these narratives and because some originate from American culture, when Mrs. Smith attempts to recount a narrative from this category, she starts by checking the students’ familiarity with these narratives.

In doing so, Mrs. Smith uses an interrogative question such as ‘do you know’ and follows with this type of narrative, i.e., a brief reference to the subject of these narratives. The students’ positive answer to Mrs. Smith’s inquiry results in Mrs. Smith not telling the narrative but rather proceeding to explain the problem that occasioned the telling. In this case, the prefacing formula cannot be seen as independent from the structure of the narrative itself as it is the case with the other forms of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives. The following is an example.

Mrs. Smith: Do you know these guys who go into restaurants  
with guns,

Hamad: [Yes, yes]

Mrs. Smith: And they shoot like thirty people,

Debra: Yes.

Mrs. Smith: These are mass murderers,

>

[“ . . . these guys who go into restaurants with guns,” Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 3, 1992]

### **5.5.1.3 Introducing a Potential-Other Experience Narrative**

The examination of the situational contexts in which Mrs. Smith used a narrative from the category of potential-other experience narratives showed that Mrs. Smith recounted these narratives during the instruction phases of all the situational contexts and the discussion phases of only the Student-Presentation Activity.

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To introduce a potential-other experience narrative, Mrs. Smith uses only the first of three identified prefacing formulas, namely the three types of pseudo prefacing. The most predominant of the three types of pseudo prefacing formula is pseudo prefacing type two. This type begins with an utterance in the form of an unacceptable answer from the students (mainly students' silence) to a question posed by Mrs. Smith. Mrs. Smith treats this utterance as a request for telling a narrative, and follows with an orientation directly after the imperative phrase 'let's say.' The following are examples of these types.

### Pseudo Prefacing Type One

- Mrs. Smith: Plausible (( she turns and writes the word 'plausible' on the black board )) i::s adjective, and it means likely or believable, okay?  
 Studnet: (( silence ))  
 Mrs. Smith: Let's say um [0.1]  
 You asked your dad if you can borrow his car on a Friday night,  
 And you get home by three o'clock in the morning.  
 >

[Plausible Excuse, Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, February 4, 1992]

### Pseudo Prefacing Type Two

- Mrs. Smith: In Japan, do blind people have dogs?  
 Kyo Ko: Ah! Yes.  
 Mrs. Smith: Okay can they take them in the restaurant?  
 Kyo Ko: Ahhh?  
 Mrs. Smith: Here in a restaurant,  
 If somebody is blind,  
 And they have one of these dogs,  
 Kyo Ko: [Um hum]  
 >

[Some Rights of Handicapped People, Student-Presentation Activity, February 5, 1992]

### Pseudo Prefacing Type Three

- Saito: People are not kind of animals.  
 Mrs. Smith: Okay. Not of. You need with.  
 Some people are not kind with animals,  
 All right?  
 Saito: (( silence ))  
 Mrs. Smith: In this weather, (( pointing towards the window. It was snowing outside ))  
 Some people would keep their animals outside,  
 And they die from the cold.  
 >

[Kind with Animals, Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity, January 16, 1992]

Wrong match?

A close examination of Mrs. Smith's use of these three forms of prefacing formulas suggests that Mrs. Smith uses the pseudo prefacing type two and pseudo prefacing type three when she addresses the potential-other experience narrative to one student. However, she uses the pseudo prefacing type one, when she addresses the narratives to all the students in the classroom. Mrs. Smith usage of these formulas to create the students' involvement is similar to how she uses these formulas to introduce personal experience narratives and known-other experience narratives.

### **5.5.2 Involvement Strategies at the Point of Telling a Narrative**

Mrs. Smith's goal at the point of telling any of her oral narratives can be captured in relation to the presence of a problematic issue that emerges during the teacher-student interaction on the one hand, and in relation to sources through which the students get acquainted with these narratives and their familiarity with the principal character, on the other hand. The following is a description of how Mrs. Smith creates student involvement when relating each type of her narratives.

#### **5.5.2.1 Telling a Personal Experience Narrative**

When Mrs. Smith begins to recount a personal experience narrative, she focuses on the ordinariness of an event that she lived through, or of an event that she used to live through or of an event that she would have lived through. In so doing, Mrs. Smith considers the most common and familiar dimension of the experience. The choice of this dimension is considerably influenced by the problematic issue that "locally occasions" the narrative in the first place, to use Jefferson's (1978) terminology.

Thus to create the students' involvement, Mrs. Smith finds in what I identified as the "emotional dimension" of the experience the basis for the achievement of this goal. Mrs.

Smith's focus on this dimension can be clearly captured when the problematic issue she attempts to address involves emotions and/or thoughts (see the interactional analysis of Mrs. Smith's "Christmas Knives" Chapter 4, for example).

However, when the problematic issue does not focus on the emotional dimension of the narrative, Mrs. Smith employs other strategies to create the students' involvement. An example of these strategies is animation of the voices of the characters with whom she gets involved, especially when she recounts a narrative in which the experience can be captured in a dialogue that took place between herself and another character. Mrs. Smith's manipulation of this performance feature dramatizes the experience, and brings the experience and the characters to life. This strategy was quite obvious when she recounted "I am not that influential" (see Appendix A).

Mrs. Smith's goal of creating student involvement using a personal experience narrative can also be captured in her telling of an experience about activities that are familiar to the students. An example of these activities can be captured in her narrative "Christmas Blues" (see Appendix A), among others. In this narrative, Mrs. Smith focuses on a common emotional experience of "buying Christmas gifts for every one [she] knows." Students' familiarity with the experience and their need to attain an understanding of the problematic issue provide potential ground for their involvement.

Other strategies that Mrs. Smith uses to create the involvement of the students using personal experience narratives can be observed in the ways in which she portrays the identity of the principal character, i.e., her own identity. Linguistic theorists of oral narratives confined their attention solely to the identity of the principal character in terms of the pronominal reference that represents this identity as though the pronominal reference is the information that is all-important about this character. As a matter of fact, the identity of the principal character can be captured in relation to the actions and/or in relation to other character(s) with whom the principal character becomes involved. This is the case

with almost all the narratives that make up the corpus of this study.

When Mrs. Smith uses the first person pronoun and recounts a common experience of an activity in which any person can become involved, she portrays her identity as an ordinary person in relation to these activities. Thus, Mrs. Smith's depiction of her self as an ordinary person and of her experience as a common experience provides the students the ground to identify with the principal character and to participate in the interaction. Here is an example:

### **Christmas Blues**

Mrs. Smith: Every December,  
I feel overwhelmed,  
Because I have to buy Christmas presents for  
everybody I know.  
Okay?  
Weeks and weeks and weeks in the mall,  
You know,  
>

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, February 4, 1992]

In other narratives, Mrs. Smith promotes her social identity either as an American teacher or just as a teacher. Mrs. Smith emphasizes this identity in relation to the social identity of the character with whom Mrs. Smith becomes involved in a conversational interaction. The following is an example.

### **"I' am not that influential"**

Mrs. Smith: A student from other classes saw me in the cafeteria,  
And he began and he said: "Are you a teacher in the Academic  
Institute for English Language Teaching?"  
>

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, February 4, 1992]

It is interesting to note that Mrs. Smith promotes her social identity as an American teacher in narratives that she recounts during the discussion phases of the interaction, especially where she attempts to request an opinion from the students on issues pertaining to their culture for which, as an American person, she cannot account. Here is an illustration.



### **Persian Gulf Culture vs. American Culture**

Mrs. Smith: I had a student from Qatar last term,  
 And [0.2] I think it was him I asked [0.1]  
 If you have families that are like on welfare systems,  
 >

[Student-Presentation Activity: Discussion Phase, February 6, 1992]

In some narratives, Mrs. Smith uses a second person singular pronoun to alternate with first person pronoun singular/plural. In so doing, Mrs. Smith alludes to what is actually her own action or her own feelings. The use of this pronoun is an attempt to insert the audience into the narrative (Tannen 1983). The following is an excerpt from one of these narratives.

### **Confession**

Mrs. Smith: In the Catholic Church,  
 We go to confession  
 You go to a Priest,  
 And tell him you have done that is wrong or bad,  
 >

[Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity: Instruction Phase, January 16, 1992]

### **5.5.2.2 Telling a Known-Other Experience Narrative**

When Mrs. Smith begins to tell a known-other experience narrative, she recounts the experience of a real or fictive person who is known to herself and/or to the students. In this narrative, Mrs. Smith focuses on the ordinariness of an event through which this person lived or used to live. To create the students' involvement using a known-other experience narrative, Mrs. Smith relies on the students' familiarity with the principal character as well as with the experience which the students get to know from a variety of different sources (see section 5.3., this Chapter).

Although Mrs. Smith's choice of a known-other experience narrative to recount is "locally occasioned" by the problematic issue that emerges during the interaction, a group of these narrative experiences appeared to be bound to a specific situational context,

namely, the group of narratives that originates in American films. This group of oral narratives appears to be restricted to the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity and is bound to the list of the vocabulary that Mrs. Smith prepared based on these films. To create the students' involvement using any narrative from this category, Mrs. Smith also focuses on the emotional dimension of the experience, namely the feelings, thoughts and desires of the principal character of these narratives.

In so doing, Mrs. Smith provides a detailed account of this dimension to create the students' involvement. The amount of details that Mrs. Smith discloses with regard to this dimension is bound to the sources of these narratives. In narratives that can be recovered from sources such as the students' personal journals or American films or those that originate in common American culture experiences, Mrs. Smith's account of the "emotional dimension" of the experience is not as detailed as it is in the case of the narratives that originate from the experiences of persons known only to Mrs. Smith. One example of the latter is "Overwhelming Experience" (see Appendix A). To compensate for the details of the experience that originates in the former source, Mrs. Smith relies on performance features such as repetition, animation of the characters' voices and the use of gestures.

Another strategy by which Mrs. Smith creates the students' involvement using a known-other experience narrative can be captured in the ways she portrays the principal character of these narratives. In these narratives, Mrs. Smith uses three types of linguistic references to allude to the principal characters of these narratives.

In the known-other narratives that originate in American films, Mrs. Smith uses a third person singular/plural pronouns to refer to the identity of these persons. In so doing, Mrs. Smith provides minimal information of the characters so that she directs the students' attention from the principal character to the experience of this/these character(s). Here is an example:

**“You loused up my life”**

Mrs. Smith: You remember [0.1] um [0.1] that the day  
 She was leaving him,  
 He got that big accountant in his office,  
 >

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, February 14, 1992]

In the known-other narratives that originate in the remaining sources such as the students’ personal journals, the media, or a personal interaction that Mrs. Smith had with the principal character, Mrs. Smith portrays the identity of the principal characters of these narratives using a range of generic references. In so doing, Mrs. Smith portrays these characters in terms of either their social identity (e.g., cab driver or a student) or their ethnic background (e.g., a Japanese student) or their gender (e.g., a woman or guys) or simply a generic pronoun (e.g., somebody or someone). Mrs. Smith’s portrayal of the identity of these characters in this way serves to create the students’ involvement by providing the students with a clue that brings about the source of this narrative experience.

Here is an example:

**Ethical or Cultural Question**

Mrs. Smith: I heard this story in the news,  
 A cab driver driving in the street,  
 And he saw a woman getting mugged,  
 >

[Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity: Discussion Phase, February 20, 1992]

In the sub category of Mrs. Smith’s known-other experience narratives which I identified as kernel known-other experience narratives, Mrs. Smith refers to the identity of the principal character using a generic reference. As a part of the structure of these narratives, the identity of the characters is assumed to be known to the students. The following is an example.

**“Like this woman”**

Mrs. Smith: Like this woman,  
You could see how simple she was,

Students: (( silence ))

Mrs. Smith: Nothing fancy,  
No Jewelry,  
No fancy clothes,  
>

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, February 3, 1992]

However, when Mrs. Smith doubts that the experience of this narrative is known to some of the students, she uses a generic reference and portrays the identity of the character in terms of the actions with which this character is most familiar. In so doing, Mrs. Smith provides the students with a clue as to what this experience is about and, in a question form, she seeks a confirmation of the students’ familiarity with these experiences. Here is an example:

**“. . . these guys who go into restaurants with guns”**

Mrs. Smith: Do you know these guys who go into a restaurant with guns,  
>

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, February 3, 1992]

In sum, to create students’ involvement using a pronominal reference or a generic reference alluding to the principal character of a known-other experience narrative, Mrs. Smith emphasizes the most well-known feature of this character by which the students can identify her/him. Given that the known-other experience narratives are known to the students, such a brief reference to the identity of the principal character guides the students’ attention in recovering whose experience the narrative is about.

**5.5.2.3 Telling a Potential-Other Experience Narrative**

At the point of telling a narrative from this category, Mrs. Smith focuses on the ordinariness of an event that *anyone* would live through under specific circumstances. In so doing, Mrs. Smith recounts the emotions and/or the actions that are *typical* of the

experience. To create the students' involvement at the point of telling an oral narrative from this category, Mrs. Smith appears to rely somewhat heavily on two features of performance narratives, mainly, intonation and gestures. The reason for doing so is that the experiences of these narratives are not familiar to all the students in the classroom and such features represent an attempt to compensate for this disadvantage.

Unlike the principal character of Mrs. Smith's other two narratives, the identity of the principal character of the potential-other experience narratives cannot be recovered from the narrative. When Mrs. Smith recounts an experience from the life of a person known only to herself, she uses the second person singular pronoun 'you' as the pronominal reference to refer to this person as can be observed in the following two examples:

#### Loving Your Adoptive Child

Mrs. Smith: Let's say,  
                   You get married.  
                   And for some reason,  
                   You are unable to have a child.  
                   >

[Student-Presentation Activity: Discussion Phase, February 7, 1992]

#### Plausible Excuse

Mrs. Smith: Let's say,  
                   You ask your dad if you can borrow his car on a Friday night.  
                   >

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, February 4, 1992]

Using the second person singular pronoun, Mrs. Smith attempts not only to protect the identity of the principal character but also to create the students' involvement by making the experience that of the audience (see Tannen 1983, 1989). Mrs. Smith suggested in one of the interviews, when asked to explain the purpose for telling a narrative, that "when I am saying . . . if you adopt a baby and you're holding this baby in your arms . . . we personalized [adoption], now it's about us, now it's not that abstract concepts, it is when *you* have a baby in *your* arms can *you* love this baby, you know" (emphasis is

Mrs. Smith's). Thus, Mrs. Smith's use of the pronoun 'you' not only personalizes the experience, but also makes the experience that of the students.

However, the principle characters of the other group of these narratives, which Mrs. Smith describes as "typical scenario" experiences, are represented by the generic references. Using the generic references, Mrs. Smith portrays these characters in terms of their social identity as "parents," "police officer" or, in a more simple generic reference, "somebody." Here are some examples.

### **Abandonment**

Mrs. Smith: Let's say um [0.1],  
Both parents work,  
>

[Student-Presentation Activity: Discussion Phase, February 19, 1992]

### **Some Rights of Handicapped People**

Mrs. Smith: Here in a restaurant,  
If somebody is blind,  
And they have one of these dogs,  
>

[Student-Presentation Activity: Discussion Phase, February 5, 1992]

It is interesting that, unlike the principal character of Mrs. Smith's known-other experience narratives who is identified by a generic reference, the principal character of Mrs. Smith's potential-other experience narratives who is identified by a generic reference is non-definite or unknown. Thus, while the students are able to recover the identity of the character in the known-other experience narratives based on their familiarity with the source of narrative experience, the students had to depend on their knowledge of persons in the potential-other experience narrative who entertain similar social identities.

