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小孩敘說過去事件能力之發展
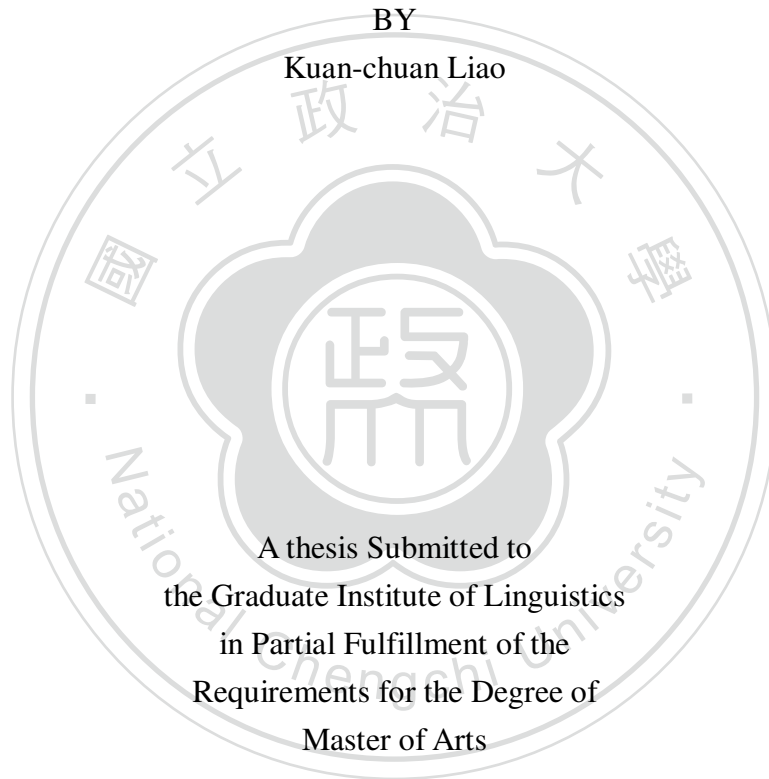Children's narrative performance about past events across time

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Children's narrative performance about past events across time

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國立政治大學研究所碩士論文題要

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論文題要內容:

　　本篇論文的目的在於探討母親在親子對話中談論過去事件的方式對於小孩自行敘說過去事件能力的影響。研究語料來自於兩名以漢語為母語的三歲小孩與她們母親的對話，以及這兩名小孩與研究者之間的對話。研究結果顯示，根據Reese, Haden, & Fivush (1993)的研究，這兩位母親都展現出高度詳述的風格(high-elaborative style)，不過這兩位媽媽所注重的敘說內容(narrative information)是不同的，其中一位媽媽注重事件的過程(complicating action)，另一位媽媽則注重事件發生的背景(orientation)。至於小孩自行敘說過去事件的能力，研究結果發現這兩位小孩會受到她們母親的影響，亦即這兩位小孩在與研究者對話時，常常詳述(elaborate)正在討論的過去事件，較少重複(repeat)已提過的資訊，不過有關於敘說的內容(narrative information)，這兩位小孩到了後期所注重的內容並不相同，她們所強調的內容會與她們母親類似，而這個結果與維高斯基(Vygotsky)的理論是一致的。

Abstract

This study investigates mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives about the past in mother-child conversations when the children were 3;6 and the children's narrative performance in researcher-child conversations at three time points when the children were 3;6, 3;9, and 4;0. The effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children on children's narrative performance was also investigated. Mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children were examined in terms of the conversational styles and the narrative information types, and children's narrative performance was examined in terms of the conversational contributions and the narrative information types. Subjects in this study are two female children (D and Z) and their mothers. The results show that the two mothers displayed the same conversational style, namely, *high-elaborative style* termed by Reese, Haden, & Fivush (1993). But, they differed in the type of narrative information that they placed more emphasis on. One of the mothers was particularly concerned about orientation information, while the other mother placed more emphasis on complicating actions.

As for children's narrative performance, the two children were very similar about the type of utterances that they contributed in the narratives when having conversations with the researcher. More specifically, they both frequently produced the type of elaborations, which was much higher than repetitions at each time point. In terms of narrative information types, at Time 1 (3;6) and Time 2 (3;9), D and Z were similar in that complicating action was higher than orientation. However, at Time 3 (4;0), Z's orientation was higher than complicating action, while D's complicating action was still higher than orientation. With respect to the effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children on children's narrative performance, it was found that the difference that D's mother provided or requested for complicating actions much more often than Z's mother did at Time 1 (3;6) was reflected in the two

children's percentage of this narrative information type at Time 3 (4;0). This is in line with Vygotskian theory that early scaffolds provided by mothers would be reflected in children's performance at a later time.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background and motivation

In most societies, narratives are woven into everyday events and interactions (Melzi, 2000). For instance, friends tell stories as a way of sharing aspects of themselves, parents tell stories as a way of transmitting knowledge and wisdom, and children tell stories at school in the process of acquiring literacy. Many researchers have pointed out the importance of narrative competence (Chang, 2004; Michaels, 1981; Roth, 1986; Snow & Dickinson, 1990). Chang (2004) suggested that this competence is important in itself as an aspect of language skill and of personal identity formation and is closely related to literacy achievement. Snow (1983) also suggested that the ability to structure narratives in ways expected by teachers has been seen as important for a smooth transition to literacy. Roth (1986) further pointed out that difficulty with oral narrative production is associated with language delay and learning disabilities. Consequently, it is essential for children to acquire the ability to construct the narratives.

Several researchers have suggested that children's narratives move from scriptlike accounts to specific recollections of real past events between the ages of two and three years (Eisenberg 1985; Hudson & Shapiro, 1991). More specifically,

children begin to tell personal experience stories at about two years old (Eisenberg 1985; Sachs, 1979, 1983). However, their narratives in this phase are quite short, simple, and fragmented, so they rely heavily on the adults' support to construct the narratives. In the process of co-constructing the narratives with the adults, children are being tutored in how to remember past experiences, how to participate in the conversations, and what narrative information should be included.

However, not all mothers co-construct the narratives with their children in structurally similar ways. That is, they display different conversational styles when having conversations about the past with children: some mothers are elaborative or high-elaborative (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1993) and extend each narrative topic (McCabe & Peterson, 1991), whereas others are repetitive or low-elaborative (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1993) and constantly switch narrative topics (McCabe & Peterson, 1991).

In addition, the narrative information type mothers request or provide in the co-constructed narratives is also different. In Peterson and McCabe's (1992) study, they found that there were individual differences in the narrative information that mothers requested or provided most frequently. That is, the results of their study revealed that the two mothers in the study emphasized different narrative information. One of the mothers focused on the orientation information of the narrative while

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placing less emphasis on the descriptions of actions. The other mother, in contrast, elicited more temporally-ordered descriptions of actions than the orientation information.

The ways that mothers co-construct narratives with children have been shown to be related to children's narrative performance (Fivush, 1991; Hudson, 1990; McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Peterson & McCabe, 1994). For instance, Hudson (1990) suggested that children of high elaborative mothers were more engaged and responded to proportionally more information requests with an experimenter than children of low elaborative mothers one year later. In addition, Fivush (1991) noted that children whose mothers used a great deal of orienting and evaluative devices also used these devices often in their independent narratives one year later. Peterson and McCabe (1992) also pointed out that the narrative information that the mothers emphasized influenced their children's subsequent narrative performance. In their study, one mother emphasized orientation information, while the other mother elicited more temporally-ordered descriptions of actions. And later on, the child of the former included a great deal of orientation information in her stand-alone narratives to a researcher but produced less sophisticated plot structures. In contrast, the child of the latter provided little orientation information in her subsequent narratives but showed well-developed plots.

Although many studies have investigated the ways mothers co-construct

narratives about the past with their children in terms of the conversational styles

(Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Reese & Fivush, 1993) and the narrative information

types (Haden, Haine & Fivush, 1997; Peterson & McCabe, 1994), these studies

limitedly focused on English-speaking mothers. Few studies have been carried out on

Mandarin mothers' ways of constructing narratives about the past with their children.

Therefore, in the present study, the first goal is to explore the conversational styles

that Mandarin mothers demonstrated and the narrative information that Mandarin

mothers provided or requested from their children in the co-constructed narratives.

We assumed that different mothers may display different styles and they may stress

the importance of different narrative information types.

In addition, most of the studies on children's abilities to construct narratives

without mothers' support in researcher-child conversations were conducted on

English-speaking children. Few were made to examine Mandarin children's abilities

to construct independent narratives in researcher-child conversations. And we are

interested in what children contributed in the conversation and what narrative

information children included in the narratives. Therefore, the second goal is to

investigate how children constructed independent narratives in researcher-child

conversations in terms of the conversational contributions and the narrative

information types.

Finally, the third goal is to examine the effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children on children's narrative performance in conversation with a researcher. That is, we aim to explore the effect of mothers' conversational styles on children's conversational contributions. And we also aim to investigate the effect of mothers' provision/request for narrative information types on children's inclusion of narrative information types.

1.2 Research questions

The present study is intended to address the following three research questions:

1. How did the mothers co-construct narratives with their children in terms of the conversational styles and the narrative information types?

2. How did the children construct narratives without mothers' support in researcher-child conversations in terms of the conversational contributions and the narrative information types?

3. What is the effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children on children's narrative performance in conversation with a researcher?

