

# 口語と文語の連続性と対人的関与 ——話しことばと書きことばによる第1言語と第2言語の 英語と日本語のナラティブ——

## The Oral/Literate Continuum and Interpersonal Involvement: L1 and L2 Oral and Written Narratives in English and Japanese

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**Keywords** ナラティブ, 話しことば, 書きことば, 口語と文語の連続性, 対人的関与  
narrative, spoken discourse, written discourse, oral-literate continuum, interpersonal involvement

### ABSTRACT

話しことばは構造的にシンプルでインフォーマルだと言われることが多いが、書きことばはより複雑で形式的だと考えられている (Chafe, 1982)。口語と文語の連続性について解説している Tannen (1982b) は、書きことばはジャンルによって話しことばの特徴を含むことがあり、またその逆もあり得ると説明している。口語談話は対人的関与を表すことが多く、文語談話は情報伝達を表すことが多い。また、話し手と聞き手の対人的関与を反映する特徴として、能動態・並列構文・直接引用の使用などが挙げられている。本研究では、英語母語話者と日本語母語話者、および日本人の英語学習者から、異なるモダリティ（話しことばと書きことば）で収集されたナラティブのデータを比較し、長さと対人的関与の観点から分析した。その結果、対人的関与のストラテジー（直接話法など）は、口語と文語の両方に見られることがわかった。さらに、対人的関与のストラテジー（擬音語など）に関しては、それぞれの言語に特有の違いも見られた。

Spoken discourse is often described as being structurally simple and informal, while written discourse is seen as being more elaborated, complex, and formal (e.g., Chafe, 1982). Tannen (1982b) describes an oral/literate continuum which exists between orality and literacy, explaining that writing can include features associated with speaking and vice versa, depending on the genre. Strategies associated with orality are the result of a relative focus on interpersonal involvement, while those associated with literacy are the result of less focus on interpersonal involvement and more focus on information conveyed. Tannen (1985) describes features reflecting a relative focus on interpersonal involvement involving the speaker and audience, including features such as high concentration of detail and imagery, use of active voice, parallel constructions, and use of direct quotations. Linguistic strategies which might be used to highlight

interpersonal involvement may differ according to language and modality. This study compares elicited narratives collected in two different modalities (i.e., spoken and written) from L1 English and L1 Japanese narrators, as well as Japanese L2 learners of English. It compares spoken and written (both handwritten and typed) narratives in terms of length and two different strategies of interpersonal involvement. The results show that strategies of interpersonal involvement can be seen both in oral and written narratives (e.g., direct speech). At the same time, there are language-specific differences regarding interpersonal involvement strategies used (e.g., onomatopoeia/mimesis).

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Spoken and Written Discourse

Earlier studies on the systematic study of language in the West tended to focus on written language because it was easily collected, stored, and examined. Later, a substantial body of research on the similarities and differences between spoken and written discourse emerged (e.g., Chafe, 1982, 1985; Chafe & Danielwica, 1987; Chafe & Tannen, 1987; Halliday, 1987; Horowitz & Samuels, 1987; Ong, 1982; Tannen, 1982a, 1989). Spoken discourse (mainly conversation) is often described as being structurally simple and informal, while written discourse (such as expository prose) is seen as being more elaborated, complex, and formal (e.g., Chafe, 1982). While spoken language tends to be described as being additive in nature, using connectives such as *and*, written language often uses subordination. Ong (1982) describes written discourse as being more analytical, sequential, and linear in thought. Moreover, written discourse is described as being relatively permanent, transcending time and place, as compared to spoken discourse.

Regarding spoken discourse, researchers discuss the importance of the interpersonal relationship between the communicator and the audience (e.g., Tannen, 1982a). In addition, spoken discourse relies on paralinguistic cues such as prosody (e.g., pitch, tempo, pauses) and nonlinguistic cues such as facial expressions and gestures. Furthermore, it is often described as being faster and more

spontaneous than written language. Chafe (1982) used data from informal spoken language (dinnertime conversations), formal spoken language (lectures), informal written language (letters), and formal written language (academic papers) to highlight the differences between informal spoken language and formal written language. He reported that speaking, at approximately 180 words per minute, is faster than writing, with handwriting being approximately one-tenth the speed of speaking and typing being about one-third the speed of speaking. Not only is writing produced more slowly than speaking, it is also typically re-worked, with writers re-reading and editing what they have written. This makes it fundamentally different from speaking, which tends to be more spontaneous and fleeting.

### 1.2 Spoken and Written Narratives

Research focusing on spoken and written narratives has also reported both similarities and differences (e.g., Tannen, 1982a; Strömquist et al., 2004). Characteristics of spoken narratives include formulaicity, repetition, and dysfluencies such as false starts, abrupt cutoffs, restarts, self-corrections, and filled pauses, which are typical of spoken conversation (Chafe, 1982, 1985; Ong, 1982). In addition, spoken narratives are often organized in intonation units of about five words in length, each with one new idea unit, often consisting of a subject and predicate (Chafe, 1985, 1994). In spoken narratives, narrators may rely on nonlinguistic and paralinguistic channels, such as

gestures, facial expressions, and prosody. Another feature of spoken narratives, in particular, conversational narratives, is interactivity with the audience (e.g., questions, requests, facial expressions, supportive vocalizations).

In contrast, written narratives often show more careful planning, revising, and monitoring of the production process due to various processing constraints (e.g., Ravid & Berman, 2006). Furthermore, narratives seem to show more lexical and syntactic complexity, such as the use of clauses, nominalizations, and adjective/adverbial clauses, as well as a greater variety of vocabulary. Unlike spoken narratives, written narratives are usually organized around complete sentences (Norrick, 2000). Furthermore, writers need to lexicalize and grammaticalize information that may be conveyed in spoken discourse through nonlinguistic and paralinguistic channels such as gestures, facial expressions, and prosody.

However, it is important to note that similarities have also been reported between spoken and written narratives (e.g., Tannen, 1982a, 1982b; Strömquist et al., 2004). For example, in a simple comparison of two narratives, one spoken and one written, by the same person, Tannen (1982a, 1982b) reported that the written version was not written in expository prose, but was a short story. In her short story, the narrator combined features typical of writing (e.g., syntactic complexity) with others more typical of speaking, such as involvement features such as details, direct quotations, and repetition. In this manner, written narratives may show features of spoken narratives, enhancing a sense of interpersonal involvement or identification between the writer or the characters, and the reader.

Tannen (1982a, 1985) explains that strategies associated with orality grow out of the emphasis on interpersonal involvement between the speaker and audience. Such involvement-oriented features include a high concentration of detail and imagery, the use

of active voice, parallel constructions, and use of direct quotations. On the other hand, literacy is described as emerging out of focus on content, using strategies such as passive voice and embedding hypotaxis (e.g., relative clauses). Tannen describes an oral/literate continuum which exists between orality and literacy, explaining that depending on the genre, writing can assume characteristics of speaking and vice versa.

Narrators will also tell their stories in culturally appropriate ways, as seen in Tannen's research (1980) on spoken elicited narratives told by Greek and American women. Although her Greek and American stories were elicited from the same 6-minute film, *The Pear Stories*, their stories differed. The Greek stories were constructed around a theme, omitting irrelevant details, with judgments about the characters' behavior or about the film's message, while the Americans included many details, listing them in temporal sequence.

Conversational narratives also reflect conversational styles, as seen by Tannen's 1979 study of conversational narratives told by participants of different ethnic and geographic backgrounds at a Thanksgiving dinner (Tannen, 1982b). Tannen reported that New Yorkers of Jewish background used oral strategies such as exaggerated paralinguistic and nonverbal cues to build a sense of interpersonal involvement. On the other hand, California natives focused on content.