### **5.5.3 Involvement Strategies at the Point of Closing a Narrative**

Once the narrative has been completed, the teller has to signal the end of the narrative. In so doing, the teller does not leave the floor abruptly. Rather, she/he gradually leaves the

floor and returns to the normal course of turn-taking (Sacks 1970-1971). Given that Mrs. Smith recounts her oral narratives in a more restricted system of turn-taking than that of the ordinary conversation (on the characteristic of classroom discourse see Mehan 1979; Cazden 1988), the examination of the corpus of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives suggests that her attempts to create student involvement do not cease at the point of introducing a narrative or at the point of telling. Rather, these attempts continue until she reaches the end of the narrative and proceeds beyond.

To create students' involvement at the point of closing an oral narrative, Mrs. Smith appears to use two types of strategies. The first type of strategies can be captured in her usage of discourse markers such as 'okay,' 'all right,' and 'you know.' I refer to these strategies as pedagogical strategies. The other set of strategies can be observed in what Wolfson (1978, 1982) identified as features of performance. The most obvious of these strategies is the teller's comment on the narrative. According to the analysis of the data, when Mrs. Smith uses this strategy, she occasionally follows her comment with a rhetorical or an interrogative question. In addition, Mrs. Smith appears to occasionally use humor at the point of closing a narrative as one strategy to create student involvement. Mrs. Smith's use of these strategies can appear in isolation or in a cluster. In the following sections are illustrations of these strategies based on frequency of occurrence.

#### **5.5.3.1 Discourse Markers**

Mrs. Smith's use of discourse markers such as 'okay,' 'all right,' and 'you know' emerges as a natural feature of classroom discourse (Coulthard 1988). These discourse markers are common and widely used. As evidence in my data, it is hardly possible to find an interaction situation in the classroom where these markers are absent. However, these data also suggest that when Mrs. Smith uses the markers at the end of any of her oral narratives in isolation from other involvement strategies, she does so only during the

instruction phases of the three situational contexts. Mrs. Smith's use of the markers at the end of her narratives in these phases emphasizes Mrs. Smith's goal to ensure that not only the students understand the narrative as it relates to the problem in question, but also that they undertake no further inquiry.

Mrs. Smith achieves this goal through the question intonation in which she utters any of these discourse markers after which she usually pauses for a response. Usually, Mrs. Smith accepts the students' silence as evidence of their understanding. However, at times, when she doubts that the students' silence is an indication of their understanding, Mrs. Smith couples the use of the marker with a personal comment on any of the dimensions of the experience that she recounted. Here is an example:

**At the closing point of "I am not that influential"**

>  
 Mrs. Smith: And I said: No I am not that influential.  
 Nobody listens to me.  
 All right? [0.1] ?  
 Students: (( silence ))  
 Mrs. Smith: You understand influential?  
 Students: (( silence ))  
 Mrs. Smith: If he wants a change, he can talk to Mr. John or  
 Mrs. Andrew,  
 They are very influential and they can make a change.  
 (( Mr. John and Mrs. Andrew are the vice director and  
 the director respectively of the Academic Institute for  
 English Language Teaching ))

>

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, February 4, 1992]

### **5.5.3.2 Personal Opinion and a Rhetorical Question**

Another strategy that Mrs. Smith uses at the point of closing a narrative to create the students' involvement is to tell the students her personal opinion about the dimension of the experience recounted, namely, the personal thoughts or the cultural thoughts or the



feelings or the actions of the principal character. In some cases, Mrs. Smith follows that up with a rhetorical question. Using these two strategies, Mrs. Smith attempts to initiate a discussion and to encourage the students to participate in the interaction. Mrs. Smith's use of these strategies is *not* restricted to the phase of the interaction in which Mrs. Smith recounts an oral narrative.

#### At the closing point of Ethical or Cultural Problem

Mrs. Smith: >  
 This is a man who was trying to stop a crime,  
 He tries to stop a crime,  
 This woman would have gotten killed,  
 He saves this woman.  
 [0.1] And the judge fined him twenty thousand dollars.  
 Isn't that crazy?  
 >

[Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity: Discussion Phase, February 20, 1992]

#### 5.5.3.3 Personal Opinion and Interrogative Question

Similar to the above strategy is Mrs. Smith's telling of her personal opinion about a specific dimension of the narrative. Instead of using a rhetorical question, however, she poses an interrogative one. Mrs. Smith's use of an interrogative question after communicating her personal opinion appears exclusively during the discussion phase of the Student-Presentation Activity. In this case, Mrs. Smith's personal opinion elaborates on the dimension of the narrative that she fails to grasp. Thus, when she proceeds with an interrogative question, she seeks illuminating information from the student in charge of the presentation on an issue that appears problematic to her. Here is an example:

### At the closing point of Tutoring Korean Girls

Mrs. Smith: >

Now for the American parents,  
If the child is getting As, they are going to leave the  
whole situation alone.

Just As perfect score.

But the Korean parents have the feeling that the children  
could work harder and the children could learn more.

I was very surprised by this because this is not a problem for us at all.

For us if the children are getting As, we leave the whole  
situation alone.

This is a good situation, we don't want to screw things up.

So Min, is that common or is this unusual for  
Koreans?

>

[Student-Presentation Activity: Discussion Phase, February 19, 1992]

#### 5.5.3.4 Humor

A fourth strategy that Mrs. Smith calls on to create students involvement is humor. Unlike the routine use of the strategies described above, Mrs. Smith's use of humor is by far occasional and is mainly bound to entertain the students and break the rigid pattern of the classroom interaction. Humor as described by (Tannen 1989) is "a function of repetition with a slight variation" (p. 63). However, according to the data of the present study, I describe Mrs. Smith's use of humor as *a function of using common cliché in an uncommon way*, the involvement effect of which is always evident in the students' reaction. The following is an example.

### At the closing point of Murder in Milwaukee

- Mrs. Smith: >  
 So with this arm he was going to cook,  
 He was afraid it would be *tough*,  
 So he puts meat tenderizer on it,  
 We put it on meat to make it tender,  
 So he'll have a nice juicy arm to eat,
- Students: (( laugh ))
- Debra: [Oooh! Ye::s!]
- Kyo Ko: [[[ continues to laugh ]]]
- Servet: How is the human meat?
- Mrs. Smith: (( with a tone of humor, )) I heard it's salty!
- Servet: Salty?
- Mrs. Smith: Yeah! I hear its salty. I don't know.  
 I didn't have this experience lately [0.1]  
 Okay? (( smiles ))
- Students: (( laugh ))
- >

*Should have said  
 here about tough  
 tenderizer, e.g.  
 activities, e.g.  
 watching movies.*

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, February 3, 1992]

## 5.6 Sources of Problems in the Interaction Between Mrs. Smith and Students

At this point, the description of the social meaning of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives in this chapter focused on the relationship between Mrs. Smith's goal and her usage of different strategies to create the involvement of the student audience. However, Mrs. Smith's goal is not isolated from the conventional purpose, i.e., the outcome of the teacher-student interaction, during the situational contexts which I identified earlier (see section 4.3., Chapter 4). The outcome of the interaction in these contexts varies as does the role of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives.

To illustrate, telling an oral narrative in face-to-face interaction does not appear in a vacuum. Rather, this narrative is "locally occasioned" by the conversation in which it is told (Sacks 1970-1971; Jefferson 1978). In the interaction between Mrs. Smith and the students, Mrs. Smith's oral narratives appear to be routinely triggered mainly by three different problematic issues. The first problematic issue is the presence of unfamiliar

*But how  
 How about  
 facial  
 expression  
 ?*

English words or American expressions or American English idioms that Mrs. Smith uses or introduces during her interaction with the students. The second problematic issue has to do with students' uninformed opinions of American culture. The third problematic issue is the students' misunderstanding of Mrs. Smith's request for information about an issue pertaining to students' cultures. These three issues are realized in students' answers to three types of questions that Mrs. Smith asks the students during their interaction.

Thus, in the verbal interaction between Mrs. Smith and the students, it is possible to identify three sets of question-answer sequences between Mrs. Smith and the students which routinely result in the identification of one of the above problematic issues that influences Mrs. Smith's use of oral narratives. Each one of the teacher's questions requires one type of an answer from the students. When the students' answers do not conform to the type of question which Mrs. Smith poses, she assumes that the students do not know the answer. Accordingly, she performs a reaction move that consists of an oral narrative.

The first type of sequence includes answers to *Fact T-event Unique* questions. Answers to questions of this type can be observed in students' no answer or answers that do not conform to what Mrs. Smith considers to be the right answer. The second type of sequence that leads Mrs. Smith to use oral narratives are answers to *Opinion T-event talk* questions. Answers to this type of questions lack facts that are known to Mrs. Smith but are not known to the students. The third type of sequence includes answers to *Opinion S-event Talk* questions. Answers to this type of questions can be observed either in the absence of an answer (i.e., silence) or in a question that students pose to request further clarification of Mrs. Smith's question. The relationship between these sequences and the role of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives will be described in Chapter 6.

## 5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the formal analysis of Mrs. Smith's oral narrative suggested that they fall into two broad categories. These categories are: personal experience narrative and non-personal experience narratives. Each category encompasses different forms. The personal experience narratives consists of past-tense narratives, habitual narratives and present-tense narratives indicating potential happening of events in the future. The non-personal experience narratives include forms of past-tense narratives, present-tense habitual narratives, kernel narratives and present-tense narratives indicating the possibility of happening in the near future.

In contrast to this formal classification, and based on the sociolinguistic criteria that underpin Mrs. Smith's use of these narratives, the latter appear to fall into three different categories. These are: personal experience narratives, known-other experience narratives, and potential-other experience narratives. In lieu of the participants' perspectives, the meaning of these narratives is bound mainly to two types of purposes: personal purpose and situational purpose.

The analysis of the meaning of these narratives in terms of the former purpose, namely Mrs. Smith's goal, showed that Mrs. Smith recounts the narratives in order to stimulate the involvement of the students. To achieve her purpose, Mrs. Smith uses different strategies at the beginning, during, and at the end of telling any of the narratives. However, the social meaning of Mrs. Smith's oral narrative in terms of the situational purpose, namely to communicate the meaning of the problematic issues facing the students during the interaction, remains to be discussed. To this I turn in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### FUNCTIONS OF MRS. SMITH'S ORAL NARRATIVES

#### 6.1 Introduction

Unlike oral narratives that are deliberately retrieved in ordinary conversations or during interviewing situations, the purposes of Mrs. Smith's naturally occurring oral narratives are mainly pedagogical. In other words, while Mrs. Smith's use of the oral narrative types analyzed in Chapter 5 is motivated by her *goal* to create students involvement, these same narratives are used to achieve different *outcomes*. The achievement of these outcomes is bound by different factors of the situational contexts that constitute the ESL lessons, in which Mrs. Smith uses these narratives. This chapter focuses on the analysis of the interaction between Mrs. Smith and the students surrounding narration in an attempt to identify and describe the social roles Mrs. Smith's oral narratives play in three situational contexts.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section provides a brief reference to the participants' perspectives on the functions of Mrs. Smith's naturally occurring oral narratives and identifies and describes the criteria that set apart the functions of these narratives. The second section is divided into three subsections. Each subsection provides an analytical description of one function that Mrs. Smith's naturally occurring oral narratives serve. This analysis begins with a description of the problematic features of answers that the student(s) provide(s) to a given type of question that Mrs. Smith poses during the classroom interaction. This analysis is then followed by a description of the pattern of the teacher-students' interactions surrounding narration.

The third and last section provides an analytic description of a discrepant case on the role that Mrs. Smith's naturally occurring oral narratives play in the interaction. This analytic description discloses Mrs. Smith's telling of an oral narrative in the absence of conventional rules that routinely influence Mrs. Smith to tell a narrative during her interaction with the students. The violation of these rules is described as realized in the changes of the communicative pattern of the verbal interaction of both Mrs. Smith and the students, surrounding narration.

## **6.2 Students' Answers to Mrs. Smith's Questions: Criteria for Classification**

The taxonomy provided on Mrs. Smith's naturally occurring oral narratives in Chapter 5 resulted in the identification of three categories of these narratives. These categories are: personal experience narratives, known-other experience narratives and potential-other experience narratives. The criteria of this taxonomy offer no reciprocal relationship between Mrs. Smith's use of a particular narrative form and a particular pedagogical problem. Rather, these criteria substantiate the observation that Mrs. Smith's decision to recount an oral narrative of a particular category is mainly motivated by her goal: to create student involvement and consequently their understanding of a given pedagogical problem.

The import of the above conclusion to the present analysis is that it clarifies the distinction between Mrs. Smith's personal goal of using an oral narrative and the outcome of the interaction where this narrative is recounted. This distinction emphasizes that Mrs. Smith has only one goal when using an oral narrative in all situational contexts, namely, creating student involvement. The expected outcome, however, varies with the situational context in which any of these narratives occurred (for a description of the situational contexts, see Chapter 4).

The variation of the outcome of the interaction, during any of the situational contexts, pertains mainly to two different constituent elements of these contexts: first the types of question-answer sequences that Mrs. Smith and the students exchange in a given problematic point of the interaction, and second, the teacher-student verbal and non-verbal activities during the interaction surrounding narration. These two elements ascribe a pattern to the interaction surrounding narration. When this pattern is violated, it signals the significance of the rule that these two constituent elements are fundamental to communicating the dominant functions of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives.

When Mrs. Smith and the students were asked to identify the functions of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives, there was a consensus that these narratives were told to "illustrate" the meanings of unfamiliar English words and also to communicate "information" about different social and cultural issues of American life (see Chapter 4). In fact, Mrs. Smith's and the students' perspectives on the functions of these narratives represented a collective, non-detailed view on a variety of interactional aspects that influence the meaning and function of these narratives. Such perspectives might satisfy the answer to the question I posed, "Why do you think Mrs. Smith uses oral narratives?" However, in my observations of the interaction between Mrs. Smith and the students surrounding narration, these perspectives provide only the beginning for pursuing further verification.

According to the analysis of the transcribed data and fieldwork observations of the interactions I gathered for this study, I identified two categories of features pertaining to the interaction between Mrs. Smith and students surrounding narration. These two categories were identified as most relevant to the functions and meaning of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives. The first of these two categories consists of features associated with three types of question-answer sequences that Mrs. Smith and the students exchange during their face-to-face interactions. These sequences routinely recur prior to Mrs. Smith's performance of a reaction move of using an oral narrative. The features of these question-



answer sequences lend themselves well to Johnson's (1979: 52) analytical description of question-answer sequences characteristic of teacher-student classroom interaction.

The second category of these features are best illustrated by the variables of the pattern of the interaction surrounding narration. These variables include the verbal and non-verbal behavior that both Mrs. Smith and the students exchanged. The following section provides an analytic description of the first category.

### **6.2.1 Features of Question-Answer Sequences: Three Different Types**

The analysis of the distribution of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives in her interaction with the students in all situational contexts (for a description of these contexts, see Chapter 4) revealed that these narratives occurred in association with certain types of question-answer sequences. These sequences routinely preceded Mrs. Smith's performance of a reaction move of telling an oral narrative. These sequences fit well Johnson's (1979: 52) classification of question-answer sequences characteristic of the classroom interaction. This classification is founded on two premises. The first premise is that the social interchanges in the classroom constitute few interrelated moves: solicitation, response and reaction. The second premise is that each one of these moves has certain characteristics. The most relevant characteristics to the classification of the question/answer sequences are the ones of the reaction move.

The characteristics of the reaction move, according to Johnson (1979), are acknowledgment and evaluating/rating. That is, the reaction move accounts for the relevance of the response move (students' answer(s)) to the teacher's solicitation move (teacher's question(s)). Because not all student response moves are rightly related to the teacher's solicitation moves, the teacher's acknowledgment of all students' responses does not suffice. A rating of these responses must be administered as well. Accordingly, a classification of the types of solicitation/response moves that demand a rating emerged.

