

On the ability to express evaluations in another language: An analysis of Chinese JFL learners' narratives

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ABSTRACT: Culturally determined discursive strategies in an individual's native language influence second language (L2) production, and numerous studies have investigated the transfer of first-language discourse skills to the linguistic performance of L2 learners. However, few studies have been conducted outside the context of Anglo-American languages; this study focused on Chinese students learning and using Japanese. Focusing on the common evaluative strategies in narrative discourse, the present study examines the marked difference between the narrative discourses of native Japanese speakers and Chinese individuals learning Japanese as a foreign language and the explanation of these differences based on a cross-cultural comparison of the two languages. The primary data were 75 "frog story" narratives solicited from native Japanese speakers, Chinese L2 learners of Japanese, and native Chinese speakers. The analytical findings showed that it is difficult for Chinese L2 learners to produce the preferred L2 evaluation strategies in Japanese, particularly due to the limited ability of L2 learners to utilize elaborate evaluative strategies in the target language and the influence of Chinese speakers' native evaluation methods.

Keywords: cross-cultural comparison, discourse performance, evaluative strategies, Japanese as a foreign language, Chinese.

Sobre la capacidad para expresar evaluaciones en otro idioma: Un estudio de las narrativas de aprendientes chinos de japonés como lengua extranjera

RESUMEN: Las estrategias discursivas culturalmente determinadas en la lengua materna de un individuo influyen en la producción de la segunda lengua (L2), y numerosos estudios han investigado la transferencia de habilidades discursivas de la primera lengua al desempeño lingüístico de los aprendices de L2. Sin embargo, pocos estudios se han realizado fuera del contexto de las lenguas anglosajonas; este estudio se centró en los estudiantes chinos que aprenden y utilizan el japonés. Centrándose en las estrategias de evaluación comunes en el discurso narrativo, este estudio examina la marcada diferencia entre los discursos narrativos de los hablantes nativos de japonés y los individuos chinos que aprenden japonés como lengua extranjera, así como la explicación de estas diferencias basada en una comparación intercultural de las dos lenguas. Los datos primarios consistieron en 75 narraciones de la "el cuento de la rana" solicitadas a hablantes nativos de japonés, estudiantes chinos de japonés como lengua extranjera y hablantes nativos de chino. Los resultados del análisis mostraron

que a los estudiantes chinos de japonés como lengua extranjera les resulta difícil emplear las estrategias de evaluación preferidas en japonés como L2, principalmente debido a su capacidad limitada para utilizar estrategias de evaluación elaboradas en la lengua meta y a la influencia de los métodos de evaluación nativos de los hablantes de chino.

Palabras clave: comparación intercultural, desempeño del discurso, estrategias de evaluación, japonés como lengua extranjera, chino

1. INTRODUCTION

Evaluative strategies, as defined by Hunston and Thompson (2005, p.5), reflect speakers' attitudes or stances toward, viewpoints on, or feelings about the referential information that they are discussing. For example, an evaluative strategy observed in the narration of a dog's search for a duck was the comment "And that was unusual" (Labov & Waletzky, 1967, p.28), because it expresses the surprise of the narrator, who thought it was easy for a dog to fulfill the task. Evaluation strategies are realized through linguistic forms, such as evaluation clauses that express emotional states, or evaluative expressions, such as declarative adverbs and modality expressions. The appropriate use of evaluation strategies to explain why an utterance is produced plays an important role in promoting the reception of the communicated message (Hymes, 1974; Polanyi, 1979; Schiffrin, 1984; Ukrainetz et al., 2005; Karatsu, 2012). This is true for both first- and second-language communications. The ability to express feelings or attitudes in narratives is essential for the second language (L2) learners to fully participate in the target language community (Liskin-Gasparro, 1996; Kida & Kodama, 2001; Chen, 2023). To improve L2 competence, learners need to develop a clear meta-awareness of the cross-cultural differences in the evaluative strategies in narratives and other discourses, which cannot be easily developed, between their native language and L2 (Berman & Slobin, 1994; Kang, 2003; Xu, 2013; Koguchi, 2017). In previous studies, deviations in textual cohesion, narrative coherence and narrative structure were observed for second/foreign-language learners (Chafe, 1994; Fukagawa, 2007; Wu, 2012; Minami, 2004, 2006, 2021). However, the use of evaluative strategies in narratives has received little attention. Moreover, observations of evaluative strategies have only been performed at the impressionistic level, and few systematic efforts have been made to explore the differences in the use of evaluative strategies between native speakers and L2 learners in narrative discourse. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to provide a comprehensive culture-sensitive quantitative description of Chinese L2 learners' evaluative behaviors in Japanese and to further explore the possibility of explaining the deviations in L2 behaviors through culturally determined native linguistic strategies. Section 2 provides a brief review of what is currently known about this topic. Section 3 lists the research questions, and Section 4 describes the participants, procedures, transcription and categories of analysis used in this study. In Section 5, the Japanese narratives produced by native speakers and L2 learners are analyzed in terms of the frequency and discourse functions of their evaluative strategies. Finally, Section 6 summarizes the discussion and conclusions of this analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Cross-cultural studies of evaluative strategies in Japanese and Chinese narratives

