

18 Narrative Analysis

Aneta Pavlenko

18.1 Introduction

Narratives have several advantages over other means of linguistic data collection. They approximate language use in context and thus allow researchers to study language properties that emerge only in connected speech, such as temporal reference or cohesiveness. At the same time, elicited narratives can be controlled for topic and, to a degree, for items and structures to be elicited. As a result, narratives are among the most popular means of data collection in the study of bilingualism. Narrative analysis, however, is among the least understood and theorized means of data analysis in the field. The purpose of this chapter is to show what research questions can be answered with the help of narratives in the study of bi- and multilingualism and to familiarize the readers with multiple approaches to narrative collection and analysis (due to space limitations, I will not discuss methods of text analysis).

The term *narrative*, as used here, refers to “all types of discourse in which event structured material is shared with readers or listeners, including fictional stories, personal narratives, accounts and recounts of events (real or imagined)” (Mistry, 1993: 208). Two types of narratives are commonly used in the field of bilingualism, fictional and personal. In what follows, I discuss first how fictional narratives can be collected and analyzed, and then collection and analysis of personal narratives. Throughout, I will focus mainly on bilinguals’ narratives, because the study of multilinguals’ narratives is at present in its inception.

18.2 Fictional narratives

18.2.1 Data collection

Fictional narratives are stories about fictional events, elicited with non-verbal prompts, such as pictures or videos. Researchers working with bilingual children

and adults commonly use these narratives to answer questions about cross-linguistic influence, language attrition, and the development of vocabulary, temporality, and narrative competence. While personal narratives can also be used for these purposes, they exhibit a significant amount of variation across participants and contexts and are less amenable to analysis of intra- and inter-group similarities and differences. To obtain comparable language samples, researchers elicit fictional narratives using non-verbal stimuli, such as cartoons, picture books, and short films, that allow them to hold the semantic referent constant. Below, I consider three issues in the collection of fictional narratives: the types of prompts used with different age groups, the elicitation procedure, and baseline data.

Researchers working with bilingual children commonly favor cartoons, pictures, and picture books, because storytelling elicited by means of these prompts does not require children to imagine events and thus reduces the cognitive load imposed by the task (Berman, 1995). A particularly common prompt is a picture book *Frog, Where Are You?* (Mayer, 1969), popularized by Berman and Slobin's (1994) cross-linguistic study and used in several studies with bi- and trilingual children (Reetz-Kurashige, 1999; Yoshitomi, 1999; Cenoz, 2001; Kellerman, 2001; Verhoeven & Strömquist, 2001; Pearson, 2002; Álvarez, 2003; Ordóñez, 2004). The advantages of using Mayer's (1969) book for elicitation purposes include established elicitation procedures, analytical frameworks, and availability of monolingual corpora in a variety of languages (Bamberg, 1987; Berman & Slobin, 1994; CHILDES: Child Language Data Exchange System).

Researchers working with bilingual adults also use cartoons (Nistov, 2001), picture series (Strömquist & Day, 1993; Berman, 1999) or picture books, such as *Frog, Where Are You?* (Olshtain & Barzilay, 1991; Kellerman, 2001; Bennett-Castor, 2002; McKinnie & Priestly, 2004; Polinsky, 2007). Often, however, they favor short films and videos, either silent or with musical soundtrack. These stimuli also allow the semantic referent to be held constant, but in addition they make the storytelling task more "adult-like," less artificial, and more similar to spontaneous narratives. The two films most frequently used in the field are the *Pear film*, a six-minute film created for research purposes by Wallace Chafe and his team (Chafe, 1980), and Chaplin's *Modern Times*, of which usually only a segment is used. Bilinguals' *Pear Stories* are examined in Nistov (2001), and stories elicited by *Modern Times* in Jarvis (1998, 2000, 2002), Bardovi-Harlig (2000), and Noyau and Paprocka (2000), among others. Bardovi-Harlig (2000: 199–201) offers a useful overview of studies that employ *Modern Times* and other films as elicitation prompts with second and foreign language learners. The advantage of using these stimuli is once again in the availability of analytical frameworks and monolingual corpora collected in a variety of languages (Chafe, 1980; Tannen, 1982, 1993; Erbaugh, 2001; Aske, 2002).

Despite the multiple advantages and conveniences of using already established prompts, researchers who are looking to elicit particular lexical items or linguistic structures may want to think about adopting different stimuli, or even creating their own stimuli, as existing prompts may be unsuccessful in serving their specific needs. In my research, I have opted for creating my own prompts, engaging students (director, cameraman, and actors) in two film schools, one in the US and one in

Kiev, Ukraine, to create videos based on specific scripts. This approach has two major advantages. First, I could directly address my research questions by creating films that elicited lexical items I was interested in: the notions of privacy and personal space (Pavlenko, 2003a) and emotion vocabulary (Pavlenko, 2002a). Second, I could control for context effects by filming the same scripts in two different environments and examining the influence of context on linguistic framing and directionality and on the amount of language transfer (Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2002).