In order for the teacher to evaluate/rate the students' answers to her questions, Johnson (1979) specified three categories of features that characterize the type of information that each solicitation requires, and consequently showed the type of responses that require rating and the type of responses that do not need rating. The first category of features is related to whether the information the teacher's question requests is *fact* or *opinion*. That is, some questions require information that is necessarily factual while others would be satisfied with the respondent's opinion. Accordingly, an answer to the teacher's question that requires factual evidence must be rated as either true or false. In contrast, an answer to the teacher's question that calls for the respondent's opinion does not require such a rating, unless the opinion is illogical or lacks factual evidence.

The second category of features to characterize the type of information that the teacher's questions require is related to whether the information the teacher requests is known only to the teacher (*A-event*) or is known only to the student(s) (*B-event*) or is known by both the teacher and the student(s) (*AB-event*.) Responses that convey information known only to the teacher require rating. However, responses that communicate information known only to the students *or* to both the teacher and the students do not require rating. Only the first two features of this category are relevant to the type of questions I identified according to the data of this study. (In this thesis, I replace A and B with T and S, respectively. See Chapter 2).

The third category of features that characterize the information demanded by a given solicitation is related to whether the information the teacher requests is *unique* or *talk*. It is unique when the teacher's question requires unique information or only one possible answer that is expected and accepted as the correct answer, although this answer can be expressed in different ways. When the teacher's question requires talk information, a range of answers to this question can disclose this type of information, with all being accepted as correct. Unique and talk are features of the information not the length of the

answer that conveys this information.

In accordance with this classification of features, the pattern of Mrs. Smith performing a reaction move using an oral narrative recurs when the students' answers do not adhere to the type of information Mrs. Smith requests using three of the eight questions that Johnson (1979) identified. Ranked by frequency of types associated with Mrs. Smith's use of an oral narrative, these questions are: *Fact T-event Unique*; *Opinion S-event Talk*; and *Opinion T-event Talk*.

The information that Mrs. Smith requests using any of the above three questions differs with regard to the topic of the interaction that dominates a given phase of the situational context in which the question occurs. Following is a description of each question in terms of two variables that I identified according to the data of the present study. The *first* variable is the point of the interaction at which Mrs. Smith introduces each question; and the second is the type of information that Mrs. Smith expects to receive from each of these question requests.

#### **6.2.1.1 Question One: Fact T-event Unique**

Mrs. Smith's questions that fall into Fact T-event Unique category questions routinely occur. Mrs. Smith uses this type of question during the *instruction phase* of all the situational contexts, namely during the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity; the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity; and the Student-Presentation Activity. In the instruction phase of all three situational contexts, the interaction topic is mainly introducing new American English vocabulary.

When Mrs. Smith uses a Fact T-event Unique question, she requires and expects an answer from the students that mainly discloses the meaning of the newly introduced word or American English expression or idiom. When Mrs. Smith receives an answer that

does not disclose this information, namely the right answer for the new term introduced, Mrs. Smith performs a reaction move to announce that an answer has been received. In addition, to the acknowledgment move, Mrs. Smith also performs an evaluation/rating move that emphasizes that this answer does not conform to what she considers to be *the* answer. The following excerpt provides an example of Mrs. Smith's use of a Fact T-Event Unique question. Mrs. Smith posed this question during the instruction phase of the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity.

### Fact T-event Unique

Mrs. Smith: (( after Mrs. Smith pronounced the new word 'plain'  
and wrote it on the blackboard, she posed the following question ))  
Amish people describe themselves as 'plain,'  
What did they mean by that?  
Hamad: Plain?  
Mrs. Smith: Yeah.  
Hamad: Cute.  
Mrs. Smith: Cute. No.  
Hamad: Take a cure.  
Mrs. Smith: Nooo.  
Servet: Healthy.  
Mrs. Smith: Good guess. No.  
Hamad: Wealthy.  
Mrs. Smith: I'd better stop you. You are making wild guesses.  
[Narrative]

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, February 3, 1992]

### 6.2.1.2 Question Two: Opinion S-event Talk

Mrs. Smith's questions that satisfy the features of Opinion S-event Talk are introduced almost exclusively during the the *discussion phase* of the Student-Presentation Activity. In the discussion phase of this situational context, Mrs. Smith introduces this type of question to request a special type of information, namely the opinion of the student in charge of the presentation on issues that pertains to the topic of her/his presentation. Given that the topics of the presentation essentially address the social and cultural issues of the students' diverse cultures, Mrs. Smith's Opinion S-event Talk question requests the

opinion of the student in charge of the presentation on issues unfamiliar to Mrs. Smith's cultural background.

In other words, the information that Mrs. Smith expects to receive from this type of question is first, known to the student(s) in charge of the presentation and not to Mrs. Smith. Second, a response to this question is not limited to one specific answer that can be rated as right or wrong. Besides, even if some facts are introduced into the student's answer to this type of question, Mrs. Smith would not be able to evaluate/rate this answer. Therefore, when Mrs. Smith receives an answer to this question, she performs a reaction move to indicate her acknowledgment of an answer. The following is an example of Mrs. Smith's use of an Opinion S-event Talk question, during the discussion phase of the student-presentation activity.

### Opinion S-event Talk

- Mrs. Smith: I'll tell you something Min,  
And you tell me your opinion. All right?
- Min: (( nods ))
- Mrs. Smith: [Narrative]  
>  
For us if the children are getting As,  
We leave the whole situation alone.  
This a good situation for us.  
We don't want to screw things up.  
So Min, is that unusual or is that  
common for Koreans?
- Min: [0.2] It's very usual.
- Mrs. Smith: Oh! Normal,
- Min: Yeah. It is normal.

[Student-Presentation Activity: Discussion Phase, February 19, 1992]

### 6.2.1.3 Question Three: Opinion T-event Talk

Mrs. Smith's questions that I identified as Opinion T-event Talk tend to recur during the *discussion phase* of both Vocabulary-Explanation and Grammatical-Rules Practices Activities. Mrs. Smith introduces this type of question when the topic of the interaction in

these two situational contexts shifts from vocabulary and grammar, respectively to social and/or cultural issues related to the American culture.

When Mrs. Smith poses this type of question, she asks the students to share their opinions about a given social or cultural issue relevant to the American society. Because this question is mainly an opinion, talk question, Mrs. Smith does not expect specific factual information or a unique specific answer. Instead, Mrs. Smith expects a range of answers that convey the students' opinions of an issue that is mainly known to her, i.e., T-event. Thus when Mrs. Smith receives an answer to this question, she has the responsibility to determine if the student(s') statements are based on false evidence (see Johnson 1979: 49).

The following excerpt provides an example of Mrs. Smith's Opinion T-event Talk questions. This excerpt is from the teacher-students' interaction during the discussion phase of the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity. In this interaction, Mrs. Smith decided that Servet's answer is uninformed so she took the floor and proceeded to tell an oral narrative.

### Opinion T-event Talk

Mrs. Smith: (( after Mrs. Smith introduced all the new words that she drew from an American film, one of the students made a comment on this film. The topic of the interaction changed. Later in the discussion, Mrs. Smith posed the following question ))

What's your opinion about these people in this time and this age?

Hamad: It is very beautiful that in the United States [these are] different styles, different uh [0.1] cultures, different ideas. I think it's very very beautiful.

Mrs. Smith: Yes, it's lovely.

Servet: I don't think so.

I think everybody likes very different life ( ) and that sometimes people like a change. But it is boring to live your life like that.

Mrs. Smith: [Narrative]

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Discussion Phase, February 3, 1992]

In sum, there are mainly three question-answer sequences that routinely precede Mrs.

Smith's use of an oral narrative. These sequences are: answers to Fact T-event Unique questions; answers to Opinion S-event Talk questions; and answers to Opinion T-event Talk questions. The analytic description above provided the features of these sequences and identified the points of the interaction at which these sequences were introduced. In the following section, the problematic features of students' answers that lead to Mrs. Smith's use of an oral narrative will be detailed. This description will disclose how the functions of Mrs. Smith's oral narrative are realized and achieved. Then a detailed description of the pattern of interaction characteristic of the role that Mrs. Smith oral narratives play in each situational context will be provided.

### 6.3 Functions Of Mrs. Smith's Oral Narrative Experiences

It's apparent from the previous section that there are three problematic issues leading Mrs. Smith to perform an oral narrative. The realization of these problematic issues can be captured in the relationship between the type of information that Mrs. Smith expects to receive to any one of the three types of questions I identified above and the answers she does receive. Accordingly, taking into consideration the participants' perspectives on the functions of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives and the analysis of these narratives in their situational contexts, it is possible to devise a set of three functions that these narratives serve in the interaction between Mrs. Smith and her students.

The first function of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives according to the participants' perspectives is *communicating the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary*. This function is realized when the students' answers do not conform to Mrs. Smith's Fact T-event Unique questions. The second function of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives is *ameliorating students' opinion of the American culture*. This function is observed when student answers do not conform to Mrs. Smith's Opinion T-event Talk question. The third function of these narratives is *a prelude to a question*. This function is best realized when student answers

to Mrs. Smith's Opinion S-event Talk question show that the students do not understand the presupposition of her question.

The realization and the achievement of any of these three functions can be captured in constituent elements of the situational contexts in which any of these sequences occur, mainly in relation to the question-answer sequences and in relation to face-to-face verbal and non-verbal interaction during the teacher's and students' activities surrounding narration. The following three subsections will provide an analytic description of the functions that Mrs. Smith's oral narratives serve in her interaction with the students. In each subsection, the analysis first considers the types of answers that are often associated with Mrs. Smith's performance of a reaction move using oral narratives during the interaction. Second, the analysis focuses on the description of the pattern of teacher-student interaction surrounding narration. This description is intended to show how, through teacher-student verbal and non-verbal interaction, these functions are realized and achieved.

This description considers the analysis of the above functions with regard to the most occurring narrative form, namely *known-other experience narratives*. The term *function* here refers to the role of the teacher's narratives which constitute a part of the reaction move to the answers that the students provide to three types of the teacher's questions, during their interaction in three situational contexts (for a description of these situational contexts, see Chapter 4).

### **6.3.1 Function One: Communicating the Meaning of Unfamiliar Vocabulary**

The most recognized function of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives among the participants, and according to the analysis of the transcriptions of the interaction, is "illustrating" or communicating the meaning of newly introduced unfamiliar words, American English expression and idioms. This function is realized when the student(s) provide problematic answer(s) to the most recurring of Mrs. Smith's questions, namely the Fact T-event Unique



question. The students' problematic answers to this type of questions are of three types.

The first and most common of all problematic answers to Fact T-event Unique question is a series of answers that provide wrong semantic or grammatical usage of the word in question. The second type of answers are non-verbal. This type of answer is realized when the selected student or the whole class remains silent after Mrs. Smith performs a solicitation move asking for the meaning of a given word. The third type of answers to Mrs. Smith's Fact T-event Unique question that also signals a problem are right answers that the selected or self-selected student provides accompanied by silence from the rest of the students or absence of any verbal response.

Mrs. Smith's use of an oral narrative, a reaction move to any of these answers, recurs during the instruction phase of the interaction in any of the three situational contexts. However, it is dominant when the interaction is situated in the instruction phase of both the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity and Vocabulary-Explanation Activity and occasionally, during the instruction phase of the Student-Presentation Activity.

At any point of the interaction, during the instruction phase, when Mrs. Smith uses an oral narrative to communicate the meaning of a word, Mrs. Smith addresses the narrative to all students. Thus, all students can participate in the joint-construction of this narrative. Students' participation may be verbal, e.g., asking questions and making comments; and/or non-verbal, e.g., nodding and/or smiling to indicate their understanding.

Students' questions or comments about the narrative point are often reiterated by Mrs. Smith to satisfy the illustration of the problem that occasioned the telling of a narrative at this point, namely the problematic word. To further explain the meanings of these narratives, Mrs. Smith often uses the pedagogical discourse markers "okay," "all right," and occasionally the discourse marker "you know." The interaction surrounding narration often concludes with the discourse markers "all right" or "okay," in a question intonation, and the students' silence is accepted and acknowledged as understanding.

The following is a typical example of Mrs. Smith's use of an oral narrative to communicate the meaning of an unfamiliar word. In this example, Mrs. Smith chose a known-other experience narrative to illustrate the meaning of the word "overwhelming." Mrs. Smith recounted this narrative after receiving several wrong answers and one potential right answer after asking for its meaning. Mrs. Smith used this narrative during the instruction phase of the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity.

### **6.3.1.1 Wrong Answers to Fact T-event Unique Question**

On February 4, during the instruction phase of the Vocabulary Explanation Activity, Mrs. Smith came to the word "overwhelming" on her list of new words. She performed a structuring move and announced the word, articulated its pronunciation and its grammatical category: "Overwhelming. Overwhelming is an adjective." She turned to the blackboard to give an orthographic presentation of this word. Then facing the students, Mrs. Smith gave a definition for the meaning of this word: "Overwhelming means too much to handle or accept." After several attempts to explain the meaning of this new word, the students remained silent. In a statement with an interrogatory intonation, Mrs. Smith said: "You know, overwhelming."

To this question, Debra laughed. Debra's non-verbal performance of a response move gains Mrs. Smith's attention and to Debra, Mrs. Smith addressed the question: "What's overwhelming?" Debra answered by giving an example, and said: "When this semester is finished [0.1] the last class, I overwhelmed." Debra's answer did not satisfy Mrs. Smith's question. This was evident when Mrs. Smith's performed a reaction move acknowledging Debra's answer as unacceptable (see Johnson 1979). In rising-falling intonation Mrs. Smith said: "Okay," thus indirectly rating this answer as unacceptable: "Overwhelming is a bad feeling." Debra positively answered that she meant to communicate a bad feeling: "Yes. This is bad!"

In a statement with question intonation, Mrs. Smith asked: "It will be bad for you?"

Debra replied positively: "Yes." Mrs. Smith explained:

1. Mrs. Smith: If you finished and passed the test,
2. You are going to be overwhelmed? [0.1]
3. Debra: (( silently nodded ))
4. Mrs. Smith: No. You are going to be overjoyed!
5. Big difference . . big difference.
6. Overwhelmed is a bad feeling.
7. Someone would give me an example of when
8. you felt overwhelmed because you had too much
9. too much of anything. [0.1]

Servet attempted an answer which was not coherent:

Servet: (        ).

From Mrs. Smith's reaction move, Servet's answer was not accepted as a right answer.

Mrs. Smith explained that:

10. Mrs. Smith: But at the beginning of the finals week you know
11. that you will be finished by Friday. But between Monday
12. and Friday it would be a kind of hell. You know you will
13. feel a kind of overwhelmed even though you know you
14. will complete your work.

Mrs. Smith then posed the question to the students: "Do you have the meaning?"

To this question, Mrs. Smith received two opposing answers. Servet answered positively "Yes." while Mashashi answered "No!" Mrs. Smith then asked Masashi to think of a time when she felt or thought she was overwhelmed. Debra interrupted, self-selected and answered:

15. Debra: Yes! When I pass that day [Mrs. Smith: Um hum]
16. finish the term. [Mrs. Smith: Okay. Right.] I think I
17. know English [0.1]
18. Mrs. Smith: Okay.
19. Debra: That I learned English, maybe [Mrs. Smith: Okay! Okay!]
20. and when the test . . I don't pass the test, [Mrs. Smith: Okay]
21. my feeling is overwhelming.
22. Mrs. Smith: Yes. That's okay.

Mrs. Smith acknowledged and evaluated Debra's answer by her utterances of "Yes" and "That's okay," respectively. These two moves were then followed by Mrs. Smith's attempt to tell the students an oral narrative.