There are few studies comparing the evaluative strategies of Japanese and Chinese narratives. Most cross-cultural studies of evaluative strategies in narratives have explored the difference between English and non-Western languages, such as the comparison of English narratives with Japanese or Chinese narratives. Kuntay and Nakamura (2004) compare the evaluative strategies of English and Japanese narrators during solicited stories and find that English narrators produced more explicit evaluative comments than Japanese narrators. Chang and McCabe (2013) investigate the use of evaluative strategies in English and Chinese narratives and reveal that Chinese narratives included frequent use of evaluative expressions of internal states and judgments, whereas English narratives included more evaluative expressions of stress and adverbs of degree. These comparative studies suggest that there is a significant difference between Chinese and Japanese evaluative behaviors. Specifically, compared with English narratives, Japanese speakers use explicit evaluative strategies in a very constrained manner, while Chinese speakers are much bolder in expressing their attitudes and judgments in discourses.

Wu (2012) further explores this issue by providing a direct comparison of Chinese and Japanese evaluative performances. He observes that Chinese narrators used more modal adverbs, such as “suddenly”, as evaluations in their narratives than did Japanese narrators. This finding is consistent with those of previous research indicating that the evaluative strategies used in Japanese narratives are much more implicit than those used in Chinese narratives.

2.2. Culturally determined strategies in second-language learners’ narratives

Investigations of evaluative strategies in L2 learners’ narratives primarily involve fictional narratives elicited from participants from prompts such as story books, comics, and film clips. Fictional narratives allow a reliable comparison of evaluative strategies based on the same storyline. Kang (2003) investigates the use of evaluative strategies in “frog story” narratives solicited from native English speakers and Korean individuals learning English. She finds that the use of explicit evaluative expressions in the narratives of Korean learners was much more cautious than in the narratives of native English speakers. The analysis of the evaluative strategy characteristics of native Korean speakers verified the apparent transfer of the first language to L2 performance. Kang defines these intruding native language transfers as “culturally determined strategies” that cannot be easily removed (p.145).

Similarly, Xu (2013) compares evaluative strategies in story narratives produced by native English speakers and Chinese learners of English and finds that Chinese learners used more evaluative intensifiers than native English speakers. Xu further investigates the use of evaluative strategies in the narratives of Chinese native speakers (CNS) and observed the occurrence of culturally determined strategies in their native language. Koguchi (2017) focuses on the expressions describing unexpected events used by Japanese native speakers (JNS) and Chinese, American, and Korean individuals learning Japanese. She finds that there were differences in the use of the subject marker “-ga” and modal adverbs between

JNS and L2 learners, indicating the possibility of explaining these differences with respect to the influence of native language and culture.

2.2. Use of evaluative strategies in second-language learners' narratives

Other L2 acquisition studies of evaluation focus on identifying the frequency and discourse functions of evaluative strategies and determining the communicative difficulties L2 learners may encounter in producing a target language discourse.

In a study of evaluative strategies from the perspective of the frequency and types of information, Minami (2004) investigates the narratives produced by JNS and American L2 learners and finds that L2 learners evaluated narratives less often than did JNS. Moreover, American L2 learners placed greater emphasis on foreground information, such as the actions of the protagonist, while JNS provided more background information, including descriptions of the environment and evaluations.

In terms of discourse functions, Liskin-Gasparro (1996) examines personal narratives produced by intermediate-, high- and advanced-level L2 learners. She demonstrates that an advanced narrator tied their episodes together with the 'reference to previous action' device (p.279), which did not occur in the high or intermediate narratives. Koguchi and Chen (2023a) explore the discourse function of evaluative strategies in narratives produced by JNS and Chinese L2 learners of Japanese (JFL) and find that Chinese L2 learners used evaluative expressions of internal states to make their narratives more evocative. A comprehensive quantitative description of frequency and discourse functions is an important methodological concern in the present comparative study of evaluative strategies between JNS and Chinese JFL learners.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. How are evaluations expressed in the narratives of native Japanese speakers and Chinese JFL learners?
2. Are there any substantial differences between the two groups' use of evaluative strategies? How do these differences influence the communicative performance of Chinese JFL learners in the target language?
3. If any differences were observed, how can the deviations of Chinese JFL learners from those of Japanese evaluations be explained by their native way of speaking, which is shaped by their Chinese language experiences?

4. METHOD

4.1. Participants

The participants in this study were three groups of college students: 25 JNS, 25 Chinese JFL learners and 25 CNS. The age of the participants ranged from 19 to 28 years. The

group of Chinese JFL learners excluded the participating Chinese native speakers. Chinese JFL learners were majoring in Japanese, and the CNS group were majoring in Engineering, Law, and Journalism. Both the JNS and CNS groups consisted of 18 females and 7 males. The JFL group consisted of 20 females and 5 males. Sex differences among the groups were not considered in the present study. The SPOT90 web test¹ was administered to Chinese JFL learners to measure their Japanese oral proficiency. The scores on the SPOT90 web test ranged from 64 to 85 ($M=74.6$), and all of the participating Chinese JFL learners were classified as having high- to intermediate-level proficiency². Chinese JFL learners had studied Japanese for an average of 5.0 years.

