

Ling 103: Language Structure and Verbal Art Essay #3

Step 1. Obtain the narrative to be analyzed.

Record narratives of personal experience by interview and transcribe the narratives obtained. In the end, you will need to submit only **one** narrative, but you may need to record several narratives in order to get an interesting one to analyze. Your narrative should be approximately one-half page to one page (or 1-2 pages when divided into independent clauses); longer narratives are acceptable but not required. You may need to use leading questions such as 'Did you ever almost lose your life?' or 'Has something supernatural ever occurred in your family?' or anything else which you think may elicit a story.

Step 2. Divide the narrative into (temporally) independent clauses, listing each on its own line, and provide each clause with an index (a, b, c ...). In deciding whether two phrases constitute two clauses or one, remember that if switching the order of the phrases changes the meaning, then the two phrases must be two temporally independent clauses.

Note: If there are cases that are ambiguous analytically, do not get upset. Choose one possibility and if you are uncertain simply make a note of the ambiguity.

Step 3. Label the clauses as *free*, *restricted*, or *fixed* (narrative) clauses. Provide a diagram showing the temporal points and intervals of the events and states expressed by the clauses.

Step 4. Discuss how the narrator has deviated (if at all) from the primary sequence. (To do this you will first need to establish what the primary sequence is, of course.) Consider, for example, whether the temporal order of the fixed clauses is different from their order of presentation in the narrative; or, what use is made of the position of clauses which describe events (/states) whose temporal ordering is not strictly ordered (i.e. the free and restricted clauses). What choices has the narrator made in the points in the narrative where various kinds of information are revealed? What kinds of effects did these choices have?

Step 5. Locate the *Orientation*, and *Coda* sections of the narrative, if any and explain why these sections serve these functions. Recall that not every narrative has an Orientation or Coda, but many do.

Step 6. Discuss specifically clauses that have evaluative function. Consider the following issues.

- (1) What techniques are used for evaluation? Does the narrator use lexical intensification or direct commentary on the narrative? Where? Are clauses with evaluative function introduced at appropriate points or not? How much did the narrator rely on evaluative techniques to make the narrative reportable?
- (2) Does the narrative contain *suspension of action* immediately prior to the Resolution or in any other location? If so, how (e.g. using syntactically complex clauses; introducing free clauses; using longer clauses; digression)?
- (3) Discuss any other aspects of the narrative that make it (in your view) a good or bad *telling* of the story (irrespective of the quality of the story itself).