1.3 Organization

The following part of this study is organized as below. In chapter 2, a review of

previous studies related to this study will be presented, including: (1) mothers' ways

of co-constructing narratives with children, (2) children's narrative performance, (3)

relationship between mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children and

children's narrative performance and (4) Vygotskian theory. In chapter 3, the

methodology adopted in this study will be presented. In chapter 4, the results of

analysis will be shown. In chapter 5, discussion of the results will be presented.

Finally, a summary, some limitations, and some suggestions for further research will

be given in chapter 6.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Previous research has suggested that the ways that mothers co-construct narratives with their children are closely related to children's narrative performance and that the relationship can be explained by Vygotskian theory. Therefore, we will first review studies on mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children in section 2.1 and children's narrative performance in section 2.2. And then we will review research on the effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives on children's narrative performance in section 2.3. Finally, research on Vygotskian theory will be presented in section 2.4.

2.1 Mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children

A number of researchers have investigated the ways mothers construct narratives about the past with their children in terms of the conversational styles (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Reese & Fivush, 1993) and the narrative information types (Haden, Haine & Fivush, 1997; Peterson & McCabe, 1994). In the following, the conversational styles are firstly reviewed in section 2.1.1. And studies on the narrative information types are presented in section 2.1.2.

2.1.1 Conversational styles

Many studies have been conducted on the styles parents display when having

conversations about past events with children and the findings of these studies suggested that some mothers are reminiscers (Engel, 1986), elaborative or high-elaborative (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Hudson, 1990; Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1993) and topic-extending (McCabe & Peterson, 1991), whereas others are practical rememberers (Engel, 1986), repetitive or low-elaborative (Fivush & Fromhoff, 1988; Hudson, 1990; Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1993) and topic-switching (McCabe & Peterson, 1991). In these studies, the quantity of talk that mothers elaborated on each topic has been an important discriminator between groups of mothers.

In Engel's (1986) study, she asked mothers to use cues while talking about past events with their 2-year-old children, and she classified those mothers into two categories: *reminiscers* and *practical rememberers*. The mothers in the former group spent much more time in talking about the event being recalled and they were more likely to provide elaborate descriptions about those events, while *practical rememeberers* had short conversations with their child and provided little embellished information. In short, she found that in parent-child interactions focusing on the narration of personal experiences, the key difference between parents lies in the quantity of discussion held with the child about each experience being recalled.

Parallel observations about maternal style differences in co-constructing narratives with children have been made by other investigators. Fivush & Fromhoff

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(1988) asked mothers of 2-year-olds to elicit conversations about past experience and they differentiated mothers into two parental styles on the basis of the quantity of talk and the type of question mothers provide their children. One group of mothers was labeled as *elaborative* because they engaged in lengthy conversations with their children and asked more elaborative questions, while the other group of mothers was labeled as *repetitive* because they talked less about the past event and tended to ask repetitive questions.

Hudson & Sidoti (1988) examined conversations about the past between 10 mothers and 2-year-old children. They used a measure of elaboration to divide the mothers into the following two groups: *low elaborators* or *high elaborators*. Both groups of mothers provided a good deal of information and asked many questions, but the *high elaborators* provided more information per questions and more propositions per turn than did the *low elaborators*. They also found that the two maternal styles were not correlated either with age of the children or with children's mean length of utterance.

In addition, Reese, Haden, Fivush (1993) investigated long-term consistency and change in maternal style in conversations about the past. They asked mothers to talk about past experiences with their children when children were 40, 46, 58, and 70 months of age. Across the four time points, these mothers could be consistently

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divided into two groups: *high-elaborative* group or *low-elaborative* group. The

mothers in the former group elaborated much more often than they repeated their

requests, while the mothers in the latter group elaborated less often in relation to their

repetitions.

In McCabe & Peterson's (1991) study, they asked mothers to elicit narratives

from their children when they were approximately 27 and 31 months of age. They

found that mothers displayed two different styles: *topic-extending* style or

topic-switching style. The mothers who displayed *topic-extending* style asked many

questions that extended the current topic as well as offered lots of information for

topic development. In other words, they stayed on each event topic for much longer

than did *topic-switching* mothers, who asked few questions before moving on to

another topic.

To sum up, mothers display different styles when having conversations about

past events with their children and these styles have been classified on the basis of the

quantity of talk that mothers elaborated on each topic.

2.1.2　Narrative information

In addition to the maternal conversational styles, the content or the narrative

information in mothers' talk is also another important aspect when analyzing the ways

in which mothers construct narratives about the past with their children.

Some studies have been conducted on the narrative information parents included in co-constructed narratives with children over time. In Haden, Haine, and Fivush's (1997) study, they examined the narrative information parents included when children were 40- and 70-months old. It was found that mothers and fathers increased the inclusion of the following three types of information: *action*, *orientation*, and *evaluation*, and no differences between mothers and fathers or with daughters or sons emerged. Furthermore, as far as *orientation* is concerned, mothers and fathers tended to increase the provision of spatial-temporal orientations, but not person orientations over time. As for *evaluation*, mothers and fathers tended to increase the following four evaluative devices significantly over time: internal states, intensifiers, affect modifiers, and emphasis.

Moreover, Chang (2003) examined what type of narrative information Mandarin mothers requested or provided most frequently when their children were 3;6, 3;9, 4;0, and 4;3 in the co-constructed narratives. And the findings suggested that at each time point, the information that mothers requested or provided most frequently was *complicating actions*. *Orientation* and *evaluation* was the second and third most frequently requested or provided. The occurrences of other information such as *reported speech* and *coda* were quite low. In addition, she found that across the four time points, there was no significant difference in total number of narrative clauses

and in clauses of each type of narrative information provided or requested by the mothers, suggesting high variability and absence of systematic change in the amount of narrative information the mothers talked about over time.

In Peterson and McCabe's (1992) study, they further pointed out that there were individual differences in what narrative information that mothers requested or provided most frequently. The results of their study revealed that although the two mothers in the study displayed the same *elaborative* style, the mothers differed in what narrative information they placed more emphasis on. One of the mothers focused on the *orientation* information of the narrative while placing less emphasis on the descriptions of *actions*. The other mother, in contrast, elicited more temporally-ordered descriptions of *actions* than the *orientation* information.

To sum up, mothers co-construct narratives about the past with their children in different ways. That is, they may display different conversational styles and may include different narrative information when they talk about the past with their children.

2.2 Children's narrative performance

A number of researchers have found that children as young as two and three years of age can recall and discuss past experiences. For example, Fivush, Gray & Fromhoff (1987) and Todd & Perlmutter (1980) interviewed children aged 2;5-2;11

and 2;11-3;2 respectively about past experiences and found that children as young as these ages readily recalled and discussed such events, even those that had occurred more than three months earlier. Other researchers have studied parent-child interactions and have also found that narratives about past personal experience begin to comprise a regular part of this interaction from about two years of age (Sachs, 1983; Eisenberg, 1985).

Research on the children's narrative performance about the past is widely conducted in terms of the conversational contributions (Hudson, 1990; Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1993) and the narrative information children included in the narratives (Chang, 2004; Minami, 1996). In the following, studies on children's contributions to the conversations about the past are firstly presented in section 2.2.1. And studies on the information children included in the narratives are presented in section 2.2.2.

2.2.1 Conversational contributions

Children's contributions when having conversations about past experiences could be viewed through different classifications of children's utterances. In Hudson's (1990) study, she investigated conversations about past experiences between a mother and a child when the child was 21 to 28 months old. The results revealed that over time, the child produced proportionally fewer *yes-no responses* which was simply a yes or no in the utterance and fewer *no responses* but provided more *offers* which gave new

information in the utterance. What this seemed to indicate is an increasing ability of

the child to participate in the conversations in general, and an increasing ability to

provide new information, both spontaneously and in response to the mother's specific

requests.

Hudson & Sidoti (1988) examined ten 2-year-old children's contributions in

mother-child memory conversations across four sessions and the same ten children's

contributions in experimenter-child conversations at the time of the fourth

mother-child memory session. The findings suggested that in mother-child

conversations, children's utterance which responded to the request with appropriate

information increased over the four sessions, but children's utterance which provided

new information without mothers' request did not increase over the four sessions. In

experimenter-child conversations, children's utterance which responded to the request

with appropriate information was higher when asked about old events than when

asked about new events. As for the utterance which provided new information without

request, the number of this kind of utterance for old and new events was not

significantly different.

In Reese & Fivush's (1993) study, they examined twenty-four 40-month-old

children's (12 boys and 12 girls) utterances in parent-child memory conversations

about past experiences. The findings suggested that there were gender differences in

the types of utterances. With respect to the type of *memory elaborations*, the frequency of this type in girls' utterances was higher than that in boys' utterances. That is, girls provided a greater number of new information about the past experiences than boys did. With respect to the type of *memory repetitions*, girls also produced this type of utterance more often than boys did. This indicated that girls showed a greater willingness to engage in the conversation even when not providing new memory information. As for *off-topic talk*, girls and boys did not differ in the number of times they produced this type of utterance.

Reese, Haden, & Fivush (1993) also investigated children's utterances in mother-child memory conversations about the past, but they focused on children's long-term contributions. Hence, they examined children's utterances at four time points: when children were 40, 46, 58, and 70 months of age. They found that the utterance type of *memory elaborations* increased gradually over time, whereas the provision of *memory repetitions* did not change over time. As for the type of *off-topic* utterances, these utterances decreased from 40 months to 46 months, and then remained relatively stable. These findings suggested that with the growth of age, children contributed to the conversation by elaborating the topic under discussion rather than just repeating previously mentioned information. And they came to have better ability to focus on the topic being discussed over time.

2.2.2 Narrative information

Haden, Haine, & Fivush (1997) explored children's narrative skills when children were 40 and 70 months old. The results indicated clear developmental changes in the amount of narrative information children provided in personal narratives across the preschool years. That is, with the growth of age, children included more *actions*, *orientations*, and *evaluations* in narrating personal experiences. In addition, they also found that there were gender differences in the inclusion of narrative information. Girls included more orientations and evaluations in their narratives than did boys. That is, girls' narratives were more contexted and evaluative than boys' narratives.

Minami (1996) examined the content of Japanese two groups of subjects' (children aged 4 and 5, respectively) independent narratives about past experiences. The findings suggested that in both groups of children's narratives, the proportion of *action* clauses is high while the proportion of *orientation* and *evaluation* clauses is relatively low. That is, when telling a personal narrative, both groups of children tended to provide more information about the temporal sequence of action, but provide less information about the characters or the setting and pay less verbal attention to their own attitudes toward the event. However, compared to four-year-olds, five-year-olds have begun to evaluate at adult-like levels. The study

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has revealed age-related differences between four-year-olds and five-year-olds, and more specifically, the transitional nature of five-year-olds; that is, five-year-olds try to express the meaning of the experiences that they had.

Studies on Chinese children (Chang, 2004) found that over time children included more narrative information and used more evaluative devices in their narratives of personal experiences. In Chang's (2004) study, she investigated the growth of 16 children's narrative competence over a 9-month period. She asked these children to tell personally experienced narratives at four time points (children aged 3;6, 3;9, 4;0, and 4;3) and examined the narrative information they included in the narratives and the evaluative devices they used. The findings suggested that with respect to the frequencies of the three major narrative information, that is, *event*, *durative/descriptive* and *evaluation*, *event* talk occurred the most frequently across time, *evaluation* talk occurred the second most frequently, and *durative/descriptive* talk occurred the least frequently. With respect to the evaluative devices, children used a wider variety of evaluation with the growth of age.

She also found that the growth patterns and rates of change for the children's narrative competence in inclusion of different narrative information and use of evaluative devices were not completely the same across children. With respect to narrative information, the children displayed the most rapid period of growth in each

major narrative information from 3;6 to 3;9. During the period from 3;9 to 4;0, the frequencies of each narrative information in the children's narratives increased at a slower pace. During the period from 4;0 and 4;3, the occurrences of some of the narrative information such as *durative/descriptive* slightly decreased. With respect to evaluative devices, the children also exhibited the most rapid period of growth in number of evaluative devices from 3;6 to 3;9, with the rate of change decreasing from 3;9 to 4;0. And the children did not show growth in number of evaluative devices during the period from 4;0 to 4;3. But, the types of evaluative devices that children included increased over time.

2.3 The effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives on children's narrative performance

Previous research has indicated that the ways that mothers talk about the past with children have an influence on children's later narrative performance. Hudson (1990) suggested that children of high elaborative mothers were more engaged and responded to proportionally more information requests with an experimenter than children of low elaborative mothers one year later. Reese & Fivush (1993) found that the elaborative style was positively correlated with children's length of conversations, memory elaborations, and evaluations. In other words, the elaborative style was related to children's participation in event talk. In contrast, the repetitive style was not

correlated with children's participation in event discussions, but was correlated with children's tendency not to respond.

In addition, Reese, Haden, & Fivush (1993) suggested that mothers' elaborations at the early time points were correlated with children's later elaborations. That is, the more the mothers elaborated on the topic under discussion when children were 40 months old, the more elaborations that children provided 1.5 years later. And the mothers' elaborations when children were 58 months old were also significantly related to children's elaborations 1 year later. In contrast, mothers' repetitions at earlier time points were not significantly correlated with children's elaborations later on.

In McCabe & Peterson's (1991) study, they found that some mothers encouraged their children to expand upon the topic extensively, while others rapidly shifted topics of conversation with their two- and three-year-old children. By the end of four years, the children differed from each other. Some children told lengthy narratives that built up to a high point, evaluatively dwelt on it, and then resolved it. Other children struggled to tell a story consisting of more than one event. And those mothers who ranked highest in the frequency of topic-extension for their two- to three-year-old children were the same mothers who had children ranking highest in terms of well-formed narratives when the children were older.

Haden, Haine & Fivush (1997) suggested that mothers who emphasized evaluations when reminiscing with their children at 40 months of age had children who emphasized evaluations in their spontaneously produced narratives at 70 months of age. In addition, Peterson & McCabe (1994) studied specific types of maternal questions about orientation information and their relations to children's abilities to provide orientation information in personal narratives with an experimenter. Results revealed that the children of mothers who provided many *wh*-context and yes or no context questions when children were 26 to 31 months old included much *when* and *where* information in their narratives with an experimenter at 38 to 43 months. That is, the children of mothers who frequently prompted for context orientation came to give much orientation to *when* and *where* in their later personal narratives.

In Fivush's (1991) study, she assessed mothers' provision of orienting, referential, and evaluative information in conversations about past events with their 30-month-old children, and children's abilities to tell independent narratives to an experimenter one year later. The findings suggested that the children of mothers who provided much orienting and evaluative information in the co-constructed narratives included a great deal of orienting and evaluative information in their independent narratives a year later.

In addition, Peterson & McCabe (1992) pointed out that mothers who were

classified as having the same elaborative style differed in the methods they utilized

for extending the topics and that these mothers had different effects on their children's

later narrative skills. Results revealed that one of the elaborative mothers focused on

orientation information, while the other one emphasized temporally ordered

descriptions of actions. And one year later, the former's child was more likely to

spontaneously include contextual information in the independent narratives but

showed less sophisticated plot structure. In contrast, the narratives of the latter's child

showed well-developed plots but included less orientation information.

In sum, the ways mothers talk about the past with their children have an

influence on children's later narrative performance when constructing narratives

without mothers' support.

2.4 Vygotskian theory

Vygotskian theory (1978) provides a conceptual framework for the study of the

developmental process of children's narrative skill in parent-child interactions. A

fundamental concept of this theory is that interpsychological processes (i.e., social

interactions) give rise to intrapsychological processes (i.e., cognitive skills). Thus,

cognitive skills have their origins in social interactions with more skilled partners.

Another important concept is *zone of proximal development*: "the difference between

the child's actual level of development and the level of performance that the child

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achieves in collaboration with the adult" (Rieber & Carton, 1987, p.209), or in other words, the difference between the level of skill spontaneously demonstrated by children and their potential level of skill which is demonstrated only under conditions of external prompting and guidance. In addition, the provision of effective task regulation, guidance and feedback by adults is frequently termed *task scaffolding*.

During the acquisition of any new skill, adults scaffold children's performance by providing the necessary structure for accomplishing the task. As the children's level of skill develops, the adult-provided scaffolding is reduced. Thus, responsibility for carrying out the task is progressively handed over to the children as they acquire greater competence, until they have internalized the major components of the scaffolding and are able to accomplish the task independently. This process proposed by Vygotsky has been found in the acquisition of a number of skills including memory (Paris, Newman & Jacobs, 1985) and communication skills (Bruner, 1983) – both of which are relevant to narration.

Several researchers suggested that parents have been found to scaffold children's early narratives in ways that are consistent with Vygotskian theory (Eisenberg, 1985; Perlmutter, 1980; Sachs, 1983). For instance, Eisenberg (1985) studied parent-child conversation with two children (1;9-2;7 and 2;0-3;2, respectively) and found that parent-child talk about the past could be classified into three successive phases: (1)

the majority of content and structure was provided by the adult and the child primarily responded to yes/no questions; (2) yes/no questions were increasingly replaced by memory questions requiring the provision of content information in the response but that the overall narrative structure was still provided by the adult; (3) the child began to structure narratives spontaneously.

To sum up, Vygotskian theory provides an approach to explain the relationship between parental ways of co-constructing narratives with children and children's later narrative performance. In other words, the narrative development of children begins in social interactions in which parents guide children's participation. As children develop, the adult scaffolding diminishes and eventually children can complete a task on their own without support. In addition, children internalize the skills gained from the interaction with the parents. Therefore, this theory provides an explanatory mechanism to account for the key role parents play in fostering children's narrative development.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1   Subjects

Two Mandarin-speaking girls and their mothers participated in this study. D[1] and

Z were both three years and six months old at the start of this study and were followed

for six months. We chose this age because 3-year-olds are able to participate in

conversations about past events but are still in the process of internalizing the

necessary memory and narrative skills (Eisenberg, 1985). Both girls are from

two-parents families in which both mothers are college educated. And both families

live in Taipei, Taiwan. Mandarin Chinese is the two children's mother tongue and it is

the major language used in the interaction; Southern Min is sometimes spoken.

3.2   Procedure

In order to collect data on the ways in which mothers co-constructed narratives

with their children, mother-child interactions were video and audio-tape recorded at

the subjects' home when children were 3;6 and were transcribed in the CHAT (Codes

for the Human Analysis of Transcriptions) format. Mothers were asked to elicit

personal experience narratives from their children as naturally as possible, and no

more specific instructions were given. The length of conversations collected is 2

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[1] D and Z are subject codes.

hours for each child.