Research on oral and written narratives in Japanese has also been presented by Clancy (1982) and Nakamura (2020, 2023). Clancy (1982) compared 40 narratives, 20 spoken and 20 written, elicited from a 7-minute film using. In her analysis, she highlighted differences between spoken and written narratives by focusing on verb morphology, sentence-final participles, reference, word order, and linguistic integration.

### 1.3 Research Question

This study attempts to explore the similarities and differences between spoken narratives and written narratives (handwritten/typed) produced by three groups of narrators: (1) L1 English, (2) L1 Japanese, and (3) Japanese learners of English (L2).<sup>i</sup> The study will examine length, and two strategies of interpersonal involvement, namely direct quotations and onomatopoeia/mimesis. Analyses will focus on differences between oral and written narratives in L1 Japanese and L1 English, and also offer a discussion of preliminary findings on Japanese L2 learners of English.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

The participants in this research study were university students attending Japanese universities in the Tokyo metropolitan area. They were 200 L1 English narrators, 200 L1 Japanese narrators, and 200 Japanese L2 learners of English.<sup>ii</sup> Table 1 shows the number of participants in each condition.

### 2.2 Procedure

Narratives were elicited from the participants using a wordless picture book titled *Frog, Where Are You?* (Mayer, 1969). The procedure was adapted from the Frog Story paradigm developed by Berman and Slobin (1994). First, narrators were

asked to look through the story. Then, they were asked to tell or write the story. In the case of the spoken narratives, the stories were recorded either face-to-face with the researcher or online with audio files or PowerPoint files (with audio). In the case of the written narratives, the stories were either handwritten or typed in Word files.<sup>iii</sup>

### 3.2 Coding & Analysis

Spoken and handwritten narratives were transcribed. The three narrative modes (spoken, handwritten, and typed) were analyzed and coded for a variety of features (e.g., syntactic, lexical, and discourse strategies showing interpersonal involvement, such as character speech and onomatopoeia/mimesis). Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted.

## 3. Results

Results showed similarities and differences in length, and use of interpersonal involvement strategies (i.e., direct quotation, onomatopoeia/mimesis).

### 3.1 Length

Based on past studies, it had been expected that written narratives, regardless of whether they were handwritten or typed, would be longer and more complex, in terms of propositional content and lexical and syntactic complexity. However, in a

**Table 1**  
*Number of Participants in Each Condition*

	<b>L1 English</b>	<b>L1 Japanese</b>	<b>L2 English</b>
<b>Spoken</b>	100	100	100
<b>Written (handwritten)</b>	50	50	50
<b>Written (typed)</b>	50	50	50

comparison of the L1 English and Japanese narratives, in general, spoken narratives were longer than their written counterparts. As seen in Table 2, the mean length for L1 English narratives was 605.3 words, while that for handwritten narratives was 429.9 words and for typed narratives was 368.5 words. Similarly, the mean length in characters for L1 Japanese narratives was 1025 characters, while that for handwritten narratives was 850.4 characters, and for typed narratives was 933.5 characters. This perhaps reflects the fact that, in general, speaking is faster than writing (e.g., Chafe, 1982).

A look at the range of length for both spoken and written narratives in both L1 English and L1 Japanese shows that there is a considerable range in length regardless of mode, reflecting considerable individual differences. While the shortest narrative

for the L1 Japanese narrators was a written typed narrative (432 characters), the longest narrative for the L1 Japanese narrators was also a written typed narrative (2409 characters). On the other hand, the shortest narrative for the L1 English narratives was a written typed narrative (161 words), while the longest narrative for the L1 Japanese narratives was a handwritten narrative (1202 words).

