ORIGINAL ARTICLE

A Cross-Linguistic Analysis of Dream Narratives: Japanese and Mandarin

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This qualitative study examines 21 Japanese and Mandarin dream narratives of male and female speakers in relation to structural and functional differences. The findings demonstrated that, independent from cultural and linguistic context, dream narratives follow a similar structural format as that proposed by Cariola (2008), i.e., 1) Topic introduction, 2) Orientation, 3) Complication, 4) Evaluation, and 5) Coda. However, significant culturally-dependent discursive functional and linguistic differences were established. Japanese dream recall primarily focuses on an objective theme-oriented perspective that emphasizes an external locus, such as social involvement. In contrast, Mandarin dream narratives reflect an internal locus, accentuating an emotion-driven recall and the tendency to describe objects in terms of what they are not rather than what they are, referred to as an indirect strategy (Kaplan, 1966). **(Sleep and Hypnosis 2008;10(2):45-53)**

Key words: Contrastive rhetoric, cultural differences, dream recall, autobiographical memory, consciousness, identity

INTRODUCTION

Based on Labov & Waletzky's (1) displacement method, Cariola (2) demonstrated that elicited dream narratives follow a homogenous structure of 1) Topic introduction, 2) Orientation, 3) Complication, 4) Evaluation, and 5) Coda.

Topic introduction units can be defined as conversation turn sequences with which the interviewer or conversational partner may introduce the topic of the dream. In relation to interview situated dream recall,

some participants also mirror the topic introduction in the form of conversational transactional markers (i.e., "ok", "basically", or filled pauses "ah...ah"). Transactional markers may be used to divide the conversational task situation into two distinguishable parts (i.e., the researcher's question and the participant's answer), which also signifies the shift of responsibility to the narrator as his/her task "has to be completed, opened and closed in a specific time limit".[i] From a conversational perspective, the employment of a transactional marker also categorizes the researcher-participant conversation as a transactional talk because it is primarily based on fulfilling a voluntary task. Therefore, the transactional marker may be perceived as an illocutionary act; thus, the agreement to

participate in the research study mirrors the implicit notion of co-operation and task-orientated interest.

The topic of the dream is also often reintroduced into the discourse subsequent to the transactional marker, which is embedded within the orientation unit. Orientation units can be distinguished between real-life orientations and dream-content orientations (2). Real-life orientations generally converse details regarding the extent to which the participant associates real-life events as a possible trigger for the dream event. These triggers can range from occurrences of the previous day to more specific and important events in the narrator's life. Specifically, triggering real-life events often "illustrated a discourse, which can be discussed independently from the dream narrative if specific questions are directed towards the described real-life events".[ii] Real-life orientations also signify a bridge between two different consciousness states, the real narrator "I" and the virtual protagonist "I". In contrast, dream-content orientations introduce the first dream-related event, which often provides visual details of spatial features and "the protagonist's and antagonist's situation or action, the description of which acts to bring the narrative closer to the listener".[iii] Thus, the narrator creates a new spatio-temporal frame in order to place the virtual space of the dream event in which the actions and encounters of the virtual protagonist "I" were situated. Due to this spatio-temporal frame, "the narrator is able to reflect and dissociate simultaneously between the imagined protagonist virtual 'I' and the real 'I'".[iv]

Complication units can be defined as actions of the imaginary protagonist "I" in a clear temporal order and the employment of past simple tense. Complications also signify a dramatic within the narrative, which peak may be in the form of an encountered problem within the narrative. It can be further distinguished between developing complication and simple complication. Developing complications share the common characteristic of an initial complication that develops over the course of the narrative into further complications. In contrast, simple complications state a complication or problem that either has no bearing on or does not develop any further in relation to the narrative.

Evaluation units convey the narrator's explicit or implicit attitude or judgment, often with emotional or ideological connotations, in relation to the described actions and circumstances of the recapitulated dream event. Evaluation may also bring about the summary and point of the narratives, which makes it relevant to the hearer and the narrator. It may also act as a pre-sequence for the coda.

The coda unit can be defined as the end of a narrative. Especially during dream recalls, codas are often introduced in the form of the narrator's awakening "and then I woke up" or recall capacity "and that's it...I cannot remember more of the dream", which is a natural end to the story.

