

Comparison between spoken and written discourse and its implication in teaching English as second/foreign language

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Abstract: The focus of this research is to investigate some characteristics of discourse that are useful in analyzing and understanding different segments of spoken and written text. The main objective of this study is to reveal the features of spontaneous speech and written text and explain how the spoken and written narratives deviate from each other in their different perspectives. The research also emphasizes both the spoken and written texts and highlights the use of English language in our teaching system. The study focus on the significance of the spoken and written narratives at micro and macro levels of discourse is recorded and transcribed and on the other hand the text of the story (clever fox) analyzed; both the narratives have same similarities and differences in their discourse structures. This study recommends some suggestions regarding to English language teaching in order to bring awareness among the teachers of English towards understanding the use of discourse analysis and may support them in their teaching career.

Keywords: micro & macro discourse analysis, Labov model, comparison of oral and written forms of narratives

INTRODUCTION

The study of discourse deals about the different linguistic features that characterize the different interpretation and comprehension of the spoken and written narratives in a language. Discourse is actually the study of understanding the use of language for achieving the target language for the learners in their learning process. It is very helpful for the language teacher for designing the required material for the learners in order to enhance their abilities. The teachers can get the real benefit of the discourse analysis while teaching English through different activities and the learners achieve their language. The

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systematic contribution of the discourse analysis in the classroom is an interactive process of teaching or providing the material to the learners.

According to Labov (1972), the basic components of narrative structure include: the abstract (summary and/or point of the story), orientation (time, place, characters and situation), complicating action (the event sequence, or plot, usually with crisis or turning point), evaluation (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotion---the soul of narrative), resolution (the outcome of the plot), and a coda (ending the story and bringing action back to present).

We applied Labov's model on the recorded and transcribed narratives. The spoken narrative are analyzed of an "unforgettable event" to which Labov's six-part model can be applied, on the one hand, the structures of written narrative are supposed to be analyzed and the research will construct the implication itself upon the English teaching as a second language. The detailed definition of the six-part model of Labov with appropriate examples is as under:

1. *Abstract*: Abstract is the form of one or two clauses that the narrator uses to point out the whole story at the start of a narrative. Usually, it is the title of the story which introduces the theme of the whole situation. In other words, it is a brief summary statement of the substance of the narrative as viewed by the narrator or it is some kind of opener signaling transition of the story.

2. *Orientation*: It introduces the time, place and character for the reader and listener. It is equivalent of the story grammar setting. It identifies the time, place and character, usually before the beginning of the story's action.

3. *Complicated action*: Complicated action can be found in narrative clauses the description of the sequence of events that are leading up to their climax or peak, the point of maximum suspense. By referring to what happens in the world of the story and what happens in the narrating world, these actions create tension that keeps the audience attached to their seats if not on their feet at all time.

4. *Evaluation*: It comprises the device by which the narrator indicates the point of narrative or why it is felt to be narration worthy. As such, it is the narrative part which shows the narrator's attitude and emotions towards the related events of the situation. Usually an evaluation is done by using adjectives. In evaluation it is observed that why the spectators should listen and allow the narrator for talking. In this phase the narrator is free to comment on the story and the

characters; clauses embedded in the narrative through looking over the details of the characters; ‘correlatives’ decode what happens simultaneously; and explicative that are supposed to be included in narrative clauses.

5. *Resolution*: Resolution tells the audience what finally happened. It is also releasing the anxiety and reveals what occurred at the end.

6. *Coda*: Coda indicates the end of the narrative. It brings the audience back to this world. In other words, by means of coda the narrator can bridge the gap between the end of the story and the present. It is an optional element in the discourse.

