

Developing Conversation Skills through Storytelling Genres

Damian P. Lucantonio

Abstract—The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the role that storytelling genres can play in developing children’s conversation skills. The paper forms part of a broader research project that describes the development of conversation skills of two, pre-school children for whom English is a foreign language (EFL). Drawing on the theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics [1], [2], [3], in particular genre theory [4], [5], [6], storytelling genres that commonly occur in casual conversation [8], [9], [10], [11] that have been constructed by the two children, are described in terms of their different social purposes and their different generic structures. In this paper, data from two of the storytelling genres, narrative and exemplum, are analyzed, illustrating how the children develop oral communication skills by recognizing the different purposes of the storytelling genres, and by organizing the information in their own stories in different ways to speak for different purposes. The implications of the research are then discussed with relevance to linguistics and language education.

Index Terms—Children, conversation skills, genre, systemic functional linguistics, storytelling.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper represents part of an unpublished, four-year research project investigating the development of conversational skills of two, pre-school children, who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in the home context. The major aim of the paper is to describe the development of the children’s English conversational skills by analyzing two of the storytelling texts that have been independently constructed by the children, considered to be typical of the children’s conversational skills, and discuss some of the implications of this for linguistic theory and pedagogical practice. Data from the two texts are analyzed within the theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) [1]-[3], in particular, focusing on genre theory [4]-[6]. It is argued that, by analyzing data that has been independently produced by the children within this theoretical framework, a systematic and effective description of their conversational English can be obtained. The two, storytelling genres analyzed in this paper are based on the research in casual conversation of Plum [7], [8], Slade [9], Eggins & Slade [10], and Thornbury & Slade [11]. They are considered to be common in every day, casual conversation and are therefore important in the

development of conversational skills.

While it is important to account for the key learning processes involved in the development of the children’s English conversational skills, this issue is considered beyond the scope of this paper. Hence, it is not dealt with in any detail, though brief reference is made to it in the section on the pedagogical approach. In the broader research project, this has been done within the theoretical framework of sociocultural learning theory [12]-[14]. In particular, this analysis focuses on the role of the scaffolding process [15]-[21] and explicit teaching [12], [19], [21], [32].

In order to examine the aims of the paper, two research questions have been formulated within the theoretical framework of SFL that have been designed to address issues dealing with the development of conversational language skills. These are as follows:

- What is the extent to which the children can independently construct texts with appropriate generic structure that reflect the speaking purpose?
- What is the extent to which the children can use the interpersonal resources of mood and appraisal?

The term ‘language skills’ refers to language that has been independently produced by the children when the assistance (or scaffolding) has been removed. It is argued that SFL provides the tools for a systematic description of these language skills.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

In this study, the children are learning English at home, not at school. However, the teaching context is regarded as a semi-formal one, involving planned aims and a pedagogical approach. The teacher is the father, whose role is to assist the development of the children’s conversational English in the foreign language context of Japan. The children’s mother tongue is Japanese. The father is using a genre-based approach during certain selected periods of the day over a 4-year period, focusing on the explicit teaching of common genres of casual conversation. Four of these are storytelling genres. The aim is to develop the children’s skills of conversational English.

The data in this paper are considered to be typical examples of the children’s language development in a particular genre of casual conversation. The two sisters are Rie (younger) and Keiko (older). They were aged three and five years respectively at the time the data collection started. At that time, both girls had not attended formal schooling, either in Japanese or English. At the beginning of the research, both girls could talk in English about basic every day things and engage in simple talk with other people,

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Damian P. Lucantonio is with University of Electro-Communications, Japan (e-mail: damian@bunka.uec.ac.jp).

albeit in limited registers. Prior to the commencement of the research, neither girl had been explicitly taught the skills of conversational English or Japanese. The explicit teaching described in the research is not meant to be the only way of developing the English language of the two children. It is meant to be complementary to their overall English language development.

III. METHODOLOGY

In this paper, research paradigms are not viewed as competing, but as being useful for different purposes [22]. Thus, rather than outlining the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, a more useful starting point is what kinds of knowledge might be more useful in order to investigate second language development. Given the kind of father-teacher-researcher relationship in this study, the issue of what Labov [23] refers to as the ‘observer-paradox’ needs to be addressed. This is a recognition of the influence that the father (as the teacher and the researcher) has on the data being collected. His language is a significant part of the data but is not subjected to the same level of interpretative analysis as that of his two daughters. While this may seem potentially problematic, it can be argued that, as all data involves theoretical assumptions, the researcher cannot be separated from the data. Thus, rather than try to eliminate the effects of the researcher, it is argued in this research that the effects should be acknowledged. According to Gibbons [19], if the researcher is held accountable for making explicit the theories that construct the framework of the research, and if the role of the researcher is built into the research design, then the issue of the ‘observer-paradox’ is a less pressing one.

In this research paradigm, the father, as both the teacher and the researcher, needs to adopt a reflexive approach to research in order to demonstrate both validity and reliability. According to Davis [24], this allows for transfer (rather than generalization) to a wide range of teaching / learning contexts. In this interpretative-semiotic approach to qualitative research, the issue is not about sampling, but about selecting the most appropriate examples in order to exemplify the basis for any claims being made [25]. The selected texts in this paper are chosen for their potential to illustrate to the reader a particular aspect of language, or a particular aspect of teaching and learning.

In this way, the researcher becomes a participant in the culture of the data, and it is this relation to the data that allows the researcher to decide whether a claim is intelligible and adequate [25]. Thus, within this research paradigm, a test of reliability would be whether the research is dependable [24]. A test of validity would be whether the research is credible to fellow cultural members (this would include fellow teachers, researchers, parents, and possibly the learners themselves), concurring with the claims being made [25]. According to Gibbons [19], this is not a ‘soft’ alternative to quantitative approaches, as the researcher and data set is held accountable to the rigorous scrutiny of the community. In more quantitative, empirical approaches, the

claims of the researcher are ultimately drawn from their interpretations of the data alone, and are held up for serious scrutiny only by other researchers.

IV. THE ROLE OF GENRE IN CONVERSATION

Slade [9] states that the goals of casual conversation are interpersonal in nature, not experiential. The main purpose is to create a rapport between participants. For example, to show how people bond together, express friendship or solidarity, or express sympathy or empathy. Casual conversation plays an important role by showing how people express their identity by belonging to a group, or conversely, to exclude certain participants from joining a group. Thus, the maintenance of social relations is often a more important goal for casual conversation than the actual topic or topics being discussed. Casual conversation, then, appears to have a very important role to play in language and social behavior. It is neither an aimless nor erratic form of talk. It appears to play an important interpersonal role in shaping who we are, and our place in the world around us.

In this paper, the term genre is defined as a staged, goal-oriented, social process [4], [6] and is comprised of both obligatory and optional elements [9], [10]. Table I summarizes the definition of genre, as used in this study.

TABLE I: DEFINITION OF GENRE (ADAPTED FROM [6], [9], [10])

| Elements of a Genre | Definition |
|---------------------|--|
| Staged | The pattern or the steps of a text; a genre is often patterned in such a way as to achieve its goal. |
| Goal-oriented | The purpose, the goal, the reason or the point of closure of a text; a genre usually has some social purpose (e.g. to persuade, argue, gossip, recount, explain, tell a story, and so on). |
| Social process | Language is a realization of a social process; a genre is negotiated interactively; a genre is constructed, negotiated & participated in with other people in society. |

The two genres selected for analysis in this paper are narrative and exemplum. They are common, every day genres of casual conversation [8]-[10]. The data analyzed from these two genres are considered to be typical examples of the children’s conversational language skills.

A. Narrative Genre

According to Plum [7], [8], building on the work of Labov [23] and Labov & Walezky [26], the term ‘narrative’ is used for those story texts that have the middle phase structure of a complication, or sequence of events, followed by a resolution, or an ending. These texts increase in tension or excitement, culminating in a crisis followed by a resolution of that crisis [10]. A narrative builds up to a climax with the main focus being on the ending. That is, most attention is on the resolution of the story, which tends to be explicitly stated and less open to conjecture.

B. Exemplum Genre

Exemplums are stories that are told to make a moral point

[7], [9], [10]. Plum [8] defines an exemplum as a moralizing tale or a parable. Exemplums fulfill the function of prescribing what is considered to be acceptable or unacceptable behavior in the cultural contexts in which they are told. Unlike a narrative, where the focus is on some problematic or surprising event, the focus in an exemplum is on the interpretation of the incident in the story. It is in the interpretation of the incident that the moral of the story is located. Thus, the interpretation of the incident is the reason for telling the story [8], [10].

A summary of the main differences between the two, storytelling genres is provided below in Table II.

TABLE II: SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO, STORYTELLING GENRES (ADAPTED FROM [10])

| | |
|------------|--|
| Narratives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The evaluation stage provides a break between the complication and the resolution stages The culmination is the explicit resolution Main grammar feature: past time reference (complication) |
| Exemplums | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focus is on the interpretation or the moral point being made about the incident, rather than on the crisis which is resolved Culmination is in the judgment or the moral point being made Main grammar feature: past time reference (incident) |

To understand the role of genre in casual conversation, the connection between generic structure and social purpose needs to be made explicit. This is illustrated in Table III below.

TABLE III: GENRE, GENERIC STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL PURPOSE (ADAPTED FROM [10], [27])

| Genre | Generic Structure | Social Purpose |
|-----------|---|---|
| Narrative | (Abstract) ^ Orientation ^ Complication ^ Evaluation ^ Resolution ^ (Coda) | To tell a story that focuses on the resolution of a crisis. That is, to tell a story with a definite or clear ending. |
| Exemplum | (Abstract) ^ Orientation ^ Incident ^ Interpretation ^ (Coda) | To tell a story that has a moral concerning the incident in the story. That is, to tell a story that has a message. |

Key: () = optional element; ^ = followed by

In generic analyses, it is important to not only identify the macrostructure of the text, but also to recognize the connection between the macrostructure and the social

purpose, as the two are interrelated. The extent to which the children can construct conversation texts that reflect the appropriate interconnectedness of generic structure and social purpose, is therefore important in describing the development of the children's conversational English skills.

V. INTERPERSONAL RESOURCES IN CONVERSATION: MOOD AND APPRAISAL

Although genres of casual conversation can be described at a macrostructure level of generic structure, they also need an analysis that can describe the more open-ended, dynamic nature of casual talk [10]. An analysis at a microstructure level of the interpersonal grammar resources of the children's texts can illustrate different kinds of information from that of generic structure. An examination of mood resources shows the extent to which the children can give and exchange information. Principally, this involves using patterns of clause types. For example, using the declarative mood to give information, the interrogative mood to ask for information, and the imperative mood to give instructions and commands [2]. The technical apparatus for describing mood resources in this paper has been derived from the work of Halliday in functional grammar [2], while the coding system has been developed by Eggins & Slade [10]. The main mood resources used by the children are interpreted and explained in the sections, 'Interpretation of Text 2.1' and 'Interpretation of Text 2.2' that follow each of the text analyses.

An investigation into appraisal resources [6], [28], [33], shows the extent to which the children can express attitudes and take a stance. Appraisal is concerned with evaluation. In this paper, an appraisal analysis reveals the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated by the children in their texts, the strength of their feelings involved, the ways in which their values are sourced, and the ways in which listeners align themselves to the attitudes expressed. The three main categories of appraisal are attitude (expressing opinions about social behavior), graduation (amplifying comments), and engagement (acknowledging or distancing oneself from other speakers). While each of these three categories can be further divided into sub-categories (see Appendix A), it is considered beyond the scope of this paper to do so in more detail (for a more detailed explanation of appraisal see [6], [28], [33]). However, as with the mood resources, the main appraisal resources used by the children are interpreted and explained in the sections, 'Interpretation of Text 2.1' and 'Interpretation of Text 2.2' that follow each of the text analyses. According to Martin & Rose [6], the extent to which the children can use appraisal resources to express attitudes and take a stance is important in describing the development of the children's conversational language skills. The technical apparatus for describing appraisal resources in this paper has been adapted from Eggins & Slade [10].

A microstructure analysis of the grammatical resources of mood and appraisal reveal different information from that of a macrostructure analysis of generic structure. However, both levels of analyses are seen as being important and complementary in describing the development of the children's language skills and are analyzed in this paper. A

summary of these features is outlined below in Table IV.

TABLE IV: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN LANGUAGE FEATURES LANGUAGE FEATURES LEVEL OF ANALYSIS SOCIAL FUNCTION

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|---|
| Generic structure | Macrostructural | Text patterning and the social purposes of speaking |
| Mood | Microstructural | Give and exchange information |
| Appraisal | Microstructural | Express attitudes and take a stance |

VI. PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH: MODELING, JOINT NEGOTIATION AND INDEPENDENT CONSTRUCTION

Vygotsky [12] has argued the importance of making meaning explicit in the learning process. In this paper, making meaning explicit addresses the issue of texts and how they are constructed. In terms of language skills, ‘explicit teaching’ refers to developing an understanding of how texts are constructed to achieve different social purposes. At a macro level, within the theoretical framework of SFL, this refers to generic structure [4], [6]. This refers to the way texts are patterned or organized, so as to achieve their social purposes. At a micro level, it refers to making explicit the interpersonal grammatical resources of a text [2], [9]. By making language explicit at macro and micro levels of analysis, we can attempt to de-mystify the speaking process for learners by illustrating that language has a system. It is argued that if learners can understand how language works, it can assist them to become more effective language users. It is further argued that language needs to be made explicit for learners in a foreign language context, as they do not necessarily have the commonsense, sociocultural knowledge of language that native speakers often take for granted [3].

As previously stated, accounting for the learning process of the children is beyond the scope of this paper. In the broader research, the learning process has been analyzed within the theoretical framework of sociocultural learning theory [12]-[14], focusing on the scaffolding process [19], [20], [21]. However, as the children are in a planned, semi-formal teaching program at home, the pedagogical approach used by the father is important. The teaching approach employed by the father has been adapted from a curriculum model involving three main phases of modeling, joint negotiation and independent construction [29]. While it was originally intended for written language contexts, it is also relevant to spoken language [30].

The focus of the teaching approach is on preparing the children to gain independent control of the target genres. As the children move through the three phases of the pedagogical cycle, they are gradually assisted to move away from the model genre presented by the father, to the independent construction of their own. In the modeling phase, the social purpose and generic structure of the target genre is introduced to the learners. A high degree of teacher scaffolding is usually a feature of the modeling phase. In the joint negotiation phase, the children begin to move away from analyzing the model text, and move towards

constructing their own with the assistance of their father (as the teacher). An important feature of the joint negotiation phase is that the scaffolding is being gradually removed, preparing the children for independent construction.

In the independent construction phase, the learners reach the point where the scaffolding is removed [31]. In this phase, the children construct the target genre without assistance from their father. In this phase, the practice and preparation is over. It is now time to see how well the children can perform the task of text construction on their own. It is argued that the language produced in the independent construction phase describes what the children can actually do. Therefore, the language produced in the independent phase is described and analyzed in this paper, as it provides an effective description of the children’s conversational language skills.

VII. DATA COLLECTION

The data were collected and recorded by the father during certain selected periods of the day over a 4-year period, focusing on the explicit teaching of common genres of casual conversation. The explicit teaching mainly occurs at certain times during ‘dinner time talk’ and ‘bed time talk’. The data set analyzed in this paper comes from data extracted during these set times. The two sisters are Rie (younger) and Keiko (older). They were aged three and five years respectively at the time the data collection started. The genres chosen by the father were selected on the basis of the perceived needs and interests of the children’s conversational English. The two texts selected for analysis in this paper, Text 2.1 and Text 2.2 (see below), are meant to be representative of a cross section of texts considered to be typical of the children’s spoken language in the particular target genre.

The data were collected from the children’s independent construction phase, that is, without any assistance from others. Hence, only one turn is transcribed in Keiko and Rie’s data, as they are the storytellers. Audio tape recordings were used to collect the data. The recordings were made as the children were constructing their texts during ‘bed time’ story time. A summary of the main transcription conventions is given in Appendix B.

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

A. Text 2.1 Keiko’s Story: Narrative Genre

Speaker: Keiko (6 years old) the storyteller

Context: Keiko telling her story, *Hairy Maclary’s Bone*, to Rie, Mum, and Dad

Setting: ‘Bed time’ story

Transcription Length: 1 minute and 18 seconds

Macrostructure Analysis: Generic Structure of Text 2.1

Turn Move Speaker Transcript

Orientation

1 1a Keiko: First the man give Hairy Maclary a very big, tasty bone.

1b And all the dogs looking at Hairy Maclary’s bone.

1c Like today I looked at mummy’s scones [gesture].

1d And then, ... the dogs all chasing after Hairy Maclary's bone.
 Complication
 1e And first, Hercules Morse.
 1f But he was big so he can't get in the big hole ...
 1g And now, they go to the road.
 1h ... And the spotty dog, Bottomly Potts, he got stuck on the rope.
 Crisis
 1i And, ... it was the skinny dog.
 1j And he have a big, big trouble.
 1k And, ... and the rocks was all tumbling ...
 1l And last, the low tum-tum dog ... can't get in the wall.
 Resolution
 1m In the end, he got safe ...
 1n Hairy Maclary got the bone.
 Coda
 1o He was a lucky dog! ...
 1p He is luckier than Polly!

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Modality | 2 times (moves 1f, 1l) | | |
| A. Modalization | | | |
| Probability | | | |

Microstructure Analysis: Appraisal Choices of Text 2.1

| Appraisal Items | Keiko | Rie | Dad |
|-------------------|---|-----|-----|
| Total clauses: 16 | 16 | | |
| Engagement | | | |
| 1. Monogloss | All clauses are monogloss (except 4 stated below) | | |
| 2. Heterogloss | 4 examples Projection: 1 (move 1c) Concession: 1 (move 1f) Modality: 2 (move 1f, 1l) | | |
| Attitude | 3 examples | | |
| Appreciation | 3 (Moves 1c, 1o, 1p) | | |
| Graduation | 7 examples | | |
| 1. Force | 2 (Moves 1a, 1j) | | |
| 2. Focus | 5 (Moves 1f, 1h, 1i, 1l, 1o) | | |

Microstructure Analysis: Mood Choices of Text 2.1

| Mood Items (clause type) | Keiko | Rie | Dad |
|--|---|-----|-----|
| Total number of clauses: 16 | 16 | | |
| Declarative | 16 | | |
| Full | 11 examples | | |
| Elliptical | 5 examples (moves 1b, 1d, 1e, 1i, 1k) | | |
| Most frequent subject choices | he: 4 times (moves 1f, 1j, 1m, 1o, 1p) All the dogs (move 1b) The dogs (move 1d) first (dog) (move 1e) they (move 1g) the spotty dog (move 1h) it (move 1i) the low tum tum dog (move 1l) Hairy Maclary (move 1n) | | |
| Most frequent time reference of verb element (finite^predicator) | Present: 7 times Past: 8 times | | |
| Negation | 2 examples (moves 1f, 1l) | | |
| Adjuncts | 17 | | |
| Circumstantial | 6 times (moves 1b, 1c, 1f, 1g, 1h, 1l) | | |
| Interpersonal | 1 time (move 1c) | | |
| Textual | Conjunctive 10 times (moves 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, 1h, 1i, 1j, 1k, 1l, 1m) | | |

B. Interpretation of Text 2.1

Text 2.1 is a narrative genre constructed by Keiko. The social purpose of a narrative is to tell a story that is developed through the complication to reach a clear and definite ending [7]-[9]. As such, the focus of a narrative is on the resolution of the crisis [10].

Keiko introduces the setting and the main participants in her text by presenting an orientation. She then begins the complication that climaxes with the rocks falling down on the skinny dog. She then presents her resolution to the crisis by stating that Hairy Maclary got home safely with the bone. Finally, she presents a coda for her story, commenting that Hairy Maclary is a lucky dog. The generic staging that the text has moved through indicates that it is appropriate to the social purpose of a narrative genre.

Keiko has used a range of mood choices to give and exchange information in the text. She has used clauses in the declarative mood to get her information across. While, most of these are full sentences, she has chosen to use several examples of elliptical clauses, which is common in casual conversation. Her main subject choices reflect the main participants in the text – the dogs. On 6 occasions in the text, her clauses are made up of inappropriate present tense choices of the finite verb element. Perhaps this may indicate she has some difficulties in recognizing and using past time reference within the context of a narrative. However, on all other occasions (8 times), her choices of the finite verb element have resulted in appropriate uses of

the past time. Keiko has used a range of adjuncts in her text. The most common are circumstantial adjuncts (moves 1b, 1c) and textual conjunctive adjuncts (moves 1d, 1e, 1l, 1m). The circumstantial adjuncts indicate that the speaker feels that it is important to locate the circumstances within which the events took place. Obviously, this is important to her in her story. The textual conjunctive adjuncts indicate the explicit signaling of the generic staging of the story. She uses these adjuncts or text markers to signal when the orientation finishes and when the complication begins; to signal when one stage of the complication starts and when it finishes; to signal when the resolution starts and when it finishes. It seems Keiko feels it is important to understand the story by using markers that explicitly indicate the generic staging or patterning of the text.

Keiko has used a range of appraisal resources to express attitudes and take a stance. Most of her clauses are expressed in monogloss voice (one source), that is, expressing attitudes that are her own to the story's events. However, there are 4 examples of heterogloss voice from other sources (move 1c), which show that some of the attitudes expressed in the text come from other sources, not just hers. From the category of appreciation, Keiko has used 3 examples of attitude in the text (move 1o) through which she expresses her feelings about some of the values raised in the text. In addition, Keiko has used 7 examples of graduation. Two of these are items of force, emphasizing the points in her text she feels are important. For example, it was not just a bone they were chasing, it was a "... very big, tasty bone (move 1a)." Keiko has also used 5 examples of focus in the text, whereby she sharpens her descriptions of some of the main participants, the dogs. Instead of referring to them by name, she has used the appraisal resources of focus to refer to them as: "... the spotty dog" (move 1h) and "... the skinny dog." (move 1i).

In summary, Keiko has independently constructed a narrative genre in terms of generic structure. While she has experienced some difficulty with the present versus past time reference, she has used a range of interpersonal mood resources to give and exchange information, which establishes her role as the storyteller. She has used a range of appraisal resources to take a stance and present various attitudes about the story she is telling.

Using the SFL analyses of generic structure, mood and appraisal, it is argued that Keiko has independently constructed a narrative genre that appropriately reflects its social purpose.

C. Text 2.2 Rie's Story: Exemplum Genre

Speaker: Rie (5 years old) the storyteller

Context: Rie telling her story, *Kessie the Magpie*, to Keiko, Mum, and Dad.

Setting: 'Bed time' story

Transcription Length: 2 minutes and 18 seconds

Macrostructure Analysis: Generic Structure of Text 2.2

| Turn | Move | Speaker | Transcript |
|------|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| | Orientation | | |
| 1 | 1a | Rie: | This is Jonathan. |
| | 1b | | This is grandma |

| | | |
|--|----------------|---|
| | 1c | and this is grandpa. |
| | 1d | They live in the small house. |
| | 1e | ... At the end of the street is the magpie... in the big gum tree. |
| | Incident | |
| | 1f | And...swish, |
| | 1g | and grandpa fell over on the bike |
| | 1h | because Kessie the magpie attack him. |
| | 1i | And when grandma went to the library, Kessie the magpie (pecked) her head. |
| | 1j | And then, Jonathan, ... the magpie tried to peck his cheek. |
| | 1k | And Jonathan went away quickly. |
| | 1l | And, ... and how was grandpa going to the work? |
| | 1m | And how was grandma going to the library? |
| | 1n | And how was Jonathan going to school? |
| | 1o | He'll be late for school! |
| | 1p | It's going to be dark! |
| | 1q | And, ... they have a good idea. |
| | 1r | And then, ... grandpa going to the yard; |
| | 1s | and grandma go inside ... with Jonathan ... have a big box of drums and balloons. |
| | 1t | And then, "tick, bom-bom, bom-bom!" [gesture] |
| | 1u | And Kessie the magpie didn't move... she stayed in the gum tree. |
| | 1v | And grandpa going to work, |
| | 1w | ... and grandma can go to the library |
| | 1x | ... with Jonathan, ... he can go to school. |
| | Interpretation | |
| | 1y | And then Kessie the magpie said: "Waddle, giggle gargle". |
| | 1z | And, ... and she have three little babies. |
| | 1zz | And have ... (.) |
| | Coda | |
| | 1zzz | She said: "Don't come near my eggs!" |

Microstructure Analysis: Mood Choices in Text 2.2

| Mood Items (clause type) | Keiko | Rie | Dad |
|--|-------|--|-----|
| Total number of clauses: 28 | 0 | 28 | 0 |
| Declarative | | 24 | |
| Full | | 21 | |
| Elliptical | | 3 (move 1f, 1s, 1t, | |
| Wh- interrogative | | 3 | |
| Full | | 3 (move 1l, 1m, 1n) | |
| Minor | | 1 (move 1zz) | |
| Most frequent subject choices | | Family members: 5 This (family member): 3 (move 1a, 1b, 1c They (family members): 2 (move 1d, 1q Kessie, magpie: 9 (move 1f ellipt, 1h, 1i, 1j, 1u, 1u (she), 1y, 1z (she), 1zzz (she)) grandpa: 4 (move 1g, 1l, 1r, 1v, grandma: 4 (move 1i, 1m, 1s, 1w, Jonathan: 6 (move 1j, 1k, 1n, 1o (he), 1x, 1x (he), | |
| Most frequent time reference of verb element (finite ^ predicator) | | Past: 12 Present: 18 | |
| Negation | | 1 (move 1zzz) | |
| Adjuncts | | 34 | |
| Circumstantial | | 14 (move 1d, 1e, 1e, 1g, 1i, 1l, 1m, 1n, 1o, 1r, 1u, 1v, 1w, 1x) | |
| Textual | | 20 Conjunctive: 20 (move 1c, 1f, 1g, 1h, 1l, 1j, 1k, 1l, 1m, 1n, 1q, 1r, 1s, 1t, 1u, 1v, 1w, 1y, 1z, 1zz) (between & within clauses: both) | |
| Modality | | 3 | |
| A. Modalization | | 2 | |
| Probability | | 2 (move 1w, 1x) | |
| B. Modulation | | 1 | |
| Inclination | | 1 (move 1j) | |

| Appraisal | Keiko | Rie | Dad |
|-------------------|-------|---|-----|
| Total clauses: 28 | 0 | 28 | 0 |
| Engagement | | | |
| 1. Monogloss | | All other clauses unless stated | |
| 2. Heterogloss | | 5 Projection: 2 (move 1y, 1zzz) (1y, 1zzz: "said") Modality: 3 (move 1j, 1w, 1x) | |
| Attitude | | 1 | |
| Affect | | 1 (move 1q) | |
| Graduation | | 3 | |
| Force | | 3 (move 1e, 1s, 1z) | |

D. Interpretation of Text 2.2

Rie has independently constructed a story that has a moral ending. The statement, "Don't come near my eggs (move 1zzz)," functions as the moral of her story, implying that it is inappropriate behavior to go near the eggs of a magpie. The generic structure starts with a sequence of events that culminate with the interpretation of the incident and ends with a coda or moral to the story. This generic structure reflects the social purpose of an exemplum [10].

From a mood analysis [32], Rie has selected mainly from the declarative mood to convey the information in her text. Most of her clauses are full declaratives. There are few examples of ellipsis in the text. She has used an extensive range of adjuncts. The circumstantial adjuncts (moves 1d, 1e, x) show the place and position of the actions that are happening in the story. The textual adjuncts or text markers (moves 1c, 1f, 1zz) focus on the explicit signaling of the text's generic stages and the linking between clauses. The mood resources she has used are appropriate to her story. However, Rie has chosen from only a limited range of subjects. This is reflected in the grammatical simplicity of her text, as she has needed to only talk about four main participants. Also, while she has used textual adjuncts many times, she seems to lack flexibility in the kinds of markers chosen, often repeating the same form of the marker. Furthermore, she occasionally mixes the use of the present and the past finite element to indicate past time reference. While the present form can be used to indicate past time reference, this lack of consistency could also be interpreted as a developmental issue, reflecting Rie's limited register at this stage of her language development.

From an appraisal analysis, Rie's use of projection from heterogloss voice (other sources) to express her attitudes and engage the listeners represents a relatively new resource for her so far. She has used heterogloss voice to express other voices in the text, not just her own (move 1y, 1zzz). She has used different kinds of modality to indicate inclination and probability (move 1j, 1w) about events in

the story. And finally, she has used force to amplify her attitudes (1s, 1z) to events in the story. Rie has used only a limited number of appraisal items in Text 2.2. However, she has used these items appropriately within the context of an exemplum genre and within her limited register development.

In summary, Rie has been able to independently construct an exemplum genre. She has constructed a complex generic structure appropriately, which seems to demonstrate her understanding of the social purpose of this genre. She has selected from a fairly limited range of mood resources and appraisal resources. In some of these areas, she appears to be experiencing difficulties. However, in other areas, she has effectively used a limited range of mood and appraisal resources to convey her information and to take a stance.

IX. DISCUSSION

It is important to emphasize that it is not the goal of the paper to generalize about language development. The goal of the paper is to analyze the language skills of two children in two different genres, and examine some of the implications of this for developing skills of casual conversation. In order to do this, it is important to re-examine the two research questions. Once again, these are: To what extent can the children independently construct texts with appropriate generic structures that reflect their speaking purposes? And also, to what extent can they use the interpersonal resources of mood and appraisal?

From a macrostructure analysis, the children have been able to independently construct the generic structure of the two genres of casual conversation. This would appear to be significant in terms of the children's development of conversation skills. It can be argued that the children are learning that English conversation has a system that can be made explicit and hence, learned. It is argued that, by learning about the system and how it 'works', it is likely to assist the children to develop into more effective language learners.

From the data, the children have been able to structure their texts to reflect their speaking purpose, albeit at a fairly basic level. This seems to be an important step in the children recognizing that we speak in different ways in order to achieve different purposes, and that these purposes are connected to the ways in which their language is organized. As the purpose of speaking changes, so too does the text's organization or generic structure. Whether the children have recognized the connection explicitly or implicitly is beyond the scope of this paper. However, even at this basic level, the children seem to realize that not all stories are the same and that if we want to tell different kinds of stories, then we need to organize our language differently in order to reflect the speaking purpose. This issue is considered important in the overall development of conversational skills.

The children have been able to use the interpersonal resources of mood to give and exchange information in the different genres, with varying degrees of sophistication. Language development is not regarded as a linear checklist of language items. Thus, it is the intention of this paper to describe and analyze examples of the interpersonal

language resources the children have independently constructed in the target genre, at both macrostructure and microstructure levels of analysis. From the data, both girls, within their limited registers, have been able to produce a variety of appropriate mood resources in order to give and exchange information, which is important in the overall development of their conversational skills.

Though limited, the children have also used a range of appraisal resources to express attitudes and take a stance, which were appropriate to the social purpose of the genre. It could be argued that the children's restricted use of appraisal items was due to their limited range of language resources. It could also be considered to be a matter of choice, with the girls deciding what was and what was not appropriate to the situational context of each particular genre within their limited register range. The issue of choice is considered to be fundamental to any discussion on language development [2], [3]. However, this is an issue that is beyond the scope of this paper.

X. CONTRIBUTIONS TO LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Carter [34], [35] states that teachers of casual, spoken English have lacked adequate models from which to draw. Furthermore, Gibbons [21] states that research into the linguistic needs of young, second language learners is often neglected. By providing descriptions of the children's casual conversations within a foreign language context, the paper aims to contribute to an area of linguistic research that has been largely under-described and under-theorized [34], [35].

One of the main contributions the paper makes to linguistics is to illustrate the importance of linguistic theory to pedagogical practice. This illustrates the relevance of merging theory with practice, and basing teaching practices on informed theories of language, rather than intuitive or anecdotal views. The views of language in this research have been drawn from the theoretical framework of SFL. To this end, it is argued that SFL has played a key role in providing the linguistic tools necessary to describe and analyze the children's conversational language. In addition, the theoretical framework has provided models of language that can be made explicit to the children and can assist them in their language learning. For young EFL learners to move beyond the sentence level to construct holistic texts is challenging. It is argued that the linguistic theory in this research can play an important role in providing teachers with a language to 'talk about' casual conversation. Furthermore, it can provide a pedagogical framework for both teachers and learners to work with, in developing skills of casual conversation. In this way, young EFL learners can be assisted to recognize that casual spoken language has a system that can be described.

Furthermore, it is argued that if teachers want learners to construct different types of texts, it is important that they know how texts work. To this end, professional knowledge and skills of a text-based linguistic theory, such as genre theory, would be useful. Through professional development, teachers can know about the nature of casual

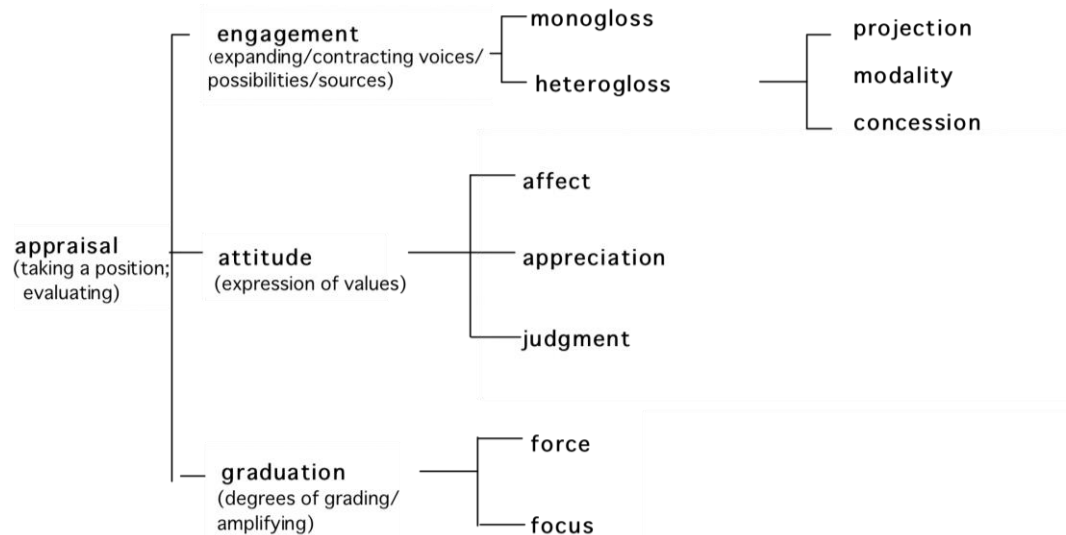
conversation and how texts work, based on informed views from linguistics and research.

XI. CONCLUSION

The main conclusions of the paper need to be discussed in relation to the research questions related to the development of the children's conversational language skills. Specifically, these have focused on the construction

of storytelling genres, the connection between generic structure and speaking purpose, the use of mood resources to give and exchange information, and the use of appraisal resources to express attitudes and take a stance. From the data analyzed in this paper, it is argued that the children have been able to use these language resources appropriately, albeit within their limited registers, contributing to the development of their conversational language skills.

APPENDIX A: MODEL OF APPRAISAL SYSTEM (ADAPTED FROM [6])



APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

The transcripts use normal American English orthography and spelling. They are presented without alterations and so spontaneity phenomena such as false starts, repetitions, incomplete utterances and fillers are all transcribed. In all transcripts, turn numbers are shown in Arabic numerals (for example, 1, 2, 3) and moves within each turn are shown in small letters (for example, a, b, c). Non-verbal turns are indicated by NV. Other transcription devices used are:

- a. Full-stops indicate completion, usually realized by falling intonation.
- b. Commas are used to make utterances readable and separate phrases or clauses where completion is not signaled. These are often, therefore, segments delivered with non-final intonation and typically correspond to silent beats in the rhythm.
- c. Question marks indicate questions, usually associated with rising intonation or WH- questions.
- d. Exclamation marks are used conservatively to indicate the expression of surprise, shock or amazement.
- e. Words in capital letters are used conservatively to show emphatic syllables.
- f. Double quotation marks are used to signal that the speaker is directly quoting speech.
- g. Single quotation marks are used to signal that the speaker is saying what they or somebody else thought.

h. Non-transcribable segments of talk are indicated by empty parentheses ()

i. Uncertain transcriptions are indicated by words within parentheses showing the transcriber's guess. For example: (taken)

j. Paralinguistic and non-verbal behavior is given within square brackets []. Such information is only included where it is judged important in making sense of the interaction.

k. Hesitations and utterances are transcribed by 3 dots ...

l. Intervals between turns are shown by square brackets, indicating a length of pause has occurred between turns longer than 2 seconds. For example: [pause: 4 secs]

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Damian Lucantonio is from Sydney, Australia. He has a master's degree in applied linguistics under professor Michael Halliday from the University of Sydney and a doctor of Philosophy degree under professor Diana Slade from the University of Technology, Sydney. His research focuses on the applications of systemic functional linguistics, in particular genre theory, to English language education. He has worked in Australia, Indonesia, and Japan. Dr. Lucantonio is currently an associate professor at the University of Electro-Communications, a national science university in Tokyo, Japan. He also works part-time in the Law Department at Keio University in Tokyo, Japan.