Mrs. Smith's decision to tell a narrative at this point came after her acknowledgment that the clues she provided to explain the meaning of the word "overwhelming" resulted in a range of unacceptable, wrong answers. These answers began with Debra's example which Mrs. Smith indirectly rated as unacceptable. Mrs. Smith's rating of Debra's answer became more obvious in (lines 1-2) and (lines 4-9), where Mrs. Smith began to explain the problem with this answer. The following answer was the answer that Servet offered. This answer, as evident from Mrs. Smith's move in (lines 10-14) was also indirectly rated as unacceptable. The last answers however, which Servet and Masashi respectively offered, were best described as diverse. While Servet's answer was positive, Masashi's answer was negative.

These answers, coupled with the silence that the rest of the students embraced during this interaction and maintained even after Debra delivered an acceptable answer in (lines 15-17) and (lines 19-21), all provided Mrs. Smith with the "situational meaning" that not every student understood what "overwhelming" means. Consequently, in order to illustrate the meaning of this word, Mrs. Smith embarked upon performing a reaction move using oral narrative. The narrative Mrs. Smith chose to tell the students is a *known-other* experience narrative, I called "Overwhelming Experience."

In this narrative, Mrs. Smith recounts the emotional experience of one of her former students. This student was assigned the upper level of English in the Academic Institute for English Language Teaching, namely the S-level. This student overestimated his English language ability. After two weeks of attending the university classes, this student could not handle the academic load and was way behind in his work. The following is the narrative as it was recounted by Mrs. Smith.

## Overwhelming Experience

1. Mrs. Smith: I will tell you an example of one of my students, last term
  2. [0.1] who went into S-Level.
  3. All right?
  4. And he thought the university classes are going to be easy.
  5. Okay?
  6. And he thought his English is very good.
  7. And he said, "I [0.1] I won't have any trouble."
  8. [0.1] he promised, [0.1] "I am going to get four points,"
  9. Okay?
  10. [0.1] "I am sure," he said.
  11. He thought [0.1] It's going to be easy.
  12. [0.1] And after two weeks of . . . in the classes, he was overwhelmed.
  13. He was way behind in his work,
  14. He couldn't keep up with the readings,
  15. He didn't understand the lectures, //
  16. Kyo Hey: ( )
  17. Mrs. Smith: Uh?
  18. Kyo Hey: ( )
  19. Mrs. Smith: Business
  20. Debra: (( laughs ))
  21. Mrs. Smith: (( exchanges eye contact with Debra )) Business Debra! Business!
  22. And he was overwhelmed.
  23. He thought it was going to be easy,
  24. And when it began,
  25. He found he couldn't keep up with the students.
  26. He was falling behind.
  27. Hamad: Something new for you, something new for you.
  28. Mrs. Smith: Yeah! Anything can be new can be overwhelming at the start.
  29. Okay. All right. All right.
- [Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Instruction Phase, Tuesday, February 4, 1992]

In recounting this narrative experience, Mrs. Smith attempted to communicate the meaning of "overwhelming." Mrs. Smith addressed the narrative to all the students, especially those who did not understand the meaning of this word. In order to assist the students with understanding, Mrs. Smith chose a narrative situation about a situation familiar to the students. In this particular case, Mrs. Smith gave a known-other experience narrative about a former S-level student who failed to handle the academic load.

Mrs. Smith considered this particular narrative material based on her awareness of the students' familiarity with the difficulties involved in going to S-level. Thus in

order to situate the meaning of this narrative as it is related to the meaning of the word “overwhelming,” Mrs. Smith focused on the emotional dimension of this experience, and described the thought and feeling states of the main character, who happened to be her former student. When she began to recount this narrative, Mrs. Smith was standing with her back to the blackboard and facing the students in the classroom.

Before she started to recount the narrative, Mrs. Smith first attempted to secure the floor and gain the students’ attention. To achieve this goal, she began with an “incomplete prefacing” (lines 1-2) (for details, see Chapter 5). Mrs. Smith followed this move with the pedagogical discourse marker “all right” in a rising intonation to ensure student engagement and attention to listen to this narrative.

To situate the meaning of the narrative in relation to the word “overwhelming,” she started this known-other experience by offering her account of the student character’s thoughts about university classes and his English proficiency, in (line 4) and (line 6), respectively. In a different tone of voice, Mrs. Smith followed her account with a direct speech of what this student character said and promised in (lines 7-8, 10).

The intonation of Mrs. Smith’s account of the student character’s thoughts appeared in a sharp contrast to what this student said and promised. The rising-falling intonation in the utterance of the phrase “he thought” in (line4) and (line 6) disclosed Mrs. Smith’s sarcastic attitude of what this student said and promised. This sarcasm suggested that this student’s expectations and promises were based on a false assumption, namely “it is going to be easy.” The function of this contrast is similar to Wolfson’s (1978, 1982) description of asides, mainly to create the audience’s engagement.

In a different tone that establishes the ground for this student’s overestimation of his language ability and his underestimation of the difficulty of the academic load, Mrs. Smith continued her account of this students’ feelings after the first two weeks in classes. In (line 12), Mrs. Smith incorporated the word “overwhelming” and disclosed her account

of this student's of emotions. In a parallel syntactic structure, Mrs. Smith recounted the impact of the academic load on this students' performance in (lines 13-16). In so doing, Mrs. Smith attempted to substantiate a connection between this student's feeling of being overwhelmed and having too much to handle.

Apparently, Mrs. Smith succeeded in communicating the meaning of the word "overwhelming." This success was evident from the students' verbal participation. Kyo Hey, for example, interrupted in (line 15) and in (line 16), he requested some information about this student character's field of study. The content of Kyo Hey's request was clear in (line 19), where Mrs. Smith answered: "Business." Debra's non-verbal reaction in (line 20), who softly laughed also suggested her understanding. Debra's laughter was an acknowledgment of the implication of Mrs. Smith's response to Kyo Hey's question. Given that Debra is a second-language learner who was looking forward to pursuing further studies in business, Debra's laughter was an acknowledgment that such an attempt might be an overwhelming experience for a person with limited English ability.

Debra's laughter, as an acknowledgment of this potential implication, was later confirmed in (line 21) when Mrs. Smith turned towards Debra, exchanged eye contact with her and said: "Business Debra! Business." Then, in (line 22), Mrs. Smith continued in a falling intonation "And he was overwhelmed." In so doing, Mrs. Smith concluded the narrative.

After a brief silence, Mrs. Smith commented on the experience of this student. In so doing, Mrs. Smith repeated parts of her account of this experience. For example, (line 23) was a repetition of (line 11); and (line 25) was a paraphrase of (line 14) and (line 26) was a repetition of (lines 13). Hamad's comment (line 27) suggested that the experience was overwhelming because it was a new experience. Mrs. Smith performed a reaction move that approved of Hamad's answer and then directed this answer to the meaning of the word "overwhelming," and said: "Yeah! Anything can be new can be overwhelming

at the start” (line 28). In (line 29), Mrs. Smith then ended the joint-construction of the narrative with discourse markers “okay” and “all right,” in rising intonation, to verify if the students understood the meaning of the word “overwhelming.”

### 6.3.2 Function Two: Ameliorating Students’ Perspectives on American Culture

Ameliorating students’ perspectives on American culture is the second most recognized function of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives. However, this function is recognized by the students and Mrs. Smith in terms of the information that Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives communicate about American culture. From the analysis of the written transcriptions of the interactions, this function of Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives can be realized in students’ problematic answers to Mrs. Smith’s recurring question, namely Opinion T-event Talk.

When Mrs. Smith poses an Opinion T-event Talk question, she requests student opinion on issues relevant to American culture. Thus a variety of answers is possible. However, Mrs. Smith performs a reaction move of using an oral narrative when she considers the answer to be based on false evidence, i.e., based on uninformed opinion about American culture. This possible evaluation of the students’ answers to Mrs. Smith’s Opinion T-event Talk is for Mrs. Smith to determine.

From the analysis of the data for this study, Mrs. Smith’s oral narratives that occurred in relation to her Opinion T-event Talk questions appeared to be restricted to the discussion phases of both the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity and the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity. During the discussion phases of these two situational contexts, this question emerges when the the topic of the interaction shifts from grammar and vocabulary, respectively to talking about an issue pertinent to American culture. When Mrs. Smith asks this type of question, Mrs. Smith’s interest is in engaging the students in an interaction where they share their opinions of the social and cultural aspects of American people and society.



When Mrs. Smith acknowledges that the answer she received to her Opinion T-event **Talk** question seemed to be based on a false assumption, she performs a reaction move **using** an oral narrative. From a repertoire of oral narrative categories, Mrs. Smith chooses **to tell** a narrative about a situation that corresponds to a situation familiar to the students. **Through** this narrative, Mrs. Smith attempts to communicate the cultural assumptions that **she** perceives to be misunderstood, or lacking from the students' answers.

When Mrs. Smith recounts an oral narrative at this problematic point, she addresses **the** narrative to all students, and invites them to participate in the construction of the **meaning** of this narrative. In these respects, the pattern of the interaction surrounding the **telling** of a narrative in this case is similar to the pattern of the interaction surrounding the **telling** of a narrative at the other two problematic points. However, this pattern is different **from** the other two in that the students are allowed not only to question or comment but **also** to challenge the point of the narrative.

The following example provides a description of how the function of Mrs. Smith's **oral** narratives to ameliorate the students' perspectives is realized and achieved. In this **example**, Mrs. Smith used a known-other experience narrative. Mrs. Smith chose this **narrative** to address a problematic answer to her Opinion T-event Talk question that she **received** from one of the students. This answer was uniformed about the lifestyle of the **Amish**, the group of people whose life was portrayed in an American film both Mrs. Smith **and** the students attended. Mrs. Smith recounted this narrative during the discussion phase **of the** Vocabulary-Explanation Activity.

### 6.3.2.1 Problematic Answer to Opinion T-event Talk Question

On February 3rd, during the instruction phase of the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity, **Mrs.** Smith worked with the students on new English vocabulary from a list she had **developed** based on an American film she attended with the students on Friday, January

*Smith had talked a little more about other activities related to classroom activities. A nice narrative and interaction would be to find*

**31st.** When Mrs. Smith finished introducing the vocabulary, she posed an Opinion T-  
**event** Talk question asking for the students' opinions on the life that Amish people lead in  
**American** society. Standing in front of the first row of desks, with her back to her table,  
**Mrs.** Smith said:

Mrs. Smith: What's your opinion about these people live  
 in this time and in this society?

To this question, Hamad self-selected and answered this question. Hamad expressed  
**his** admiration of the diverse cultures that America embraces. He said:

Hamad: It is very beautiful that in the United States . .  
 different styles, different uh [0.1] cultures, different ideas.  
 I think it's very very beautiful.

Mrs. Smith performed a reaction move acknowledging Hamad's answer and posi-  
**tively** rated his answer. In agreement with Hamad's opinion, Mrs. Smith said: "Yes, it's  
**lovely.**" Mrs. Smith, then turned to Servet, who was sitting in silence, and performed a so-  
**licitation** move asking Servet for his opinion. Servet provided an answer in disagreement  
**with** Hamad's answer, and said: "I don't think so."

To Servet's answer, Mrs. Smith performed a reaction move repeating Servet's answer  
**and** indirectly encouraged him to elaborate on his answer. Mrs. Smith said: "You do not  
**think** so. What do you think? Let's give Hamad a fight." Servet replied:

Servet: I think they are very closed community,  
 I think their thinking is primitive and that they  
 do not accept other people very quickly.

Mrs. Smith performed a reaction move, and explained that the Amish do not accept  
**other** people because they may not be able to "maintain their society." Servet remained  
**silent** for an instance and appeared unsatisfied with Mrs. Smith's explanation. This was  
**obvious** when he added that if they have a strong sense of culture they can maintain what  
**they** have.

Servet later added in a sarcastic tone that everybody likes to lead a different life and **likes** a bit of a change, and that it is boring that any one leads a life like that of the Amish.

**Servet** said:

Servet: I think everybody likes very different life (       )  
and that sometimes people like a change.  
But it is boring to live your life like that."

Mrs. Smith reads into Servet's answer that it is not an informed answer, and that it **lacks** some facts. Such a generalization suggested that all the Amish likes to lead such a **boring** life, the presupposition that Mrs. Smith attempts to ameliorate.

To Servet's answer, Mrs. Smith performed a reaction move using an oral narrative. **Mrs.** Smith began to illuminate Servet's answer. To Servet and the other students in the **classroom**, Mrs. Smith attempted to communicate the assumption that not every one among **the** Amish people accepts this kind of life. Mrs. Smith chose to recount a known-other **experience** narrative, through which she attempted to explain that there is a percentage of **mostly** Amish boys, not girls, who leave the community for the big city; and that they **prefer** life in the city to life in their communities. I called this narrative which follows **New** Amish Generation.

**New Amish Generation**

1. Mrs. Smith: You know,
2. They have a percentage of their children leave the community
3. and don't come back.
4. The children are free to leave if they want to.
5. And I don't remember,
6. I read once how many of the Amish children want to leave.
7. Mostly the sons not the daughters.
8. They leave
9. They go to big cities,
10. They like it,
11. And they leave.
12. But the situation is if they want to leave they don't come  
back [0.1]
13. It's a very big decision. You know,
14. I think probably you know,
15. Maybe they think that the English as they call the rest of us,
16. You know, spoiled them, ruined them.
17. Isn't that interesting?
18. That they think the other Americans are a kind of strangers,
19. You know,
20. They set themselves aside as a separate group.

[Vocabulary-Explanation Activity: Discussion Phase, Monday, February 3, 1992]

In this narrative, Mrs. Smith attempted an explanation to illuminate Servet's opinion of **the** Amish people's attitude towards life in their Amish community. As apparent from **the** beginning part of the reaction move, Mrs. Smith starting with the discourse marker "you know" in rising intonation marks the transition of the floor from the current speaker to the **next** and the information that follows as new information (Schiffrin 1987). As the students **remained** silent, Mrs. Smith attempted to take over the floor and to attract the students' **attention** that the information which follows is new. This part of the reaction move **confirmed** that Mrs. Smith acknowledges Servet's answer as questionable and lacking in **some** factual element.

Mrs. Smith then began with an orientation to direct the students' attention to listen **as** **the** narrative unfolds. In so doing, Mrs. Smith started with a general account of who **among** the Amish leaves the community and do not come back. As it is apparent from **(lines 2-3)** that the children are the ones who cannot tolerate such a life. In **(line 6)**, Mrs.

**Smith** traced the origin of this account to a written source which, as she pointed out in **(line 5)**, escapes her memory.

In (line 7), Mrs. Smith pinpointed that many of the Amish children wanted to leave **their** community, mostly boys. As the narrative unfolds in (lines 8-11), Mrs. Smith **disclosed** the places to which these children go (line 9) and the emotions they experience **afterwards**, in (line 10). Mrs. Smith ended this account in (line 11), and continued with **an** evaluation that pronounces the consequences of the decisions these children had when **they** left. She then pronounced her perspective of this decision in (line 13).

In situating the point of this narrative to the problematic answer that Servet offered to **her** Opinion T-event Talk, Mrs. Smith depended upon the students' familiarity with the **life** of Amish people as it was portrayed in the American film, *The Witness*. She then **manipulated** several performance features (Wolfson 1978, 1982) such as repetition of key **phrases** in (line 8) and (line 11); punctuating the narrative using the discourse marker "**you** know" with falling intonation (lines 13-14, 16, 19) and the rhetorical tag question in **(line 17)**, to create the students' involvement. Then she communicated her personal **thoughts** on the actions that triggered the Amish children's to leaving their communities as **illustrated** in (lines 14-16) and paraphrasing the implications of her thoughts in (lines 18-20).

Furthermore, Mrs. Smith addressed the students' queries and comments that they **made** about the Amish people's beliefs, historical establishment, and about Mrs. Smith's **account** of these beliefs. After Mrs. Smith's last statements about the Amish beliefs in **(lines 18, 20)**, Servet made a comment about what he thought that the Amish think of **their** community. Mrs. Smith refuted Servet's comment and evaluated this comment as **invalid**. She then apologized for not knowing whether Servet's speculation is right, and **for** not finding the library information she promised the students.

Servet: You know one thing that they think that ( )  
of their community?

Mrs. Smith: No! No! I don't know. I said that this weekend I was going to  
get some information, but I didn't have time. So I don't know.

Hamad then asked about whether this community is an old community. And Mrs. **Smith** answered positively and elaborated that this community has not changed. She **suggested** that the students visit an Amish community, which is a couple of hours from the **institute**. Servet smiled, and in a humorous tone, he questioned Mrs. Smith's suggestion. **He** focused on Mrs. Smith's account of what the Amish think of the Americans (line 15, 18, 20), and said:

Servet: I think this dangerous for us. If they don't accept  
the English, how they accept us?

Mrs. Smith acknowledged Servet's concern. In agreeing with his view, Mrs. Smith **replied** in a humorous tone: "WOW! like Mars, somebody from another planet. Yeah, I **guess**." Then she continued to soothe Servet and said: "They don't have to accept you, **they** just have to let you be tourists." Mrs. Smith then ended the discussion phase with the discourse marker "okay," in rising intonation and pronounced the beginning of the next **activity**.

In summary, in her account of the Amish people's thoughts and beliefs, Mrs. Smith **attempted** to address the faulty assumption that all the Amish people tolerate living in **solitude**. In so doing, she first disclosed an account of the Amish people's thoughts and **attitudes** towards life in their communities. Mrs. Smith elaborated that the new generation **of the** Amish attempts to escape this life, and traced this account to its source in a written **document**, which she could not remember at the time of telling the narrative. And finally, **she** gave her personal thoughts on how the Amish people stand in sharp contrast to the **rest** of the American white people.

Following this account, Mrs. Smith allowed the students to share their opinions and **negotiate** the point of the narrative (Polanyi 1979). This strategy allowed the student

to share their perspectives and understanding of the Amish people's life, history and thoughts. Through this interaction, one may realize the students' were still focused on the Amish thoughts, as apparent from Servet's comments, and on their lives as apparent from Hamad's question.

The pattern of the interaction surrounding Mrs. Smith's attempt to communicate the necessary information of the Amish people's thoughts and culture, to assist Servet to realize the problem with his answer, appeared typical of the pattern that is associated with Mrs. Smith's use of oral narratives at other problematic points of the interaction. The difference here, however, is that Mrs. Smith allowed the students to negotiate the cultural assumptions of the narrative experience, attended to them and responded to their views, individually.

### **6.3.3 Function Three: Requesting Students' Opinions on Cultural Issues: A Prelude to a Question**

This function of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives was the least recognized among the participants. The analysis of the interaction between Mrs. Smith and the students revealed that Mrs. Smith used oral narratives after the student failed to recognize her request for an opinion on social and/or cultural issues pertaining to the students' culture. As a prelude to a question, this function of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives is recognized in answers that students offered to Mrs. Smith's Opinion S-event Talk questions. These answers have two main features.

The first is realized when the selected student fails to understand the proposition of Mrs. Smith's Opinion S-event Talk question. Hence, instead of giving an answer, this student makes a solicitation move to request further information to enhance her/his understanding of the question. The second feature of an answer to Mrs. Smith's Opinion S-event Talk question can be captured in the selected student's concise answer. That is,

instead of providing an elaborate answer, the student provides a short answer with less information than Mrs. Smith expects to receive for her question.

To any of these answers, Mrs. Smith performs a reaction move using an oral narrative. Mrs. Smith's use of an oral narrative to any of these two answers is an acknowledgment of the difficulties that the selected student has in understanding her question, and is an acknowledgment that the student's answer does not provide the information that she expected to receive for her solicitation, respectively. Using an oral narrative to either answers, Mrs. Smith attempts to elaborate what she finds problematic and difficult to understand. Following the telling of an oral narrative, Mrs. Smith either paraphrases the Opinion S-event Talk question or poses a question "So what do you think [name of the student]."

The realization of the function of Mrs. Smith's oral narrative as a prelude to a question is achieved under circumstances different from the circumstances of the previously described functions, in two ways. First, this function is restricted to the discussion phase of only one situational context, that is, student-presentation activity. During this phase of this situational context, when Mrs. Smith recounts an oral narrative, she addresses her narrative to only one student. This student is the one who is in charge of the presentation. Although all students are allowed to participate in the joint-construction of this narrative, Mrs. Smith considered only the input of the student presenter.

Second, in this situational context, Mrs. Smith exchanges her place and social role with the student in charge of the presentation. The presenting student assumes Mrs. Smith's place, in front of the classroom. The roles are reversed as Mrs. Smith becomes a member of the student audience and the student in charge becomes an educator.

These two circumstances do not have a direct effect on the pattern of the interaction characteristic of Mrs. Smith's use of oral narrative to communicate pedagogical or cultural issues. As mentioned earlier, both the student in charge of the presentation and any student



member of the audience can participate in the interaction.

The following section provides an analytic description of how this function of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives is realized as a prelude to requesting S-event information. In this example, the analysis focuses on Mrs. Smith's use of a known-other experience narrative. Mrs. Smith used this narrative after she acknowledged that the answer the student provided to her Opinion S-event Talk question was not satisfactory. In this example, the student's answer was based on the assumption that the information he provided was shared, i.e., known to both the teacher and the students. Needless to say, the following interaction occurred during the discussion phase of the Student-Presentation Activity.

### **6.3.3.1 Problematic Answer to Opinion S-event Talk Question**

On February 3rd, after the Vocabulary-Explanation Activity was over, Mrs. Smith outlined the schedule for the remaining part of the lesson event. Mrs. Smith said:

Mrs. Smith: Today, we are going to do some work from this book,  
 (( holding a book in her hand that is entitled Paragraph  
Development: A Guide for Students of English )) and before,  
 we are going to begin with some presentations, "Okay?"

This latter utterance announced the beginning of the Student-Presentation Activity. As is routine in starting this activity, Mrs. Smith first selects the student to be in charge of the presentation, and asks her/him to give a presentation. The student and Mrs. Smith then trade spaces and roles. Looking at the students before she started to take a seat among them, Mrs. Smith selected Kyo Hey to give his presentation and said: "We need Kyo Hey."

Kyo Hey complied with Mrs. Smith's request and started to walk towards the front of the classroom to assume his place behind Mrs. Smith's table. Mrs. Smith then moved in the other direction. The topic of the presentation that day was left to the student's discretion under the title: Choose Your Own Topic. Kyo Hey gave his presentation on

preparing a popular Japanese dish, “Ski Yaki,” a tofu-based recipe. Kyo Hey introduced his topic and said:

Kyo Hey: I like to talk about [0.1] (( laughs )) how to cook Japanese food [0.1] Ski Yaki.”

The choice of Kyo Hey’s topic was humorously received. While all the students in the classroom joyously laughed, Mrs. Smith, in a humorous tone, acknowledged Kyo Hey’s choice and said:

Mrs. Smith: “Aaah! We are going to have a cooking lesson.  
This is exciting. We didn’t have cooking lessons here, yet.  
WOW!”

This reaction resulted in louder laughter from the other students and Kyo Hey. Mrs. Smith continued in the same tone, and asked that Kyo Hey use language, not pictures, “We want language, not pictures, you can draw pictures but accompany them with language, please!” Kyo Hey assured Mrs. Smith that this will be the case, then he started his presentation.

When Kyo Hey finished his presentation, Mrs. Smith announced the discussion phase. In so doing, Mrs. Smith turned to the students and said: “Questions . . . questions for Kyo Hey?” The students laughed, and nobody volunteered to ask the first question. Mrs. Smith took the floor and said: “I have a question.” This move signaled the discussion cycle of Kyo Hey’s presentation topic. As the discussion developed, Mrs. Smith posed an Opinion S-event Talk question to Kyo Hey about the use of tofu:

Mrs. Smith: I think that the way you use tofu is the way we use cheese,  
What do you think Kyo Hey?

To this question, Kyo Hey negatively replied: “Nooo.” Kyo Hey’s response to Mrs. Smith’s query appeared to be an excuse to not elaborate on the answer. This response was influenced by the faulty presupposition of Mrs. Smith’s query that the Japanese use tofu the way Americans use cheese. Thus Kyo Hey assumed that his response satisfies

Mrs. Smith's query. However, this faulty presupposition also indicated Mrs. Smith's unfamiliarity with the way this type of Japanese food is used. Hence, Kyo Hey's concise answer, which is mainly a presupposition denial (Johnson 1979: 31), appeared to not satisfy Mrs. Smith's need for an elaborate information.

Mrs. Smith then repeated her request in an assertive way with a questioning intonation "You don't think so?" Mrs. Smith's repetition of the question was intended to encourage Kyo Hey to further elaborate upon his answer. Kyo Hey answered:

Kyo Hey: No, we put it in soup, and boil it.

Once again, Kyo Hey negatively replied and offered little other information. Kyo Hey's elaborate answer, however, is not easily related to Mrs. Smith's solicitation move. Rather, it superficially asserts that the way Japanese use tofu is not similar to the way Americans use cheese. Kyo Hey's answer is based on an assumption which he assumed to be shared. This assumption is that the Americans do not put cheese in soup and boil it. Thus he expected, that by indicating the way tofu is prepared, Mrs. Smith would know that there is no similarity between the Japanese's use of tofu and the American's use of cheese.

However, Mrs. Smith appeared unsatisfied with the limited information Kyo Hey offered to her query. What Mrs. Smith wanted from an elaborate answer is to learn if the Japanese have a way to prepare tofu that would make it taste similar to cheese. Kyo Hey's concise answer however, limited the information to what he thinks is the difference between the Japanese's use of tofu and the American's use of cheese. To assist Kyo Hey to give her the information that she requested, Mrs. Smith performed a reaction move and began to recount an oral narrative.

The oral narrative Mrs. Smith gave is a known-other experience narrative. In this narrative, Mrs. Smith offered her account of an experience that the American people had

with tofu. In so doing, she recounted what Americans thought of tofu and the way this thought influenced their actions and feelings about it. She then offered her thoughts about the problems that Americans have with tofu. The following is Mrs. Smith's account of this narrative experience.

"Nobody knows what to do with it!"

1. Mrs. Smith: [0.1] You know,
2.                   Here, it became very popular several years ago.
3.                   Here.
4.                   Because everybody believes it is so healthy,
5.                   Good for you.
6. Kyo Hey:       Yeah! Yeah!
7. Mrs. Smith:    So everybody bought it.
8.                   But nobody knows what to do with it.
9.                   And nobody likes it.
10. Masashi:     ( Oh! )
11. Mrs. Smith:    Perhaps the taste is a problem, for us.
12.                   We need to know what to do with it,
13.                   You know,

[Student-Presentation Activities: Discussion Phase, Monday, February 3, 1992]

Mrs. Smith's decision to recount the above oral narrative occurred in acknowledgment that Kyo Hey's concise answers for her two solicitation moves did not provide the sufficient information to her Opinion S-event Talk question. Because the information is an S-event opinion, Mrs. Smith could not rate Kyo Hey's answer (see section 6.2, this Chapter). Instead, Mrs. Smith used the discourse marker 'you know' in falling intonation and directly began to tell the above narrative. Mrs. Smith's performance of a reaction move using an oral narrative, however, indicated, Mrs. Smith's dissatisfaction with Kyo Hey's answer.

From a repertoire of possible oral narratives, Mrs. Smith chose to recount this known-other experience narrative. Mrs. Smith's decision to recount an oral narrative is not predetermined. Rather, it is occasioned by Kyo Hey's unsatisfactory answer. Mrs. Smith's choice of an oral narrative at this point is a prelude to a more specific solicitation move for the information that she opted to get from Kyo Hey about tofu. In so doing,

**Mrs. Smith** chose a narrative situation through which she can explain the problem she has **with** tofu.

**Mrs. Smith's** choice of this narrative situation was based on the popularity of tofu and the **students'** familiarity with the experience that Americans had with it. This latter piece of **information** was initially clear in the interaction when Kyo Hey attempted to describe tofu. **Building** on what the students already knew, **Mrs. Smith** recounted the problem she had **with** tofu and presented this problem as a collective problem rather than an individual one.

**Through** this narrative, **Mrs. Smith** attempted to explain her problem with tofu to assist **Kyo Hey** understand the presupposition of her requests through the question that **follows** her narrative. To create Kyo Hey's involvement and understanding, **Mrs. Smith's** **account** of known-others experience narrative, in this case "everyone" in America, **Mrs. Smith** attempted to universalize her problem (Schiffrin 1987).

**When** **Mrs. Smith** began to recount this narrative, she was still sitting with the **students**, facing Kyo Hey who was still standing in the front of the classroom. **Through** the **orientation** (lines 2-3), **Mrs. Smith** provided Kyo Hey the information that directed his **attention** to Americans' experience with tofu. In so doing, **Mrs. Smith** alluded to the **place** where tofu became well-known and the time of its peak popularity (line 2).

Then she proceeded to give her account why "tofu" became that popular. In (line 4), **Mrs. Smith** asserted the motivating belief behind the popularity of this food item. In order to **clarify** this, **Mrs. Smith** paraphrased her use of the adverbial phrase "so healthy" in (line 4) **using** the colloquial, familiar phrase "good for you" in (line 5). To the presupposition of **this** utterance, Kyo Hey positively responded "Yeah, yeah" in (line 6). This reply **suggested** Kyo Hey's engagement.

**Mrs. Smith** then continued to recount the effect of the popularity of tofu on the

actions, thoughts and feelings of Americans (lines 7-9). Mrs. Smith's use of the generic reference "everybody" in (lines 4, 7) serves to create Kyo Hey's involvement. A similar effect is achieved by generic reference "nobody" in (lines 8-9). Using these generic references, Mrs. Smith attempted to make the Americans' experience with the taste of tofu a collective experience. The effect of doing so is to magnify the problem and to make it obvious to tackle.

Masashi's response in (line 10) using the discourse marker "oh!" displays not only her engagement as an active recipient of the new information but also signals her acknowledgment and integration of it (Schiffrin 1987) that Mrs. Smith provided in (line 9). In (line 11), Mrs. Smith continued and recounted her personal thoughts that "perhaps the taste is a problem for us." In a declarative statement, with a questioning intonation in (line 12), Mrs. Smith posed her Opinion S-event Talk question "We need to know what to do with it."

From this illustration, the pattern of the interaction surrounding Mrs. Smith's use of an oral narrative as a prelude to a question appeared different from the pattern of the previous two functions. Mrs. Smith appeared to be less dependent on the pedagogical discourse markers like "all right" and "okay" and less manipulative of the non-verbal performances of the narrative. However, she appeared to rely more on performance style.

This obvious difference in the pattern of the interaction seemed to be influenced by the number of students to whom this narrative was addressed. (In the discussion phase of the Student-Presentation Activity, Mrs. Smith addressed the narrative to only one student. Thus the scope of Mrs. Smith's goal in this case is limited to creating the involvement of one student whose opinion on a problematic issue is of primary concern.) Consequently, the meaning of Mrs. Smith's oral narrative in this situational context was dependent on the contributions of this student, whether verbal and/or non-verbal. Upon these contributions, Mrs. Smith gave her judgment of this student's understanding.

