

Week 1 (September 10-11, 2004)

Kanno, Y. (2003). *Negotiating bilingual and bicultural identities: Japanese returnees betwixt two worlds*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Maeda, A. (in press). The complex construction of professional identities: Female educators in Japan speak out. *TESOL Quarterly*.

Interesting read, this one. I must admit that I was somewhat skeptical about this, having met Andrea and heard a couple of her assertions that were—to be kind—rather a stretch. I don't mean to pitch the baby with the bathwater, and I know that much of what she says is true (after all, I'm also an educator in Japan), but...

One problem I see is with her inclusion of the composite lesbian character. The original participant specifically opted out of the study, yet there she was—hmm, an ethical lapse, perhaps? Furthermore, on what grounds should she or a composite have been included?

In foreign language anxiety research, an oft-quoted paper is Dolly Young's 1991 piece on highly-anxious learners. While offering insights into those learners, Young's paper has been criticized precisely because it addressed one tail of the distribution and not the remainder (i.e., moderately-anxious or minimally-anxious learners), which is a fair point: Young did not include those other learners (who were, in all fairness, not her intended focus). In Maeda's article, are we getting one tail of the distribution, or is this a representative sample of female educators here in Japan?

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Does all rsch. need to present a "representative sample"? If not, what would the other purpose(s) be?
Chris.

Casanave, C. P. (in press). Uses of narrative in L2 writing research. In P. K. Matsuda & T. Silva (Eds.), *Second language writing research: Perspectives on the process of knowledge*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Tierney, W. G. (1993). Self and identity in a postmodern world: A life story. In D. McLaughlin & W. G. Tierney (Eds.), *Naming silenced lives* (pp. 119-134). New York: Routledge.

Touching, very much so—on a personal note, which may be the only I'll ever be able to read this piece, my first college

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roommate, a good friend, died in about 1991 of AIDS. I had lost touch of and with him after he attended my 1987 wedding and didn't hear the news until 1996 from a mutual friend—a huge shock, indeed. We roomed together a couple years and got drunk together more than a couple times until he found religion near the end of that interval. Having both come from small Montana towns (his home PO box was number 6, whereas mine was 8), I can see how he must have struggled with his identity as a gay man—not so much acceptance of that gender orientation in those little towns. I can also imagine how, were I the researcher (non-gay) to be talking with my roomie the participant (gay), we would not have been able to communicate or empathize with each other in the way that Tierney and his participant did.

indeed.

Was he out to you & his friends, or closeted till the end?

I'm not sure I understand your reasoning here.

Week 2 (September 10-11, 2004)

Narrative and the construction of reality and knowledge; Intro to narrative analysis

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Ch 3, 67-68; 75-87; 95-97).

Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Ch 7, 130-149).

Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Ch 2, 11-14).

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. (Intro, 1-7; Ch 1, 8-24; Ch 2, 25-53).

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowledge*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. (Ch 1, Introduction, 13-36).

Comments on Polkinghorne:

Lots of things covered in the chapter!

The author approaches narrative as a “kind of organizational scheme expressed in story form” (p. 13). S/he then contends that narrative is a pervasive phenomenon...

Donald

One problem I see is that the author tries to frame narrative as one distinct part of a dyad (in opposition to logicosemantic or paradigmatic reasoning). On page 18 we are told that the “paradigmatic mode searches for universal truth conditions,

whereas the narrative mode looks for particular connections between events.” Then on page 19 in the paragraph beginning “A plot is constructed...” we are treated to a process for narrative inquiry which—with a couple lexical changes—fits exactly what science does. What I’m saying is that the distinction is not so clear-cut, and the author appears to be basing his/her reasoning here on rather limited knowledge of so-called hard science. I don’t have a problem with narrative seeking a comprehensible thread, but science does so, too!

Furthermore, in both this piece and Bruner (1990) we find efforts to claim some sort of uniqueness for the narrative mode as it seeks relationships—again, that’s very typical of hard sciences, too.

A point from Bruner to explore: on top of p. 79, he asserts “the very act of speaking is an act of marking the unusual from the usual.” Hmm. What if one speaks of the usual—is that then marking it? Not being familiar with Greenfield and Smith’s work, I’m not sure what has been demonstrated empirically, but it seems there may need to be an order here, not an equality.

