Different Narrative Genres:
Interactional, stylistic and developmental aspects

1 Introduction

Linguistic research on narrative structure, narrative interaction, and especially narrative development has primarily focussed on (everyday) narratives of personal experience. The special status of spontaneously told stories of personal experience may be due to the idea – made prominent by Conversation Analysis - that mundane conversationally embedded activities can be considered as prototypical interaction, whereas institutionally framed activities have a derived status. Viewed ontogenetically, of course simple forms of linguistic references to past events are the first to develop. Accordingly, they might be used as a model of different kinds of narrative activities differentiated later in life.

Our contribution will be based on two different kinds of narrative interaction between the same 6-year-old story-tellers and adult listeners (N = 38): conversational narratives of personal experience and fictitious fantasy-stories prompted by the adult listener. We will look at some of the linguistic resources the children use to mark the stories’ highpoints. We will be able to show that the linguistic variation found is due to variable style dispositions but nevertheless subordinated to the requirements of the different narrative genres.

As opposed to everyday stories, fantasy-stories are considered to be closer to the institutional context of classroom activities and the written modality. This is at least partly reflected by the children’s use of linguistic resources typical of spoken language in one genre, whereas features of a written style are shown in the other. Thus, in and with their linguistic activities, the children constitute the two differentiating narrative genres and establish personal performative preferences at the same time.

2 Data

Our study is based on a videotaped corpus of conversations with 38 six year-old children who had just started elementary school. The data are part of a larger corpus of adult-child-interaction collected in a DFG- (=German National Science Foundation) research project called ‘Discourse styles as verbal socialisation’ at the University of Dortmund guided by Prof. Dr. Uta M. Quasthoff. I will just present a quick overview over the complete set of longitudinal and cross-sectional data.
Sample: 38 Kinder im ersten Schuljahr; 39 Kinder im zweiten Schuljahr

Daten

I. DSP-Daten (erste Runde: August 2000; zweite Runde: September 2001)
Ton- und Videoaufzeichnungen
1. Interaktionskonstellation: 1 Kind, 1 Erwachsene
   Diskurseinheiten: a) Spielerklärung (Memory), b) Fantasieerzählung
2. Interaktionskonstellation: 2 Kinder, 1 Erwachsene
   Diskurseinheiten: konversationelle Erzählung und Spielerklärungen
   (Topfschlagen, Reise nach Jerusalem)

II. Familienaufnahmen
Tonbandaufzeichnungen von zwei Alltagsroutinen
1. Mahlzeiten
2. Hausaufgaben

III. Schulaufnahmen (longitudinal)
monatliche Video- und Tonbandaufzeichnungen pro Schulkasse zweier Unterrichtssituationen
1. Gesprächskreis
2. Frontalunterricht

Fantasy stories and stories about own experiences were elicited in two different kinds of interactive settings. First, one child was asked by an adult to invent a story after it was given a verbal trigger that set a fantastic, fairy-tale-like frame (once upon a time there was a little boy/girl who could fly. But suddenly, one day something happened). Second, in order to elicit topic-bound conversational stories, two children were read out loud a story about two children and a dog. The story stopped before the highpoint, which the children had to conclude. Subsequently, the children were asked in the course of the ongoing conversation if they had experienced a similar event with a pet.

3. Theoretical and descriptive issues
The analytic focus on narrative interaction and narrative development in an integrated approach generates a series of theoretical and descriptive problems, which have to do with the fact that developmental questions are asked with respect to the child – and the child alone – whereas interactive analysis is oriented towards the mutual achievement of the dyad. We solved these problems by designing a sequentially oriented descriptive tool of narrative interaction, the basic idea of which is a three branch analysis of JOBS, DEVICES and FORMS in the reconstruction of the interactive process (for details, see Hausendorf/Quasthoff 1996).
The descriptive level of the JOBS covers the global narrative tasks to be fulfilled jointly by both participants. Consequently, this descriptive level does not yet allow the differentiation into narrator and listener or adult and child activities respectively.