To collect rich narrative data and comparable language samples it is important to follow appropriate elicitation procedures. The standard protocol for story elicitation through *Frog, Where Are You?* is offered in Berman and Slobin (1994: 22–3), it requires the use of the actual book and thus eliminates memory demands from the task. This protocol is often modified in the studies with bi- and multilinguals, some of which examine narratives elicited by the actual book (Kupersmitt & Berman, 2001; Severing & Verhoeven, 2001; Stavans, 2001), and others co-construction of the story with the caretakers (Boyd & Nauc  r, 2001) or retellings of the previously heard story (Lanza, 2001). The standard protocol for Pear Story elicitation is described in Chafe (1980: xiv–xv), while Jarvis (1998) and Bardovi-Harlig (2000: 200–1) offer detailed discussions of narrative elicitation through *Modern Times* and other films.

What makes elicitation of bilinguals' narratives particularly challenging is the fact that "the same" narratives have to be elicited twice, once in each of the bilingual's languages. As a result, these narratives may be subject to order effects, with the second telling less detailed than the first one. Alternatively, they may be subject to practice effects. For instance, when a story is elicited by an unfamiliar series of pictures, the second telling may be more elaborate, since, having seen the ending during the first telling, the narrator can now attribute significance to previously unnoticed elements of the plot (Bennett-Castor, 2002). These effects are easily overcome if more than one prompt is used. In this case, half of the participants, randomly selected, are asked to tell or write stories elicited by the first prompt in language A and stories elicited by the second prompt in language B, while the other half are asked to do the reverse. In cases where only one prompt is used, narratives in different languages are commonly elicited during different sessions, typically two weeks apart, preferably with the help of different interviewers. If the languages of the speakers are fairly balanced, language order is randomized; in some cases, narratives in a non-dominant language are elicited first (Lanza, 2001). Another possibility is to ask the storytellers to switch languages in the middle of the story, so that half of the participants tell the first half of the story in language A and the second in language B, and the other half do the opposite (Kupersmitt & Berman, 2001).

Another issue to consider is the form in which narratives are elicited, as oral and written narratives elicited by the same prompt may differ in meaningful ways (Tannen, 1982). Both oral and written elicitation modes have advantages and disadvantages. Written narratives are time-efficient in terms of data collection, and allow the inclusion of more participants, yet the language used is not necessarily representative of speech. Furthermore, the ability to write down stories is constrained by participants' ages, and levels of literacy and proficiency in the languages in

question. On the other hand, oral narratives are more representative of spontaneous speech, yet their transcription is extremely time-consuming. An additional choice to be made in oral narratives is between narratives elicited after the participants saw the entire film or set of pictures and narratives that offer a running commentary on what is going on in the pictures or in the film. One's final choice will depend on the research questions – some can be resolved through the written narratives, others require oral elicitation, and others are best addressed through analysis of both oral and written discourse.

Finally, we also need to consider the issue of baseline data from monolingual speakers. In the case of established prompts, monolingual corpora may already exist in the required language and age group. If one is using a prompt for which no monolingual corpus has yet been collected, it is very important to collect narratives from monolingual speakers of similar age and socioeconomic background. Such a corpus will provide invaluable information about age norms and regional variation; in the absence of such data, regionalisms, colloquialisms, and structures specific to particular developmental stages may be mistakenly qualified as errors or instances of cross-linguistic influence. The existence of monolingual and bilingual corpora collected with the same prompts also facilitates cross-linguistic comparisons (cf. Bennett-Castor, 2002) and comparisons in terms of bilinguals' ages and levels of acculturation and proficiency.

18.2.2 *Data analysis*

The first step taken in analysis of elicited oral narratives is the choice of transcription conventions. There is no standard way to transcribe oral narratives – transcription conventions are usually chosen with the research questions and the theoretical framework in mind (Ochs, 1979). Regardless of the actual conventions, two types of errors need to be avoided – additions and omissions. Inexperienced transcribers tend, for instance, to organize spoken discourse into written prose, i.e. a series of sentences. Note that while punctuation makes transcripts easier to read, it is not a faithful representation of the data – this addition may negatively affect subsequent analysis. Inexperienced transcribers may also decide to omit repetitions and false starts. This can also create problems for analysis – self-corrections, repetitions, slips of the tongue, false starts and restarts, code-switches, and requests for help are crucial cues in analysis of lexical retrieval problems. To increase transcript reliability you need to go over the tape and the transcript many times. If possible, use two or more independent transcribers. To facilitate your own task and that of the reader, try to use standard transcription conventions and include whatever conventions you used in the appendix of your study. Conventions for transcription of Frog Stories are discussed in Berman and Slobin (1994: 657–9) and Pearson (2002: 141); Chafe (1980: xv) makes suggestions for transcription of Pear Stories (additional sources of transcription conventions are listed in the "Further reading and resources" section at the end of the chapter).

The second commonly undertaken step is to use descriptive statistics to characterize the corpus in terms of narrative word length, number of clauses per narrative,

and mean length of utterance (MLU). You may want to include this information in a table that provides mean values, ranges, and standard deviations for all groups in question. Unless lexical diversity and narrative structure are the foci of your extended analysis, you may also want to include information on average lexical diversity in your narratives and on their basic structure. Then you can use inferential statistics to see if there are significant differences between your groups or participants, between narratives elicited by different prompts or in different languages, and between first and second tellings. If you have adopted a commonly used prompt, you may also consider comparing the characteristics of your corpus with those of other corpora collected with the same stimuli. After you have familiarized yourself and your readers with the general characteristics of your corpus, you are ready to begin answering your questions. Your analytical framework will depend on the questions posited in your study. Below I review the most common frameworks used for analysis of fictional narratives in studies of bilinguals' linguistic development, narrative development, cross-linguistic influence, and language attrition.

The first set of questions about language development and attrition answered with the use of elicited fictional narratives involves the lexicon, and more specifically lexical choice and lexical diversity. What factors affect lexical choice in bilingual speakers? How do bilinguals' choices compare with those made by monolingual speakers? Are speakers experiencing any difficulties in lexical retrieval and, if so, why? How rich are the L1 and L2 lexicons of the study participants? How do these lexicons compare with those of monolingual speakers within the parameters of a retell task? What factors affect lexical diversity in bilinguals' lexicons?

Your first interest may be in the use of specific words, because you suspect their choice might be affected by cross-linguistic influence, language attrition, or other factors of interest to you. In this case, you identify all references to specific target denotata in your narratives (e.g., deer, stag, antelope, elk), including circumlocutions (e.g., little animal), arrange them in a convenient format (typically a table), and analyze lexical choice tendencies quantitatively and qualitatively in terms of inter-group similarities and differences. In your qualitative analysis you may want to pay particular attention to instances of lexical borrowing, semantic extension and narrowing, and conceptual transfer (Pavlenko, 2002a, 2003a, 2003b; Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2002). Detailed recommendations on quantification and statistical analysis of lexical references in elicited narratives are offered in Jarvis (1998, 2000). Qualitative analyses of bilinguals' choices in Frog Stories can be found in Kaufman (2001) and Olshtain and Barzilay (1991).

Your research questions may also require you to consider the use of a particular type of vocabulary in your narratives, for instance, emotion vocabulary. In this case, you will identify all instances of the use of what you consider to be "emotion words," and consider the richness and use of this vocabulary across the groups in your study through a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) (cf. Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002). You may also be interested in lexical diversity in general. Definitions of lexical diversity, also known as lexical richness or variation, vary across studies. Most commonly it is measured through a type-token ratio (TTR), which compares the number of different words (types) with the number of total words (tokens). This approach is not without problems. For detailed discussions of problems

with TTR and for suggestions of alternative measures of lexical diversity in elicited narratives, see Jarvis (2002) and Dewaele and Pavlenko (2003: 123–6).

The second set of questions about language development and attrition answered with the use of elicited fictional narratives involves morphosyntactic accuracy and complexity, most frequently temporal reference: How do bilingual speakers use particular forms (e.g., tense and aspect) in their stories in comparison with monolingual speakers of respective languages? What factors affect their morphosyntactic choices? Is there any evidence of cross-linguistic influence or language attrition? To answer these questions, you will identify all instances of the morphosyntactic forms of interest to you and analyze these instances quantitatively and qualitatively. If your focus is on temporal relations you also need to code all clauses for anchoring tense, in order to identify instances of tense shift.

Quantitative analyses of morphosyntactic forms typically examine similarities and differences in the proportion of particular forms across languages and groups or individuals (Bos, 2001; Lanza, 2001; Stavans, 2001; Viberg, 2001; Bennett-Castor, 2002), as well as the overall morphosyntactic accuracy and syntactic complexity (Berman, 1999; Kupersmitt & Berman, 2001; Severing & Verhoeven, 2001; Pearson, 2002; Polinsky, 2007). Qualitative analyses examine morphosyntactic choices, including tense shifts, in the context of various narrative structures and functions. Bardovi-Harlig (2000: 279–337) offers an excellent discussion of distribution of tense and aspect across different narrative structures, types, and functions, and an overview of the studies of temporality in narratives told in a second or foreign language. Studies of temporality in both languages of bilingual individuals include Aarssen (2001), Bos (2001), Kupersmitt and Berman (2001), Lanza (2001), Stavans (2001), Viberg (2001), Bennett-Castor (2002), and Polinsky (2007). Morphosyntactic analyses may also consider other form–function relationships, e.g., the framing of emotions (Pavlenko, 2002a).