I found much of this piece very logical. Typical was this chunk on p. 95: “There must obviously be some consensus to ensure the achievement of civility. But what may be just as important to the coherence of a culture is the existence of interpretive procedures for adjudicating the different construals of reality that are inevitable in any diverse society.” I guess this provides a firm grounding in certain truths (i.e., the existence of diversity, different construals of reality, adjudication).

Another important point in EFL is eloquently captured on p. 87: “To narrate in a way that puts your case convincingly requires not only but a mastery of the canonical forms, for one must make one’s actions seem an extension of the canonical, transformed by mitigating circumstances.” I recently submitted a paper that touched on how students may be well trained in English forms but lack knowledge of how to appropriately use them, in either a grammatical or canonical.

I believe there are strong connections between science and narrative (if you're interested I can give you some refs. in the sociology of science - a fascinating field) especially in terms of process, and of the construction of a coherent "story" from sometimes messy and contingent events. It may be that the goals of these 2 modes of thought are different.

yes - but recall again that the purposes of science may differ (at least traditionally) from other people-oriented disciplines: to demonstrate by "proof" links between a statement (eg hypothesis) and some kind of objective reality.

nice quote

Chris, as your note near the bottom of p. 96 indicates, the “breakdown of narrative from impoverishment of narrative resources” doesn’t quite fly. “[V]ariation no longer seems possible” is a statement of very wide scope, and I really question if it’s true in all cases. Just one that Bruner seems to use on both sides of the fence is the urban ghetto—used earlier to explicate the quantity of narrative (“one every 7 minutes” in blue-collar Baltimore, pp. 83-84), but then used on p. 96 as an illustration of narrative impoverishment vis-à-vis the “permanent underclass in the urban ghetto.” I’d grant that Bruner’s point may be valid in a sub-Saharan refugee camp in which people are dying of hunger and lack the strength to do much, but the point seems stretched quite thin in the other examples (especially considering Polkinghorne’s section (p. 14) on “the pervasiveness of narrative”).

It was interesting to be reading Bruner’s point about the “ambiguity of reference” (1996, pp. 140ff) and ever-evolving “narrative chaos” while sitting on a train with W’s picture on the newspaper in the hands of the gentleman opposite me—irony is a fine thing, indeed. I believe the current term might well be “spin control”...

In Bruner’s 1996 piece I found things to well presented and, by and large, in agreement with some of my ^{be?} thoughts (at least those that have surfaced enough to make any sense). The one point I might quibble with is on p. 136 where we read that “actions have reasons”—as I’ve mentioned in Mark Sawyer’s courses in the past, sometimes I just don’t give a damn what’s for dinner when I get home after a long day. Dinner? Whatever, and certainly not necessary. I believe Mark characterized it as the “lazy factor”, which fits quite well. My point: I’m not sure that all actions have discernible, “intentional” reasons—what would prevent some from just happening? Maybe Coke was right—“For no reasons”?

One final shot at Bruner: I still don’t like the rather smug dismissal of scientific reasoning (doxology, indeed) only to read later a bit later about “universals”—maybe a bit of the pot

(as we discussed in class, I think B. may have been referring to certain political and social situations, not to people's cognitive abilities. Like you, I would have liked some expansion here.

I guess the Q is: What kinds of narratives are people able to construct/imagine as a way to make sense of their lives? How many groups (and what kinds), e.g., are living only w. narratives of hopeless men?

Interesting idea. I wonder what Bruner would say about this.

He's not dismissing A, Jim. He's a scientist, has been one all his life. He's, for years, been trying to convince people, esp. in psychology, that they shouldn't impose science's strict standards inappropriately.

calling the kettle black??

Week 3 (October 8-9, 2004)

Metadisciplinary narratives; Narratives and science; Pedagogical narratives

Barone, T. E. (1992). A narrative of enhanced professionalism: Educational researchers and popular storybooks about schoolpeople. *Educational Researcher*, 21(8), 15-24.

Matsuda, P. K. (2003). Process and post-process: A discursive history. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 12(1), 65-83.

Shehan, R. J., & Rode, S. (1999). On scientific narrative: Stories of light by Newton and Einstein. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 13 (3), 336-358.

Smith, J. K. (1997). The stories educational researchers tell about themselves. *Educational Researcher* 26(5), 4-11.

Comments on _____: