

A Cognitive Approach to Subjective Expressions in Narrative Texts

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1. Introduction

As we mentioned in Sawa (2001a) in which we defined subjective narrative expressions as *narrative representation* with its various types given, the prime goal of this paper is to propose our own hypothesis and theory with a view to realizing the correct understanding of narrative from the cognitive perspective. We will confirm their validity and availability through a practical analysis of many narrative texts in Sawa (to appear), discussing the relation among narrative representation, a character's point of view and the narrator's, with the *narrative schema* provided in which that relation is shown. These suggestions will enable us to give a clear illustration of the human cognitive process in understanding narrative texts.

2. Narrative Representation, Cognitive Subject and Point of View

We will first clarify the crucial elements for understanding a narrative text correctly, such as point of view, with their strict definitions, which will play a critical role in our later practical analysis of narrative texts. Then we will see the linguistic features other than syntactic ones which were the only basis of our analysis in Sawa (2001a), for deciding that a sentence is narrative representation. Our final task here is to show the precise way of identifying the character whose point of view is reflected in each narrative representation in a narrative text.

2.1 Point of View

The term *point of view* itself has been used by many linguists in a variety of senses. It is, for instance, a *viewing position* (Uspensky, 1973:2), from which one sees things around him. Or it is an *angle of vision* or a *camera angle* (Kuno and Kaburaki, 1977; cf. Kuno, 1978:129), which means the angle or position one takes, whether physically or mentally, in order to view even the same thing that he perceives. Point of view which we mean by in this paper is like that stated by Banfield. She remarks that 'any subject confronting the world necessarily adopts a position from which he perceives what will constitute his visual field, his experience, and any point of view is thus a limited one' (Banfield, 1982:68). In a narrative, there is a fictional world outside characters. They perceive it from their points of view taken physically or mentally, on the basis of which their speech, thought, action and perception are produced. Since narrative representation is what represents these *activities* of characters, it follows that each representation reflects a certain point of view. In this sense, it is fair to say that every narrative representation is more or less subjective expression, because as Banfield also suggests, 'point of view' is 'the term for subjectivity as a feature of narrative style' (op.cit.:10). Therefore, it is quite important to recognize points of view so that we can read a narrative appropriately. Now let us define the notion *point of view* in this paper by summarizing our discussions so far.

(1) The definition of *point of view*: Point of view is a subjective position that a character or/and

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the narrator take (s) physically or mentally in viewing what is to be perceived. As a result it is reflected in narrative representation.

2.2 Cognitive Subject

To identify the character whose point of view is taken is also important in reading a narrative.

Here we will give a clear definition of such a character. First, let us call the character with his point of view reflected in narrative representation *cognitive subject (CS)*, because he is the subject whose cognition of what is to be perceived in the fictional world entails his point of view reflected in narrative representation. There arises, however, such a serious problem as we noted in Sawa (2001a), in the identification of CS of free direct or indirect representation. The problem is that CS cannot precisely be determined from a sentence only. Instead, it can be determined from a narrative text by considering the *flow* and *shift* of point of view, which will be discussed later in 2.4 and 2.5. We should thus define the notion *CS* as follows.

(2) The definition of *cognitive subject*: Cognitive subject (CS) is a character whose point of view based on his cognition of things in his external world is reflected in narrative representation. He may be identified from only a sentence of narrative representation itself if possible. Otherwise, he should be identified from the text containing that sentence.

As we stated in Sawa (2001a), if CS can be determined from a sentence of narrative representation alone, there is no problem. Rather, we should provide a useful hypothesis for deciding CS in a narrative text when it cannot be determined from a sentence alone. We will tackle this task later in 2.4.

2.3 Linguistic Features Typical of Narrative Representation

In this section, we will see the typical linguistic features showing that a sentence is narrative representation. Among them, the syntactic ones were already treated in Sawa (2001a), so that we will look into other features here.

2.3.1 Lexical Features

Some special lexical items used in a sentence clearly indicate that it is narrative representation. Banfield provides such lexical features for regarding a sentence as narrative representation.

One of them is what is called qualitative nouns or epithets, as shown below.

- (3) that *idiot* of a doctor
- (4) a *peach* of a girl
- (5) a *devil* of an organizer (Banfield, 1982:54) [italics mine]

These words imply one's subjectivity who uses them. In other words, if these words are contained in a sentence, we can say that the sentence is narrative representation, because they reflect the subjective point of view either of CS or of the narrator.