Yet, dream narratives are lacking a resolution unit (1) because, first, it may be difficult to distinguish it from the coda unit (4) and, second, most collected samples reflected nightmares and, therefore, did not employ a resolution other than the relieving of waking up from the dream. Thus, this structural and functional framework for dream narratives also reflects the notion that the "thought pattern which speakers and readers of English appear to expect as an integral part of their communication is a sequence that is dominantly linear in its development".[v]

However, contrastive rhetoric studies argue that linearity in thought pattern varies cross-culturally. Contrastive rhetoric as a paradigm emerged in the mid-sixties and researched discursive and linguistic cultural differences in relation to learners of English

as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). Robert Kaplan invented the term contrastive rhetoric and pioneered this field with his study "Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education" (5), which analysed short essays written by foreign English learners. Based on these analyses, he established various cultural dependent discourse patterns. For example, Chinese "is marked by what may be called an approach by indirection...turning and turning in a widening gyre. The circles or gyres turn around the subject and show it from a variety of tangential views, but the subject is never looked at directly. Things are developed in terms of what they are not, rather than in terms of what they are".[vi] However, other studies have challenged this view and argue that Chinese and English text construction is similar and have no marked differences (6).

Japanese discourse has been characterized as following a linear consistent pattern of introduction, development and topic maintenance (Hinds, 1984), and acceptability in the form of abrupt insertions (7). Japanese discourse may also follow a hierarchical structure in which introduced topics are subdivided into subtopics, and either their developments are explored in more detail or a shift is made to semantically related topics, referred to as topic constrain (Hinds, 1979). Thus, the continuation of hierarchical discourse is primarily governed by the speaker's perspective. Perspective in this sense may be a) object orientated (e.g., participants, propos, causes, results), b) emotion orientated (e.g., positive/negative, agree/disagree, like/dislike), or c) theme orientated (e.g., generalization, instantiation, meta-knowledge) depending on which pieces of information may be perceived as more predominate than others.

In relation to dreams, Chinese samples have been previously investigated in relation to dream content (10), whereas dreams of the Japanese-speaking population have been analysed in relation to dream content (11) and gender differences (12). However, the current study primarily analyses structural and functional differences in relation to an underlying recall rhetoric style.

Consequently, whereas other cross-cultural dream studies examined gender and content differences, my study investigates structural, functional, and linguistic constructs of orally elicited dream narratives based on Japanese and Mandarin samples. Thus, in order to establish rhetorical differences, a holistic interrelated analysis of structure, function, and linguistic forms may be necessary because these forms may depend on one another and culturally specific discourse constructions.

It is predicted that dream narratives of Mandarin and Japanese speakers will show no significant differences in relation to the structural and functional framework based on English samples, outlined as 1) Topic introduction, 2) Orientation, 3) Complication, 4) Evaluation, and 5) Coda. In addition, it is predicted that dream narratives as a discourse may reflect significant differences. Thus, dream narratives of the Mandarin-speaking sample are predicted to employ indirect strategies and represent various views on the subject without actually using direct descriptions. On the other hand, Japanese dream narratives are predicted to be hierarchically organised through the introduction of additional subtopics that are independently explored within the same narrative discourse.

METHODS

Participants

Eleven Japanese and 10 Mandarin speakers (10 male and 11 female), aged between 18-29 years with an average of 25.6 years) voluntarily participated in this study. All participants were unknown to the researchers at the point of the study and,

consequently, represent an opportunity sample.

Procedure

Participants were approached within the university's facilities and student halls. All participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to investigate individual differences in dream recall. In addition, participants were reassured that any audio-taped information that could be linked to the participant would not be transcribed. Subsequently, all participants were interviewed based on the question "Could you please recall a dream in as much detail as possible"? The dream narratives were audio-taped, transcribed verbatim, and divided into clauses. Native research assistants, who subsequently translated the samples into English, collected the Japanese and Mandarin samples.

Independent measure

Displacement

The dream narratives were analysed with the displacement method (1). As stated in Cariola (2), the displacement method probes each clause of a narrative for a potential displacement position. This displacement is perceived as acceptable if it does not interfere with the meaning of the narrative as a whole. The results of the displacement method are then documented in displacement charts, for which each row and column of the x-scale and the y-scale represent a clause of the analysed narratives.

Objective measures

The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC 2001) text analysis program (13,14) analysed all narratives in relation to the percentage of words and the occurrences of words in predefined categories. These dimensions and categories include social process words (e.g., mate, talk, they), negation words (e.g. no, not, never), positive emotion words (e.g., love, nice, sweet), positive feelings words (e.g., love, like, admire), negative emotion words (e.g., hurt, ugly, nasty), cognitive process words (e.g., cause, know, ought), affect process words (e.g., happy, cried, abandon), anxiety words (e.g., worried, fearful, nervous), anger words (e.g., hate, kill, annoyed), sadness words (e.g., crying, grief, sad), spatial words (e.g., down, in, thin), negation words (e.g., no, not, never), inclusion words (e.g., and, with, include), exclusion words (e.g., but, without, exclude), and tentative words (e.g., perhaps, maybe, guess). You-words and self-reference words were omitted from the analysis because "Japanese has no forms that correspond to either I or you"[vii]. According to Pannebaker and Francis (13), LIWC has high reliability and validity in written text; however, validity and reliability have not been tested in spoken text.