4.2. Procedures

Oral narratives were elicited from participants prompted by the wordless 24-page picture book “Frog, where are you?” (Mayer, 1969). This picture book depicts a little boy’s retrieval of his escaped pet frog. In this process, the boy needs to overcome numerous troubles and obstacles. This picture book was chosen because it provides a rich context for the use of evaluative strategies, and evaluative strategies used in similar stories have been extensively investigated in L2 acquisition settings (Bamberg & Marchman, 1991; Kang, 2003; Minami, 2004). The participants were given 10~15 minutes to read through the picture book to understand the storyline. Participants were not allowed to refer to the picture book in the process of narrating to minimize the direct influence of separate events on the overall organization of the told stories. All narratives were tape-recorded.

4.3. Transcription and categories of analysis

All tape-recorded stories, including Japanese and Chinese narratives, were transcribed verbatim by well-trained JNS and CNS following the revised guidelines based on the Basic Transcription System for Japanese (Usami, 2011) and Chinese (Wu, 2012). Transcripts were originally coded into clauses that included a unified predicate according to the definitions of Masuoka and Takubo (1992). This definition of a clause was applicable to both Japanese and Chinese narratives. To test the reliability of the designed transcription and division system, eighteen randomly selected narratives (6 JNS narratives, 6 Chinese JFL learner narratives, and 6 CNS narratives) were transcribed and divided into clauses by two JNS and two CNS. The agreement rates of the transcriptions were 96.8% and 97.9% for the Japanese narratives and Chinese narratives, respectively. The agreement rates of the divisions were 93.0% and 90.6% for the Japanese narratives and Chinese narratives, respectively. Transcription and division discrepancies were discussed, and an agreement was reached on all the narratives.

¹ The Simple Performance-Orientated Test (SPOT90) is a test that measures the examinees’ Japanese language proficiency by asking them to select the hiragana to fill in a blank space after listening to a sentence. The objective of the SPOT90 is to estimate the skills that examinees can use in real life by testing whether they can understand the meaning of a sentence in real time (Kobayashi, 2005).

² According to the interpretation of SPOT90 scores, a score of 56~80 points is defined as intermediate level, and a score of 81~90 points is defined as advanced level (Tsukuba Test-Battery of Japanese, <https://ttbj.cegloc.tsukuba.ac.jp/en/p1.html#SPOT>).

After each narrative was transcribed and divided into clauses, it was coded for the *narrative structure*, *narrative clause* and *evaluative strategies*.

Narrative structure: Narrative structure is the analytical framework for the oral versions of narratives that includes the following sections (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972):

Abstract: A brief summary of the whole narrative.

Orientation: An introduction of the time, place, persons, and their activities or the situation.

Complicating action: A series of temporally ordered clauses recapitulating past experience.

Evaluation: The characters' or narrators' attitudes or feelings toward the events or background information.

Resolution: The presentation of results of the sequences of events.

Coda: The closure of the narratives and connection of the narrative world and the present.

Narrative clause: Polanyi (1985) classified narrative clauses into event clauses, durative-descriptive clauses, and evaluative clauses. Evaluative expressions are embedded in the three categories of clauses and attribute evaluative commentary to the propositions of the narrative clauses.

Event clause: The basic skeleton of the narrative.

Durative-descriptive clause: The settings or background information for the actions of the characters.

Evaluative clause: The speaker's attitude or stance toward, viewpoints on, or feelings about the referential information that he or she is discussing.

Evaluative strategies: Kang (2003) and Özyıldırım (2009) reported that evaluations are scattered throughout the narrative text and performs different situation-specific functions. Because the place in which evaluations may appear is not fixed, the narrative structure of the evaluation is analyzed in the form of evaluative strategies. In this study, evaluative strategies were coded at the levels of 'evaluative clause' and 'evaluative expression'. Evaluative clauses are part of the narrative structure tier, and they suspend the sequence of events to express the comments of characters or narrators, such as "*And I can't take this all*" (Labov, 1972, p.359). Evaluative expressions are embedded in the clauses to attribute attitudes/stances to the propositions of narrative clauses, such as "only" in "*This girl was only about 12 years old, man*" (Labov, 1972, p.358). The quantitative analysis of the evaluative strategies is presented following the narrative sequence of abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, and coda.