The DEVICEs are formulated narrator- and listener-specifically in the sense of moves designed to contribute to the fulfilment of jobs.

The FORMs refer to the linguistic surface realizations of the semantic-pragmatic units of the DEVICEs. FORMs (as well as DEVICEs) have been found to be not only different for narrator and listener but also for children of different age-groups as opposed to adults, and even for adults in interaction with children of different age levels. In other words, the variation of devices and forms in the context of an equal set of jobs enables the description of stylistic variation, developmental variation and the variation between different narrative genres. In this talk we will present observations concerning all three of these domains, concentrating on the forms which children realize to express the structural nucleus of the story, traditionally called the highpoint.

Forms in the sense of our analytic tool are defined locally. There is, however, also a global formal domain: Narratives of adult speakers systematically represent formal patterns in the presentation of the entire story. There are (at least) two possible global forms (or discourse patterns) in which both narrator and listener in a joint achievement realize the narrative discourse unit on the linguistic surface: the report and the "replaying" (cf. Goffman 1974) discourse pattern. Whereas the report presents an elaboration of the event from a retrospective point of view, the latter actualises the past event strictly from the perceptual and experiential perspective of the narrator in the participant’s role and thus contains what Labov calls evaluative elements (Quasthoff 1987). Looking at the typical forms used to establish this pattern (direct speech, a high degree of detailedness, „scenic“ elements in general) we called this global narrative pattern DRAMATIZING. We will be able to show that dramatizing forms are a central resource to differentiate between genres and have a developmental relevance at the same time.

4 Conversational Stories: Stylistic variation at highpoints

4.1 Forms of dramatization at the highpoints: Patterns of oral language

Many examples from our data demonstrate that merely elaborative, non-evaluative forms predominate in the children’s conversational narratives. As a matter of fact, dramatizing forms hardly occur. However, taking a closer look at them it soon becomes clear that the children use resources of spoken vernacular and employ typical oral patterns to present and illustrate their stories of personal experience.

4.3.2 Lexical cues

Some ways to mark highpoints draw on lexical devices. In the following examples the children use the German word voll to mark the story’s highpoint. Voll functions as an intensifier and is typical not only for spoken language, but is marked in the sense of youth-specific talk.

1) Tom (02m-3-1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TR</th>
<th>wo die-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wo die st andere STRAsse war,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da ist die voll ABgehauen;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   TO where the
   where the st other street was
   there she absolutely escaped

2) Arne (16m-3-1)

| TR  | .h da war ( ) was LUSTiges passiert, |

| AR  | .h da war ( ) was LUSTiges passiert, |
4.3.1 Prosodic cues

In addition to specific lexical devices, some children employ prosodic cues to conversationally establish their story’s highpoints. In the following example, the accumulation of accents signals the unusualness of the event and therefore marks the story’s highpoint.¹

3) Ralf (24m-3-1)

RA ja da musste ich so was HOlen,=
= nur weil: zwei mädchen hatten so was verLOren, =
= und konnten nicht so gut TAUchen, =
= da haben sie mal geFRAGT; (--)=
-> .h und da bin ich sO TIEF getAU:cht,
E acht MEter bist du tief getaucht;

RA well I had do got something
only because two girls had lost something
and couldn’t dive so well
then they asked
I think eight meters
E you dived eight meters deep

Example (2) is another good example for the use of accent accumulation at the story’s highpoint.

As another stylistic strategy, the children might also use especially strong accents to express unusualness and mark the story’s highpoint.

4) Harald (10m-3-1)

HA hm die haben sich schon mal GEgenseitig, =
-> =so ge!BIS!sen; (--)=

HA they have once bitten each other

4.3.3 Onomatopoeias as Interjections

Other markers of spoken language are extremely striking: Some children use noise-imitating interjections as onomatopoeias (as we will call them) in their narratives to illustrate the told events acoustically. Such minimal scenic elements function to constitute a replaying mode (in the sense of Goffman). They establish a specific evaluative perspective of involvement in the course of the

¹ Compare also the use of emphatic style in narrative sequences (cf. Selting 1994).
events told, which focuses on the on-line dynamics of the unexpected happening. The story events are acoustically performed and thus presented to the ears of the listeners.

5) LEA (21w-3-1): about monkeys in the zoo

LE da ham we geSEHeN,
   ist uns geFOLGT;
   ->  <<f>!ZACK! ham we die TÜR zu gemacht;>
      und SCHON, (.)
      .h war die tür wieder OFFen;
      dann is=se RAUSgehuscht;
      dann ham we wieder { ( ) }
   ->  ZACK ham we die (..) TÜR zugemacht;
      (...
LE dann (..) ehm war er wieder DRIN.

LE and then we saw
    followed us
    zack we closed the door
    and already
    the door was open again
    then he slipped out
    then we again
    zack we closed the door
    (...
    and then he was in again

6) DENNIS (11m): about one of his rabbits

D          [da  ] hab ich einfach SO=N langen stock genommen ne, (-)
E   ja; (-)
D   hab ich den so .h in=n KÄfig reingehalten;=
   ->       zupp zupp
   ->       [hat se überall den GANzen stock knack knack weg angeknabbert;

DE    then I just took a stick that long
E    yes
DE    I stuck it in the cage
      zupp zupp
      she nibbled at the whole stick everywhere knack knack

7) Tim (30m-3-1): about one of his cats

TI    und einmal hat die EIne,
      ä die immer (.) fast immer die FAUCHT,
      die eine die nicht FAUCHT,
      hat mich schon mal HIER so;
   ->      KLACK;
      hat=se mir eins geGEBen;
E     echt,
TI    mit der PFOte;
TI    and once one of them did
      uhm the one who nearly always hisses
      the one that does not hiss
      once did to me here
      Klack
      she gave me one
E     really
TI    with the paw

4.3.4  Gestures

If we take a closer look at the last two examples, the use of one more feature of oral language in talk-in-situation becomes obvious: along with the minimal scenic elements described
before the children use gestures to underline their verbal activities. Those gestures regularly occur at the stories’ highpoints and additionally dramatize the narrative. They are iconic in the sense that they show the semantic content of a lexical unit (cf. Schegloff 1984). Through such iconic gestures, the children bring important actions and events into the discursive reality and act them out visually. Note, however, that only some children mark their stories’ highpoints in this way whereas others don’t.

8) Dennis (11-3-1m): about one of his rabbits

D          [da ] hab ich einfach SO=N langen stock genommen ne, (-) |____________________________________________________|
E   ja; (-)
D   hab ich den so .h in=n KÄfig reingehalten;=
  |____________________________________________________|
-> zupp zupp
-> [hat se überall den GANzen stock knack knack weg angeknabbert;|____________________________________________________________|
D schiebt Kopf zweimal vor, bewegt dann Finger der re Hand vor dem Mund auf und ab

DE    then I just took a stick that long |___________________________|
E    yes
DE    I stuck it in the cage
zupp zupp
she nibbled at the whole stick everywhere knack knack

D pushes his head forward twice, then moves fingers of right hand had up and down in front of his mouth

9) TIM (30m)

T    und einmal hat die EIne,
   ä die immer (.) fast immer die FAUCHT,
   die eine die nicht FAUCHT,
   hat mich schon mal HIER so;
   |_________________________|
macht kratzende Bewegung übers ganze Gesicht

-> KLACK;
   hat=se mir eins geGEben;
E    Echt,
TI   mit der PFote;

TI   and once one of them did
   uhm the one who nearly always hisses
   once did to me here
   |_________________________|
   does a scratching movement over his face
   Klack
   she gave me one
   E    really
TI   with the paw

In the following example, an explicit lexical device to mark the highpoint is combined with prosodic and gestural features: the turn’s main accent is synchronised with an iconic gesture that shows how thick the dog got and so visually illustrates the word’s semantic content. Prosodic and lexical features are synchronised with the gestures to connect verbal and non-verbal means.

10) MICHAEL (17m) (about a dog)
As has become obvious from the above examples, the children use gestural features as an additional resource to dramatize the narrative events and visually present them to the listeners. The children make an effort to set up a replaying mode and acoustically and visually perform the story events and actions for the listeners’ ears and eyes. They do so by drawing on lexical, paraverbal and nonverbal features that are all resources of informal spoken language in talk-in-situation. Interestingly enough, the do not use the prototypical dramatizing device, namely direct speech.

The last examples have also shown that some children use such resources in patterned ways: Those who employ onomatopoeias to imitate noises and thus perform some events acoustically also act out specific actions visually with their hands and bodies. This might be taken as evidence for the children’s specific stylistic disposition that includes the combination of onomatopoeitic words with iconic gestures at highpoints in conversational stories.

However, so far we have only looked at conversational stories (with some interesting results though). Next, we will look at the highpoints in fantasy stories and some of the genre-specific and stylistic aspects.

5 Fantasy Stories: Genre-specific and stylistic variation at highpoints

In comparison to the narratives of personal experience, different forms of dramatization can be found in our fantasy stories. Because of the limited time, we will first closely look at only one form of dramatization solely found in fantasy narratives, namely the use of direct speech.

5.1 Genre-specific aspects: Direct speech

Actually, the most striking difference between conversational and fantasy stories is that only in fantasy stories one of the classical forms of dramatization, i.e. the use of direct speech can be found rather frequently. There is no single case of it in conversational stories. In the fantasy stories, however, the children often produce direct speech to dramatize the story events and establish a perspective of on-going experience (as opposed to a retrospective viewpoint that was more frequently found with the stories of personal experience). Thus, direct speech here also functions as a device to establish an evaluative, ‘scenic’ perspective and thus constitutes a replaying mode.

11) CHRISTIAN (18m-2-1)

CH Dann: ist er zum Ententeich gegangen, hat sich in ein Boot gesetzt, und versuchte damit zu fliegen;
-> a:h geht ja AU nicht, er ist zu SCHWER geworden;

Then he went to the ducks', sat down in a boat and tried to fly with it
ahh doesn't work eather
he got too heayy

12) TIARA (22w-2-1)

TI  =das eichhörnchen wachte AUF,
->  und sagte <<f> HEY> was machst du hier in meinem BAUMhaus?
->  .h ich wollte nur SCHUTZ suchen für das gewItter;
->  =dann dann sAgte aber das kleine EICHhörnchen,=
->  =dann dann such dir doch das NEbenbaumhaus;=

TI  the squirrel woke up
and said hey what are you doing in my tree house
I wanted to find some shelter from the thunderstorm
and then the squirrel said
why don't you go and find the neighboring tree house

13) SABINE (03w)

SA  und da hat ihr die FEE wieder am:-=
=is zu ihr gekommen,=
->  =hat gesagt,
->  .h ohh armes KIND- was HAST du;
<<gehauucht> da> (..) da (..) sagt DIE ähm: ((schnalzt)) (1)
äh (--)<<p> sagt DIE->
->  ähm ich hab keine FLÜgel mehr=-
= eine böse HExe hat das verzaubert oder (..) ich weiss nicht WER;

SA  and then the fairy did again
went to hear
said
ohh poor child
whats up
then then she said
uhm she said
uhm I don't have wings anymore
a bad witch has done that or I don't know who

5.2 Stylistic Aspects: Gestures

Apart from direct speech, gestures were to be found the most frequent form of dramatization in fantasy stories. As in conversational stories, children produce them to act out important actions and events with their hands and bodies and present a performance for the eyes.

14) Tiara (22w-2-2)

TI  da sch: machte (..) da SCH:NITT es die sch::nÜre,
|__________________________|
->  macht eine "Schnittbewegung" mit ihren Fingern
vom LUFTballon ab, (.)