To start the analysis, a brief examination of the recorded narrative is given which is followed by the six components of the analysis. Table 1 below shows the lines where different components of Labov’s model have been used.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For teaching a second language/ foreign language, a teacher must be aware about the different perspectives of spoken and written discourse. These both categories are helpful for understanding the different discourse structures of the English language. There are certain crucial differences between spoken and written discourse. It has been clearly demonstrated that writing is not just spoken language written down (Biber 1988, 1992, 1995). There is a big difference between spoken and written discourse, spoken discourse can be disconnected for some time, because the ideas come spontaneously, but in written discourse, the ideas are planned to capture the scene. According to Goody and Watt (1968) the written discourse is a higher order-more logical, formal, and complex-than oral discourse and therefore superior to it. As Ochs (1979) points out, rather than using the terms of formal and informal, it may be more appropriate to speak of planned versus unplanned discourse to describe the differences between such cases. Basically, writing is claimed to be more structurally complex and elaborate than speech, indicated by such features as longer sentences or T-units and greater use of subordination (Chafe 1982); more explicit than speech, in that it has complete idea units with all assumptions and logical relations encoded in text; more decontextualized, or autonomous, than speech, so that it is less dependent on shared situation or background knowledge; less personally involved than speech and more detached and abstract than speech (Chafe 1982); characterized by a higher concentration of new information than

speech (Brown and Yule 1983); more deliberately organized and planned than speech (Akinnaso 1982). The researcher will analyze both the sections (spoken & written) by applying the six-part model of Labov in order to examine the different characteristics that will be helpful for teaching second language learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY (MACRO & MICRO ANALYSIS)

The study was conducted at the macro and micro level of discourse of the narratives. In macro discourse analysis, the researcher recorded the voice and transcribed it for analyzing the spoken features of the narrative and on the other hand, the researcher analyzed a short narrated story at micro level. Both the narratives were analyzed at macro and micro level. A systematic analysis of spoken and written discourse could offer the kind of data teachers need to compare the two modes of discourse and a model they could use in their writing instruction Fecho, Allen, Mazaros, & Inyega (2006). The researcher focused on the spoken & written features in the form of an interview and a short narrated story and within both these texts the researcher identified the difference between them. The study proposes methodologically within a qualitative research. B

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher collected and reviewed both the discourses seriously and in both spoken (transcribed) and written narrative, the narrator gathered the supporting detail for both of the segments and analyzed separately by applying the six-part model of Labov that has been characterized in different features. Moreover, the certain elements of the model usually work in the following order: “abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda.” The six-part model made the researcher to construct an accurate comparison of the spoken and written discourse for the help of the teacher’s awareness in teaching. Interestingly, the narrative features in both the sections (spoken and written) discourse match up with each other (see Appendices).

The research is based on the comparative analysis of the narrator’s spoken discourse and a short narrated story were carefully planned and followed accordingly. The researcher analyzed the differences and similarities between spoken and written narratives. He pointed out the different aspects in (interview) spoken narrative that resembled with a written narrative (short narrated story) and suggested ways in which

teacher could aware the differences in spoken and written discourse, so that the students get the proper guidelines in using the spoken and of written narratives.

KEY TO UNDERSTAND TRANSCRIPTION

We have used the following transcription conventions which are adapted from Van Dijk (1997, 313-314). One full stops for a short pause, two for a longer pause, and three for a long pause.

PUNCTUATION:

- Capital letters: For proper names
- Colons: For Lengthened syllabus
- Capitalization: For highly stressed syllabus

NONVERBAL SOUNDS: (Clicks) used for the sound produced with the tip of the tongue striking the upper teeth bridge. Indecipherable: bracket and a question mark for him.

ANALYSIS AT A MICRO LEVEL: UNFORGETTABLE EVENT

Some characteristic of spoken language found in the above transcribed passage is summarized in the following table:

Table 1: List of features of spoken language

Use of the lexical verbs	For example, got in line, 30-35
Cohesive devices:	'so' (line 2,9,17,26,29,30 'but' 5,10,12,20,22 'and' in L 6, 7, 24, 25, 33, 35 'because' in L 28 'or' L 21
Discourse markers	The word 'well' in 1
Less grammatical sentences	So spirited we (L 13) It was like a it was some pleasurable moment (L 13) There for us (L 18) Something may be it was yeah (L15) That what was still there or something else (L16) They were just they might be just a few steps behind (L20) Something like that and some other worldly some unknown thing sounded good (L 21-22) It looked good it was beautiful but it sparked again but this time it was...(L 22) My turning into ashes (L 28) I was to do immediately (L29)
Repetition	To have To have (L3) And.....and (L6) So which are flowers ... so which are flowers