In addition, in order to examine children's abilities to construct narratives without mothers' support, researcher-child interactions were video and audio-tape recorded at subjects' home at three time points when the children were 3;6 (Time 1), 3;9 (Time 2), and 4;0 (Time 3). And these tapes were transcribed in the CHAT (Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcriptions) format. At each time point, the researcher played with the children for 1.5 hours. During the course of play, the researcher prompted personal experience narratives from the children. Examples of prompts include the following: 'Have you ever fallen and hurt yourself? You have? Tell me about it.' 'What happened on your birthday? Tell me about it.' Some of the experiences being prompted about were provided by the parents, who listed various experiences that the children had had, and some prompts were the product of the play context. While the child narrated, the researcher refrained from prompting the child for specific sorts of information but rather provided interested encouragement by means of nonspecific prompts like 'uh-huh', 'and?', 'and then what happened?', or repetitions of what the child had just said. Such a procedure has been found to be successful at encouraging narration without imposing structure (Peterson & McCabe, 1983).

3.3   Coding scheme

In the present study, a narrative was defined as an instance of talk about events removed in time and included at least two utterances on the same topic, similar to the definition of a narrative by Peterson (1990) and Umiker-Sebeok (1979). And these narratives were about specific past events, not routine occurrences.

All maternal utterances in the co-constructed narratives with the children and all children's utterances in the narratives to the researcher were coded for conversation and narrative information. Conversation codes, which will be shown in section 3.3.1, were designed to explore mothers' conversational styles and to explore what children contributed in researcher-child conversations. Narrative information codes, which will be presented in section 3.3.2, were designed to examine the narrative information types that mothers provided or requested from their children and to examine what narrative information types that children included in the independent narratives.

3.3.1   Conversation codes

The coding system is adapted from Reese & Fivush (1993) and Reese, Haden, & Fivush (1993), and is developed from the actual data. There are six types, and examples from maternal utterances and children's utterances are given for each type:

1.   **Elaborations:**

Speakers either introduce a topic for discussion (e.g., Mother: *Let's talk*

something about seeing the dentist. or Child: *When I went to see the doctor, he*

gave me two stickers.) or provide new information about the topic under

discussion.

2. **Repetitions:**

Speakers repeat the exact content or the gist of their own previous

utterances (e.g., Mother: Did the nurse give you stickers? Mother: *Did she give*

you stickers? or Child: The grandmother gave these candies to me. Researcher:

uh-huh. Child: *The grandmother gave these candies to me.*). Also included are

speakers' utterances which provide no new information (e.g., Mother: *Do you*

remember? or Researcher: And then? Child: *I don't know.*).

3. **Clarification questions:**

Speakers ask for clarification of what the addressee just said (e.g., Child:

Because there was a hole. Mother: *What did you mean (there was) a hole?* or

Researcher: You said that you went to the park. Child: *Huh?*).

4. **Evaluations:**

Speakers confirm, negate, or correct the addressee's previous utterance (e.g.,

Mother: Where did we go yesterday? Child: The zoo. Mother: *Right.* or

Researcher: You said that you have eaten the chocolates at that day? Child:

Right.).

5. **Associative talk:**

Speakers' utterances which are not specifically about the particular event

under discussion but are related to the event in a tangential way, such as general

knowledge talk, fantasy talk, and future talk.

6. **Off-topic talk:**

Speakers' utterances which are completely unrelated to the topic under

discussion (e.g., Mother: *Do you want to go to the toilet?* or Child: *Can you help*

me open it?).

3.3.2 Narrative information codes

The coding system is adapted from Chang (2003) and Peterson & McCabe (1983),

and is developed from the actual data. There are six types, and examples from

maternal utterances and children's utterances are given for each type:

1. **Complicating action:** Utterances which refer to events or actions that

advance the narrative (e.g., Mother: *Did you remember what we did that day?*

or Child: *Then I ate the noodles.*).

2. **Orientation:** Utterances about descriptive or durative information which is

related to who/what is involved in the narrated events and when/where the

events take place (e.g., Mother: *It is in Ilan where we saw dolphins.* or Child:

It is uncle who bought the chocolate for us.).

3. **Evaluation:** Utterances which are non-events and contain only evaluation such as descriptions of internal states (emotions, cognitions, and physical states), intentions, intensifiers, compulsions, explicit negatives, etc. (e.g., Mother: *You were scared at that time, right?* or Child: *I was very happy.*).

4. **Speech:** Utterances which include direct or reported character speech (e.g., Mother: *The doctor said you should take the medicine.* or Child: *The uncle told her that she should be careful.*).

5. **Coda:** Utterances which serve to mark an explicit conclusion (e.g., Mother: *That's all.* or Child: *That's all what I remembered.*).

6. **Non-narrative talk:** Utterances which are completely unrelated to the narration of the story (e.g., Mother: *Do you want to eat the pudding now?* or Child: *I want to eat the bread.*). Also included are utterances which are related to the narrative in a tangential way, such as general knowledge talk, fantasy talk, and future talk.

3.3.3 Reliability

About one-third of the mothers' data in the co-constructed narratives and one-third of the children's data in the independent narratives to the researcher were randomly selected and then coded independently by another trained rater in accordance with the coding schemes described earlier. The rater is also a Mandarin

speaker. Then, Cohen's Kappa was used to calculate the reliability of the data. The

inter-coder reliability reaches 0.86, which represents a considerably high agreement

between the two coders.

Chapter 4

Results

Analysis of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children and analysis of children's narrative performance in researcher-child conversations will be shown in section 4.1 and section 4.2, respectively. The effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children on children's narrative performance will be presented in section 4.3.

4.1 Analysis of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children

At first, we presented the number of co-constructed narratives in mother-child conversations, the number of total utterances per narrative, and the number of utterances that the mothers and the children produced per narrative when the children were 3;6, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number and length of narratives in mother-child conversations

Category	Conversation between D's mother and D	Conversation between Z's mother and Z
Number of narratives	21	16
Utterances per narrative	28.6	33.9
Maternal utterances per narrative	18.0 (62.9%)	20.6 (60.7%)
Child utterances per narrative	10.6 (37.1%)	13.3 (39.2%)

Note. The ratios of maternal/child utterances per narrative to total utterances per narrative are given in parentheses.

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Table 1 shows that in conversation between D's mother and D, they co-constructed 21 narratives, while in conversation between Z's mother and Z, they co-constructed 16 narratives. As for the ratio of maternal utterances per narrative to total utterances per narrative, D's mother is 62.9% and Z's mother is 60.7%. This suggested that the two mothers produced quite similar proportion of utterances per narrative. As for the ratio of child utterances per narrative to total utterances per narrative, D is 37.1% and Z is 39.2%. This indicated that the two children were also quite similar about the proportion of utterances that they produced per narrative when they were 3;6. In addition, it is worth noting that the proportion of utterances that both mothers produced per narrative is higher than the proportion of utterances that both children produced per narrative, suggesting that mothers contributed more utterances than children did in co-constructed narratives.

In the following section, we will present the findings of the two mothers' ways of co-constructing narrative with their children in terms of the conversational styles, which will be shown in section 4.1.1 and in terms of the narrative information types, which will be presented in section 4.1.2.

4.1.1 Conversational styles

Maternal utterances were classified into six types. The mean frequencies and distribution of utterance types per narrative are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean frequencies of maternal utterance types per narrative

Category	D's mother	Z's mother
Elaborations	9.0	14.1
Repetitions	1.3	1.9
Clarification questions	2.4	1.0
Evaluations	3.8	2.7
Associative talk	0.7	0.6
Off-topic talk	0.8	0.2

Table 2 revealed that the highest mean frequency of the two mothers' utterances was elaborations. This suggested that they often elaborated on the narrative topic when they talked about past events. Repetitions seldom occurred in the two mothers' utterances. With regard to clarification questions and evaluations, D's mother clarified and evaluated her child's utterances more often than Z's mother did. As for associative talk and off-topic talk, both mothers seldom made these kinds of utterances.

Furthermore, in order to determine the two mothers' conversational styles on the basis of Reese, Haden, & Fivush's (1993) classification, the ratio of elaborations to repetitions is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mothers' elaborations to repetitions ratio

	D's mother	Z's mother
Ratio of elaborations to repetitions	6.92	7.42

Based on Reese, Haden, & Fivush's (1993) study, if mothers used at least twice as many elaborations as repetitions, they would be classified as *high-elaborative* mothers; if mothers' use of elaborations was nearly equal to the use of repetitions, they would be classified as *low-elaborative* mothers. As a result, according to this classification, the results in Table 3 reveal that the two mothers were both *high-elaborative* mothers because the ratios of elaborations to repetitions were higher than 2. That is, both mothers used more than twice as many elaborations as repetitions.

To sum up, on the basis of the quantity of talk that the two mothers elaborated on the topic, they could be viewed as displaying the same conversational style: *high-elaborative* style. In order to gain more insight into how the two mothers co-constructed narratives about the past with their children, we further analyzed the type of narrative information that they provided or requested from their children in the co-constructed narratives.

4.1.2 Narrative information types

The mean frequencies and standard deviations of the narrative information that were provided by or requested by the mothers per narrative are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Mean frequencies and standard deviations of mothers' narrative information types per narrative

Variable	D's mother		Z's mother		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*
Complicating action	7.6	4.4	4.9	7.4	0.33
Orientation	5.1	2.8	10.1	13.6	-2.07*
Evaluation	2.9	0.9	2.6	0.7	0.29
Speech	0.2	0.1	0.9	0.6	-1.49
Coda	0	0	0	0	-
Non-narrative talk	2.2	1.8	2.0	2.6	0.32

* *p* < .05

Note. t values refer to tests for the significance of the difference between the two
    mothers.