In sum, Mrs. Smith's use of an oral narrative as a prelude to requesting the opinion of the student in charge of the presentation is essentially a function of Mrs. Smith's dissatisfaction with the information that this student provided to her Opinion S-event Talk question. That is, this function is realized when the student in charge of the presentation does not provide a satisfactory answer. Given that the students' presentation topics routinely centered around students' cultures and social practices, Mrs. Smith's questions routinely are requests for information about issues, for which her cultural background does not account. Thus, when the student failed to provide a satisfactory answer, Mrs. Smith recounts a narrative to communicate her cultural perspectives on the issue and then to paraphrase her request or directly requests the student's opinion.

(When Mrs. Smith recounts a narrative at this point, all the students in the classroom are welcomed to participate and collaborate in the construction of the meaning of this narrative. All right. However, the meaning of this narrative is an accomplished achievement of mainly Mrs. Smith and the student in charge of the presentation.) The pattern of the interaction at this point is slightly different from the pattern of the interaction surrounding Mrs. Smith's use of a narrative to communicate the meaning of a word or to ameliorate the student's opinion. This difference is an attribute of the number of student participants to whom Mrs. Smith's addresses this narrative, and the number of students whose contributions are considered.

#### **6.4 Discrepant Case: Supporting One Students' Experience**

In the last section, a description of teacher-student interaction disclosed the rules that pinpointed the appropriateness for Mrs. Smith to use oral narratives during her interaction with the students in this classroom. This section provides a description of a discrepant case where one of the rules that contributes to the social functions of Mrs. Smith's oral narratives was broken.

In this case, Mrs. Smith performed a reaction move and recounted an oral narrative in absence of a problematic issue. Mrs. Smith's attempt was realized as a discrepant case. This realization was captured in the exchanges of the verbal and non-verbal performances of both Mrs. Smith and the students during the interaction surrounding narration. In other words, this was obvious from the pattern of the interaction. For example, Mrs. Smith appeared to use less pedagogical discourse markers, e.g., "okay" and "all right" in intervals with narrative discourse; the students' verbal contribution in the joint-construction of the significance of this narrative was reduced to nil and Mrs. Smith's deliberate effort to gain student attention and secure their participation was more directly pronounced.

The interesting point in the sudden change of Mrs. Smith's use of an oral narrative is that it is immediately recognized by the students and not by Mrs. Smith. This was clear in the students' non-verbal interaction. This performance was then influenced by Mrs. Smith's verbal behavior. The following is a detailed description of this case.

#### 6.4.1 Non-Problematic Answer

On January 16th, during the instruction phase of the Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity, Mrs. Smith was working with her students on the syntactic structure of conditional sentences. To contextualize the interaction, Mrs. Smith considered an article about fish contamination from Consumer Reports Magazine. As the interaction between Mrs. Smith and the students progressed, Mrs. Smith learned from Hide, a Japanese male student, that the Japanese people like to eat raw fish for breakfast. Mrs. Smith then turned to Masashi, a Japanese female student, for an opinion that either confirms or refutes Hide's opinion.

Following the pattern of interaction characteristic of the instruction phase of this situational context, Mrs. Smith called Masashi's name and performed a solicitation move asking Masashi the following question:



Mrs. Smith: Masashi . . when you eat fish for breakfast,  
how did you prepare the fish?

Mrs. Smith's question was structured so that Masashi is to provide two pieces of **information**. The first is about how she, as a Japanese person, prepares fish for breakfast. **The** second piece of information pertains to Mrs. Smith's instruction early in the interaction **that** the answer should be presented in the form of a conditional sentence. Accordingly, **Masashi** slowly answered: "If you wanted to eat fish for breakfast, you fix rice and you **fix** vegetables." Mrs. Smith performed a reaction move to correct Masashi's use of the **verb** tense, and said: "If you want," Masashi then acknowledged Mrs. Smith's correction **and** repeated the whole sentence, correcting the form of the verb tense. Masashi replied: "**If** you want to eat fish for breakfast, you fix rice and you fix vegetables."

Masashi's response to Mrs. Smith's solicitation, however, omits the way fish is **prepared**. In providing this response Masashi assumed that Mrs. Smith shared the presup-  
**position** that the Japanese eat raw fish and instead communicated how the fish is served. **This** assumption was confirmed when Mrs. Smith performed a solicitation move asking **Masashi** to specify how the fish is served. Mrs. Smith said: "And you put it with rice?" **Masashi** answered: "No beside rice."

To this answer, Mrs. Smith performed a reaction move, acknowledging Masashi's **fulfillment** of the expectation of this solicitation, and repeated Masashi's phrase: "Okay, **beside** rice." Yet because the question is a request for information that is an S-event, Mrs. **Smith** did not rate the answer. Instead, Mrs. Smith acknowledged Masashi's answer and stated her personal perspective. In rising-falling intonation, Mrs. Smith said: "Fish and rice for breakfast. WOW! So unusual for us!" This utterance of the reaction move by Mrs. Smith marked Mrs. Smith's concern with the experience over the concern with the conditional rule, which in turn marked the shift from the instruction phase to the discussion phase.

This was clear when Servet self-selected to share an experience with fish oil, and **said**: “In Turkey, we drink fish oil.” Mrs. Smith who was standing to the right of her table **turned** towards Servet and in a statement with falling-rising intonation she performed a **solicitation** move and said: “You mean cod-liver oil?” This solicitation was an attempt **to verify** what Servet meant by his utterance. With a subtle shake of his head, Servet **answered** negatively: “No!” Servet’s response was instantly followed with a non-verbal **attempt** to illustrate what he meant. With his hands Servet formed a shape of a circle. **With** his right hand pointing to the center of the circle which was partially maintained by **his left hand**, he said: “Fish [0.1] oil [0.1] fish oil.”

Mrs. Smith, who had not recovered from the first surprise of knowing about the **Japanese** habit of having “fish and rice for breakfast,” was shocked with the Turkish habit **of drinking** oil in which fish was cooked. This point was emphasized when Mrs. Smith **received** a positive answer from Servet to her question: “And then when the fish is done, **you** drink that oil?” Servet’s positive answer was accompanied with a nod and a smile. **Accordingly**, Mrs. Smith responded by making a fricative sound, the sound that indicates **how** disgusting that could be (Tannen 1989).

Mrs. Smith’s last move to Servet’s response provided the first utterance of her reaction **move**. Mrs. Smith’s fricative sound signaled Mrs. Smith’s acknowledgment with Servet’s **response**. Although Mrs. Smith’s move did not indicate any problem with Servet’s answer, **in** the following move, she embarked on telling a personal experience narrative. In so **doing**, Mrs. Smith offered an account of her personal experience of drinking natural fish oil. The following is Mrs. Smith’s account of this experience.

**“Grandmothers have some funny ideas!”**

1. Mrs. Smith: You know something,
2. We have a kind of oil [0.1] that comes directly from the fish,  
without cooking,
3. We call it,
4. (( Mrs. Smith moved away from the students, went to the
5. blackboard and wrote “cod-liver oil” then she pronounced the  
name of this oil ))
6. Cod-liver oil.
7. And our grandmothers [0.1] used to make us drink that.
8. You know how grandmothers have some funny ideas about what
9. you should do for your health,
10. Students: (( no response ))
11. Mrs. Smith: You know,
12. Students: (( silence ))
13. Mrs. Smith: Don’t all of your grandmothers have some funny ideas about
14. what you should do for your health?
15. Students: (( no response ))
16. Mrs. Smith: WOW! That’s terrible stuff [0.1] but it’s supposed to be healthy  
huh?
17. Students: (( no verbal response, Debra and Servet smile ))
18. Mrs. Smith: Okay.

[Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity: Discussion Phase, Wednesday, January 16, 1992]

From the analytic description of the interaction preceding Mrs. Smith’s use of this **oral** narrative, there was no evidence from Mrs. Smith’s performance of a reaction move **that** there was a problem with Servet’s response. According to the interaction, Mrs. **Smith’s** choice of this narrative experience was locally occasioned (Jefferson 1978) by **the** narrative experience she constructed with Servet’s collaboration (Polanyi 1979, 1985). **A** close examination of the jointly-constructed narrative and the account of Mrs. Smith’s **Personal** narrative showed a close affinity.

Unlike the oral narratives that Mrs. Smith routinely used at a given problematic point, this personal experience narrative shares an affinity that can be captured and easily pinpointed from the interaction. First, in this narrative, Mrs. Smith disclosed her personal experience with an American habit, namely drinking oil that comes directly from fish. This account corresponds to Servet’s personal account of the Turkish people’s habit of

**drinking** oil in which fish was cooked. Second, Mrs. Smith disclosed the name about this **oil** (line 6) which corresponds to what Servet initially pinpointed as “fish oil.”

The third affinity can be captured in Mrs. Smith’s personal idea about these two **habits**. In the jointly-constructed narrative with Servet, Mrs. Smith made a fricative sound **to** indicate her idea of the Turkish habit of drinking an oil in which fish was cooked. In **her** personal account of the American experience, Mrs. Smith suggested that cod-liver oil **was** “terrible stuff” (line 16).

This close affinity between the two experiences suggested that Mrs. Smith **re-****counted** this narrative to communicate solidarity with Servet’s experience (see Allen 1987). Through her experience, Mrs. Smith attempted to point out that the American **habit** of drinking cod-liver oil is as unpopular with the Americans, including Mrs. Smith, **as** is the Turkish experience of drinking oil in which fish was cooked, to the non-Turkish.

However, Mrs. Smith’s use of this oral narrative at a non-problematic point in the **i****nteraction** breaks the routine of using oral narratives. In addition, her use of an oral **n****arrative** at this point marks a shift from the pattern of interaction characteristic of the **c****lassroom** to the pattern of interaction typical of everyday conversational interaction. The **i****mpact** of this violation was manifested in the students’ performance during Mrs. Smith **t****elling** of this narrative. This performance later impacted Mrs. Smith’s verbal performance **a****s** well. The students, for example, did not participate in the joint construction of this **n****arrative**. In (line 10), for example, the students showed no verbal response to Mrs. Smith **s****tatement** in (lines 8-9). The students’ silence continued in (line 12) as Mrs. Smith in **(l****ine** 11) pursued their engagement and invited their participation by using the discourse **m****arker** ‘you know’ in falling intonation. In this position, Mrs. Smith’s usage of ‘you **k****now**’ suggests that what she said in (lines 8-9) was a shared knowledge and invited the **s****tudents** to take the floor in support of her assumption (see Schiffrin 1987).

Late in the interaction, the students’ silence appeared to be recognized by Mrs. Smith.

**This** recognition was apparent when she directly posed the interrogative question in (line 13), to which the students maintained their silence in (line 15). Mrs. Smith then continued **to** recount her thoughts in (line 16) which also appeared to result in minimal response, as **seen** on the faces of both Debra and Servet in (line 17). Because this narrative was not told **to** explore a problem, Mrs. Smith closed by using the discourse marker “okay” in falling intonation.

The students’ silence, in this case, suggests their recognition of Mrs. Smith’s violation **of** her routine use of oral narratives. Thus, in contrast to their routine verbal behavior in **inter**actions surrounding narration, the students’ silence here, can be regarded as a reaction **to** Mrs. Smith’s equivocal use of an oral narrative at this point. This ambiguity began **with** Mrs. Smith’s use of an oral narrative at a non-problematic point and continued with **a** coherent affinity to features of the narrative she jointly-constructed with Servet. (This **latter** factor confused the students, as demonstrated by their silence.) *Really?*

## **6.5 Conclusion**

In summary, it is apparent from the analysis in this chapter that Mrs. Smith’s use of **oral** narratives in her interaction with the students serves three different functions. These **functions** are: first, illustrating the meaning or usage of unfamiliar American English **vocabulary**; second, ameliorating students’ misconceptions about American culture and **social** life; and third, as a prelude to requesting information about the problematic issues **pertaining** to the students’ cultures and social practices. The identification of these **functions** is based on the outcome of teacher-students’ interactions during a given phase **of** a given situational context. These three functions are bound mainly to three different **interactional** rules: first, the irrelevance of the students’ answers to any of three types of **Mrs.** Smith’s questions; second, Mrs. Smith’s acknowledgment of this irrelevance; and **third** Mrs. Smith’s choice of a narrative that the students either know or with which they **are** familiar.

Mrs. Smith's use of oral narrative to communicate information pertinent to a specific **pedagogical** problem constitutes a system that is governed by the rules specified above. **The** violation of any of these rules provides evidence that supports the validity of this **system**. Accordingly, when Mrs. Smith used an oral narrative at a non-problematic point, **the** students appeared confused and maintained a complete silence. This sudden change **of their** verbal reaction signaled the presence of a problem and emphasized their failure to **grasp** the reason for which Mrs. Smith recounted this narrative.

## Chapter 7

# CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Introduction

This ethnographic, discourse analysis study was conducted to identify and to describe **the** social rules that contribute to the meaning and the functions of oral narratives in one **speech** event where oral narratives were not deliberately retrieved. The focus was on **naturally** occurring oral narratives that an American female teacher recounted during her **interaction** with adult students in an English as a second language classroom. The results **as** described in the previous three chapters offer implications for theory, practice, and **directions** for future research. The intent of this present chapter is to delineate these **implications**.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides the summary **and** conclusions of the study. The second section discusses the implications of this study **for** theorization on oral narratives. The third section focuses on the advantage of using **oral** narratives in classroom pedagogy in general, and in second-language classroom in **particular**. The fourth section pinpoints the limitations of the study and delineates possible **areas** of investigation for future research on oral narratives.

### 7.2 Summary and Conclusions

This ethnographic, discourse analysis study was an attempt to investigate the **structure** and functions of naturally occurring oral narratives as situated in an English as a

second language classroom interaction. Its goal was first to identify the social rules that contribute to the forms and the functions of these narratives from the perspectives of the participants, and second to revisit some limited views of oral narratives. The study focused on pedagogical, naturally occurring oral narratives recounted by an American, female teacher during her interaction with eleven foreign students, who attended one of the mid-western English language institutes in a northern American University to learn English as a second language, for academic purposes.]

The study combined two techniques: participant/observation and interviewing. The participant/observation technique provided the necessary information about the activities in which both the teacher and the students participated inside and outside the classroom; about the situations in which the teacher used oral narratives; and about the verbal and non-verbal activities of both the teacher and the students during the different activities surrounding narration. The interviewing technique provided the tool for investigating the participants' perspectives of what narratives are, of the categories in which these narratives fall, and of the purposes these narratives served. |

Within the framework of Hymes' ethnography of speaking, the collected data were analyzed. This framework guided the researcher to make conscious decisions about what she knows and what actually happened. Accordingly, the data were analyzed to reflect the perspectives of the members of the second language classroom, namely the perspectives of both Mrs. Smith and the students. The analysis of the interview data provided an operative definition of the teacher's oral narratives; the identification of the categories of the teacher's oral narratives and the identification of the reasons for which the teacher uses an oral narrative. ]

In relation to the components of Hymes' framework, the three situational contexts in which both the teacher and the students interact were identified; the interactional rules characteristic of these contexts were also analyzed and described in light of Johnson's



framework of classroom interaction. The reasons the teacher uses these narratives were analyzed in terms of the teacher's personal purpose; and in terms of the rules of the interaction characteristic of a given situational context, in which both the teacher and the students interact.

[The analysis of these data provided the following results. First, Mrs. Smith's oral narratives communicate the ordinariness of mainly one event, and occasionally more than one event that happened in the past, or that used to happen in the past, or that is/are apt to happen in the future.