### 3.2 Strategies Creating Interpersonal Involvement: Direct Quotations

Similarities in the use of strategies creating interpersonal involvement (i.e., direct quotations) were observed in the spoken and written narratives. Although strategies creating interpersonal involvement have been reported to be more likely to appear in spoken narratives, as seen in Table 3, in the case of L1 English stories, the mean number

**Table 2**

*Spoken vs. Written (Handwritten/Typed) Narratives in Terms of Length*

	L1 English (Mean length in words)	L1 English range (in words)	L1 Japanese (Mean length in characters)	L1 Japanese range (in characters)
<b>Spoken</b>	605.3	321-833	1025	562-1327
<b>Written (handwritten)</b>	492.9	245-1202	850.4	620-1196
<b>Written (typed)</b>	368.5	161-656	933.5	432-2409

**Table 3**

*Mean # of Direct Speech and Range (% of stories with direct speech) in L1 Spoken & Written English and Japanese Narratives*

	L1 English (mean # per story)	L1 English range (% of stories with direct speech)	L1 Japanese (mean # per story)	L1 Japanese range (% of stories with direct speech)
<b>Spoken</b>	0.2	0-3	8.3	0-26
<b>Written (handwritten)</b>	4.6	0-14 (80%)	10.3	0-30 (80%)
<b>Written (typed)</b>	7.4	0-31 (57%)	6.1	0-24 (61.5%)

of direct quotations was considerably higher in the handwritten and typed narratives. Regarding the L1 Japanese stories, across all modes (spoken, handwritten, typed), the mean number of direct quotations was higher than that in the English narratives. This reflects the tendency of direct quotations to be actively used in Japanese narratives, regardless of whether they are spoken or written.

Regarding the range of direct quotations in the L1 English and L1 Japanese narratives, strong individual differences could be observed, with the lowest number being 0 across all modes, and the highest number being 31 in the L1 English typed stories, and 30 in the L1 Japanese typed stories. While there are narrators (in both L1 English and Japanese) who do not use any direct quotations, there are narrators who use a considerable number of direct quotations.

Here is an example from a handwritten L1 English story of a description of the scene where the boy and dog are looking at the frog in the jar:

1. "I found this frog by the lake today," said Ben to his dog Rover.  
 "I'm going to show Grandpa tomorrow!"  
 "Good night, Rover!"  
 Ben and Rover fell asleep.  
 Ben did not close the jar properly, and the frog

got out.  
 Ben woke up and saw that the jar was empty.

### 3.3 Strategies Creating Interpersonal Involvement: Onomatopoeia/Mimesis

Similarities were also seen regarding strategies creating interpersonal involvement in spoken narratives (onomatopoeia/mimesis). The use of onomatopoeia/mimesis as a descriptive strategy, could be seen in both the spoken and written stories, especially in the Japanese narratives. Onomatopoeia/mimesis is a common evaluative device in Japanese, creating a sense of interpersonal involvement. As seen in Table 4, the mean number of onomatopoeic/mimetic devices was comparable across all three modes (spoken, handwritten, typed) in the L1 Japanese narratives, although it might be expected that they might be more common in spoken narratives. Regarding the L1 English narratives, they were less common, with hardly any appearing in the spoken and typed narratives.

Regarding the range in the L1 English narratives, most narrators did not use any onomatopoeic/mimetic devices. On the other hand, Japanese narrators showed individual differences in their usage: while some narrators did not use any such devices, for the spoken narratives, the maximum number was 6.

**Table 4**  
*Mean # of Onomatopoeia/Mimesis and Range (% of Stories with Onomatopoeia/Mimesis in L1 Spoken & Written (Handwritten/Typed) English and Japanese Narratives*

	L1 English mean # per story	L1 English range	L1 Japanese mean # per story	L1 Japanese range
<b>Spoken</b>	0.1	0-1	1.5	0-6
<b>Written (handwritten)</b>	1.1	0-3	1.6	0-4
<b>Written (typed)</b>	0.3	0-2	1.1	1-4

Examples of English onomatopoeia/mimesis included:

2. *Splash!* (boy falling into water)
3. *Whoosh!* (bird swooping down on boy)
4. *Thump!* (boy falling down from tree)

Examples of Japanese onomatopoeia/ mimesis included:

5. *barin!* (sound of jar cracking)
6. *basha! bochan! bochari! botchan! jabon!*  
(sounds of boy falling into water)
7. *sotto* (moving quietly)
8. *batabata* (bird flapping wildly)
9. *hyokotto* (mole popping up)
10. *wanwan; kerokero/ gerogero* (animals sounds:  
dog barking & frog)

Onomatopoeic/mimetic devices are effective in bringing the Japanese listener/reader into the story and are perhaps less so in English.

#### 4. Discussion

Overall, the results show that strategies of interpersonal involvement (i.e., direct quotations, onomatopoeia/mimesis were not necessarily limited to the spoken narratives, but they actually could be found in both the spoken and written narratives.

Regarding methodology, some differences were observed between the two different types of written stories (i.e., handwritten, typed). Two different data collection procedures were used for the spoken data: (1) face-to-face audio recording, and (2) online audio recording into mp4 audio files or PowerPoint files, but the data analysis was based on a combined pool of data. It would be interesting to see if there were differences between the different types of spoken data, or if other procedural differences might affect the narrative results (e.g., narrators writing the text below the picture for each page instead of as a continuous

text).

Individual differences in narrative length were observed. Regarding the differences between the typed narratives, one possible explanation is the manner in which the stories were typed. Japanese university students often do their assignments on their smartphones, which may explain the shorter narratives. Students typing on a PC might be more likely to write longer narratives. As the participants were asked to save their narratives in an MS Word file, the expectation was that students would be typing their narratives with a computer keyboard; however, it is likely that students may have been using alternative devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets), which may have influenced the length of their narratives, based on the ease of typing and other factors. This is something which needs to be explored further.

Further analyses are needed regarding the L2 data. Preliminary analysis showed considerable differences by proficiency level. Low-level narrators created shorter narratives, regardless of whether they were spoken or written (handwritten, typed). Narrators with higher levels of proficiency created longer narratives in general. Some narrators with low levels of proficiency showed transfer of interpersonal involvement strategies, such as using Japanese onomatopoeic/mimetic devices in their L2 English stories, or being more likely to use direct quotations in their L2 English stories.

Another interesting research approach would be to compare written narratives collected before and after the spread of texting, such as comparing those written prior to the 1990s, and those written after the proliferation of SNS (e.g., Facebook, LINE, Twitter, Instagram). Due to the influence of texting, it is possible that written narratives have adopted more interpersonal involvement strategies, as well as some of the characteristics of spoken narratives, such as shorter sentences or decreased formality.



## 5. Conclusion

This study attempts to explore the similarities and differences between spoken narratives and written narratives (handwritten/typed) produced by three groups of narrators: (1) L1 English, (2) L1 Japanese, and (3) Japanese learners of English (L2). The study examined length, and two strategies of interpersonal involvement, namely direct quotations and onomatopoeia/mimesis, focusing on differences between oral and written narratives in L1 Japanese and L1 English, it also offered some preliminary findings regarding Japanese L2 learners of English.

## 6. Acknowledgments

This research was funded by the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) with (1) a KAKENHI Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) (JP18K00789) from 2018-2024: *Extended discourse in Japanese learners of English: From the perspective of oral and written narratives*, and (2) a KAKENHI Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C) (JP22K00688) from 2022-2025: *Extended discourse in the foreign language classroom: From the perspective of narratives of Japanese learners of English*. Additional funding was received from Meikai University. I would also like to express my appreciation to all of the participants who contributed their spoken and written narratives.

## Notes

- i An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 18th International Pragmatics Conference (IPRA2023) held in Brussels, Belgium (Nakamura, 2023).
- ii The data for this study comes from a larger project with a narrative database, including personal narratives, elicited narratives, fictional narratives, and collaborative narratives, both

spoken and written. In this study, elicited narratives were used to facilitate systematic comparisons between the spoken and written narratives.

- iii Part of the data collection was collected during the Covid-19 pandemic, limiting opportunities to record in face-to-face contexts. Participants who were recording online could record their narratives either in audio files (such as mp4 files) or PowerPoint.

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