The third set of questions involves narrative development. These studies examine narrative structure in order to assess children's narrative competence and language and literacy development or adults' levels of proficiency in particular languages (for a discussion of specific approaches to analysis of narrative structure, see the section on personal experience narratives below). Pearson (2002) offers a detailed and well-exemplified discussion of coding, analysis, and evaluation of linguistic and narrative competence in bilingual children's Frog Stories in terms of age levels. Other studies examine bilinguals' narratives in terms of overall structure and amount of evaluation and detail (Shrubshall, 1997; Berman, 1999; Akinci, Jisa, & Kern, 2001; Kupersmitt & Berman, 2001; Lanza, 2001; Stavans, 2001; Viberg, 2001; Bennett-Castor, 2002; Ordóñez, 2004), character introduction and reference continuation (Strömquist & Day, 1993; Nistov, 2001; Severing & Verhoeven, 2001; Álvarez, 2003), subject ellipsis (Kupersmitt & Berman, 2001; Stavans, 2001), and the use of connectors (Berman, 1999; Stavans, 2001; Viberg, 2001).

Some studies also use additional approaches to determine speakers' language dominance and to examine proficiency, cross-linguistic influence, or attrition. These studies analyze the degree and directionality of transfer, code-mixing, and lexical borrowing (Cenoz, 2001; Lanza, 2001; Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2002; Pavlenko, 2003a, 2003b), speaking rates and fluency (Tomiya, 1999; Yoshitomi, 1999; Polinsky,

2007), and the use of monitoring devices (Severing & Verhoeven, 2001) in each of the speaker's languages. Studies of language attrition and cross-linguistic influence pay particularly close attention to deviation from lexical choices made by monolingual speakers, and to the use of compensatory strategies, such as circumlocution, pausing, code-switching, omission, attempts at word retrieval, and explicit requests for help (Olshtain & Barzilay, 1991; Tomiyama, 1999; Cenoz, 2001; Kaufman, 2001; Polinsky, 2007).

Section summary

In sum, if you are planning to use fictional narratives in your research, you need to:

- decide on your initial research questions and/or hypotheses and make sure that they are indeed best answered through the means of elicited fictional narratives;
- select the prompts that fit the age of your participants and allow you to collect the data that will answer your questions; don't be tempted by the most popular prompts if they do not elicit the types of language you need; if in doubt, pilot a few different prompts;
- decide on the baseline data (existing corpora or monolingual participants);
- think through the elicitation procedure, considering both the format (oral or written) and instructions (when and who will the story be told to?); unless you study repetition effects, do not use the same prompt to elicit stories in both languages within one session;
- use standard transcription conventions but modify them if necessary for your purposes;
- create an overall description of your narrative corpus;
- proceed to coding and analysis that allow you to answer your research questions.

18.3 Personal Narratives

18.3.1 Data collection

While fictional narratives have an established place in the repertoire of bilingualism researchers, personal narratives are just beginning to gain recognition. *Personal narratives* are stories based on speakers' personal knowledge and experiences. They can be either spontaneous or elicited with verbal prompts, such as interview questions or key words. These narratives cannot be controlled in the same way as

narratives elicited by non-verbal prompts; nevertheless, they can be used for the same purposes, namely, to answer questions about linguistic and narrative development, cross-linguistic influence or attrition. In some cases they may in fact be a better source of data. For instance, Noyau (1984) argues that because they are less rigidly structured than fictional narratives elicited by non-verbal prompts, personal narratives offer researchers a better opportunity to examine how learners manage temporal reference. Shiro (2003) shows that there is a larger gap between children of different social classes in retelling of fictional stories than in narratives of personal experience. She argues that in some social classes and subcultures children are not required to retell what they read or saw on TV and thus personal experience narratives constitute a better tool for evaluation of their narrative competence. The autobiographic content of these narratives also makes them excellent instruments for the study of language socialization, for inquiries into emotional expression and narrative construction of bilinguals' selves, for investigations of sociolinguistic determinants of language learning, attrition, and shift, and for historical and diachronic research in contexts where other sources are scarce.

Two types of personal narratives are commonly used in the study of bilingualism: personal experience narratives and linguistic autobiographies. Both types can be oral or written, elicited or spontaneous. *Personal experience narratives* are stories about real, imagined, or possible events that draw on speakers' experiences. They can be elicited in experimental settings through key words, interview questions, or requests to tell particular types of stories, such as earliest memories, stories about holidays or car accidents, or stories about times when the speakers felt a particular emotion. McCabe and Bliss (2003: 6–10) provide detailed guidelines for elicitation of personal experience narratives and recommend specific prompts for use with children and adults. To maximize representativeness, they recommend collecting several narratives from each individual. Researchers interested in spontaneous narratives tape-record narratives co-constructed in conversations among friends or family members (Pfaff, 2001), or in interviews and informal conversations between researchers and participants (Wenzell, 1989; Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001; Vitanova, 2004, 2005). Schlyter (1996) tape-recorded narratives produced by children in interaction with parents over the span of two years, and Dart (1992) tape-recorded narratives spontaneously produced by a four-year-old bilingual girl playing by herself.

Depending on the research questions, stories may be collected in the two languages of bilingual individuals (Dart, 1992; Javier, Barroso, & Muñoz, 1993; Maeno, 1995; Schlyter, 1996; Koven, 1998, 2001, 2002; Pfaff, 2001; Marian & Kaushanskaya, 2004), in the first language (Schmid, 2002), or in the second language (Wenzell, 1989; Rintell, 1990; Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001; van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers, & Stoit, 2003). Koven (1998) offers excellent recommendations for elicitation of stories on the same topic in two languages, including the use of different interviewers.

Three issues need to be considered by bilingualism researchers in elicitation of personal experience narratives in two languages. The first one involves order and practice effects that may affect the consecutive tellings of the same story. In order to minimize these effects, second tellings are usually collected after a two-week interval. The second issue to be aware of is the fact that the amount of detail and emotional intensity may be higher in narratives told in the language in which

the original experience took place (Javier, Barroso, & Muñoz, 1993; Marian & Kaushanskaya, 2004). The third issue to consider is the source of speaking dysfluency – it may be caused by the lower proficiency itself, or by anxieties stemming either from the topic of the conversation, or from insecurities about one's level of proficiency. Attrition researchers are particularly concerned about speakers "brushing up" on the language before the interviews. In some cases, this problem can be overcome through the use of previously collected narrative corpora, in particular corpora collected for non-linguistic purposes. An excellent example of such use is offered in Schmid's (2002) study of language attrition, where the researcher analyzed autobiographical interviews collected from German Jews in anglophone countries by historians as part of an oral history project conducted by the Düsseldorf Holocaust Memorial Center.

Linguistic autobiographies or *Sprachbiographien* are a subtype of personal experience narratives; they focus on the languages of the speaker and discuss how and why these languages were acquired, used, or abandoned. Linguistic autobiographies are elicited through interviews or questionnaires (Nekvapil, 2000, 2003; Meng, 2001; Meng & Protassova, 2002; Cmejrková, 2003; Franceschini, 2003; Protassova, 2004) or as classroom assignments (Hinton, 2001; Tse, 2000a; Pavlenko, 2003c). To avoid influencing speakers' responses, researchers have also analyzed spontaneously created linguistic autobiographies, such as learners' diaries and journals, and published autobiographies, otherwise known as language memoirs (Schumann, 1997; Pavlenko, 1998, 2001, 2004; Norton, 2000; Tse, 2000b; Granger, 2004).

When life histories and linguistic autobiographies are used for analysis of sociolinguistic situations, researchers tend to collect them only in one language, the one most convenient for analysis. There are several problems with this choice. Elicitation in the participant's weaker language involves a possibility that some information may get misrepresented or left out. Elicitation in the participant's dominant language may necessitate the use of a translator, which might also compromise the integrity of the narrative. More importantly, the tendency to collect linguistic autobiographies in one language positions them as "facts" rather than as discursive constructions. To get a comprehensive picture and to enable analysis of linguistic autobiographies as narratives, Nekvapil (2003) recommends collecting several autobiographies from the same informant, at significant intervals, and in both of the informant's languages. When possible, these narratives should be collected by different interviewers, because informants may choose to foreground different ethnic identities with different interlocutors.

18.3.2 Data analysis

18.3.2.1 Personal experience narratives

Just as it is with fictional narratives, the initial step in analysis of orally elicited personal experience narratives involves decisions about transcription: how much of the material should be transcribed and what conventions should be used. Subsequent analysis should be based on the transcripts as well as on the original tapes,

because some characteristics of speech, in particular affect, are hard to capture on paper. Several approaches can be taken toward analysis of personal experience narratives and the final choice will depend on the researcher's interests (linguistic or narrative development) and on specific questions.

In the study of language development and attrition, personal experience narratives could be subject to the same linguistic analyses as fictional narratives, including inter-group comparisons between monolingual and bilingual corpora (Schmid, 2002; van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers, & Stoit, 2003). Narratives can be analyzed quantitatively in terms of length, lexical diversity, morphosyntactic accuracy and complexity, and degree of cross-linguistic influence (Dart, 1992; Schlyter, 1996; Schmid, 2002; van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers, & Stoit, 2003). They can also be analyzed qualitatively to examine, for instance, the use of parts of speech, relative clauses, or tense and aspect in terms of narrative functions (Dart, 1992; Wenzell, 1989) or the development of temporal reference over time (Schlyter, 1996; Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001). From a uniquely bilingual perspective, narratives in the two languages may also be compared in emotional intensity and amount of detail (Javier et al., 1993; Marian & Kaushanskaya, 2004).

Considering that narrative structures and conventions differ across languages and cultures (Mistry, 1993; Blum-Kulka, 1997; McCabe & Bliss, 2003; Klapproth, 2004), personal experience narratives can also be analyzed as narratives to compare speakers' narrative competencies and performances of self in respective languages. Five approaches are commonly used in traditional narrative analysis: high point, story grammar, stanza analysis, narrative assessment profile, and form-function analysis (Berman, 1995; McCabe & Bliss, 2003).

High point analysis examines narrative functions of particular utterances and episodes in terms of the structure outlined by Labov (1972a; Labov & Waletzky, 1967) and consisting of an abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and a coda. *Story grammar analysis*, developed by Stein and Glenn (1979) and Mandler (1982), based on Propp's (1968) analysis of Russian folk tales, examines the degree to which the story is structured around the explicit goals of the protagonist (setting, initiating event, character's internal response and plan, character's attempts to solve the problem, consequences). These approaches, which focus on the episodic structure and the degree and richness of evaluation, have been successfully used in the study of narrative competence of bilingual children and adults in both fictional (Shrubshall, 1997; Ordóñez, 2004) and personal experience narratives (Rintell, 1990; Maeno, 1995).

Critics argue however that high point and story grammar analyses may be biased toward Western narratives, and, more specifically, toward the European tradition (cf. Mistry, 1993; McCabe & Bliss, 2003). This concern is addressed in the third approach, stanza analysis, advanced by Hymes (1982) and Gee (1991). *Stanza analysis* breaks the narrative into lines and then groups the lines into hierarchical levels, such as stanzas (a group of lines about a single topic), scenes, and acts, presenting the narrative as if it were a prose poem. Stanza analysis was successfully used by Maeno (1995) to examine narratives of English-Japanese bilinguals. At the same time, even though this approach is helpful in illuminating the structure of Japanese or Zuni narratives, it does not apply well to all cultures (McCabe & Bliss, 2003).

The fourth approach, *narrative assessment profile*, advocated by McCabe and Bliss (2003) on the basis of many years of work with children from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, addresses the cultural concerns through its multidimensionality. This approach involves evaluation of topic maintenance, event sequencing, informativeness, referencing, conjunctive cohesion, and fluency (McCabe & Bliss, 2003: 15–20) and has been successfully used by the authors in analysis of bilingual children's narratives. Finally, *form-function analysis* (Bamberg, 1987; Berman & Slobin, 1994; Berman, 1995) considers how linguistic forms are deployed to express narrative functions, i.e. encode temporal and causal relations, or create textual cohesiveness. The multiple applications of this approach to bilinguals' stories have been discussed earlier with regard to fictional narratives.

Over the years, these narrative approaches have faced a number of critiques, in particular from conversation analysts, who argue that narratives have to be examined as a fundamentally interactional activity (cf. Edwards, 1997; Schegloff, 1997a). These critiques have been heeded by bilingualism researchers who began to examine conversational narratives and their interactional functions (cf. Pfaff, 2001). To date, the most elaborate framework for interactional analysis of bilinguals' narratives of personal experience has been advanced by Koven (1998, 2001, 2002). Her studies of French-Portuguese bilinguals' stories examine the following discursive forms, both quantitatively and qualitatively: (1) speaker roles, i.e. ways in which speakers position themselves as interlocutors, narrators, or characters; (2) denotational characterizations, i.e. speakers' references to various characters and entities (e.g., woman vs. chick); (3) metapragmatic descriptors, i.e. speakers' descriptions of the verbal actions of others (e.g., he said vs. he groaned); (4) quotation, also known as voicing (Bakhtin, 1981), i.e. speakers' renderings of the speech of others (e.g., direct vs. indirect); (5) epistemic modalization, i.e. the status speakers give to the events described relative to the event of speaking, oftentimes indexed through manipulation of tenses (e.g., present vs. past).

What is particularly intriguing about Koven's approach is that she does not stop at using this elaborate schema but appeals to two additional analytical sources to shed light on how the selves are situated within the local order of meanings: self- and other-evaluations (Koven, 1998). Thus, immediately after the story elicitation the participants were asked how they felt telling the stories in each language and how they thought they came across. Then, the researcher played the recordings to other French-Portuguese bilinguals and elicited their opinions on the similarities and differences between speakers' personae in each language.