As shown in Table 4, the two mothers both frequently provided or requested

information about complicating action and orientation, which were the two frequently

mentioned information types. But the mean frequencies of the two narrative

information types in the two mothers' utterances were quite different. Z's mother

specifically focused on orientation ($M = 10.1$), with more than twice as many as

complicating action ($M = 4.9$). In contrast, D's mother placed more emphasis on

complicating action ($M = 7.6$) than on orientation ($M = 5.1$). Furthermore, differences

between the two mothers in orientation ($t = -2.07$, p < 0.05) reached statistical

significance. With regard to evaluation and non-narrative talk, the two mothers

sometimes provided or requested these types of narrative information. As for speech

and coda, the occurrences of these information types were all very low in the two mothers' utterances. In sum, Z's mother and D's mother emphasized different narrative information. Z's mother focused on the orientation information of the narratives. In contrast, D's mother, while providing or requesting some orientation information, focused on describing the actions and events in the narratives.

To sum up, the two mothers were similar in that they frequently elaborated on the narrative topic under discussion. That is, they demonstrated the style termed *high-elaborative* by Reese, Haden, & Fivush. But there were differences in how they elaborated on the topic. Z's mother was particularly concerned about orientation information. She frequently provided or requested information about the context of the narratives. In contrast, D's mother placed more emphasis on complicating actions. As a result, although the two mothers could be classified as having the same *high-elaborative* style, they differed in the type of narrative information that they placed more emphasis on when co-constructing narratives about the past with their children.

4.2 Analysis of children's narrative performance in researcher-child conversations

We firstly presented the number of narratives in researcher-child conversations, the number of total utterances per narrative, and the number of utterances that the

researcher and children produced per narrative at three time points, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Number and length of narratives in researcher-child conversations at three time points

Category	Conversation between the researcher and D			Conversation between the researcher and Z		
	Time 1 (3;6)	Time 2 (3;9)	Time 3 (4;0)	Time 1 (3;6)	Time 2 (3;9)	Time 3 (4;0)
Number of narratives	7	6	6	6	6	5
Utterances per narrative	9.71	15.00	27.16	9.83	25.16	47.60
Researcher utterances per narrative	3.57 (36.7%)	4.50 (30%)	10.00 (36.8%)	2.00 (20.3%)	6.83 (27.1%)	14.20 (29.8%)
Child utterances per narrative	6.14 (63.2%)	10.50 (70%)	17.16 (63.1%)	7.83 (79.6%)	18.33 (72.9%)	33.40 (70.2%)

Note. The ratios of researcher/child utterances per narrative to total utterances per narrative are given in parentheses.

Table 5 shows that in conversations between the researcher and D/Z, the number

of total utterances per narrative increased over time. In addition, the ratio of child

utterances per narrative to total utterances per narrative for both children is higher

than the ratio of researcher utterances per narrative to total utterances per narrative at

three time points. That is, both children contributed more proportion of utterances per

narrative than the researcher did at each time point. This suggested that the major

narrator in researcher-child conversations was the children, not the researcher.

In the following section, we will present the findings of the two children's

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narrative performance in researcher-child conversations in terms of the conversational

contributions, which will be shown in section 4.2.1 and in terms of the narrative

information types, which will be presented in section 4.2.2.

4.2.1   Conversational contributions

The utterances that the two children produced in the narratives when having

conversations with the researcher were classified into six types. And the

conversational contributions were analyzed through the classification of utterance

types. One way ANOVA was performed for each type to determine if there was

significant difference in the two children's utterance types over time. The mean

frequencies and standard deviations of the utterance types per narrative at three time

points (3;6, 3;9 and 4;0) are presented in Table 6 and Table 7. Table 6 and Table 7

exhibit the findings of the child D and the child Z, respectively.

Table 6. Mean frequencies and standard deviations of D's utterance types per narrative

Variable	D						
	Time 1 (3;6)		Time 2 (3;9)		Time 3 (4;0)		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*
Elaborations	3.57	0.53	6.66	3.26	10.83	5.56	6.50*
Repetitions	0.28	0.48	0.50	0.83	2.50	1.76	7.25*
Clarification questions	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-
Evaluations	0.85	0.69	1.50	0.54	2.16	2.56	1.19
Associative talk	0.28	0.48	0.33	2.04	0.83	2.89	0.38
Off-topic talk	1.14	3.02	1.50	3.67	0.83	2.04	0.07

* *p* < .05

Note. F values refer to tests for effects of time.

Table 7. Mean frequencies and standard deviations of Z's utterance types per narrative

Variable	Z						
	Time 1 (3;6)		Time 2 (3;9)		Time 3 (4;0)		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*
Elaborations	5.33	1.21	15.00	3.03	27.00	14.94	9.46*
Repetitions	0.33	0.81	1.16	1.60	4.20	3.70	4.34*
Clarification questions	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-
Evaluations	0.16	0.40	0.83	0.75	1.00	1.22	1.60
Associative talk	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.83	0.60	0.89	1.23
Off-topic talk	2.00	4.89	0.83	2.04	0.60	1.34	0.30

* *p* < .05

Note. F values refer to tests for effects of time.

Table 6 and Table 7 revealed that within each time point, elaborations was the most frequently occurred utterance type for both children. In comparison to elaborations, the mean frequencies of repetitions were much lower at each time point. This implied that the two children both frequently elaborated on the topic under discussion. That is, they contributed unique pieces of information about past events more than they participated without adding new information in researcher-child conversations. As for clarification questions, both of the children did not produce this kind of utterance.

Across time, the mean frequencies of elaborations, repetitions, evaluations, and associative talk increased as the two children grew older. According to the analysis of variance performed, differences in frequencies of elaborations (D child: $F = 6.50$, p < 0.05; Z child: $F = 9.46$, p < 0.05) and repetitions (D child: $F = 7.25$, p < 0.05; Z child: $F = 4.34$, p < 0.05) across the three time points reached statistical significance. This indicated that the children provided significantly more pieces of new information when they were older, and they also showed a greater willingness to engage in the conversation even when not providing new memory information. With regard to off-topic talk, the mean frequencies decreased to the lowest at Time 3 (4;0) for both children, suggesting that the two children had better ability to focus on the topic under discussion when they were older.

In sum, the findings suggested that the two children were very similar about the type of utterances that they contributed in the narratives when having conversations with the researcher. More specifically, they both frequently produced the type of elaborations, which was much higher than repetitions at each time point. In addition, there were significant differences in the amount of elaborations and repetitions over time. Therefore, in terms of the conversational contributions, the two children displayed very similar performance. In the following, we will further analyze the type of narrative information that the two children included in the narratives to gain more insight into their narrative performance in conversations with the researcher.

4.2.2　Narrative information types

The utterances that the two children produced in the narratives when having conversations with the researcher were classified into six narrative information types. One way ANOVA was performed for each type to determine if there was significant difference in the two children's information types over time. The mean frequencies and standard deviations of the information types per narrative at three time points (3;6, 3;9 and 4;0) are presented in Table 8 and Table 9. Table 8 and Table 9 exhibit the findings of Child D and Child Z, respectively.

Table 8. Mean frequencies and standard deviations of D's information types per narrative

	D						
	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3		
	(3;6)		(3;9)		(4;0)		
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*
Complicating action	2.14	1.06	3.50	1.97	7.33	3.01	10.20*
Orientation	0.57	0.78	2.16	1.47	2.83	3.37	1.99
Evaluation	0.85	0.89	1.50	1.37	1.83	2.31	0.62
Speech	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.51	2.73
Coda	0.28	0.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.02
Non-narrative talk	2.28	3.09	3.33	3.77	4.83	4.70	0.70

* *p* < .05

Note. *F* values refer to tests for effects of time.

Table 9. Mean frequencies and standard deviations of Z's information types per narrative

	Z						
	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3		
	(3;6)		(3;9)		(4;0)		
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*
Complicating action	3.00	1.41	7.50	2.88	12.00	6.00	7.93*
Orientation	1.50	0.54	5.66	6.83	15.80	9.62	6.69*
Evaluation	0.33	0.81	1.50	1.76	1.40	1.34	1.32
Speech	0.16	0.40	1.50	1.37	3.00	2.54	4.22*
Coda	0.66	1.21	0.33	0.51	0.00	0.00	0.98
Non-narrative talk	2.16	5.30	1.83	2.13	1.20	1.09	0.10

* *p* < .05

Note. *F* values refer to tests for effects of time.

Table 8 revealed that within each time point, complicating action was the most frequently included information type for Child D. And non-narrative talk was the second most frequently included information. As for Orientation and evaluation, Child D sometimes produced utterances about these information types. With regard to speech and coda, the mean frequencies were quite low. Across time, the mean frequencies of complicating action, orientation, evaluation, speech, and non-narrative talk increased as Child D grew older. According to the analysis of variance performed, differences in mean frequencies of complicating action ($F = 10.20$, $p < 0.05$) across the three time points reached statistical significance. This indicated that Child D produced significantly more utterances about the events or actions which occurred in the narratives when she was older.