Considering that the semantic classification of evaluative strategies is applicable to different languages, the classifications of Peterson and McCabe (1983) and Chen (2019) were adapted to code evaluative strategies in Chinese and Japanese narratives. The categories included in the evaluative clauses and expressions are shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. *Classification of evaluative clauses in Japanese and Chinese narratives*

| EVALUATIVE CLAUSES | DESCRIPTIONS | EXAMPLES (JAPANESE) | EXAMPLES (CHINESE) |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| Emotions or cognitions | Clauses that express the emotions, thoughts, or beliefs of the characters or narrator. | <i>Tanosinde imasi ta.</i> ³ ‘They were enjoying.’ | <i>Ran35hou51 xiao214nan35hai35 hen214 jin214zhang55.</i> ‘Then, the little boy got nervous.’ |
| Judgments | Clauses that express opinions or statements based on the narrator’s value system. | <i>Zenzen daijbu nan da kedo.</i> ‘They were totally fine.’ | <i>Ran35hou51 jiu51 jue35d-eyou214dian214chou51.</i> ‘Then, he felt a little smelly.’ |
| Intentions or desires | Clauses that refer to a character’s plans to reach a goal. | <i>Yoku kiite miy teomotte.</i> ‘They thought they would listen more carefully.’ | <i>Ta55menjiu51 da214suan-51jin51 shu51lin35li214m-ian51 qu51zhao214.</i> ‘They decided to go into the woods to search for it.’ |
| Hypotheses or inferences | Clauses that refer to a character’s inference process based on the known clues. | <i>Tabetan janai ka tte utagatta kedo.</i> ‘The boy wondered if the dog had eaten it.’ | <i>Ran35hou51 ta55 xiang214, ta55 ke214neng-35shi51xiang214 chi55mi51feng55, xiang-214chi55feng55mi51.</i> ‘Then, he thought, maybe he wanted to eat bees, to eat honey.’ |

Table 2. *Classification of evaluative expressions in Japanese and Chinese narratives*

| EVALUATIVE EXPRESSIONS | DESCRIPTIONS | EXAMPLES (JAPANESE) | EXAMPLES (CHINESE) |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Mental states | Interjections; auxiliary verbs of emotions | <i>Waa</i> , ‘Wow’ | <i>Ai55ya55</i> , ‘Oops’ |
| Opinion statements | Modality expressions of value judgments | <i>Beki</i> , ‘Should’ | <i>Bi51xu55</i> , ‘Must’ |
| Utterance attitudes | Declarative adverbs; hedges; modality expressions of authenticity determination | <i>Mitaina</i> , ‘Like’ | <i>Ke214neng35</i> , ‘Probably’ |
| Information supplements | Intensifiers; focus particles; onomatopoeia; quantifiers; modal adverbs; repetitions; character delineation; exaggeration; metaphors | <i>Metcha</i> , ‘Very’; <i>Tot-suzen</i> , ‘suddenly’ | <i>Fei55chang35de</i> , ‘Very’; <i>fan55xiang55dao214gu-i51de</i> , ‘Desperately’ |
| Causal or adversative relationships | Expressions of causal relationship; Expressions of adversative relationship | <i>Kara</i> , ‘Since’ | <i>Dan51shi51</i> , ‘But’ |

³ In Japanese and Chinese, the evaluative clauses or expressions are presented in italics, and the corresponding translations are presented afterwards. In addition, the long vowels in Japanese are expressed with a line over the corresponding romaji, and the four main tones in standard Chinese are expressed with the numbers 55, 35, 214, and 51.

In the analysis of evaluative language, the above classifications of evaluative clauses and expressions were used as the analytic scheme to determine the varying linguistic forms corresponding to each evaluative category.

To assess differences in JNS' and Chinese L2 learners' evaluative strategies in the narrative, the mean numbers of evaluative clauses and evaluative expressions were calculated. In addition, analyses were carried out separately for notable evaluative strategies to explore how similar or different the native speakers and the L2 learners were in evaluating different scenes. The discourse function of evaluative clauses was analyzed under the narrative structure tier, while the discourse function of evaluative expressions was analyzed under the narrative clause tier.

4.4. Reliability of coding

Two independent JNS and two CNS, all of whom majored in linguistics, analyzed the narratives. Interrater agreement on narrative structure, narrative clauses, and evaluative strategies was scored in 20.0% of the randomly selected narratives. For the analysis of narrative clauses, the agreement rates were 90.1% for Japanese narratives and 97.7% for Chinese narratives. For the analysis of evaluative strategies, the agreement rates were 90.6% for Japanese narratives and 90.7% for Chinese narratives. Coding discrepancies were reviewed in a subsequent discussion until an agreement was reached.

5. RESULTS

The first part of this section discusses the mean numbers of evaluative clauses and evaluative expressions in the JNS and JFL narratives. By determining where particular evaluative strategies are used in narratives, we are able to consider why they are used and what their intent is (Bamberg & Damrad, 1991, p.699). The second part of this section focuses on the discourse function of evaluative strategies. Through the analysis of the frequency and discourse functions of evaluative strategies, we explored how Chinese JFL learners' narratives differ from JNS' narratives and how this difference could be explained by their diverse cultural backgrounds.