RESULTS

Structural and linguistic differences

The results showed that Japanese and Mandarin speakers omit transactional markers in the topic introduction unit.

In addition, Japanese speakers employ significantly high rates of subtopics (r = .718, p < .000), relative to Mandarin speakers. Specifically, subtopics correlate significantly with orientation units (r = .671, p < .024) and low rates of structural omissions (r = .624, p < .040).

In contrast, Mandarin speakers show a significant tendency to represent their emotions explicitly (r = .618, p < .003), and employ significantly less social words (r = -.440, p < .046)) and other reference words (r = -.504, p < .020), relative to Japanese speakers (Figure 1 & 2).
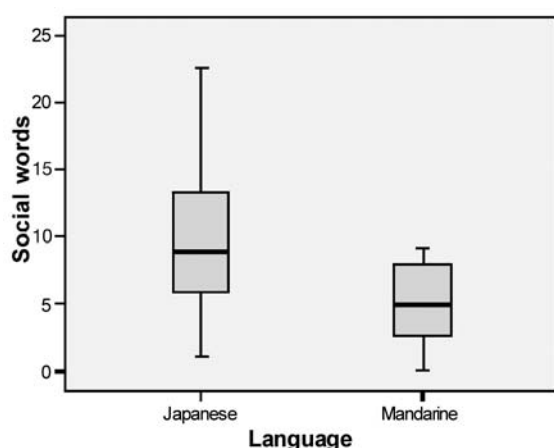
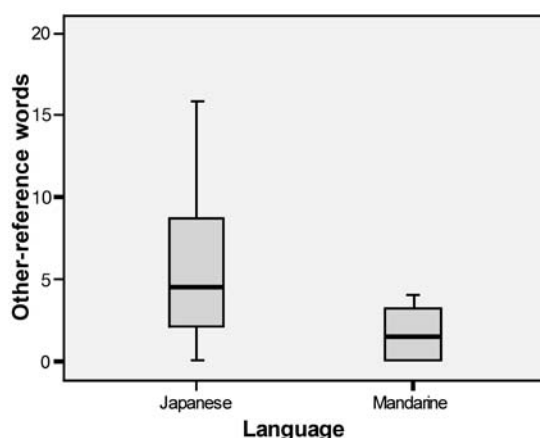**Figure 1. Japanese and Mandarin speakers employing social words.**

Figure 2. Japanese and Mandarin speakers employing other-reference words.

Interrelated constructs

Dream narratives of Japanese speakers carry a significant association between explicit emotional content and high rates of certainty words (r = .674, p < .035) and anxiety words (r = .633, p < .000). Moreover, the topic introduction "in my dream" is significantly associated with spatial words (r = .998, p < .000). Tentative words are significantly associated with content mentioning friends (r = .677, p < .022) and low frequencies of sadness words (r = -.632, p < .037). Family related content correlates significantly with high rates of inhibition words (r = .624, p < .040) and low rates of

exclusion words (r = -.622, p < .041).

In addition, dream narratives of Japanese speakers show a significant low association between the topic introduction "in my dream" and developing complications (r = -.667, p < .035), relative to Mandarin speakers (Figure 3).
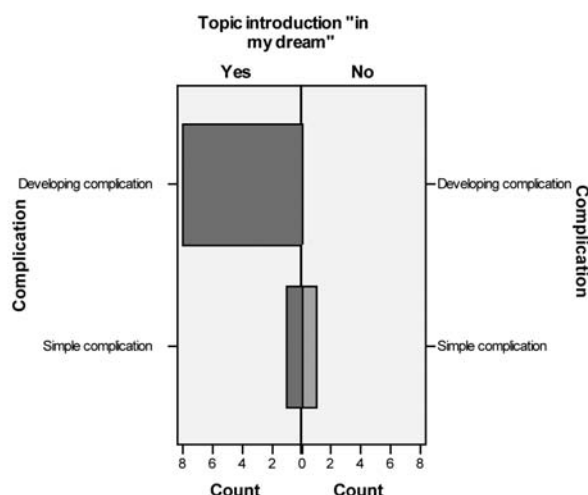

Figure 3. Interrelationship between topic introduction "in my dream" and developing complications in Mandarin speakers.

In contrast, Mandarin speakers' topic introductions in form of abstracts correlated positively with other-reference words (r = .800, p < .005). In addition, positive emotion words showed a significant association between content related to friends (r = .677, p < .031), high rates of optimism words (r = .777, p < .008) and positive feeling words (r = .859, p < .001). Moreover, emotional explicit content is significantly associated with high rates of exclusion words (r = .666, p < .036), and negative emotion words are significantly associated with high rates of anxiety words (r = .846, p < .002) and exclusion words (r = .735, p < .001).

Gender differences

Japanese dream narratives showed that female speakers employed significantly more positive emotion words (r = .706, p < .015), negation words (r = .664, p < .026) and

cognitive mechanism words (r = .676, p < .022), relative to male Japanese speakers.

No significant gender differences could be established between male and female Mandarin speakers.

Gender differences between Japanese and Mandarin narratives

When comparing male Japanese and Mandarin dream narratives, the male Japanese speakers show significantly higher tendencies to introduce dream narratives with the researcher's questions mirroring phrase "in my dream" (r = .655, p < .040), relative to male Mandarin speakers.

In contrast, female Mandarin speakers tend to employ significantly more anxiety words (r = .691, p < .024), explicit emotion content (r = 1.000, p < .000), utilize the narrative approach of indirection (r = .671, p < .024) and employ significantly less social words (r = -.639, p < .034) and less other reference words (r = -.694, p < .018), relative to the female Japanese speakers.

DISCUSSION

The results show that the majority of Japanese and Mandarin samples approximately follow the normative structural and functional framework outlined as 1) Topic introduction, 2) Orientation, 3) Complication, 4) Evaluation, and 5) Coda. This may indicate that English, Japanese, and Mandarin speakers have similar story schemas of how dream narratives are internally and verbally represented and of what dreams are like.

However, there are significant differences in relation to the topic introduction unit; the majority of Japanese and Mandarin samples omit the transactional marker, which has been perceived as normative in English samples (2). Consequently, Japanese and Mandarin speakers tend to introduce the topic of dreams in combination with the

orientation unit, such as in the Japanese narrative [1] "in my dream, I was in a bedroom at my parent's house" and the Mandarin narrative [1] "in my dream, I was in a running elevator together with a few of my classmates".

Furthermore, the topic introduction "in my dream"' may have different functions in both languages. For example, in relation to Japanese dream narratives, the wording "in my dream" may also partly reflect the researcher's questions "Could you please recall a dream in as much detail as possible?", reflecting the notion of mirroring and "direct repetition in Japanese conversation"[viii]. This is a specific conversational strategy in Japanese conversations as "the general tendency in Japanese conversation to repeat the words, phrases, or grammatical pattern of the other participant in an attempt to achieve solidarity"[ix]. Consequently, repeating semantic items of the previous adjacency item, in this case a simple question-answer turn, serves the function of moving the narrative forward and making it relevant to what has been previously said, which essentially complies with Grice's conversational maxim of relevance (16,17).

In addition, the topic introduction "in my dream" has a function in the orientation unit as it works as a pre-sequence to give a detailed account of the spatial properties of the experiences in the dream event. Specifically, narratives that "provide examples of details and images also create involvement...and reinforces the hearer's sense of the vividness of the memory, and therefore its reportability and authenticity"[x]. Moreover, Japanese speakers tend to emphasize the presence of other protagonists, such as friends, and activities associated with friendships, such as talking and chatting. This is demonstrated in the following female dream narrative [2]:

"I was with my class mate from university. Now she is an obstetrician. We were drinking together at a class reunion of something.

Then we did a pub-crawl afterwards. In front of one of the pubs we went and then we were talking in the basement. "

In contrast, Chinese speakers may use the topic introduction "in my dream" as a pre-sequence for an elaborated and detailed dream recall that also employs a developing complication. Thus, the phrase "in my dream" or "my recent dream" may act as a topic marker and, equally, as a structural device of a greater "story schema as a set of retrieval cue in order to reconstruct what may have happened at this time"[xi]. Based on this notion, "in my dream" may be conversationally integrative, but the locus may be located much more internally, focusing on structurally organized remembering and retrieval rather than being externally conversationally located. In addition, an internal focus also allows Mandarin speakers to create an emotional based involvement style as they employ significantly high rates of emotional explicit content, which may "seek not merely to convince audiences (a purportedly logical process), but also to move them (an emotional one)"[xii]. For example, this can be observed in the male dream narrative [3]

"I was chased by someone who I believed to be an enemy or a wicked person. I felt miserable. I was cornered at last by the pursuer. Then, after a short period of time, a brother or a kinsperson of mine had a similar experience with mine. He was also pursued by someone. I remember the whole dream was very short, but a very negative sentiment was felt throughout the dream."