	like (L8) I was....I was (L29) A few steps a few steps (L 19)
Self-correction	I was ... we were (L 6) The rain (L 9) The Moon (L 10) The environment (L12) I saw... something (L 18) I am.... I was (L 25)
Co-ordination	Almost every line contains ‘and’ as a conjunction. It is used seventeen times in the speech. Its high frequency shows that it is the characteristics of the spoken language.
False starts	The peanuts (L 7) The Iris (L 9)
Rephrasing	I used to... I had been (L 3) I was... we were (L 6) I am ... I was (L 25) I had it.... I picked it (L 27)
Reciprocal	Right! (L 35)
Interruption	Yes (L 33) Thank you very much (L 35)

The above list of features of spoken language consists of the characteristics of spoken language in the transcribed passage.

In the following section we analyzed a short narrative in written form and examine the form and examine its main characteristics.

The Clever Fox: Analysis at a Micro-Level

Some written characteristics of the language used in the text above are summarized in the following table:

Table 2

Non-finite clauses	Sitting (L 5), Holding (L 5), Flattering (L12)
Relative clauses:	That (L 6 & 12) Which (L 18)
Subject verb inversion	Said the fox (L12) Thought the crow (L 15)
Small (minor) sentence:	Tasty (L 6)
Cohesive device	Time adverbial (sequences) When (L 9) Linkers: that (L 6 & 12, this (L 7,15,17)
Fronting

COMPARISON OF THE TEXTS AT A MICRO-LEVEL

The above data (Tables 1 and 2) show that the spoken text has the following characteristics: its language is less grammatical. It is full of the false starts, rephrasing, self-correction and repetitions, which are not found in Text 2. Furthermore; it seems unplanned, spontaneous, interactive and full of interruptions like the background noise and the interference by other people, in contrast, the text 2 (written) is well planned, organized and free from external interruptions. It is full of non-finite clauses, relative clauses and cohesive devices. It has the characteristics of spoken language such as, subject verb inversion, small sentences, fronting etc.

In both texts, we find the use of coordination of the sentences, through the written text is more replete with sub-ordination clauses. In both texts there are found examples of discourse markers and cohesive devices (linkers) through the written text are more variant and dense as compared to the spoken text.

Both texts use narrative clauses, which have a simple past form of the verb. They are the minimal units of the narrative and are temporally ordered. Both the texts use small sentences, i.e. words equivalent to a sentence.

It is a comprehensive analysis by any means, but it is representative of aspects of spoken and written English.

The texts are structurally organized and fulfill the characteristics of the model developed by Labov (1972) as under:

Table 3: Comparison of oral and written forms of narratives

Narrative Structure	Text 1 A Spontaneous Speech	Text 2: A Short Narrative
Abstract	[The title] Unforgettable event	[The Title] The Clever Fox
Orientation	It was a very nice summer night when I was living at a farm with my friends.... (L1)	There once lived a crow. One day he was very hungry..... (L1)
Complicating action	This is a significant portion of the story, beginning with]... suddenly, I saw something sparking on the road a few steps away from me and my friends (L 18-19) OR suddenly I went to close to it and I was about to touch the thing I thought it was some	[The complicated actions start at the end of the story, in the beginning the story is full of sequence narrative.]... the crowd started to believe what that fox saying (L14-15) OR As soon as the foolish crow

	wood that was burning there I was to about pick it up(L23-24)	opened his mouth to sing the bread fell from its beak and into the ground (L 16-17)
Evaluation	It was a very beautiful night (L 3-4) it was cloudy and cool wind...(L 4-5) OR immediately after it stopped raining (L7-8)	His eyes fall on a piece of bread (L 3) OR... that breads looks delicious (L 6) OR ... the fox decided to use his cunning means to get the piece of bread from the mouth of crowd(L 6-8) OR ...crows are such lovely birds and you are charming too(L 11) OR ... I have heard besides many beautiful you also have a sweet voice(L 12-13)
Resolution	I was able to see that it was a main electric cable that had come down the tract(L 25-26) OR ... I thanked God for sending this lightening just at the very right moment when I was about to proceed to touch the electric cable(L 30-32)	The clever fox which had just been waiting for this very moment caught the bread in his mouth gulped it down his throat (L16-17)
Coda	I was able to save mine and my friend(L 26-27) OR ...That is one story that I never forget it because one moment something that came from heaven some divine lightening that had saved me and my friends(L 33-35)	The crow had paid a heavy price of his foolishness(L 18-19)

DISCUSSION

Table 3 shows that both the spontaneous speech and the short written narrative abstracts consist of the title. According to Labovian terms both the title indicates that what the narratives will be about and also tell why it is being told.