5.1. Comparing the frequency of evaluative strategies in narratives of native speakers and L2 learners

Table 3 presents the mean numbers⁴ of evaluative clauses in the narratives. The total number of evaluative clauses in JNS (12.32) and CNS (13.20) narratives is nearly two times greater than that in JFL (7.28) narratives. In the JNS and CNS narratives, 'judgments' had the highest frequency, followed by 'emotions or cognitions', 'intentions or desires', and 'hypotheses or inferences'. JFL narratives, on the other hand, exhibited the greatest number of 'emotions or cognitions' clauses, followed by 'judgments', 'intentions or desires', and

⁴ The mean number in each table is the total number of evaluative clauses or expressions divided by the number of the participants.

‘hypotheses or inferences’. The most notable difference between the native speakers and L2 learners was the mean number of ‘judgments’ (JNS: 6.08, JFL: 2.68, CNS: 7.20). In other words, L2 learners tended to use fewer evaluative strategies than native speakers did in their native language.

Table 3. *Mean numbers of evaluative clauses in narratives*

| EVALUATIVE CLAUSES | JNS (n=25) | | JFL (n=25) | | CNS (n=25) | |
|--------------------------|---------------|------|---------------|------|---------------|------|
| Emotions or cognitions | 4.24 | (21) | 3.60 | (19) | 3.48 | (24) |
| Judgments | 6.08 | (24) | 2.68 | (21) | 7.20 | (25) |
| Intentions or desires | 1.04 | (16) | 0.68 | (10) | 1.56 | (16) |
| Hypotheses or inferences | 0.96 | (12) | 0.32 | (6) | 0.96 | (10) |
| Total | 12.32 | (25) | 7.28 | 25 | 13.20 | (25) |

Note: () = the number of narratives that include evaluative clauses.

The mean numbers of evaluative expressions in the narratives are listed in Table 4. On average, JNS and CNS used 42.40 and 35.28 evaluative expressions, respectively, while JFL learners only used 19.56. The preference for deploying specific evaluative expressions was largely the same in the JNS and JFL narratives. The ‘information supplements’ expressions were the most common, followed by ‘utterance attitudes’, ‘mental states’, ‘causal or adversative relationships’, and ‘opinion statements’. Comparing the individual frequencies showed that only ‘opinion statements’ were more common in JFL narratives, with a slight difference between JFL and JNS narratives (JNS: 0.64; JFL: 1.00). CNS narratives included the greatest number of ‘information supplements’, followed by ‘utterance attitudes’, ‘causal or adversative relationships’, ‘opinion statements’, and ‘mental states’. Considering their rare use in CNS narratives, the difference in the frequency of ‘utterance attitudes’ and ‘mental states’ expressions between JNS and JFL narratives may reflect differences in the preferred evaluative strategies in each culture.

Table 4. *Mean numbers of evaluative expressions in narratives*

| EVALUATIVE EXPRESSIONS | JNS (n=25) | | JFL (n=25) | | CNS (n=25) | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------|---------------|------|---------------|------|
| Mental states | 8.88 | (25) | 2.44 | (25) | 0.08 | (2) |
| Opinion statements | 0.64 | (14) | 1.00 | (25) | 1.76 | (25) |
| Utterance attitudes | 12.32 | (25) | 3.68 | (25) | 6.32 | (25) |
| Information supplements | 16.04 | (25) | 10.32 | (25) | 22.72 | (25) |
| Causal or adversative relationships | 4.52 | (25) | 2.12 | (25) | 4.40 | (25) |
| Total | 42.40 | (25) | 19.56 | (25) | 35.28 | (25) |

Note: () = the number of narratives that include evaluative expressions.

5.2. Comparing the discourse function of evaluative strategies in narratives of native speakers and L2 learners

As the most notable difference between the native speakers and L2 learners is observed in the mean number of ‘judgments’, and the ‘information supplements’ is most frequently used in both native speakers’ and L2 learners’ narratives. This section focuses on the two categories and sees how they were specifically deployed in structural and functional episodes of solicited narratives. This analysis allowed us to compare the distributions of distinctive evaluative strategies in narratives and to identify the scenes that are narrated and see why these expressions were used.

5.2.1. Judgments

Table 5 shows the distribution of ‘judgments’ in narrative episodes. The frequency of ‘judgments’ in JNS narratives was 3.08 in the complicating action section, 1.36 in the resolution, and 1.12 in the coda. JFL narratives included ‘judgments’ at frequencies of 1.80 in the complicating action section, 0.36 in the resolution, and 0.20 in the coda. CNS used more ‘judgments’ than did the JFL in the complicating action (4.08) and resolution (2.32) sections, although the frequency of ‘judgments’ in the coda remained the same.

Table 5. *Distribution of judgments in the narrative structure*

| NARRATIVE STRUCTURE | JNS (n=25) | | JFL (n=25) | | CNS (n=25) | |
|---------------------|---------------|------|---------------|------|---------------|------|
| Abstract | 0.20 | (2) | 0.12 | (3) | 0.08 | (2) |
| Orientation | 0.32 | (7) | 0.20 | (3) | 0.52 | (10) |
| Complicating action | 3.08 | (24) | 1.80 | (20) | 4.08 | (24) |
| Resolution | 1.36 | (17) | 0.36 | (8) | 2.32 | (21) |
| Coda | 1.12 | (9) | 0.20 | (4) | 0.20 | (2) |
| Total | 6.08 | (24) | 2.68 | (21) | 7.20 | (25) |

Note: () = the number of narratives that include judgments.

