Hughes D., McGillivray, L., & Schmidek, M. (1997)
Guide to narrative language. Pro-Ed.

Analysis of Narrative Language

TABLE 4.3	

STORY STRUCTURE LEVELS, ORDERED FROM LEAST TO MOST COMPLEX

Story Structure Levels	Developmental Age	Description
1. Descriptive Sequence	Preschool	Describes character(s), surroundings, and habitual actions with no causal relations
2. Action Sequence	Preschool	Lists actions that are chronologically but not causally ordered
3. Reactive Sequence	Preschool	Includes a series of actions, each of which automatically causes other actions, but with no planning involved; no clear goal-directed behavior
4. Abbreviated Episode	About 6 years	Provides aims or intentions of a character but does not explicitly state the character's plan to achieve aims; planning must be inferred
5a. Incomplete Episode	Around 7–8 years	States planning, but one or more of the three essential story grammar parts of a complete episode is missing: IE, A, or C
5b. Complete Episode	Around 7–8 years	Includes aims and plans of a character; may reflect evidence of planning in the attempts of a character to reach the goal; has at minimum an initiating event, an attempt, and a consequence; uses words like *decided to*
5c. Multiple Episodes	Around 7–8 years	Is a chain of reactive sequences or abbreviated episodes, or a combination of complete and incomplete episodes
6. Complex Episode	Around 11 years	Includes elaboration of a complete episode by including multiple plans, attempts, or consequences within an episode; includes an obstacle to the attainment of a goal; may include a trick, as in "trickster tales"
7a. Embedded Episode	Around 11 years	Embeds another complete episode or reactive sequence within an episode
7b. Interactive Episode	None established by research; beyond 11–12 years	Describes one set of events from two perspectives, with characters and goals influencing each other; may have a reaction or consequence for one character serving as an initiating event for another character

Sources: Glenn and Stein (1980); Hedberg and Westby (1993); Liles (1987); Stein (1988); Peterson and McCabe (1983)

Lahey (1988) presented a simplified developmental sequence of story structure in self-generated narratives that includes four levels: additive chains, temporal chains, causal chains, and multiple causal chains. The narratives of preschoolers mostly fall into the first two levels, and the stories produced by children in the early elementary grades may fall into any of the four levels, with stories at the last two levels increasing in frequency. Adults also create narratives at

TABLE 4.6

STRUCTURAL PATTERNS
ANALYZED BY HIGH POINT ANALYSIS

Age	Structural Pattern	Description
3–4 years	1. Two-event	The narrative is a combination of only two events (e.g., complication and evaluation; orientation and complication).
4 years	2. Leapfrog	The narrative jumps from one event to another within an integrated experience, leaving out major events that must be inferred by the listener; the narrator's sequence of events does not match a logically occurring order.
5 years	3. End-at-high-point	The narrative builds up to a high point (i.e., the narrator concentrates on the complication and evaluative comments, then ends, without resolution).
6 years	4. Classic	The narrative builds up to a high point, the narrator evaluatively dwells on it, then resolves it; this is the typical form of adult narratives found by Labov and Waletzky (1966).
All ages	5. Chronological	The narrative consists of undeveloped stories that are unevaluated lists of actions or simple descriptions of successive events.
No typical age	6. Impoverished	The narrative consists of too few sentences for any high point pattern to be recognized, or it reiterates and evaluates only two events.
No typical age	7. Disoriented	The narrative is too confused or disoriented for understanding.
No typical age	8. Miscellaneous	The narrative does not fit into one of the above categories.

Sources: McCabe and Rollins (1994); Peterson and McCabe (1983)

For additional practice in assigning a pattern to personal narratives, practice exercises have been provided at the end of this chapter. A blank Personal Narrative Data Sheet is included in Appendix D and may be used for high point analysis. It provides an efficient means for analyzing the narrative pattern and parts of a personal narrative. Attach this data sheet to a Narrative Sample Data Sheet (Appendix A) to retain the quantitative information (e.g., total words, MLCU, etc.) that was discussed in Chapter 3. The Personal Narrative Data Sheet also includes a place to comment on microstructure features, which will be described later in this chapter.

MACROANALYSIS OF SCRIPTS

As children experience the same event repeatedly, such as going to a birthday party, they form a script, or stored set of expectations,

TABLE 4.7

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES OF NARRATIVE PRODUCTION USED FOR MACROSTRUCTURE[*]

Developmental Age	Personal and Fictional Narratives	Narrative Level	Story Structure Level
About 2 years	Children embed narratives in adult-child conversations, with basic elements of narrative structure but no identifiable high point.	Heaps and sequences, and centering	
About 3 years	Children can produce verbal descriptions of temporally organized general knowledge about routine events; children can independently report memories of past specific episodes with little support (i.e., questions and cues); no identifiable high point.	Primitive narrative and unfocused chain	Descriptive and action sequences; more likely if retelling than generating a story
About 4 years	Children's narratives have no identifiable high point; 13% of personal narratives incorporate goal-directed episodes.	Focused chains	Complete episodes in 16% of 4 year olds' stories; reactive sequences
About 5 years	42% of 5-year-old children incorporate goal-directed episodes; 93% of stories by children 5 and older have a central focus or high point; children end narratives at the high point.	True narratives	Earlier story structure levels still occur; some complete episodes may occur. In fictional stories, children include setting information and may attempt to develop a plot;
About 6 years	After age 5 years, children build to a high point and resolve it in classic form.		Abbreviated episode
Around 7–8 years	Children use codas to tie personal narratives together; children use introducers in elicited personal narratives.	Narrative summaries	60% of 8 year olds' stories are complete episodes. Stories include internal goals, motivations, and reactions that are largely absent in stories produced by younger children; some episodes will be incomplete. Multiple episodes
Around 11 years/ 5th grade	Children tell coherent, goal-based, fictional stories, although reference to internal states is still rare; 10 years olds may be limited in number of embedded or interactive episodes they can handle when retelling a story.	Complex narratives	Complex episode Embedded episode Interactive episode
Around 13 years		Analysis and generalization	

[*]Note that information is based on narrative generation, not retelling unless specified.

Sources: Hedberg and Westby (1993); Hudson and Shapiro (1991); Kemper (1984); Peterson and McCabe (1983)