

Huabin Zhou
ANP 420
Professor Tetreault

Take Home Exam 2

Narrative Collection and Transcription

*The original conversation was narrated in Chinese

A Trip to West Creek Old Town

- 1 M: ...Remember the pics we sent you couple of days ago?
2 D: It should be your Thursday morning, when you sent us your breakfast photo
3 Me: Ye:ah, those of you posing in a park? By the way dad, you should practice
4 your photography skills, mom looks little bit old in those you took hhh
5 D: hhh
6 M: hhh ((while hitting dad's shoulder jokingly
7 Me: Yeah so how was the trip?
8 D: We:ll=
9 M: =It was... Ugh! You remember Bronze Old Town? We took grandpa and
10 grandma to a year ago? In Taizhou (.) took us a 2-hour road trip
11 Me: Yeah
12 M: That was wa:ay better! Comparing to it West Creek looked like *an ugly*
13 *woman trying to imitate a true beauty!*
14 Me & D: ((laugh loudly.))
15 M: Ugh! It was so disappointing! We started at 9 o'clock in the morning (.)
16 and it took us 2 or 3 hours=
17 Me: = was it tha:at bad?
18 D: Let your mom finish her sentence hhh
19 M: Well, they said that the place where Dong Yong met the Seven Fairies was
20 in that old town=
21 Me: =wait what? that story was originated there?
22 M: at least they said so, some sort of temple, but it looked the same as that
23 summer house here in Yinbing Park
24 Me & D: ((laugh loudly))
25 M: ...oh yeah I remember its name, Taishan Temple, they said it was built in
Tang dynasty
26 Me: Re:ally?!
27 D: It has been renovated a lot=
28 M: =everything has been changed into new ones, except a old bridge, that was
29 authentic, the other stuffs? all fake ((shaking her head, uttered a quick sigh))
30 Me: so: didn't you say you had a good time when you sent me the pics?
31 D: (.) Oh yeah, it was Huanghai Park, we walked there after lunch.
32 M: Huanghai was good though (.) the forests there were beautiful, the air was
33 fresh, we took it as an "oxygen massage".
34 D: Yeah the air was re:ally fresh! The minute we walked into the park we could
35 tell it.

36 M: Do you know the history of it? The Huanghai Park?
37 Me: Nah...
38 D: Well then listen up=
39 M: =your dad again! he could not stop talking about those youths...
40 Me: hhh
41 D: You remember those sent-down youths in 60s? A group of youth were sent
42 down there in 1965, the Huanghai Park that time were mainly barren land...
43 that... how do you call it? Salt...?((turn to mom))
44 M: Saline Land=
45 D:=yeah there were mainly saline lands, and those youths were sent there to
46 cultivate the land and plant trees
47 M: Can you imagine that? Almost 4000 Hectares!
48 D: Yeah, 4000 Hectares in total! And fifty years later that place turned into
49 this huge forest, the Huanghai Park
50 Me: wow tha:ats incredible...
51 D: Yeah the forests were truly beautiful
52 M: Well, little kids gonna love that place, but we just took it as an "oxygen
53 massage"(.). It was kinda cloudy that day you know
54 D: It was not bad.
55 Me: Yeah...
56 M: Oh one more thing!=
57 Me: =what?
58 D: Well, haha, something that kinda terrifying((laugh in a self-mocking tone))
59 M: That really shocking! I haven't seen your dad shocked like that for
60 decades.
61 Me: What happened?
62 D: Well, when we decided to leave the park, we walked through a small
63 footpath near the edge of the park, and there were no others around us,
64 everything seems so quiet, and the environment is kinda desolate...
65 M: And suddenly your dad turned around with a pale face and he quickly
66 grabbed away from that footpath...
67 D: Well... There was a snake ((scratching his head))
68 M: *I was so terrified cuz I haven't seen your dad acted like that for decades*
69 *and I saw it too, that snake, green little thing, quickly slipped away into*
70 *the bushes...*
71 Me: Well it might not be toxic, remember the fieldtrip we had in my
72 primary school? In the countryside, we saw some water snakes too.
73 D: I know, but... you know... I haven't seen a snake so lively in front of me for
74 years! ...and it shocked me bad!
75 M: Fortunately nothing bad happened
76 D: Yeah, it was a little interlude hhh
77 ((All of us laughing loudly.))
78 Me: So the trip was not that bad huh
79 D: It was OK

80 M: And we had dinner in that restaurant near our apartment, when we got back
 81 around 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and that fried fish!
 82 D: That fried fish was re:ally great
 83 M: You have to try some when you come back home this winter
 84 D: hhh
 85 Me: I will, I will, you are making me hungry!
 86 ((All of us laughing loudly.))