The mean numbers of judgments used in each scene of the complicating action section are shown in Table 6. Obvious differences were observed between JNS and JFL narratives in Scene 3 and Scene 6. In Scene 3, JNS used 0.72 judgments, which is nearly 2 times greater than that of JFL learners (0.44). Taking a typical use of ‘judgments’ by a JNS in Scene 3 as an example (*‘A, Chigatta wa’ mitai natte.’* ‘Oh, they may realize that it was not the frog.’ (JNS-F04)), encounters with characters that turned out not to be the frog appeared to have motivated the use of evaluative strategies. This use of ‘judgments’ in the evaluation of the results of the search was also observed in CNS narratives. By comparing this to the responses of the JNS and CNS, we found that only two JFL narrators followed this pattern. All other participants in the JFL group described the summary of the search in the forest as a difficulty and challenge (e.g., *‘N, a, iroi, sonou, kareraha, a, iroirona taihenna koto wo e-, hirukoto ga arimasu.’* ‘Hmm, ah, a lot, the, they were, uh, they have uh, encountered a lot of troubles.’ (JFL-F20)). Thus, in contrast to JFL learners, JNS felt the need to frequently

report the results of the search for the frog so that the main theme of the narrative could continue. JFL learners seemed to be limited in their L2 proficiency because they restricted themselves to the detailed linguistic deployment of evaluative strategies, paying little attention to discursive needs. JFL learners may have realized that referring to difficulty in this scene implied the failure of the search, which may promote the overall plot structure of their narratives. However, they failed to do so because the use of ‘judgments’ related to the pictorial information seemed to be difficult for JFL learners.

A similar conclusion can be reached from the analysis of ‘judgments’ in Scene 6. The climax sequence of falling into the river, resulting in finding the frog, included only 0.20 ‘judgments’ in JFL narratives. However, JNS used similar judgments 3 times as often. The example of JNS-F15 (*‘Maa, shnen to inu ha daiji niha itaranakattan desukedo.’* ‘Well, the boy and the dog were not seriously injured.’) stands out from the remaining transcripts, revealing the speaker’s concern for the safety of the protagonists. The focal use of ‘judgments’ by JNS in this episode appeared to be motivated by their need to show the audience that the protagonists were in good condition for frog searching so that the narratives could reach a resolution. Although falling into the river is a dangerous event worthy of reporting, only 4 of the JFL learners made an explicit reference to it. This may be due to the lack of L2 learners’ knowledge on how to use the evaluative strategies of the target language.

Table 6. Mean numbers of judgments used in each scene of the complicating action section

| SCENES | JNS (n=25) | | JFL (n=25) | | CNS (n=25) | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|------|---------------|------|---------------|------|
| 1. Searched at home | 0.48 | (10) | 0.24 | (6) | 0.88 | (19) |
| 2. The dog got his head stuck | 0.48 | (8) | 0.36 | (6) | 0.60 | (11) |
| 3. Searched in the forest | 0.72 | (10) | 0.44 | (8) | 1.24 | (17) |
| 4. The beehive fell | 0.24 | (5) | 0.16 | (3) | 0.44 | (8) |
| 5. The boy climbed up on the deer | 0.56 | (12) | 0.40 | (8) | 0.28 | (7) |
| 6. The protagonists fell into a river | 0.60 | (11) | 0.20 | (4) | 0.64 | (13) |
| Total | 3.08 | (24) | 1.80 | (20) | 4.08 | (24) |

Note: () = the number of narratives that include judgments.

5.2.2. Information supplements

The distribution of ‘information supplements’ in the narratives is displayed in Table 7. JNS had a greater frequency of ‘information supplements’ in the complicating action, resolution, and coda sections. The most obvious difference between JNS and JFL learners was observed in the complicating action; JNS used 10.72 information supplements, while JFL learners used 7.24. CNS used more information supplements in the complicating action and resolution sections but rarely used them in the coda (0.04). In other words, the lower number of evaluative strategies used by JFL learners in the complicating action and resolution sections may be an indicator of imperfect foreign-language performance.

Table 7. *Distribution of information supplements in the narrative structure*

| NARRATIVE STRUCTURE | JNS (n=25) | | JFL (n=25) | | CNS (n=25) | |
|---------------------|---------------|------|---------------|------|---------------|------|
| Abstract | 0.28 | (4) | 0.08 | (2) | 0.08 | (2) |
| Orientation | 0.92 | (11) | 1.12 | (25) | 1.44 | (25) |
| Complicating action | 10.72 | (25) | 7.24 | (25) | 16.92 | (25) |
| Resolution | 2.76 | (25) | 1.60 | (25) | 4.24 | (25) |
| Coda | 1.36 | (25) | 0.28 | (5) | 0.04 | (1) |
| Total | 16.04 | (25) | 10.32 | (25) | 22.72 | (25) |

Note: () = the number of narratives that include information supplements.