18.3.2.2 *Linguistic autobiographies*

Linguistic autobiographies and life histories are rapidly gaining popularity in the field of bilingualism as a unique means of gaining first person insights into the processes of language learning, attrition, and shift. Sociolinguistic analyses of linguistic autobiographies commonly appeal to some form of thematic or content analysis, in which narratives are coded according to emerging themes and conceptual categories (cf. Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The advantage of this approach is its sensitivity to

recurrent motifs salient in participants' stories. Unfortunately, in many cases content analysis amounts to nothing more than a generous use of quotes in support of researchers' observations. This approach treats narratives "as observation notes and transcripts" (Tse, 2000b: 191) and displays uncritical reliance on what is said in the narratives, neglect of what is omitted, and lack of insight as to why certain things are said in certain ways at particular times and others are excluded. In its worst realizations content analysis is characterized by complete insensitivity to linguistic, interactional, and discursive properties of narratives, and to particularities of storytelling in a second language.

Several scholars have argued that linguistic autobiographies cannot and should not be treated as observation notes, transcripts, or collections of facts (Kramsch & Lam, 1999; Nekvapil, 2000, 2003; Pavlenko, 2002b). Rather, they should be treated as discursive constructions, similar to other personal experience narratives, and as such be subject to analysis that considers their linguistic, rhetorical, and interactional properties, as well as the sociolinguistic and sociohistoric contexts in which they were produced. The innovative uses of linguistic autobiographies by European researchers also show that these narratives function best if they supplement, not supplant, other means of data collection (Meng, 2001; Meng & Protassova, 2002; Nekvapil, 2000, 2003; Protassova, 2004).

From this perspective, the first step in analysis of linguistic autobiographies should consider the sociohistoric circumstances of their production. For instance, a comparison of language memoirs written in different time periods shows that historic and political events significantly affect the ways in which individuals position themselves with regard to their languages (Pavlenko, 2004). This means that researchers working with linguistic autobiographies need to take into account the speakers' social, historic, political, and economic circumstances, and language ideologies and discourses that have currency in the speakers' communities and with regard to which they position themselves. Čmejrková (2003) provides a great example of such sociohistorically sensitive analysis of Ukrainian Czechs' narratives of repatriation.

The second step is to consider the circumstances surrounding the interview process, power relations between the interview participants, roles taken by the participants at different points in the interview, and ways in which various formulations, and more generally societal attitudes, might have affected speakers' decisions about the tellability of particular events. In research with bi- and multilingual speakers this sensitivity is particularly important, as some participants may be refugees or immigrants, and thus occupy inherently powerless positions not only vis-à-vis the researcher but vis-à-vis the society in general. This means that they may produce a version of their institutionally oriented narratives, i.e. narratives they have already produced for a variety of governmental representatives. An example of such awareness can be found in Simon-Maeda's (2004) discussion of why lesbian educators either refused to participate in her study or chose to downplay their sexual identities.

The third analytical step involves a decision with regard to the focus of the study and the relative importance of the three types of information that can be gathered from life history narratives: life reality (i.e. findings on how "things" are or were), subject reality (i.e. findings on how "things" or events were experienced by the

respondents), and text reality (i.e. ways in which "things" or events are narrated by the respondents) (Nekvapil, 2003: 69). Some researchers are primarily interested in how their subjects narrate themselves and, hence, in text reality. They focus on rhetorical properties of texts and appeal to positioning theory (Pavlenko, 2001, 2004), Bakhtinian analysis (Vitanova, 2004, 2005), or rhetorical analysis (Kramsch & Lam, 1999) to examine how non-native speakers create textual homes and selves in a second language and how they position themselves with regard to societal discourses on language and identity.

Others are interested in subject reality. These studies appeal to content analysis to examine bilinguals' attitudes toward their respective languages (Pavlenko, 1998, 2003c; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Tse, 2000a; Heinz, 2001; Yelenevskaya & Fialkova, 2003) and heritage-language speakers' ethnic identification and attitudes toward language maintenance (Tse, 2000b; Hinton, 2001). The weakest applications of content analysis usually appear as summaries of themes, interspersed with quotes. Other studies supplement content analysis with discourse analysis (Pavlenko, 2003c; Yelenevskaya & Fialkova, 2003) or membership categorization analysis (Nekvapil, 2000) and apply poststructuralist (Norton, 2000), sociocultural (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000) or psychoanalytic (Granger, 2004) theory to move beyond a summary approach and understand internal and external influences on the authors' positioning.

And yet others are interested in life reality, be it linguistic trajectories of individual speakers or sociolinguistic circumstances of particular communities. The strongest analyses in this area use autobiographies in conjunction with linguistic, historic, and ethnographic data to examine the situation of Ukrainian Czechs (Čmejrková, 2003), Czech Germans (Nekvapil, 2000, 2003), Turkish and Russian immigrants in Germany (Meng, 2001; Meng & Protassova, 2002; Franceschini, 2003) and the Russian diaspora in Finland (Protassova, 2004). The weakest analyses, on the other hand, confuse textual and experiential reality and analyze narrated episodes as real-life events. Kramsch and Lam (1999) criticize this approach, using specific examples to show that the act of narration inalterably transforms its subject and any further interpretation interprets the telling and not the event in question. Furthermore, regardless of what type of reality one is interested in, it is quite likely that the realities of life, subject, and text are not easily separable and those interested in one aspect still need to be fully cognizant of the other two (Nekvapil, 2003).