Transcription Keys

- (()) Description in double parentheses indicate non-verbal movements
- :
- : A colon indicates that the preceding sound was elongated in marked pronunciation
- (.) A period in parentheses indicates a stretch of time, lasting no more than two-tenths of a second, during which there is no talk
- ... An ellipse indicates a pause that longer than 2 seconds, during which there is no talk
- = An equal sign indicate utterances spoken one after the other without a pause
- hhh h's connected to a word indicate breathiness, usually associated with laughter
- _ Text that is underlined was pronounced with emphasis, i.e. some combination of higher volume, pitch, and greater vowel length
- italic* Descriptions transcribed in italic indicate the sentence was speaking in regional dialect

Narrative Analysis w/ Labov's Elements

- Abstract

There's no clear indication of abstract in this story

- Orientation

1. "...Remember the pics we sent you couple of days ago?" (Line 1)
 - I take this as one of orientation sentences despite the fact that the information it gives was kind of vague and does not identity with the normal orientations we would have in a story. However, it did bring the listener back to the pics she send couple of days ago - introducing the settings of the following story.

2. " We started at 9 o'clock in the morning (.) and it took us 2 or 3 hours=" (Line 15-16)
 - This is one of those common examples we can see for orientations, where it identify the time when the whole story begins.

3. " Well, they said that the place where Dong Yong met the Seven Fairies was in that old town=" (Line 19-20)
 - Well, I feel a little reluctant to include this one here, since it definitely provides the historical background of that particular temple and bring the listen close to the

settings. Yet I am not so sure, this story may have a lots orientations due to the complexity its information possesses.

- Complicating Action

1. " Yeah the air was re:ally fresh! The minute we walked into the park we could tell it.." (Line 34)

- There are lots of complicating actions existing in first half of this story, while this one I pick indicates not only an evaluation of the freshness of Huanghai's air, but also indicates one main characters' action as they decided to enter the park.

2. " And suddenly your dad turned around with a pale face and he quickly grabbed away from that footpath..." (Line 65-66)

- This is definitely the most easy-to-pick complicating actions in this story, since it is the major twitch of story from a cozy forest walk to this frightful encounter.

- Evaluation

1. " at least they said so, some sort of temple, but it looked the same as that summer house here in Yinbing Park" (Line 22-23)

- Again, this story has lots of evaluations embedded in the narratives. This sentence I chose uses exaggerative satire and comparison to indicate the narrator's attitude towards this "authentic temple" - which looked the same as a common summer house.

2. " Well, little kids gonna love that place, but we just took it as an "oxygen massage"(. It was kinda cloudy that day you know" (Line 52-53)

- This one is really interesting. Following the other narrator's evaluation on the forest as "it's really beautiful" (line 51), this narrator did not directly oppose his idea, while using series of very subtle descriptions and comparisons to indicate her attitude towards the trip in that forest. "Little kids gonna love that place" - but we are a mid-aged couple and did not bring any kids with us; "just took it as an 'oxygen massage'" - the fresh air is really enjoyable, but maybe this is the only thing I enjoyed from that trip; "kinda cloudy" - well the weather might not be the best for a nice forest walk.

- Resolution

1.

" 75 M: Fortunately nothing bad happened

76 D: Yeah, it was a little interlude hhh

77 ((All of us laughing loudly.))

78 Me: So the trip was not that bad huh

79 D: It was OK"

- These series of interactions between the two main narrators mark the end of the snake encounter and the trip of Huanghai park, and give the final evaluation for the trip, therefore, I take it as one resolution for this story.

2. "And we had dinner in that restaurant near our apartment, when we got back around 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and that fried fish!" (79-80)

- Well, this kind of mark the end of the whole narrative, even though a little bit irrelevant to the trip itself, but somehow I feel it can be seen as a resolution for the whole narrative since it kind of represents the end of the whole old town trip - they came back home and have some delicious dinner - the end.