As shown in Table 8, both the JNS (6.80) and JFL (4.04) narratives included more ‘information supplements’ in event clauses. Taking a typical use of information supplements use in event clauses by JFL learners (“*Totsuzen* ‘suddenly’” in ‘*A, totsuzen, ano, shikagae, shikaga tatte.*’ ‘Ah, suddenly, um, the deer, the deer stood up.’ (JFL-M04)) as an example, the unexpected appearance of the deer is considered an event that motivated the use of evaluative devices. In contrast, we found that only two JNS followed this pattern. All the other participants described the deer running (“*Metcha* ‘very’” in ‘*Metcha hashitte.*’ ‘The deer ran very fast.’ (JNS-F09)) and throwing the boy into the river (“*Gyutte* ‘tightly’” in ‘*De, shikaha sokode otokonoko, atamao gyutte surukoto de.*’ ‘And, the deer squeezed the boy’s head tightly.’ (JNS-M07)) when referring to this sequence of events. JNS described this scene using intensifiers to provide a complete description of the sequence of actions. However, JFL learners seemed to be focused on the introduction of the deer, and they restricted themselves to a minimum use of evaluative expressions in event clauses. An analysis of ‘information supplements’ (11.04) in CNS event clauses revealed that the modal verb ‘suddenly’ and the intensifier ‘very’ were frequently used in the narration of the sequence of events in this scene (e.g., “*Tu55ran35* ‘suddenly’” in ‘*Ran35hou51 ran35hou51 tu55ran-35jian55 na51zhi55lu51 tu55ran35jian55 zhan51qi214lai35le.*’ ‘Then, then all of a sudden, the deer stood up suddenly.’ (CNS-F07)). In the JFL and CNS narratives, the preference for the modal verb ‘suddenly’ in the introduction of the unexpected characters showed the culturally determined native strategies of evaluation in the L2 story-telling activity. However, compared to native speakers, JFL learners failed to include a full description of the pictorial information in the target language.

Table 8. *Mean numbers of information supplements in each narrative clause of the complicating action section*

| NARRATIVE CLAUSES | JNS (n=25) | | JFL (n=25) | | CNS (n=25) | |
|------------------------------|---------------|------|---------------|------|---------------|------|
| Event clauses | 6.80 | (25) | 4.04 | (25) | 11.04 | (25) |
| Durative-descriptive clauses | 1.96 | (19) | 1.36 | (16) | 2.80 | (23) |
| Evaluative clauses | 1.96 | (16) | 1.84 | (19) | 3.08 | (23) |
| Total | 10.72 | (25) | 7.24 | (25) | 16.92 | (25) |

Note: () = the number of narratives that include information supplements.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from the analysis of ‘information supplements’ in the resolution section (Table 9). JFL learners’ typical use of ‘information supplements’ in event clauses (0.96) attempted to show the unexpectedness of the frog’s sound (e.g., “*Totsuzen*, ‘suddenly’” in ‘*A, dou, kono toki, totsuzen ano, kodomo ga e-, a, kaeru, kaeru no chiisana, a, hanashi, hanashigoe ga kikoeta.*’ ‘Oh, how, at this time, suddenly, uh, the child was, uh, uh, the frog, the frog’s little, uh, talk, they heard the sound of the frogs.’ (JFL-M04)). In contrast, JNS (1.60) focused on the protagonists’ actions upon hearing the frog’s sound, especially the use of the modal verb ‘*Sotto*’, ‘quietly’ (“*K sotto nozoitara.* ‘They peeked quietly like this.’ (JNS-F11)). This choice seemed to be motivated by their knowledge of how to characterize and enrich the story of searching for the frog in detail. Although the omission of the evaluative strategies in event clauses may not hinder the audience’s understanding of the overall plot structure of the story, it may make the narrative sound flat, and the key point may not be highlighted as intended. CNS’ use of ‘information supplements’ (2.04) focused on the unexpectedness of the frog’s sound (“*Tu55ran35* ‘suddenly’” in “*Ran35hou51 xiao214nan35hai35 tu55ran35 ting55dao51le na51ge51 qing55wa55 de jiao51 sheng55.* ‘Then, the little boy heard the sound of the frog suddenly.’ (CNS-F17)) and hints at the cautiousness of the protagonists’ actions (“*Man51man51* ‘slowly’” in “*Ran35hou51ne man51man51 kao51jin51.* ‘Then, slowly approached.’ (CNS-M04)). Thus, we suggest that the minimal use of evaluative strategies in JFL narratives is due to their limited L2 knowledge of expressing evaluation in event clauses. The use of information supplements showing the unexpectedness of the events in the JFL and CNS narratives suggest that L1 interference and transfer are observed in the JFL L2 narratives.