Table 9 showed that the information type which had the highest mean frequency at Time 1 (3;6) and Time 2 (3;9) was different from the one at Time 3 (4;0). That is, complicating action was the highest one at the first two time points, while at Time 3 (4;0), orientation became the highest one. This indicated that at first, Child Z placed more emphasis on complicating action than orientation, but afterwards she became more concerned about the orientation than complicating action. With respect to non-narrative talk, the mean frequency was quite high at Time 1 (3;6) but it decreased to 1.2 at Time 3 (4;0). As for evaluation, speech, and coda, Child Z sometimes

produced utterances about these information types at each time point. In addition,

across the three time points, differences in mean frequencies of complicating action (F

= 7.93, p < 0.05), orientation (F = 6.69, p < 0.05), and speech (F = 4.22, p < 0.05)

reached statistical significance. This indicated that Child Z produced significantly

more utterances about the actions, context, or reported speech in the narratives when

she was older.

To sum up, the results suggested that at Time 1 (3;6), the two children were not

very different in the mean frequencies of orientation that were included in the

narrative. But, at Time 3 (4;0), the mean frequency of orientation for Child Z was

much higher than that for Child D. And there was significant difference in the mean

frequency of orientation over time for Child Z (F = 6.69, p < 0.05), while there was

no significant difference in the mean frequency of orientation over time for Child D

(F = 1.99, p < 0.05). This suggested that Z increasingly paid much more attention to

include orientation information than D did as she got older. Furthermore, at Time 1

(3;6) and Time 2 (3;9), D and Z were similar in that complicating action was higher

than orientation. However, at Time 3 (4;0), Z's orientation was higher than

complicating action, while D's complicating action was still higher than orientation.

Therefore, in terms of the narrative information type, the two children displayed

different performance at Time 3 (4;0) in that Z placed more emphasis on orientation

than complicating action, while D focused on complicating action just as she did at Time 1 (3;6) and Time 2 (3;9).

4.3 The effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children on children's narrative performance

In this section, we aim to see whether differences between mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children would be reflected in children's narrative performance in conversations with the researcher. There are two sub-sections included. The first section shows the effect of mothers' conversational styles on children's conversational contributions, and the second section presents the effect of mothers' provision/request for narrative information types on children's inclusion of narrative information types.

4.3.1 Effect of mothers' conversational styles on children's conversational contributions

Although the two mothers showed the same *high-elaborative* conversational style, there was difference between the two mothers' percentage of the two utterance types (*elaborations* and *repetitions*) which were used to determine the conversational style. Hence, we were then interested in analyzing whether the difference between the two mothers' percentage of elaborations and repetitions would be reflected in children's contributions of the two utterance types in conversations with the

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researcher. Table 10 shows the distribution of D's mother's elaborations and

repetitions in conversation with D and the distribution of D's elaborations and

repetitions in conversation with the researcher. Table 11 presents the distribution of

Z's mother's elaborations and repetitions in conversation with Z and the distribution

of Z's elaborations and repetitions in conversation with the researcher.

Table 10. Distribution of D's mother's and D's elaborations and repetitions per narrative

	D's mother	**D**		
	Time 1 *(3;6)*	*Time 1* *(3;6)*	*Time 2* *(3;9)*	*Time 3* *(4;0)*
Variable	*%*	*%*	*%*	*%*
Elaborations	50	58.3	63.4	63.1
	(9.0)	(3.57)	(6.66)	(10.83)
Repetitions	7.2	4.5	4.7	14.5
	(1.3)	(0.28)	(0.50)	(2.50)

Note. The mean frequency of each category per narrative is given in parentheses. The total utterances per narrative of D's mother are 18, and the total utterances per narrative of D at each time point are 6.14, 10.5, and 17.16, respectively.

Table 11. Distribution of Z's mother's and Z's elaborations and repetitions per
narrative

	Z's mother	Z		
	Time 1	*Time 1*	*Time 2*	*Time 3*
	(3;6)	*(3;6)*	*(3;9)*	*(4;0)*
Variable	*%*	*%*	*%*	*%*
Elaborations	68.8	68.1	81.8	80.8
	(14.1)	(5.33)	(15.00)	(27.00)
Repetitions	9.3	4.2	6.3	12.5
	(1.9)	(0.33)	(1.16)	(4.20)

Note. The mean frequency of each category per narrative is given in parentheses.
The total utterances per narrative of Z's mother are 20.6, and the total
utterances per narrative of Z at each time point are 7.83, 18.33, and 33.4,
respectively.

Table 10 showed that in D's mother's utterances, the percentage of the type of

elaborations at Time 1 (3;6) was 50%, and Table 11 revealed that in Z's mother's

utterances, the percentage of the type of elaborations at Time 1 (3;6) was 68.8%. This

suggested that when having conversations with children, Z's mother elaborated on the

topic under discussion much more often than D's mother did at Time 1 (3;6). As for

children's performance in conversations with the researcher, Table 10 showed that in

D's utterances, the percentage of elaborations at three time points was 58.3%, 63.4%,

and 63.1%, respectively. And Table 11 revealed that in Z's utterances, the percentage

of elaborations at three time points was 68.1%, 81.8%, and 80.8%, respectively. These

results indicated that at each time point, the percentage of Z's elaborations was higher

than the percentage of D's elaborations. At Time 1 (3;6), D and Z did not differ much. But at Time 2 (3;9) and Time 3 (4;0), the difference between the two children's percentage of elaborations was more apparent. This suggested that the difference between the two mothers' elaborations was reflected in their children's contributions of elaborations more obviously at later time points.

With regard to the type of repetitions, Table 10 showed that the percentage of D's mother's repetitions at Time 1 (3;6) was 7.2%, and Table 11 revealed that the percentage of Z's mother's repetitions at Time 1 (3;6) was 9.3%. This suggested that when having conversations with children, Z's mother repeated her own utterances a little more often than D's mother did at Time 1 (3;6). As for children's performance in conversations with the researcher, Table 10 showed that the percentage of D's repetitions at three time points was 4.5%, 4.7%, and 14.5%, respectively. And Table 11 revealed that the percentage of Z's repetitions at three time points was 4.2%, 6.3%, and 12.5%, respectively. These results indicated that there was no consistent difference between the two children's repetitions at three time points. That is, at Time 1 (3;6), the percentage of D's repetitions was higher than the percentage of Z's repetitions. At Time 2 (3;9), the percentage of Z's repetitions became higher than the percentage of D's repetitions. But at Time 3 (4;0), the percentage of D's repetitions was higher than the percentage of Z's repetitions.

4.3.2 Effect of mothers' provision/request for narrative information types on children's inclusion of narrative information types

We were interested in analyzing whether differences between mothers' provision/request for narrative information types would be reflected in children's inclusion of narrative information types in conversations with the researcher. More specifically, we aimed to analyze whether the mother who provided/requested for certain narrative information type more often than the other mother had the child who included this narrative information type more often than the other child. Table 12 shows the distribution of D's mother's each narrative information type in conversation with D and the distribution of D's each narrative information type in conversation with the researcher. And Table 13 presents the distribution of Z's mother's each narrative information type in conversation with Z and the distribution of Z's each narrative information type in conversation with the researcher.

Table 12. Distribution of D's mother's and D's narrative information types per narrative

Variable	D's mother	D		
	Time 1 (3;6)	Time 1 (3;6)	Time 2 (3;9)	Time 3 (4;0)
	% (M)	% (M)	% (M)	% (M)
Complicating action	42.2 (7.6)	34.9 (2.14)	33.3 (3.50)	42.7 (7.33)
Orientation	28.3 (5.1)	9.3 (0.57)	20.5 (2.16)	16.5 (2.83)
Evaluation	16.1 (2.9)	13.8 (0.85)	14.2 (1.50)	10.6 (1.83)
Speech	1 (0.2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1.9 (0.33)
Coda	0 (0)	4.5 (0.28)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Non-narrative talk	12.2 (2.2)	37.2 (2.28)	31.7 (3.33)	28.1 (4.83)

Note. The mean frequency of each category per narrative is given in parentheses.

Table 13. Distribution of Z's mother's and Z's narrative information types per narrative

Variable	Z's mother	Z		
	Time 1 (3;6)	Time 1 (3;6)	Time 2 (3;9)	Time 3 (4;0)
	% (M)	% (M)	% (M)	% (M)
Complicating action	23.9 (4.9)	38.4 (3.00)	40.9 (7.50)	35.9 (12.00)
Orientation	49.3 (10.1)	19.2 (1.50)	30.8 (5.66)	47.3 (15.80)
Evaluation	12.7 (2.6)	4.2 (0.33)	8.1 (1.50)	4.1 (1.40)
Speech	4.3 (0.9)	2 (0.16)	8.1 (1.50)	8.9 (3.00)
Coda	0 (0)	8.4 (0.66)	1.8 (0.33)	0 (0)
Non-narrative talk	9.7 (2.0)	27.6 (2.16)	9.9 (1.83)	3.5 (1.20)

Note. The mean frequency of each category per narrative is given in parentheses.

Table 12 and Table 13 showed that the percentage of D's mother's complicating

action (42.2%) was higher than that of Z's mother's complicating action (23.9%) at

Time 1 (3;6). This suggested that when having conversations with children, D's

mother provided or requested for complicating action much more often than Z's

mother did at Time 1 (3;6). As for children's performance in conversations with the

researcher, Table 12 showed that in D's utterances, the percentage of complicating

action at three time points was 34.9%, 33.3%, and 42.7%, respectively. And Table 13

revealed that in Z's utterances, the percentage of complicating action at three time

points was 38.4%, 40.9%, and 35.9%, respectively. These results indicated that at

Time 1 (3;6) and Time 2 (3;9), the percentage of Z's complicating action was higher

than that of D's complicating action. But at Time 3 (4;0), the percentage of D's

complicating action became higher than that of Z's complicating action. This

suggested that the difference between the two mothers' provision/request for

complicating action may be reflected in their children's inclusion of this information

type in conversations with the researcher 6 months later.