Section summary

In sum, if you are planning to use personal narratives in your research, you need to:

- decide on your initial research questions and/or hypotheses and make sure that they are indeed best answered through the means of personal narratives;
- determine what type of personal narratives will be most helpful for your purposes: (1) personal experience narratives or linguistic autobiographies; (2) spontaneous or elicited narratives; (3) oral or written narratives, and in the latter case, elicited or previously published ones;

- estimate the size of the corpus you need to answer your questions and then decide on the collection procedure: (1) if you decide on published narratives, what are the criteria by which you will select them; (2) if you decide on spontaneous narratives, how and where you will collect them and for how long; (3) if you decide on elicited narratives, what type of prompts, cues, interview questions, or instructions you will use, how many narratives will be collected from each individual, and over what span of time;
- decide on the language or languages of narrative elicitation, and consider both pros and cons of collecting narratives in all of the participants' languages for your own research purposes;
- choose appropriate transcription conventions;
- consider the advantages and disadvantages of several approaches to narrative analysis and settle on a combination of approaches that best addresses your own research needs; remember to consider the circumstances surrounding the production of the narratives and their possible influence on the narrative structure and content.

18.4 Conclusion

I hope that this chapter highlighted the multiple possibilities narrative analysis has to offer to bi- and multilingualism researchers interested in various aspects of linguistic and narrative development, and sociolinguistic determinants of language learning, attrition, and shift. I end it with words of caution. Several studies demonstrate that speakers' performance on narrative tasks depends on numerous factors, including the nature of the prompt, participants' social and cultural background, elicitation mode, and context (Tannen, 1980, 1982, 1993; Berman, 1995; Shiro, 2003; van Hell, Bosman, Wiggers, & Stoit, 2003; McKinnie & Priestly, 2004). This means that conclusions about the narrative competence of specific speakers cannot be reached on the basis of just one type of narrative; rather, narratives of different kinds need to be collected across different contexts, over time, and in all of the languages of the speakers. Similarly, the seductive ease with which linguistic autobiographies can be obtained should not obscure the fact that participants' stories are interpretations, and not representations, of reality, and are best used in conjunction with other means of data collection. Moreover, precisely because these narratives offer ready-made interpretations, researchers should resist the appeal of a summary and instead attempt to offer analyses that incorporate participants' views but go beyond them.

Further reading and resources

Films

Professor Chafe has generously agreed to free distribution of the *Pear film*. The film can be downloaded from his website at www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/faculty/chafe/pearfilm.htm or from the website created by Mary Erbaugh at www.pearstories.org/. Both *Modern Times* and the *Pear film* can also be downloaded from Jon Aske's website at www.lrc.salemstate.edu/aske/basquecorpus/movies/index.htm.

Narrative corpora

The CHILDES website at <http://childes.psy.cmu.edu/> offers several monolingual and bilingual Frog Stories corpora. Transcripts of Pear Stories and stories elicited by *Modern Times* in Basque are found at Aske's website at www.lrc.salemstate.edu/aske/basquecorpus/movies/index.htm. Pear Stories elicited in seven Chinese dialects can be found on Erbaugh's website at www.pearstories.org/.

Transcription conventions

Several websites offer useful information on transcription conventions, including www.linguistlist.org and www.celt.stir.ac.uk/resources/ML51/transcription_symbols.html. The website at www.speech.psychol.ucl.ac.uk/transcription/transcript.html offers an on-line training course for phonological descriptions of stuttering and fluent speech, and includes transcription conventions, exercises, and links to the International Phonetic Association (IPA) charts. The website at www ldc.upenn.edu/Projects/Transcription offers project-specific transcription conventions for Korean, Russian, Mandarin, and Spanish.

Narrative elicitation, coding, and analysis

Newcomers to research will benefit from the discussion of narrative elicitation, as well as from a more general overview of second language research, offered in Mackey and Gass (2005), a text that also offers samples of consent forms, institutional review board applications, and transcription conventions. McCabe and Bliss (2003) offer useful recommendations on narrative elicitation and analysis and specific coding schemas. Pearson (2002) provides a coding sheet and instructions for Frog Story coding. Studies in Berman and Slobin (1994) and Chafe (1980) constitute an excellent primer in all aspects of elicitation and analysis of fictional narratives. Denzin (1989a) and Riessman (1993) offer useful introduction to analysis of personal narratives. Nekvapil (2003) provides informative discussion of elicitation and analysis of linguistic autobiographies. Verhoeven and Strömquist's (2001) volume is a unique collection of studies of bi- and multilinguals' narratives.