Thus, conversational based emotional sharing and involvement appear to be more important and emphasized within Mandarin dream narratives than recalling objective facts such as spatial information, which is important in Japanese dream recall. Consequently, Japanese speakers tend to construct dream recall from an object-oriented perspective in contrast to the emotion-oriented perspective of Mandarin

speakers (9).

In addition, Japanese dream narratives employ significantly high rates of subtopics, as "topics may progress hypotactically in that the subsequent topic is in fact a subtopic of the prior topic"[xiii], for which the narrative follows hierarchically down to a related dream event rather than "across a parallel topic of subtopics"[xiv]. Subtopics also allow discourse to be overtly introduced, and a topic shift from the main topic of the dream to a relevant subtopic may act as a "planning mechanism" (20) in order to produce an acceptable dream recall structure. Specifically, subtopics divide dream narratives into two interrelated event sequences; this emphasizes that subtopic may have a "theme oriented function and often constitutes as a cause"[xv] for the subsequent second event. This is demonstrated in a female Japanese dream narrative's [2] topic introduction and subtopic:

"On Sunday morning, I was sitting with my boyfriend in a coffee shop. Where we often went together. He was reading a magazine and I was just relaxing there. After sitting for a while, it was time to go ", followed by the thematic and causal interrelated second event "when I was leaving, somehow I felt that I might not ever see him again. We didn't have a fight or anything, but for some reason, I felt it was my last time to see him", followed with the last statement "I kissed him on his cheek as I said goodbye". This can be perceived as an unexpected twist, which is a normative occurrence in Japanese expository discursive narratives (9), such as dream narratives.

In contrast, dream narratives of Mandarin speakers reflect the tendency to communicate a self-reflective and openly disclosed emotion-oriented discourse. Furthermore, Mandarin speakers also tend to describe objects in relation to what they are not rather than what they are. Thus, explicit emotional content correlates significantly

with high rates of exclusion words, which can be perceived in the following Mandarin female narrative [2]

"I've had this dream before. I was quarrelling with a certain person. It was not a serious or fierce quarrel with extreme emotions. On the contrary, it was under a very casual situation. He fell down the floor. Due to unknown reasons I stepped on his head. Consequently, his head fell off from his neck. Seeing this, I was very frightened. I kept thinking, I would be put into prison and I could never fulfil my objective of becoming a lawyer."

Consequently, all research hypotheses were confirmed. Both Mandarin and Japanese speakers construct dream narratives following the narrative structure, outlined as 1) Topic introduction, 2) Orientation, 3) Complication, 4) Evaluation, and 5) Coda. In addition, Mandarin speakers show a significantly high rate of employing indirect strategies and high rates of exclusion words, resulting in descriptions of objects and events

in terms of what they are not rather than what they are. In contrast, Japanese speakers significantly employ subtopics.

Methodological implications

This study employed oral samples elicited in interview situations, which may be subject to confounding variables such as the interviewer's age, gender, interpersonal variables (e.g., sympathy), and situational factors (e.g., setting, presence of others).

Future work

The results from this qualitative study were generated from a rather small sample size, which may have diminished the power of the tests employed. Consequently, further research may be based on a greater sample size in order to investigate structural, functional, and linguistic differences as well as underlying gender differences in Japanese and Mandarin speakers' dream recall.

i   McCarthy, M. (1991); Discourse analysis for language teachers; p. 131.
ii Cariola, L. A. (2008); A structural and functional analysis of dream narratives; p. 19
iii Cariola, L. A. (2008); ibid; p. 20
iv Cariola, L. A. (2008); ibid; p. 20
v   Kaplan, R. B. (1966); Cultural thought pattern; p. 4
vi Kaplan, R. B. (1966); ibid; p. 10
vii Hinds, J. (1979); Organizational patterns in discourse; p. 139

viii McCarthy; ibid, p. 71
ix   Hinds, J. (1979); ibid; p. 138
x   Tannen, D. (2007); Talking voices; p. 137.
xi   Mandler, J. M. & Johnson, N. S. (1977). Remembrance of things parsed: Story structure and recall; p. 112
xii Tannen, D. (2007); ibid; p.46
xiii Hinds, J. (1982); Japanese conversational structure; p. 310
xiv Hinds, J. (1982); ibid; p. 311
xv   Hinds, J. (1982); ibid; p.310

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