With regard to orientation, the percentage of Z's mother's orientation (49.3%)

was higher than that of D's mother's orientation (28.3%) at Time 1 (3;6). This

suggested that when having conversations with children, Z's mother provided or

requested for information about the context of the narratives much more often than

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D's mother did at Time 1 (3;6). As for children's performance in conversations with the researcher, Table 12 showed that in D's utterances, the percentage of orientation at three time points was 9.3%, 20.5%, and 16.5%, respectively. And Table 13 revealed that in Z's utterances, the percentage of orientation at three time points was 19.2%, 30.8%, and 47.3%, respectively. At each time point, the percentage of Z's orientation was higher than that of D's orientation. And it is worth noting that at Time 3 (4;0), the difference between the two children's percentage of orientation was the most apparent. This indicated that the two mothers' difference in provision/request for orientation was reflected in their children's inclusion of this information type most obviously at the last time point.

As for evaluation and speech, there was not much difference between the two mothers' percentage of these two information types at Time 1 (3;6). That is, with respect to the percentage of evaluation, D's mother's provision/request for this information type (16.1%) was a little higher than Z's mother's provision/request for this information type (12.7%) at Time 1 (3;6). With respect to the percentage of speech, the percentage of Z's mother's provision/request for this information type (4.3%) was a little higher than D's mother's provision/request for this information type (1%) at Time 1 (3;6). As for children's performance in conversations with the researcher, it was found that the percentage of D's evaluation was higher than that of

Z's evaluation at each time point and the percentage of Z's speech was higher than that of D's speech at each time point. But it is worth noting that the difference between the two children's percentage of these two information types was not much at each time point. This may be due to the slight difference in the provision/request for evaluation and speech between D's mother and Z's mother.

With regard to coda, both mothers did not provide or request for this information type in conversations with their children at Time 1 (3;6), but their children sometimes included this information type in conversations with the researcher. Table 12 showed that the percentage of D's coda at three time points was 4.5%, 0%, and 0%, respectively, and Table 13 revealed that the percentage of Z's coda at three time points was 8.4%, 1.8%, and 0%, respectively. The possible reason may be that when mothers had conversations with their children, if they wanted to close the topic under discussion, they may just open a new topic. But when children had conversations with the researcher, children may not come up with a new topic as quickly as adults. Hence, if children wanted to close the topic under discussion, they may mark the end of the narrative by providing the information type of coda to the researcher who did not share the background knowledge.

With respect to non-narrative talk, the percentage of D's mother's non-narrative talk (12.2%) was higher than that of Z's mother's non-narrative talk (9.7%) at Time 1

(3;6). And Table 12 suggested that in D's utterances, the percentage of non-narrative

talk at three time points was 37.2%, 31.7%, and 28.1%, respectively. Table 13

revealed that in Z's utterances, the percentage of non-narrative talk at three time

points was 27.6%, 9.9%, and 3.5%, respectively. These results indicated that the

percentage of D's non-narrative talk was higher than that of Z's non-narrative talk at

each time point. In addition, it is worth noting that the difference between the two

children's percentage of this information type at Time 2 (3;9) and Time 3 (4;0) was

more apparent than that at Time 1 (3;6). This indicated that the two mothers'

difference in provision/request for non-narrative talk may be reflected in their

children's inclusion of this information type more obviously at later time points.

In sum, the findings suggested that the mother who provided/requested for

certain narrative information type much more often than the other mother had the

child who included this narrative information type more often than the other child. For

instance, D's mother provided or requested for complicating action much more often

than Z's mother did. Then, it was found that D included this information type more

often than Z did at Time 3 (4;0). In addition, the difference between the two mothers

would be reflected in their children's performance more obviously at later time point.

For instance, Z's mother provided or requested for orientation much more often than

D's mother did at Time 1 (3;6). Then, it was found that the difference that Z included

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this information type more often than D did was the most apparent at Time 3 (4;0).

Chapter 5

Discussion

After presenting the results of the study, in this chapter, we will summarize and

discuss what we observed in the two mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with

their children in section 5.1 and the two children's narrative performance in

conversations with the researcher in section 5.2. At last, we will discuss the effect of

mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children on children's narrative

performance in terms of Vygotskian theory in section 5.3.

5.1 Mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children

Generally, results of previous studies suggested that mothers display different

styles when having conversations with children about the past (Fivush & Fromhoff,

1988; McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Reese & Fivush, 1993). In this study, the two

mothers showed the same conversational style termed *high-elaborative style* by Reese,

Haden, & Fivush (1993). This may be due to the small sample size, so the other style

termed *low-elaborative style* was not observed.

With respect to the narrative information, the two mothers were the same that

they both seldom provided or requested for information about evaluation and speech

in the co-constructed narratives with their children. That is, the percentage of these

two narrative information types was not high. This finding is consistent with what

Chang (2003) observed in her research on Mandarin mother-child conversations about the past events.

However, the two mothers differed in the type of information that they provided or requested most frequently when co-constructing narratives about the past with their children. Z's mother was particularly concerned about orientation information. That is, she frequently provided or requested information about the context of the narratives. In contrast, D's mother placed more emphasis on complicating actions. This individual difference is not found in Chang's (2003) study which suggested that complicating action was the most frequently requested or provided information for all the mothers in her study, but is consistent with Peterson and McCabe's (1992) study that one of the mothers in their study focused on the orientation of the narrative while placing less emphasis on the descriptions of action; the other mother elicited more temporally-ordered descriptions of actions than the orientation information. One possible explanation for the difference in these studies is probably because of the ways of analyzing the data. That is, Chang (2003) examined 16 mothers' mean frequencies of narrative information types rather than separately examined every 16 mother's provision/request of narrative information types, whereas Peterson & McCabe's (1992) study and the present study investigated 2 mothers' narrative information types separately. This implies that mothers' individual difference may

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only be obvious if we analyze the data separately.

5.2 Children's narrative performance in conversations with the researcher

In terms of the conversational contributions, the findings suggested that the two

children were very similar about the type of utterances that they contributed in the

narratives when having conversations with the researcher. More specifically, they both

frequently produced the type of elaborations, which was much higher than repetitions

at each time point. And it is worth noting that both children did not produce the type

of clarification questions at each time point. The reason may be that compared with

mother-child conversations, the way that children construct narratives in

researcher-child conversations was more like a monologue rather than co-construction

with the researcher. And the researcher just gave nonspecific prompts such as

'uh-huh', 'and?', and 'then what happened?' in response to the children's utterances.

Hence, the children would pay more attention to what they wanted to say but show

less concern about what the researcher said. Therefore, at each time point, the children

did not produce utterances to ask for clarification of what the researcher just said.

As for the change of utterance types over time, both children's elaborations

increased significantly with the growth of age. This is in line with Reese, Haden, &

Fivush's (1993) study that children's utterance type of *memory elaborations* increased

gradually over time. But our finding that both children's repetitions increased

significantly with the growth of age is not consistent with Reese, Haden, & Fivush's (1993) study that children's provision of *memory repetitions* did not change over time. One possible explanation for this may be that the conversational contributions that Reese, Haden, & Fivush examined were in mother-child conversations, whereas the conversational contributions that this study examined were in researcher-child conversations. That is, when children had conversations with their high-elaborative mothers, their mothers may lead them to a new aspect of the narrative. But when children had conversations with the researcher who did not share the background knowledge of the narrative, children may make time to plan what to tell the researcher by repeating their own utterances. With regard to children's off-topic talk, the finding supports Reese, Haden, & Fivush's (1993) study that the mean frequency of this utterance type decreased to the lowest at the last time point, suggesting that children came to have better ability to focus on the topic under discussion when they were older.

In terms of the narrative information, at the first two time points when the two children were 3;6 and 3;9, they were similar in that complicating action was the highest frequently included information. This result lends its support to many previous studies that children focused on the descriptions of actions that occurred in the narratives (Chang, 2004; Minami, 1996). As for coda, the two children's mean

frequencies of this information type were quite low at each time point. This is in line

with Chang's (2003) study. Over time, the results showed that the mean frequencies of

both children's complicating action and orientation increased, which supports many

researcher's claims that children included more actions and orientations in

constructing personal experience narratives with the growth of age (Chang, 2004;

Haden, Haine, & Fivush, 1997).

5.3 The effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives on children's narrative performance

The findings indicated that differences between the two mothers' ways of

co-constructing narratives with their children would be reflected in children's

narrative performance in conversations with the researcher. With respect to the effect

of mothers' conversational styles on children's conversational contributions, results

revealed that the difference that Z's mother's elaborations were higher than D's

mother's elaborations at Time 1 (3;6) would be reflected in their children's

performance. That is, it was found that Z's elaborations were higher than D's

elaborations when having conversation with the researcher. And it is worth noting that

at Time 1 (3;6), D and Z did not differ much. But at Time 2 (3;9) and Time 3 (4;0), the

difference between the two children's percentage of elaborations was more apparent.

This suggested that the difference between the two mothers' elaborations would be

reflected in their children's contributions of elaborations more obviously at later time points. This is consistent with Reese, Haden, and Fivush's (1993) study that mothers' provision of elaborations was significantly correlated with children's elaborations at later time points. That is, the more elaborations that mothers provided, the more elaborations that children provided in their later narratives.

