

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to identify the structure of narrative compositions written by fourth-year English major students of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Naresuan University, Phitsanulok. It was expected that the study would provide us with the information about how a narrative composition written by this group of Thai students looked like and if the way they wrote was effective as evaluated by EFL teachers. This information would supply EFL teachers with a concrete guideline for evaluating a narrative composition.

Chapter Three explains all procedures in this study. It includes Subjects, Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Validity and Reliability of the Study.

Subjects

The subjects in this study were 43 fourth-year English major students who enrolled in the Essay and Report Writing course in the first semester of the academic year 2001 at Naresuan University, Phitsanulok. The student's age ranged from 20-23 years, and their first language was Thai. The students had studied three courses relating to English writing; Grammar and Writing (205221), Writing (205321), and Note - Taking Summarizing, and Letter Writing (205421); it was assumed that they all learned English to the stage that they could express their ideas through their writing. Three sections of the Essay and Report Writing course were offered in this semester, but only two sections were selected for the study. These two intact groups were selected for the reason that they were taught by the same instructor. The students in another section were excluded

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due to the reason that they were taught by a different instructor. This might effect the outcome of their writing compositions because the students in this group might have lessons, assignments and background knowledge that were different from the students in the two intact groups, and this might cause variation in the study.

Data Collection

It is generally believed that in order to be effective and successful, a composition should be written during a test because the students will put their utmost effort on their compositions. In this study, the students in the two groups were assigned to write a composition by the instructor during the final exam. The students had to choose to write about only one topic from the four topics given (see Appendix A). The writing session was one hour. In order to see if there was a rhetorical organization, the students were allowed to use a dictionary because the researcher did not want the students' limitations of the vocabulary to impede their writing process. After one hour, all 43 compositions were collected by the instructor.

Analysis of Data

In the data analysis, this research was undertaken in accordance with two methods; Evaluation of the students' compositions and Analysis of the Students' Compositions. The first method was done by two evaluators, and the second one was done by the researcher and the expert. The two methods are as follow.

1. Evaluation of the Student's Compositions

After getting all 43 compositions from the instructor, the researcher assigned number 1-43 to the compositions. The compositions were firstly offered to two evaluators. One of them was a native English teacher in the Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty,

Naresuan University, Phitsanulok. He was experienced in teaching English for nearly a decade. The other was a non-native English teacher in English courses in the Faculty of Education, Yonok College, Lamphang. He was experienced in teaching English for five years. The compositions were then scored by these two evaluators using the holistic scoring of Test of Written English (TWE) scoring guide (Educational Testing Service 1986) (see Appendix B). Each of the students' compositions had two scores gained from the two evaluators. The scores were averaged and then arranged from the highest to lowest scores.

2. Analysis of the Students' Compositions

All 43 compositions were collected by the instructor, and then given to the researcher. After getting all 43 compositions, the researcher assigned number 1- 43 to the compositions. They were analyzed to see if there was a basic generic structure of a narrative pattern. As described in Chapter II, this study drew on Labov and Waletzky's narrative pattern (1967) to provide a more objective framework for the analysis of the students' compositions. As other studies have shown, narratives follow certain prototypical patterns or grammars and the patterns may be universal across cultures (Mandler, 1984); (Rumelhart, 1977). Thus, the models for narrative analysis such as Labov and Waletzky's can be applied to stories written by ESL students from different cultural backgrounds to assess their narrative quality (Wu, 1995).

The researcher analyzed the compositions based on Labov and Waletzky's narrative pattern (1967). Each composition was separated into individual sentences. Each sentence was analyzed to see its function of narrative factors as characterized by four factors; Orientation, Complication, Resolution and Evaluation. For example, the sentence 'when I was ten years old I lived in Phitsanulok' can be seen as a factor of the orientation, or the sentence '...so this event is an unforgettable event for me and I never forget it' can be seen as a factor of the Evaluation. Furthermore, some sentences were analyzed as carrying more than one discourse function. For instance, the clause 'When I

was five years old, my younger brother was born' can be seen as an event in Orientation (italicized) with Complication (underlined) to the story attached. The following figure showed an example of how the researcher analyzed the students' composition in this study.

Figure 3 An Example of Students' Composition Parsed into Clauses

An Unforgettable Event

(1) When I was young, I disliked Mathematics. (2) My mathematics teacher usually assigned a difficult homework to us, and the deadline always was the next day in the morning.

(3) Every morning, I often copied my friend's homework. (4) My friend copied my homework too. (5) My teacher knew that we copied homework, but he just said he would catch the students who copied homework by himself, and didn't tell us what he would handle us. (6) One day, I went to school early. (7) I forgot to do my homework, so I decided to copy my friend's homework. (8) Unfortunately, my teacher saw I was copying my friend's homework. (9) He didn't say anything. (10) Until in the Mathematics class he whipped me, 4 times. (11) He said I was an example of bad student. (12) My friends made fun me. (13) I was ashamed and I started to hate the Mathematics. (14) I hardly copy my friends' homework since the day.

As show in Figure 3, sentences1 and 2 were analyzed as a factor of Orientation. SentencesClauses 4-15 were Complication. Clauses 16-18 were resolution and Clause 19 was Evaluation.

In order to see if there was the difference in the use of narrative factors between the high-rated and the low-rated compositions, the five high-rated compositions were compared with the five-low rated compositions. Moreover the information of the basic generic structure of narrative compositions written by 43 fourth year students at Naresuan University were described

Validity and Reliability of the Study

This study was an analysis of the narrative compositions written by 43 fourth-year English major students. In order to ensure that the selected topics for writing compositions were appropriate to lead the students to write narrative compositions, the researcher did a pilot survey using a questionnaire (See Appendix C). The questionnaire was conducted with 20 fourth-year English major students at Naresuan University who were not the subjects of the study. It was aimed to survey that the selected topics were appropriate to write in a kind of narrative writing. The students were required to consider if each of the topics was appropriate for writing either Narration or Description. It was reported that 96% of the students agreed that the topics were appropriate for writing narrative composition. This was assumed that all of the selected topics had validity and they were appropriate to lead the students to write a narrative composition.

In order to ensure the intra-rater reliability attributable to the study on the data analysis, the researcher analyzed the students' compositions twice. The time lapse between the two analyzing was two weeks. The percentage of the sameness of the analysis between the two analyzing was 100 percent.

In order to ascertain the inter-rater reliability, ten compositions were randomly selected and analyzed by an expert who was a professor with a doctorate in linguistics and with experience in teaching English at the graduate level in Thailand for several years. The expert was asked to identify the factors of narrative pattern in the students' compositions. Before reviewing the students' composition, this expert was briefed by the researcher about the criteria and the narrative pattern used in the study. Then the results received from the researcher were compared with those received from the expert to ensure that the analyzing of the students' compositions was reliable. The inter-rater agreement of analyzing the narrative pattern between the researcher and this expert was

reported in percentage. The degree of agreement was 97 percent. This agreement was very high, indicating that the analysis of the students' compositions was reliable.

In brief, 43 compositions written by fourth-year English major students were collected by the instructor. Then the compositions were scored by the two evaluators and arranged from the highest to the lowest scores. In order to see if there was the difference in the use of narrative factors between the high-rated and the low-rated compositions, the five high-rated compositions were compared with the five low-rated compositions. Finally the information of the basic generic structure of narrative compositions written by 43 fourth year students at Naresuan University were described.