Second, Mrs. Smith's oral narratives fall into three different categories. These categories were identified and two of the labels were coined to capture the range of these categories. These categories were: personal experience narratives, known-other experience narratives and potential-other experience narratives. The criteria of this classification are found to be the sources from which the material of these narratives originate.

Third, the reasons Mrs. Smith uses an oral narrative from any of these categories are two-fold. The first is to create the students' involvement. To achieve this purpose, the teacher relies on different involvement strategies at three points of the interaction surrounding narration: at the point of introducing a narrative, at the point of telling a narrative, and at the point of closing a narrative.]

The second purpose is to communicate different pedagogical and cultural problems that the students cannot understand. The achievement of this purpose is bound to the rules of the social interaction characteristic of the situational context in which Mrs. Smith uses any of these narratives. In both cases, there appears to be no direct relationship between the forms of the narratives Mrs. Smith uses and either of the two identified purposes.

Fourth, Mrs. Smith uses these narratives in three situational contexts. These situational contexts were identified as: Grammatical-Rules Practices Activity; Vocabulary-

**Explanation Activity; and Student-Presentation Activity.** Each situational context is characterized by the domination of a certain topic and certain rules of interaction that can be captured in the type of question-answer sequences that the teacher and students exchange during the different phases of the interaction.

Fifth, Mrs. Smith's usage of an oral narrative during any of these situational contexts can be captured at different points of the interaction. These points appeared to be associated with a problematic answer that the teacher received for three different types of questions she routinely posed. These questions were identified as: Fact T-event Unique; Opinion T-event Talk; and Opinion S-event Talk. Accordingly, three functions of the teacher's oral narratives were identified: illustration of unfamiliar lexis; amelioration of students' misconceptions of issues relevant to the American culture; and as a prelude to a question.

Finally, the routine pattern of the interaction characteristic of all three functions of the teacher's oral narratives exhibited an astounding similarity. This routine was a function of the fact that the teacher's oral narratives were recounted to communicate mainly problematic issues. This routine becomes obvious when the teacher recounts a narrative in absence of the presence of a problem. The change of the routine pattern of the interaction emphasizes the original role of the teacher's oral narratives as a tool to address different problematic issues.

### **7.3 Implications for Theory**

The outlined findings of this ethnographic, discourse analysis study bear the following implications for five different matters relevant to Labovian narratives. The first implication is for the definition of oral narratives. The study suggests that oral narratives can be defined in terms of their evaluative clauses. Thus no narrative lacks evaluation, even those narratives that are only constituted of event clauses. In this latter type of narratives, evaluation can be captured in terms of different dimensions. In terms of their linguistic

**dimension**, evaluations can be captured in the ways the events are chronologically organized; in terms of the verbal and non-verbal features associated with their production; **and** in terms of tellers' semantic choice of the verbs that represent these events and their **choice** of the part of narrative to recount.

The second implication of the definition of oral narrative as developed in this study is **for** the Labovian definition of minimal narratives. The study suggests that minimal narratives can constitute less than two events. For example, some Kernel narratives, as described in this study, constitute only of one event while others constitute of no events at all. This conclusion also suggests that oral narrative is not necessarily recounting of the events in a sequence but rather recounting of the *ordinariness*, i.e., the common attributes, of **one** event or more than one event in a sequence.

The third implication of the definition of oral narrative in this study is for the tense of **personal experience** narratives. The study reinforced the view of recent empirical studies that the events of personal experience narratives can be recounted *not only* in well known past-tense *but also* in present tense, future tense, and continuous past tense.

The fourth implication of the study is for Labov's description of narratives that are characterized by the lack of definite pronominal reference to the characters of these narratives to be vicarious or non-narrative at all. The study suggests that what appears as an indefinite character in such narratives is in fact known to the participants and that not revealing the character's identity serves a purpose that can not be discerned solely from this textual feature of the narrative.

The fifth implication of the study is for Labov's theoretical assumptions about the tellability of oral narratives. The study suggests that the tellability of oral narratives is not an autonomous or an exclusive linguistic feature of oral narrative experiences. Rather, the tellability of these narratives is mainly contextual and is bound to the social components that constitute the situation in which these narratives are told. The tellability is mainly

a **product** of the participants' shared everyday experiences of what is tellable of a given **experience** as well as their shared social norms of the point at which telling an oral **narrative** in their interaction is required. In addition, the tellability as described in this study **suggests** that it is bound to the teller's goal. These implications for the tellability **refute** the potential suggestions from the above four implications that oral narrative is an **elusive** term. These implications also emphasize that any verbal behavior can not be **described** based solely on its linguistic features. *that seems to be what you're trying to say!*

The study also has an implication that would extend Polanyi's view of the joint-construction of the narrative point. The study suggests that the joint-construction of a **narrative** is not limited to negotiating the cultural assumptions of the various propositions of **which** the narratives are composed. Rather, the act of the joint-construction of a **narrative** also includes an attempt on the part of the audience to reach an affirmation of **what** the teller strives to communicate. *helped formation. There meaning makes*

The most significant implication for oral narrative theory that this study has is the **implication** for the linguistic criteria of oral narratives classification. The study suggests that **the** classification of oral narratives from the perspective of the researcher and the **perspectives** of the insiders do differ. To this effect, the study suggests that the insider's **perspectives**, *not* the theoretical assumptions alone, be taken as a guide for the classification of **oral** narratives, a step that would bring more insight into our understanding of this verbal behavior.

The above implication for theory leads also to the final and no less significant **implications** for the linguistic hypotheses about the taxonomy of oral narratives. The first **implication** is that oral narratives include *not only* the accounts of the teller's personal **experiences** *but also* experiences of a person other than the narrator and/or experiences of a person whose identity is not revealed. The second implication is that oral narratives are *not* limited to be about events that took place in the past or events that did not take place.

Rather, oral narratives can also be about events that may take place in the future. This final implication extends Riessman's view of the hypothetical oral narratives.

## **7.4 Implications for Classroom Practice**

The findings of this study suggest the following two sets of implications for the utility of oral narratives in the classroom. The first set of implications is for the general utility of oral narratives in classroom instruction. The second set of implications is for the utility of oral narratives in second-language classroom instruction, in particular.

### **7.4.1 General Implications for Classroom Instruction**

Oral narratives can be used as an effective pedagogical tool in communicating classroom material. In order to maximize the effectiveness of this tool, it is important that the teacher develop an awareness of her/his students' interests. This study suggests the following strategies that the teacher can implement to get acquainted with the students' interests. First, encourage classroom discussion on issues that are not directly related to the curriculum. Second, request that the students keep journals of their personal daily experiences and encourage them to share these journals with one another. Third, develop social activities in which the teacher and all students can participate.

Oral narratives are a better tool for introducing unfamiliar vocabulary and terminology than providing abstract dictionary definition. Teachers in both second-language classrooms and content-areas classrooms can consider the use of oral narratives for this purpose.

Oral narratives have significant impact on the pattern of classroom interaction. They promote opportunity for the alternating instruction phase where the teacher's turn is dominant and the students' participation is minimal with the discussion phase where

this pattern is reversed. In order to enhance this potentiality, the teacher can consider incorporating oral narratives whenever permissible.

The use of oral narratives as a tool to create the students' involvement depends not only on the students' familiarity with narrative experience but also on the strategies that the teacher uses to create this involvement. The teacher's manipulation of the features of performance and other strategies such as repetition and humor furthers the students' involvement.

#### 7.4.2 Implications for Second-Language Classroom Instruction

The implications of the study for second-language instruction suggest that oral narratives can be a useful pedagogical tool. They offer the teacher a means to help second-language learners practice their listening and comprehension skills of the oral discourse of the target language. The teacher's use of oral narratives also encourages the students' participation in the interaction and consequently the chance to practice their speaking skills. The students' contribution provides the teacher the touchstone for evaluating the students' listening skill. These hypotheses are, of course, not proven, but evidence from the description of teacher-student interaction surrounding narration provides support to this effect.

Oral narratives are one possible means of transmitting cultural values and social practices of any speech community. Thus the teacher of a second language should use oral narratives to incorporate teaching the culture of the target language as an integral component of teaching its linguistic code.

The teacher's use of oral narratives in second-language classroom interaction teaches the students not only the potential utilities of oral narratives but also the transitional material to introduce oral narratives into social interaction. Although the ability to introduce

a **narrative** is not explicitly taught, the students will acquire this ability by participating in a **situation** where the use of an oral narrative emerges as best solution.

**Oral** narratives are common to most cultures. They give the learners of a second language better understanding of the different language and cultural issues than does **direct instruction**. The teacher of a second language should consider using oral narratives **deliberately** and systematically.

## **7.5 Limitations and Future Research**

This present study has some limitations that offer possible avenues and directions for **future** research of oral narrative structure and meaning per se, and for future research of oral **narratives** for pedagogical purposes. The following are the limitations and implications for **future** research in both areas.

### **7.5.1 Directions for Future Research on Oral Narratives**

This research suggested the sources from which the teacher's naturally occurring oral **narratives** originate as the criteria for the taxonomy of these narratives. The social criteria of **classification** of any verbal behavior are not constant across speech communities and the **criteria** of oral narratives classification are not an exception. Future research may **investigate** naturally occurring oral narratives of other speech communities to identify **other** criteria of classification. This would expand the horizon for understanding the **nature** of oral narratives and inform oral narrative theorization.

This ethnographic, discourse analysis study invokes a potential foundation for **investigating** the universality of the structure of oral narrative experience. This potentiality can be captured in the students' shared cultural perspectives of the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives as a group that makes up the speech community of this par-

particular classroom. However, the specific cultural background of each participant was not considered in any detail to substantiate any hypothesis about the universality of oral narrative structure. The exploration of this issue would advance theorization about the universality of oral narrative structure and in turn would illuminate the teachers' usage of oral narratives for pedagogical purposes.

There should be a discussion of structure of text.

### 7.5.2 Directions for Future Research on Oral Narratives for Pedagogical Purposes

This study provided analyses of the situated meaning of naturally occurring oral narratives recounted by an American, second-language, female teacher. An exploration of this issue of naturally occurring oral narratives recounted by an American, second-language, male teacher can be informing in terms of the differences and/or the similarities of oral narrative taxonomy and for the teacher's purpose of telling a narrative.

How about non-Am teachers?

This study may also be duplicated in content-area lessons to expand the range of contrast of the formal structure and of the pedagogical functions of the teacher's naturally occurring oral narratives. Such an attempt may lead to better our understanding of the role that the teacher's oral narratives play in classroom instruction.

This study described the students' silence as one of the non-verbal behaviors in situating the teacher's oral narratives. [Cultural and personal factors are potential foundation for this non-verbal feature of students' interaction surrounding narration.] An exploration of these two dimensions in relation to the teacher's oral narratives of cultural sources can illuminate the results of this study.

Good point

The description of teacher-student interaction surrounding narration in this study did not consider the asymmetrical aspect of the classroom interaction on the students' contribution to the ecology of the teacher's oral narratives. [Investigation of this point can illuminate the quality of the student's contribution and on the role it has in situating the teacher's oral narratives.]

Good point



## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

### TRANSCRIPTIONS OF MRS. SMITH'S ORAL NARRATIVES

#### Overwhelming Experience

1. Mrs. Smith: I will tell you an example of one of my students, last term
2. [0.1] who went into S-level.
3. All right?
4. And he thought the university classes are going to be easy.
5. Okay?
6. And he thought his English is very good.
7. And he said, "I [0.1] I won't have any trouble."
8. [0.1] he promised, [0.1] "I am going to get four points,"
9. Okay?
10. [0.1] "I am sure," he said.
11. He thought [0.1] It's going to be easy.
12. [0.1] And after two weeks of .. in the classes, he was overwhelmed.
13. He was way behind in his work,
14. He couldn't keep up with the readings,
15. He didn't understand the lectures, //
16. Kyo Hey: ( )
17. Mrs. Smith: Uh?
18. Kyo Hey: ( )
19. Mrs. Smith: Business
20. Debra: (( laughs ))
21. Mrs. Smith: (( exchanges eye contact with Debra )) Business Debra! Business!
22. And he was overwhelmed.
23. He thought it was going to be easy,
24. And when it began,
25. He found he couldn't keep up with the students.
26. He was falling behind.

## Christmas Knives

1. Mrs. Smith: For Christmas, all right,
2. My husband got me a new set of knives.
3. (( non-verbally demonstrating by her two hands facing each other
4. with some distance between them ))
5. [0.1] *BEAU*tiful knives,
6. Oh! No knives like this. Ooo.
7. Debra: [[[ laughs ]]]
8. Mrs. Smith: And for two weeks oh! [0.1] all of my fingers are bandages.
9. Kyo Hey: [[[ laughs ]]]
10. Mrs. Smith: My new knives are *beautiful*,
11. And they cut off all of my fingers just off.
12. [0.1] Okay?
13. I was *VERY* angry with myself.
14. *Every* time I took one of my new knives I am bleeding.
15. It's too awful.
16. I had to go back to my old knives.
17. You know.
18. The new knives are dangerous.
19. Good, good sentence. All right.

**Christmas Blues**

1. Mrs. Smith: Every December,
2. I feel overwhelmed,
3. Because I have to buy Christmas gifts for everybody I know.
4. Okay?
5. Weeks and weeks and weeks in the mall,
6. You know,
7. [0.1] And shopping in every store in the town
8. And it is exhausting [0.1]
9. You get so tired,
10. And you have to do it
11. And every December I said: "WOW! why didn't I start this in August?"
12. I should have started this in August,
13. You know,
14. But you wait until December and you are overwhelmed.
15. Okay,
16. All right, all right.

**“Grandmothers have some funny ideas!”**

1. Mrs. Smith: You know something,
2. We have a kind of oil [0.1] that comes directly from the fish,  
without cooking,
3. We call it,
4. (( Mrs. Smith moved away from the students, went to the
5. blackboard and wrote ‘cod-liver oil,’ then she pronounced the name  
of this oil ))
6. Cod-liver oil.
7. And our grandmothers [0.1] used to make us drink that.
8. You know how grandmothers have some funny ideas about what
9. you should do for your health,
10. Students: (( no response ))
11. Mrs. Smith: You know,
12. Students: (( silence ))
13. Mrs. Smith: Don’t all of your grandmothers have some funny ideas about what
14. you should do for your health?
15. Students: (( no response ))
16. Mrs. Smith: WOW! That’s terrible stuff [0.1] but it’s supposed to be healthy  
huh?
17. Students: (( no verbal response, Debra and Servet smile ))
18. Mrs. Smith: Okay.

**Resurrected Bicycle**

1. Mrs. Smith: Let's say,
2. In the attic of my house, I have a bicycle
3. [0.1] that no one has used many years,
4. And it is rusty,
5. And it is old,
6. And it does not work very well.
7. But my husband goes up there,
8. And he gets this bicycle,
9. And he brings it back to down stairs,
10. And he cleans and paints it,
11. And he makes it work very well,
12. And we can say he has resurrected the bicycle.
13. Okay?

## Killing Korean Girls

1. Mrs. Smith: Some cultures,
2. I guess someone wrote this to me in their journal,
3. About ancient [0.1] ancient [0.1] Korean cultures,
4. They wanted boys,
5. They wanted sons,
6. And the Korean girls are born.
7. They kill them in the ancient Korean culture.

**New Amish Generation**

1. Mrs. Smith: You know,
2. They have a percentage of their children leave the community
3. and don't come back.
4. The children are free to leave if they want to.
5. And I don't remember,
6. I read once, how many of the Amish children want to leave,
7. Mostly the sons not the daughters,
8. They leave.
9. They go to big cities,
10. They like it,
11. And they leave.
12. But the situation is if they want to leave they don't come  
back [0.1]
13. It's a very big decision. You know,
14. I think probably you know,
15. Maybe they think that the English as they call the rest of us,
16. You know, spoiled them, ruined them.
17. Isn't that interesting?
18. That they think the other Americans are a kind of strangers,
19. You know,
20. They set themselves aside as a separate group.



**American Household**

1. Mrs. Smith: For the Americans [0.1],
2. Very often, the children will misbehave during the day,
3. And the mother will threaten the child and say:
4. "Wait until your father gets home."
5. Masashi: [Um hum]
6. Mrs. Smith: As soon as the father gets home, the mother
7. tells the father what the child did,
8. And the father will discipline the child.

**“ . . . these guys who go into restaurants with guns”**

1. Mrs. Smith: Do you know these guys who go into restaurants with guns,
2. Hamad: [Yes, yes]
3. Mrs. Smith: And they shoot like thirty people,
4. Debra: Yes.
5. Mrs. Smith: These are mass murderers,

**"Like this woman"**

1. Mrs. Smith: Like this woman,
2.                   You could see how simple she was,
3. Students: (( silence ))
4. Mrs. Smith: Nothing fancy,
5.                   No Jewelry,
6.                   No fancy clothes,
7.                   And they don't wear buttons
8.                   Did you know they don't wear buttons?
9.                   (( pointing at the buttons in her own blouse ))
10. Students: (( silence ))
11.                   Buttons are not plain enough
12.                   They said: "Buttons are too proud,"
13.                   Maybe it looks like jewelry to them,
14.                   They could not wear buttons
15.                   They needed something more plain, more simple,
16.                   Okay?

## Loving Your Adoptive Child

1. Mrs. Smith: Let's say,
2.               You get married.
3.               And for some reason
4.               You are unable to have a child,
5.               All you think about is a child,
6.               You want a baby *so much*,
7.               Okay?
8.               If you wait ten years,
9.               Finally, someone gives you a little baby,
10.              And says: "This is yours,"
11.              (( gestures ))
12.              You are gonna love this baby so much,
13.              Maybe more because you waited for this baby,
14. Debra:       Yeah!
15. Mrs. Smith: Maybe you're gonna love this child more than your children,

**"It was the weirdest I ever saw"**

1. Mrs. Smith: I'll tell you about this. This is too weird.
2. Students: (( silent and attentive ))
3. Mrs. Smith: There was an animal on Johnny Carson show called a cabbit
4. (( on the black board, she wrote the word 'cabbit' ))
5. Debra: A cabbit?
6. Mrs. Smith: A cabbit. They called it a cabbit.
7. It was an interbreed between a cat and a rabbit,
8. This part is a cat (( gestures ))
9. And has a CAT head and has a cat face and a little cat ears,
10. And the back end is a RABBIT,
11. It has a big rabbit, a big rabbit feet,
12. you know,
13. And flab like this,
14. And when this animal moved,
15. The front legs walked,
16. And the back legs hopped,
17. And they call it a cabbit.
18. Students: (( laugh ))
19. Mrs. Smith: It was the weirdest thing I ever saw.

## Tutoring Korean Girls

1. Mrs. Smith: I'll tell you something Min and you give me your opinion,
2. all right?
3. Min: (( nods ))
4. Mrs. Smith: Maybe ten years ago um [1.0]
5. Some Korean parents asked me to tutor their children [1.0]
6. Two little girls in elementary school [0.1]
7. Min: [Um hum]
8. Mrs. Smith: They got just As in the school,
8. Both of them.
9. They were bright girls,
10. All As.
11. And the parents [1.0] //
12. Visitor: (( interrupted Mrs. Smith to leave the class ))
13. want their kids to have tutors,
14. And I asked them why?
15. They have only As,
16. And they said that the school wasn't pushing the children
17. really hard enough,
18. And they want the children work more,
19. Now for the American parents,
20. If the child is getting As, they are going to leave the
21. whole situation alone,
22. Just As perfect score.
23. But the Korean parents have the feeling that the children
24. could work harder and the children could learn more.
25. I was very surprised by this because this is not a problem for us at all.
26. For us if the children are getting As, we leave the whole
27. situation alone.
28. This is a good situation, we don't want to screw things up.
29. So Min, is that common or is this unusual for Koreans?

**Plausible Excuse**

1. Mrs. Smith: Let's say, um [0.1]
2. You asked your dad if you can borrow his car on a Friday night,
3. And you get home by three o'clock in the morning.
4. And he said: "Be home at midnight," [0.2]
5. And he says: "What happened?"
6. And you said: "The car ran out of gas."
7. Is that a plausible excuse?
8. Students: (( silence ))
9. Mrs. Smith: (( clicks )) No.
10. What's plausible is you were having fun,
11. And you didn't want to come home,
12. That's plausible. That's likely.
13. Okay?

## Some Rights of the Handicapped People

1. Mrs. Smith: Here in a restaurant,
2. If somebody is blind,
3. And they have one of these dogs,
4. Kyo Ko: [Um hum,]
5. And they go to a restaurant,
6. And the restaurant says: "You cannot come
7. because some people if they see a dog in a restaurant they
- will leave,"
8. Kyo Ko: [Uh! huh!]
9. Mrs. Smith: If they say your dog cannot come,
10. That blind person may sue the restaurant.
11. Because that blind person has every right that a seeing person has.
12. So a dog must be allowed in the restaurant.
13. Okay?
14. The dog can go any where [0.1]
15. What do you think Kyo Ko?



**"Kind with Animals"**

1. Saito: People are not kind of animals.
2. Mrs. Smith: Okay. Not of. You need with.
3. Some people are not kind with animals,
4. All right?
5. Saito: (( silence ))
6. Mrs. Smith: In this weather, (( pointing towards the window. It was  
snowing outside ))
7. Some people would keep their animals outside,
8. In this weather.
9. And they die from the cold.
10. Okay?
11. So we say kind with animals
12. Kind with, Okay?

**"I am not that influential"**

1. Mrs. Smith: A student from other classes saw me in the cafeteria,
2. And he began and he said: "Are you a teacher in the Academic
3. Institute for English Language Teaching,"
4. And I said: Yes,
5. And he said: "I don't like my schedule. I am here from eight
6. o'clock in the morning until five o'clock at night,
7. with too many breaks,"
8. Jiwoon: [Ahh!]
9. Mrs. Smith: And I said: "Why are you telling me this,"
10. And he said: "Your are a teacher,"
11. [0.1] "You can do something,"
12. Mrs. Smith: And I said: "No I am not that influential."
13. Nobody listens to me.
14. All right? [0.1] ?
15. Students: (( silence ))
16. Mrs. Smith: You understand influential?
17. Students: (( silence ))
18. Mrs. Smith: If he wants a change, he can talk to Mrs. John or Mrs. Andrew,
19. They are very influential and they can make a change.
20. (( Mr. John and Mrs. Andrew are the vice director and
21. the director respectively of the Academic Institute for English
- Language Teaching ))
22. Okay?

## Persian Gulf Culture vs. American Culture

1. Mrs. Smith: I had a student from Qatar last term,
2. And [0.2] I think it was him I asked [0.1]
3. If you have families that are like on welfare systems,
4. Families who get money from the government to support,
5. And he said: "Not usually because if a man does not have a job,
6. He can't get married."
7. Hamad: That's right.
8. Mrs. Smith: And because the woman's family would not permit their daughter
9. to marry a man who does not have a good job,
10. Hamad: Sure.
11. Mrs. Smith: And his family is not going to help him to get married
12. if he doesn't have a job,
13. I think that what he told me.
14. Hamad: Yes. That's right //
15. Mrs. Smith: But here, a man doesn't need a job to get married [0.1],
16. He Just needs his money from the government,
17. His check,
18. The woman if she wants to marry him,
19. There is nothing her family can do about it.

## Confession

1. Mrs. Smith: In the Catholic Church,
2. We go to confession
3. You go to a Priest,
4. And tell him you have done that is wrong or bad,
5. Jiwoon: [AHH!]
6. Debra: We don't (( laughs ))
7. Mrs. Smith: I said you should should should.
8. Debra: Ye::s.
9. Mrs. Smith: Sins you confess.
10. This is the verb (( points to the word 'confess' on the blackboard ))
11. You confess your sins (( writes 'sins' on the blackboard ))
12. Servet: Sins?
13. Mrs. Smith: Those things that you have done that don't please God.
14. Okay?
15. We confess our sins.
16. We say we go to confession.
17. Or we make a confession
18. All right?
19. You are telling the truth when you don't want to tell the truth.
20. All right?



**"You loused up my life"**

1. Mrs. Smith: You remember [0.1] um [0.1] that the day
2. She was leaving him,
3. He got that big accountant in his office,
4. And it was a very important day for him,
5. And he said: "You loused up my life,"
6. (( she wrote the idiom 'loused up' on the blackboard ))
7. He said: "You loused up one of the best five days of my life"
8. Okay?

## Ethical or Cultural Problem

1. Mrs. Smith: Here is another story.
2. I heard this story in the news.
3. A cab driver was driving in the street,
4. And he saw a woman getting mugged,
5. A man is beating her and stealing from her,
6. So you know what he did?
7. [0.1] This is happening next to a building,
8. The cab driver drove his car next to the man,
9. And bend him,
10. Stuck him to the building,
11. The car is in the front
12. and the man is stuck to the building with the car in front of him,
13. And because the cab driver drove too much
14. He broke one of the two man's legs, the mugger's
15. Okay?
16. The mugger went to the jail,
17. While he is in the jail he got a lawyer
18. [0.1] and the cab driver who broke his legs,
19. He sued him for breaking his legs with the car,
20. And he got twenty thousand dollars.
21. This is a man who was trying to stop a crime,
22. He tries to stop a crime,
23. This woman would have gotten killed,
24. He saves this woman.
25. [0.1] And the judge fined him twenty thousand dollars.
26. Isn't that crazy?

**Abandonment**

1. Mrs. Smith: Let's say um [0.1]
2. Both parents work,
3. They have jobs and they don't have a baby sitter
4. for their small child,
5. Three-years-old, four-years-old,
6. And they leave the child in the home *alone* all day,
7. And they go to their jobs,
8. They are not torturing the child,
9. (( points at the word 'torture' on the blackboard ))
9. They are not hitting the child,
10. They are abandoning the child,
11. They are not taking care of the child.
12. Okay?



## Murder in Milwaukee

1. Mrs. Smith: Do you know the man in Milwaukee who killed all these people ?
2. (( slowly pronounced his name )) Jeffery Dahmer, his name is?
3. Students: (( silence ))
4. Mrs. Smith: He is the man in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
5. who [Hamad: Yeah!] worked in a chocolate factory,
6. And who killed like seventeen people?
7. Debra: [Yeah!]
8. Mrs. Smith: Men?
9. And he cut them up,
10. And put them in the freezer,
11. And ate them,
12. And last week . . the trial is right now,
13. It is in the court,
14. And he is telling the whole story to everybody,
15. Debra: Yes.
16. And he told something so weird last week,
17. Hamad: He is in jail?
18. Mrs. Smith: Um . . he is in the court right now.
19. He is in jail but he is not sentenced yet .
20. And he told something so weird last week,
21. He cuts up people's arms, legs and heads,
22. And he ate them.
23. It is so weird.
24. So with this arm he was going to cook,
25. He was afraid it would be *tough*,
26. So he puts meat tenderizer on it,
27. We put it on meat to make it tender,
28. So he'll have a nice juicy arm to eat,
29. Students: (( laugh ))
30. Debra: [Oooh! Ye::s!]
31. Kyo Ko: [(( continues to laugh ))]
32. Servet: How is the human meat?
33. Mrs. Smith: (( with a tone of humor )) I heard it's salty!
34. Servet: Salty?
35. Mrs. Smith: Yeah! I hear its salty. I don't know.
36. I didn't have this experience lately [0.1]
37. Okay? (( smiles ))
38. Students: (( laugh ))

**“Nobody knows what to do with it!”**

1. Mrs. Smith: [0.1] You know,
2.                   Here it became very popular several years ago.
3.                   Here.
4.                   Because everybody believes it is so healthy,
5.                   Good for you.
6. Kyo Hay:       Yeah! Yeah!
7. Mrs. Smith:    So everybody bought it.
8.                   But nobody knows what to do with it.
9.                   And nobody likes it.
10. Masashi:      Oh!
11. Mrs. Smith:    Perhaps the taste is a problem, for us.
12.                   We need to know what to do with it,
13.                   You know,

## **Appendix B**

# **CORRESPONDENCE**

This appendix contains correspondence letters from UCRIHS.

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH  
MORRILL HALL

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1036

December 4, 1991

Dr. David E. Wright, Chair  
UCRIHS  
Campus

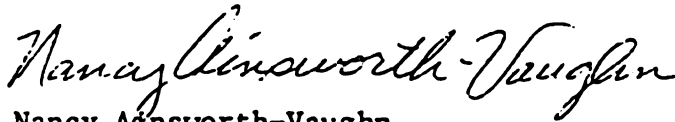
Dear Dr. Wright:

I am the major professor for Suad Abdul-Hamid. I have reviewed the project which she proposes to carry out, and I approve her methodology.

You may contact me at 332-8059 until December 6 and after December 22, should you have further questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn".

Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn  
Associate Professor

## MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH  
AND DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN • 48824-1046

January 8, 1992

Suad Abdul-Hamid  
P.O. Box 6734  
East Lansing, MI 48826

RE: POWER AS REALIZED IN ESL CLASSROOM DISCOURSE, IRB #91-599

Dear Ms. Abdul-Hamid:

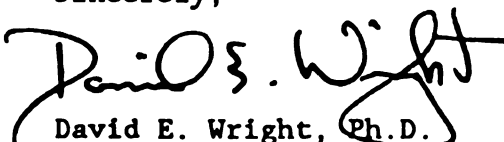
The above project is exempt from full UCRIHS review. I have reviewed the proposed research protocol and find that the rights and welfare of human subjects appear to be protected. You have approval to conduct the research.

You are reminded that UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year. If you plan to continue this project beyond one year, please make provisions for obtaining appropriate UCRIHS approval one month prior to December 30, 1992.

Any changes in procedures involving human subjects must be reviewed by the UCRIHS prior to initiation of the change. UCRIHS must also be notified promptly of any problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects during the course of the work.

Thank you for bringing this project to our attention. If we can be of any future help, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Sincerely,



David E. Wright, Ph.D.  
Chair, UCRIHS

DEW/deo

cc: Dr. Douglas Campbell  
Dr. Nancy Ainsworth-Vaughn

## Appendix C

### CONSENT FORM

#### **PURPOSE:**

I understand that the purpose of this project is to study communication between the teacher and the students in English as a second language classroom. The nature of my involvement in this study does not go beyond my actual behavior in the classroom as a teacher or student. I understand that the collected data for this study will be retained indefinitely, and will be used by the researcher to satisfy the requirements of a fieldwork course TE 922 and TE 923, and might be used as part of her Ph.D. dissertation.

#### **METHODS:**

I understand that audio and video tapes will be used twice a week of my classes in English as a second language during the Winter term, 1992. I understand that these audio and video tapes will be played back and studied by the researcher and those who supervise her work, and I agreed to participate in an interview that the researcher intends to conduct with me by the end of her study for further clarification of the already collected data.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

I have been assured that my confidentiality will be protected, and my name and identity will not be revealed. I do understand that when the video tape will be played it will be shared with other researchers, I might be recognized even though no names will be used. I may choose to have the segment of the video tape where I am identifiable not to be used in the study.

#### **RIGHTS TO WITHDRAW:**

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and without penalty. And I have been assured by the researcher that I reserve the right at any time to decline from participating in any or all parts of this study. I understand that by signing this form I indicate my voluntary agreement to participate in this study.

Witness's  
name:

Participant's  
name:

Signature:

Signature:

Date:

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