As for the utterance type of repetition, there was not much difference between the two mothers' percentage of this utterance type at Time 1 (3;6). And it was found that there was no consistent difference between the two children's repetitions at three time points. That is, at Time 1 (3;6), the percentage of D's repetitions was higher than the percentage of Z's repetitions. At Time 2 (3;9), the percentage of Z's repetitions became higher than the percentage of D's repetitions. But at Time 3 (4;0), the percentage of D's repetitions was higher than the percentage of Z's repetitions. The inconsistent difference between the two children's percentage of repetitions may be due to the slight difference between the two mothers' percentage of this utterance type.

With regard to the effect of mothers' provision/request for narrative information types on children's inclusion of narrative information types. Results revealed that the mother who provided/requested for certain narrative information type much more often than the other mother had the child who included this narrative information type

more often than the other child. For instance, D's mother provided or requested for

complicating actions much more often than Z's mother did at Time 1 (3;6). Then, it

was found that the percentage of D's complicating actions was higher than the

percentage of Z's complicating actions at Time 3 (4;0). This is in line with Peterson &

McCabe's (1992) study that the mother who emphasized complicating actions in the

co-constructed narratives had the child who included much information about

complicating actions in the narratives when having conversation with the researcher.

In addition, results revealed that the difference between the two mothers'

provision/request for narrative information type would be reflected in their children's

performance more obviously at later time point. For instance, Z's mother provided or

requested for orientation much more often than D's mother did at Time 1 (3;6). Then,

it was found that the difference that the percentage of Z's orientation was higher than

the percentage of D's orientation was more apparent at Time 3 (4;0) than that at Time

1 (3;6). This finding lends its support to many previous studies that the children of

mothers who provided or requested much orientation information in the

co-constructed narratives included a great deal of orientation information in their later

independent narratives (Fivush, 1991; Peterson & McCabe, 1992).

According to Vygotskian (1986) theory, it proposes that interpersonal processes

become internalized into intrapersonal processes. Generalizing to narration, this

theory would predict that the way a child comes to internally construct his or her

narrative should reflect the social interactions that the child has experienced. For

instance, mother-child conversations would influence the child's internalization of

how to construct a narrative. That is, the questions that asked and statements that

made by mothers would direct the child's attention to what is important in a narrative.

Thus, the narrating child is responding to an internal sense of audience, which has

developed in accordance with the real external audience that the child has been

exposed to.

As an example of the predictions of Vygotskian theory, consider the orientation

information that was included in the narratives by Child D and Child Z at each time

point. Neither of them was proficient in the provision of orientation at Time 1 (3;6).

And complicating action was higher than orientation for both of them. However, at

Time 3 (4;0), Z's orientation became higher than complicating action, while D's

complicating action was still higher than orientation. This suggested that because Z's

mother placed more emphasis on orientation than D's mother did, Z then increasingly

incorporated much more orientation than complicating action in the narratives as she

got older. That is, Z came to internalize which narrative information type was

important through the way that her mother co-constructed narratives with her.

Therefore, Z's orientation became the most frequently included narrative information

at Time 3 (4;0).

To summarize, a mother who frequently provided or asked for orientation information about participants, place, time, and objects stressed the importance of such information to her child. These then were the components that the child came to stress in her own independent narratives to the researcher; such is the case with Z's mother and Z. On the other hand, a mother who paid less attention on orientation but stressed complicating actions indirectly taught her child that complicating actions were quite crucial; such is the case with D's mother and D.

In addition, Vygotskian theory predicts that there is a time-lag relationship between parental behavior and subsequent child performance. In our data, it was found that the difference between the two mothers' elaborations would be reflected in their children's contributions of this utterance type more obviously at later time points. And the difference that D's mother provided or requested for complicating actions much more often than Z's mother did at Time 1 (3;6) was reflected in the two children's percentage of this narrative information type at Time 3 (4;0). And the difference that Z's mother provided or requested for orientation more often than D's mother did at Time 1 (3;6) would be reflected in the two children's percentage of this narrative information type more apparently at Time 3 (4;0).These findings are consistent with Vygotskian theory that early scaffolds provided by mothers would be

reflected in children's performance at a later time.

One thing should be noted is that although there was a close correspondence between the mothers' provision/request for narrative information types in the co-constructed narratives and their children's later narrative performance in conversation with the researcher in this study, such correspondence was not necessarily to be expected in other studies. The reason is that the two mothers in this study were both high-elaborative mothers. That is, they devoted considerable time to talking about past events with their children and elaborated the topic under discussion. Thus, their children were exposed to frequent narrative scaffolds. In contrast, mothers in other studies may devote little time to such discourse and show low-elaborative style. Then, the concordance between these mothers' provision/request for narrative information types and their children's later narrative performance would be considerably diminished. For instance, in McCabe & Peterson's (1991) study, they examined the children's narrative performance of high-elaborative mothers and low-elaborative mothers. And the findings suggested that the important predictor of the children's narrative performance of low-elaborative mothers was not the same as that of the children's narrative performance of high-elaborative mothers. That is, the important predictor of the children's performance of low-elaborative mothers was not the specific type of narrative information that their mothers scaffolded frequently, but

the lack of many prompts of any sort, i.e., an impoverished scaffold.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

In this chapter, the summary of the findings of the present study will be given.

Then some limitations will be pointed out and a few suggestions for further research

will be made.

6.1 Summary

This thesis attempted to investigate (1) mothers' ways of co-constructing

narratives with their children in terms of the conversational styles and the narrative

information types, (2) children's narrative performance without mothers' support in

researcher-child conversations in terms of the conversational contributions and the

narrative information types, (3) the effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing

narratives with children on children's narrative performance in conversation with a

researcher. Results revealed that the two mothers displayed the same conversational

style, namely, *high-elaborative style* termed by Reese, Haden, & Fivush (1993). But,

they differed in the type of narrative information that they placed more emphasis on.

One of the mothers was particularly concerned about orientation information, while

the other mother placed more emphasis on complicating actions. As for children's

narrative performance, the two children were very similar about the type of utterances

that they contributed in the narratives when having conversations with the researcher.
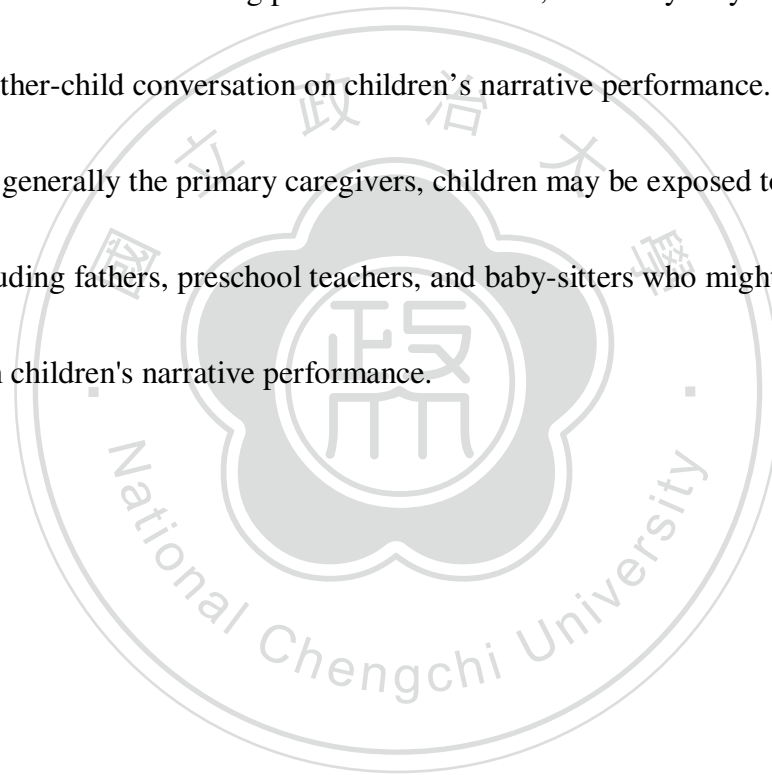
More specifically, they both frequently produced the type of elaborations, which was much higher than repetitions at each time point. In terms of narrative information types, at Time 1 (3;6) and Time 2 (3;9), D and Z were similar in that complicating action was higher than orientation. However, at Time 3 (4;0), Z's orientation was higher than complicating action, while D's complicating action was still higher than orientation. That is, at Time 3 (4;0), Z placed more emphasis on orientation than complicating action, while D focused on complicating action just as she did at Time 1 (3;6) and Time 2 (3;9).

With respect to the effect of mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with children on children's narrative performance in conversation with a researcher, it was found that the difference between the two mothers' elaborations would be reflected in their children's contributions of this utterance type more obviously at later time points. And the difference that D's mother provided or requested for complicating actions much more often than Z's mother did at Time 1 (3;6) was reflected in the two children's percentage of this narrative information type at Time 3 (4;0). These findings are in line with Vygotskian theory that early scaffolds provided by mothers would be reflected in children's performance at a later time.

6.2 Limitations of this study

Despite all the findings, this study leaves room for improvement and further

inquiry. First of all, the sample size of this study is too small, so the generalizability

of the findings remains a question. Therefore, it is suggested that more subjects

should be included in future research. Second, the time span for observation in this

study is too short. Change in mothers' ways of co-constructing narratives with

children and children's narrative performance in conversations with the researcher

may only be obvious over a long period of time. Third, this study only examines the

effect of mother-child conversation on children's narrative performance. Even though

mothers are generally the primary caregivers, children may be exposed to many other

people, including fathers, preschool teachers, and baby-sitters who might also have an

influence on children's narrative performance.

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