The orientation part of the story is brief, consisting of only a few clauses in which the narrator tells the time, place, persons and their situation and it occurs immediately before the first narrative clauses as a rule. Orientation often contains past progressive verbs depicting the type of situation that was going on before the first event of the story. According to this criterion the opening statements, 'it was nice summer night' in Text 1 and 'There once lived a crow. One day he was very hungry' in Text 2 serve the function.

Complicating action is the backbone of the story. This part of the story consists of the set of narrative events that engage the audience about the happenings which happened to him in order to make up a story. In Text 1 it consists of a sequence of interrupted narrative clauses (by telling the event with structural features) such as 'saw', 'went' they make a significant feature of the story. Text 2 is more organized as compared to Text 1. It has been observed that in the beginning and the end of the story there are dialogue in much sequenced form, its middle is a good example of sequential narrative. This part is consisting of simple past form of the verb make the narrative core. They move the story forward and show the steps in sequence. For example, verb form such as 'saw', 'sat', 'held', 'spoke', 'heard', 'opened', 'fell' etc. show that simple narrative clauses are dominant in the story.

The resolution of the story is usually presented in the final clause (s) of the complicating action. Complicating action takes the situation to the climax or to the final peak, after which comes a clause answering the question 'what finally happened?' In Text 1 the utterance 'I was able to see that it was a main electric cable that had come down the tract' and in Text 2 the clauses 'The clever fox which had just been waiting for this very moment caught the bread in his mouth gulped it down his throat'.

The function of the coda is to seal off the telling of the specific story and the complicating actions and show that the narrator clearly states that his story has now come to an end. Its function is to leave the audience with a feeling of satisfaction and completeness that matters have been rounded off and accounted for. It brings the audience back to this real world. In Text 1 'I was able to save mine and my friend' in Text 2, 'The crow had paid a heavy price of his foolishness'.

The evaluation is the major component after complicating action of the story. This part is to identify the incidents in the story such as in Text 1 'it was a beautiful night' or, 'it was cloudy and cool wind' In

Text 2, “His eyes fall on a piece of bread” or, ‘that breads look delicious’ or, ‘immediately after it stopped raining.’

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The above analysis shows that this study seeks to identify and describe that the features of both the spoken and written texts are somehow similar in their use in a language. These features are commonly used in formal and informal contexts.

Standard descriptive grammars of English are normally used to describe such linguistic features. Eventually written contexts are used to describe most of the authoritative / standard grammars and this is the reason that in the description of such grammars written examples are used formally. Therefore, written English structures are taught to the learners of English language enabling them to follow such standards in spoken English. This practice leads these students to speak English according to the already set standards of written English to follow these in letter and spirit. That’s why such expressions can easily be traced out in their written and spoken language. This emerging thought is not only useful for learning, but also for teachers. Teachers peep into the minds of their learners through this strategy.

CONCLUSION

Both of the sections (spoken & written) were analyzed on applying Labov’s framework. The different characteristics of spoken and written texts noticeably identified, the similarity and commonality between both the narratives are compared and concluded that the Spoken language seems to be less structured, full of false starts & repetition, rephrased and self-corrected, on the other hand the written text is fully structured, with discourse markers, with cohesive devices and more variant as compared to spoken discourse.

Appendices:

Text: 1 Spoken narrative analysis

UNFORGETTABLE EVENT	
well. .. (cough) ... it was a very nice summer night when I was living at a farm with my friends	
this farm was located in H9 I used to... I had been .. living there for more than five years ... so it	
was a routine in the evening I used to have (clicks) to have evening walk with the friends who	

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were living with me at the farm so one night It was a very beautiful night there was you know it	
was a summer night but it was cloudy and cool wind...it was blowing and I was enjoying the	5
Whole atmosphere this romantic atmosphere and ... (clicks) and then started raining and I was .. we	
Were..having chit chat and eating the peanuts .. and taking a cup of tea immediately after it stopped	
raining I decided to have ... to have a walk with my friends we just left and went into the fields	
where we used to actually grow these bulbous crops ..so which are flowers .. So which are flowers	
like Claudius and the Iris all these flowers so it was a time immediately after .. the rain .. there was	
moonlight ... the moon .. was peeping out of clouds and it was just smiling at the flowers and the	10
whole scene was beautiful and we were..you know .. very excited enjoying this whole the	
Environment .. and you know.. umm .. (coughs) we were high spirited cutting jokes laughing ..	
you know it all was like a it was some pleasurable moment and so spirited we... we came out of	
the fields we started walking on a tract that was within the farm we were going down to of	
another field that was the wheat crop or something else may be it was .. yeah .. It was wheat I don't	15
remember or it was summer crop either it was late May days ... that what was still there or	
something else or some other crop so we decided to go there to have a long walk to the farm we	
didn't know what was stored.. there for us ... suddenly .. I saw : something sparking on the	
road just of a ... a few steps(clicks)... a few steps away from me and my friends...	
they were just they might be just a few steps behind and that sparking thing looked	20
some sparking bird .. or some insect ... (clicks) ... or something like that and some other	
worldly some unknown thing sounded good .. it looked good It was beautiful, but it sparked	
again but this time it was... some fire and suddenly I went close to it and I was about to touch the	
thing I thought it was some wood that was burning there so I was about to pick it up and ... that	
...that lightening happened and I am...I was able to see that it was a main electric cable that had	25

come down the tract. So it was just... you know a few moments that I was able to save mine as	
well as my friends lives otherwise had I touched it I had it ... picked it up, with my finger that	
could have meant you know, my turning into ashes, because It was...you know the live main	
electric cable that was very dangerous Thing so I was ...I was to do Immediately after that ...It	
was something....so dangerous thing so I got a shock I didn't know Thank God for sending this	30
lightening just at the very right moment when ... I was about to proceed to ...to touch ...the	
electric cable so that was a strange day and that was... you know very telling and... very	
teaching story and event so of my life that is one story that I never forget ..yes.. it because one moment	
something that came from heaven some divine lightening ...(clicks) ... that had somehow saved	
me and my life...right ..I had very bitter experience in my life Thank you very much ... Ok ...	
(Time of the recording 6:41	

Text 2: Written narrated analysis

THE CLEVER FOX	
There once lived a crow. One day he was very hungry. He had not been able to get any food	
the previous day. "If I do not get anything to eat I will starve to death," he thought.	
As the crow was searching for food, his eyes fell on a piece of bread. He quickly swooped	
down, picked it up and flew off. Far away in a lonely place he sat on a tree to enjoy the	
bread. Just then a hungry fox saw the crow sitting on the tree holding the bread in his mouth.	5
"Yummy! That bread looks delicious. Tasty. What I would give to get that piece of bread," the fox	
Thought. The fox decided to use all his cunning means to get the piece of bread from the	
mouth of the crow. He sat under the tree. The crow saw him and thought, 'I guess this fox	
wants to eat my bread. I shall hold it carefully.'" And when he held on to the bread even more	
tightly. The clever fox spoke to the crow politely. He said, "Hello friend! How are you?" But	10

the crow did not say anything “Crows are such lovely birds. And you are very charming too,’	
said the fox, flattering the crow. Then the fox said,’ I have heard that besides being beautiful	
you also have a sweet voice. ‘Please sing a song for me.’	
By now the crow started to believe what the fox was saying. ‘The fox knows true beauty. I	
must be the most beautiful bird in this whole world. I will sing him a song,’ thought the crow.	15
As soon as the foolish crow opened his mouth to sing the bread fell from its beak and into	
the ground. The Clever fox, which had just been waiting for this very moment, caught the	
bread in his mouth and gulped it down his throat. The crow had paid a heavy price for his	
foolishness.	

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