Table 9. Mean numbers of information supplements in each narrative clause of the resolution section

| NARRATIVE CLAUSES | JNS (n=25) | JFL (n=25) | CNS (n=25) |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Event clauses | 1.60 (25) | 0.96 (25) | 2.04 (25) |
| Durative-descriptive clauses | 0.60 (19) | 0.44 (16) | 1.00 (23) |
| Evaluative clauses | 0.56 (16) | 0.20 (19) | 1.20 (23) |
| Total | 2.76 (25) | 1.60 (25) | 4.24 (25) |

Note: () = the number of narratives that include information supplements.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate how Chinese JFL learners’ oral narratives differ from those of JNS in terms of their evaluative strategies and how their culturally determined strategies may affect their L2 performance in Japanese. This study revealed that JNS used more evaluative clauses and evaluative expressions in narratives than JFL learners did. Compared to native speakers, L2 learners tended to use fewer evaluative strategies in oral narratives.

The difference between native speakers and L2 learners is also apparent in the distribution of evaluative strategies in narrative structure. That is, compared to JNS and CNS, JFL learners used fewer ‘judgments’ and ‘information supplements’ in the complicating action and resolution sections of their narratives. This conclusion is consistent with previous studies

that state that the level of language proficiency has a co-relational impact on the production of evaluative strategies in L2 utterances (Liskin-Gasparro, 1996; Kida & Kodama, 2001). A qualitative analysis of evaluative clauses focused on the discourse function of judgments showed that native speakers reported concern for the safety of the protagonists as a necessary part of the plot unfolding in the complicating action section, while JFL learners referred to a vague all-encompassing difficulty of the search, thus avoiding the use of elaborate evaluative strategies. In terms of information supplements, JFL learners restricted themselves to a minimum use of evaluative strategies in introducing characters, whereas JNS provided a full description of the sequence of actions. This finding might be explained in terms of the limited ability of Chinese JFL learners to produce elaborate evaluative strategies in the target language even when the event is worthy of reporting. Minami (2004, p.14) reported that frequent and affective use of evaluative strategies in L2 learners' narratives seemed to be restricted to proficiency in the target language.

However, as observed in the JNS and JFL narratives, in both kinds of narratives, 'information supplements' were used most frequently, followed by 'utterance attitudes', 'mental states', 'causal or adversative relationships', and 'opinion statements'. This finding also supports the hypothesis that there is a culturally defined cognitive pattern of evaluation in the minds of adult narrators (Koguchi & Chen, 2023a, 2023b). Moreover, the frequency of 'judgments' in the coda was found to be similar in the JFL and CNS narratives. This result may indicate that Chinese JFL learners are influenced by their culturally determined linguistic habits. The influence of native evaluative strategies was also observed in discourse functions. JFL narratives included information supplements to highlight the unexpectedness of characters' appearances. Koguchi (2017) and Xu (2013) noted that Chinese L2 learners used more information supplements that highlight the unexpectedness of events or intensify the emotions of characters in narratives than JNS or native English speakers did. By analyzing evaluative strategies, especially information supplements, in narratives produced by CNS, deviations in Chinese JFL learners' narratives were observed to evolve in the direction of Chinese speakers' native narrating style, another indicator of the inference and transfer of native language and culture in L2 performance.

This study contributes to the field of second-language acquisition (SLA), highlighting the significance of circumscribing traditionally valued statistical descriptions in multilevel social and cultural backgrounds. The consideration of cultural constraints and resources may help researchers discover new insights that cannot be determined only through statistics of decontextualized data and variations. This study also has pedagogical implications. The reported findings emphasize Chinese JFL learners' difficulties in producing a preferred narrative style in the target language and suggest two related possible causes, i.e., culturally determined strategies in their native language and a lack of narrative skills in L2. Thus, the findings related to L2 learners' difficulties in narration might suggest ways to develop new approaches to teaching. On the one hand, instructors can incorporate the limitations of Chinese JFL learners' narrative competence into the design of their teaching materials and pedagogical tasks. This study revealed that Chinese JFL learners tended to tell complete but short narratives to compensate for their insufficient evaluative competence. Based on this, instructors are advised to ask L2 learners to incorporate their descriptions of each scene and compare their narration and evaluation strategies to those of JNS, which could cause

the differences between L2 learners and native speakers. On the other hand, Japanese instructors in foreign-language classrooms need to be aware of the culture-specific properties of evaluating behaviors, especially regarding the unexpectedness of events or the emotions of characters. Instead of the onefold use of modal verbs such as “*Totsuzen*, ‘suddenly’”, Chinese JFL learners may be instructed to provide more details about events or emotions with other evaluative strategies provided by JNS in the same scene.

However, the discussion of culturally determined evaluative strategies in Chinese JFL learners’ narrative discourse reported here is by no means complete and further studies are required to acquire more revealing discoveries regarding the pattern of evaluating behaviors in different narrative tasks and contexts. Particularly, future studies of evaluative strategies may compare L2 learners’ and native speakers’ oral narratives of personal experience, as it provides another abundant context for the investigation of the use of evaluative strategies. Also, such studies will provide more evidence about the difficulties that second language learners encounter in the use of target language and allow us to elucidate more aspects of the culturally determined strategies embedded in L2 narratives.

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