- Coda

There's no clear indication of coda in this story

- Narrative Analysis w/ Holmes' model

This conversation took place among me and my parents, which was maybe one unique case for this take home assignments, since the whole narrative was in Chinese. It was a weekly routine among my family, in which we would schedule a video chat (through Wechat) in every Saturday morning (EST). This narrative was recorded on Oct. 13th. I asked them permission and consent for "some information" that I would later include in this anthropological analysis two days prior to that video chat. However, I did not straightforwardly ask them to "share a story" prior or during the conversation, all things just came naturally, since sharing stories about everyday life was part of our routine for each week's video talk. I hope this can explain all of the confusion that may rise in this narrative transcript.

Yet I'm grateful to find out how dense this narrative turned out to contain. This narrative generally tells a story that the parents went on a trip to an old town called West Creek in a nearby town, and the two main narrators each gave their own attitudes towards this experience. Is it an enjoyable one? Or is it a really terrible one? Neither of them gave a straight answer. There exist a large degree of ambiguity throughout series of their evaluations on each part of the trip. Yet it was evident that the father was more neutral in this case comparing to the mother, who would overtly express her disappointment. For instance, when they were first asked their opinions towards the trip, the father was reluctant to give a straight answer, while the mother indirectly showed her disappointment by comparing the trip to West Creek with another trip happened before (where the listener also participated in), together with utterances with emphasis like "Ugh!", "wa:ay better" and specific details of how much time they spent on the road (see line 8 - 16). These contrasts were evident throughout the whole conversation, that the mother was always the one giving (relatively) more straightforward opinions while the father's attitudes would often be (relatively) more ambiguous. However, one thing to notice is neither of those two gave a straight critiques throughout the narrative (except the mother's initial impression) and they would end the narrative as "it was an ok trip" (see line 77-80). The reason of which can be found in Holmes' mode of story analysis, since stories often serve the role to entertain and amuse. Considering the fact that this was a story narrated during a weekly video chat between the parents and their son who was studying abroad, the parents would not wish to fill the conversation with negative opinions or bad things.

However, these negativities did exist in the narrative - either the imperfect trip itself or that snake encounter, but these complaints were told with a humorous tone, and one could easily see that there are lots of laughs going on.

Holmes also argues that stories may serve to bolster one's ego and socialize, educate the listener. These characteristics are also evident in this narrative. The mother, who complained more and would give more straightforward opinions, actually reflected her role in the family as a woman with power, yet there's no sign of authority. On the other hand, the father's often reticent and ambiguous attitudes throughout the conversation maybe viewed as a way of showing respect to the mother and let her lead the narrative. With the exception of the history of Huanghai Park and sent-down youths, together with the frightful snake encounter. His narratives, even though were relatively short, actually serve to educate the listener in a subtle way. For instance, he would remind the listener to let the mother finish her sentence (line 18), and the "history class" he gave about Huanghai Park and sent-down youth (line 36-50), while did not use a demanding tone. His role in the family as the "leader" in this case was prominent. However, sort of like Mori's men in Holmes' analysis, he would also use self-mocking in the story telling, instead of portraying himself as a masculine hero with no fear. For instance, we can see subtle movements like "scratching his head" (line 67) and how directly he would admit how shocked he was during that snake encounter (line 67-74). This again, indicated his role among the family, represents as a leader instead of an "authority". However, he definitely would not show this aspect of his narrative in other situations like huge family dinner (with all the elders and relatives) or party with his colleagues. All of these indicate one form of modern Chinese family/kinship structure and the new aspect of masculine/feminine identity among each household.

In the end I also want to quickly discuss two other aspects I found from this narrative. As Holmes argues, stories may serve to explore social issues. This whole experience of visiting one so-called "old town" indicates how provincial governments would follow the campaigns publicized by the central government ("preserving traditional culture" was one of President Xi's recent campaigns), while these actions were often crude in their essences as we could see how awkward and inauthentic this "old town" turned out to be. The father's educative narrative on history of sent-down youth also indicate the influence he have had from that particular period, especially considering the fact that he was raised in the countryside with two die-hard socialist veterans in the household (his father and uncle). Last but not the least, the presence of dialect in the narrative is the most interesting thing for me. The mother would use dialect to describe how inauthentic West Creek turned out to be, while the phrase she used was an old Chinese saying. The other case both narrators use dialect was when they describe the snake encounter and how shocked the father was. Even though mandarin is the language we often use among us three, we still would use dialect in many occasions. The role of dialect in today's Chinese society is one of those topics that I wish to explore more in my graduate study, and this particular narrative has already shed light upon this topic.