(. .)
TI  =hat den KORB zerschnItten,
|__________________________|
zeigt das Schneiden mit der rechten Hand
und hAt sich dann so eine LEIter gemacht,=
|__________________________|
->  zeigt die Leitersprossen in der Luft
=bis zum BAUMhäuschen

TI  then she cut the leads
|__________________________|
shows the cutting with her fingers
from the balloon
(....)
cut the basket
shows the cutting with her fingers
and made herself a ladder
shows bars in the air
to the little tree house

15) Michael (17m-2-1)
MI auf EINmal woll- (.)
hat der=n STURZflug gemA:cht;
-> streckt beide Arme zur Seite aus
und dann war (er) geNAU, (-)
im haus vom PAPA;
-> nimmt die Arme wieder runter

MI suddenly
he did a dive
-> reaches out to the sides with both arms
and then he was exactly
at daddy's house
-> takes his arms down again

16) LEA (21w-2-2)
LE aber in dem FALSCHen land, (--) hm (schmatzt) und ähm DA:NN nämlich; (--) dann ähm wurde es von dem (---) <<acc>SÄbelzahntiger angegriffen-> = =<<all>aber dann war da der> dino(.)saurier mit dieser KEUle DA;

Zeigt Keulenschlag mit einer Hand
und hat ihn WEGge(stoßen); (.).

LE but then in the wrong country
hm and uhm then
then she was attacked from the tiger
but then there was the dinosauier with his club

shows hit with an imaginary club

and pushed him away

The examples show that many of those children who produce iconic gestures in fantasy stories to underline their verbal performance do the same in conversational stories. Moreover, they often combine them with other forms of dramatization. However, instead of using patterns of oral language such as onomatopoeias, in fantasy stories, some of these children produce imagined dialogues instead and thus use direct speech as a form of dramatization that might be closer to a literal style of speaking. We will offer an explanation for this in our concluding remarks.

6 Conclusion

In the past 15 minutes or so, we looked at some of the linguistic devices children produced to mark or dramatize their conversational and fantasy stories’ highpoints. One of the major differences between the use of linguistic resources in the different genres concerns the use of
informal oral language patterns in one genre (such as prosodic cues, onomatopoetic interjections and gestures) and the absence of such patterns in the other genre. In contrast to mundane narratives, in fantasy stories direct speech is a common form of dramatization. In conclusion, the children establish genre-differentiation by employing different resources of oral and literal language respectively; this may be taken as an indicator of fantasy stories indeed representing a prototypical written modality as opposed to conversational stories. The closeness to written prototypes such as fairy tales is reflected in the use of specific forms of dramatization such as the use of direct speech.\(^2\) The interesting fact induced by our observations is the way in which members – even children – manage to contextualize a written modality in the course of an oral conversation.

However, the results also call for an explanation in terms of style: The children’s use of gestural and prosodic resources is part of a specific ‘style of dramatization’. The production of onomatopoetic interjections imitating noises is regularly combined with iconic gestures to make the story’s events not only audible, but also visible. Children who frequently make use of such onomatopoetic interjections also use gestures often for dramatization. This constitutes a style that uses specific resources of ”somatic speech” (as introduced by Scollon & Scollon) for story-telling, which is produced across the different genres. At the same time, the children subordinate some of the stylistic features to the requirements of the genres: Oral language patterns are frequently used in conversational stories but do not occur in fantasy stories. Thus, stylistic variation represents a clear personal preferences at the one hand and at the same time adapts to the respective genre at the other hand.

The developmental relevance of our observation arises from the comparison with another set of data which includes four different age groups: The results of a previous research project GENESIS show that in narratives of personal experience 5-year-old children do not use direct speech in the sense of a global narrative pattern. 7-year-olds “work” on this dramatizing element with a clear interactive support by the adult listener. Given the fact that the children whose narratives we presented here are about 6 years old, the fact that they do not use direct speech in their conversationally embedded narratives of personal experience is in line with these former results. Unexpected, however, is the fact that (some of) the same children do use direct speech in a globally relevant way in the context of fantasy stories. Developmentally spoken, we can close our considerations with the idea that written narratives may play a bootstrapping role at least on a certain level of narrative acquisition.

**Bibliography**


\(^2\) Other linguistic resources that induce a literal style are specific forms of tense, syntactical complexity and thematic devices such as the „return-home“ figure.