Another lexical feature denoting that a sentence is narrative representation is evaluative adjectives which show one's subjective evaluation. Examples are as follows.

- (6) The *poor* girl couldn't go to the ball.
- (7) That *darned* Faustus knew too much. (op.cit.:55) [italics mine]

Since an evaluation inevitably involves a certain subjective point of view of an evaluator, these sentences are narrative representation in which a character's or the narrator's point of view is reflected. Thus evaluative adjectives, if used in a sentence, imply that it is narrative representation.

We should see another lexical feature typical of narrative representation. It is kinship nouns, which usually mean a human relationship between characters if used in a narrative. They are such words as a character would use to refer to the person so designated in a narrative fictional world, as in:

- (8) 'Think about something cheerful, *old man*,' he said. (*The Old Man and the Sea*:89)
 (9) She gently placed one hand on Jamie's shoulder, and her strength flooded into him. "You do what you must, *Son*..." (*Master of the Game*:19)
 [italics mine]

As is clear from the examples above, each italicized kinship noun reflects the character's point of view who uses it on the basis of how he looks upon the person it designates in his own mind. Therefore, kinship nouns are also a lexical feature typically seen in narrative representation.

In the appendix of this paper are listed lexical items expressing subjectivity that are typically used in narrative representation. They are cited from Wiebe (1990) and Banfield (1982).

2.3.2 Graphological Features

In a sentence, there may also be graphological features from which we can consider it to be narrative representation. The characteristic one of them is the exclamation mark used intentionally by the author in order to show a character's or the narrator's astonishment, wonder and what not. See the following examples.

- (10) And Andre d'Usseau! How could a man like that be bought? But of course Kate would know the price of any man. (*Master of the Game*:270)
 (11) She was so innocent! She obviously idolized her husband. What Peter had to say could destroy her. (*op.cit.*:387)

Since such subjective emotions as can be sensed from the sentences with the exclamation mark above entail a certain point of view, whether it is the character's or the narrator's, it is fair to say that the exclamation mark is a graphological feature that indicates a sentence with it is narrative representation.

There is another graphological feature which enables us to regard a sentence as narrative representation: words intentionally emphasized by the author. They are typically italicized, underlined or enclosed with such marks as single or double quotation marks (' ' or " "). The author makes use of these techniques for many purposes, one of which is to express some character's point of view by the word emphasized, as in:

- (12) The snow *was* growing blue. (Banfield, 1982:202)

The emphasized word *was* expresses the character's point of view who perceives *the snow growing blue*. By using the emphasized word *was*, the author intentionally implies the character's progressive perception which makes us sense his point of view. If there was no emphasis in (12), as is shown in the sentence below, we might regard it as a mere objective

narration of the state of *the snow growing blue*, not as some character's subjective perception of that state indirectly represented by the author.

(13) The snow was growing blue.

In this way, words intentionally emphasized by the author may denote that a sentence in which they are contained is a kind of narrative representation.

2.4 Identifying Cognitive Subject

As is obvious from Sawa (2001a), to exactly identify CS from a sentence itself is not possible, when it is free direct or indirect representation. In this case, we have no other choice but to analyze the text containing it. Our task in this section is to illustrate how to identify CS of each free direct or indirect narrative representation in respect of *text*, because he cannot be identified from a sentence only.

2.4.1 Expected Cognitive Subject

As is often seen in most narratives, a series of narrative representation reflects one and the same character's point of view. This means that CS of the current narrative representation is the same as that of the last in such a series. Let us see the following text.

(14a) This isn't happening to me, Jamie thought. (14b) It's a nightmare. (14c) ...He had nearly died, and now this man was trying to cheat him out of what was his.

(Master of the Game:47)

(14a) is the direct thought representation (DTR) with Jamie as its CS. (14b) is free direct thought representation (FDTR) and (14c) is free indirect thought representation (FITR), both of which reflect Jamie's point of view. This is the most acceptable reading. Note that he is the common CS in this series of representation. CS of (14b) and (14c) can be determined from the last narrative representation of each. That is to say, Cs of (14b) can be identified from (14a), while that of (14c) from (14b). We confirm this fact by setting up our hypothesis as follows.

(15) The hypothesis on how to identify CS of free direct or indirect representation: CS of the current free direct or indirect narrative representation is the same as that of the last narrative representation.

Now let us call CS of the last narrative representation which becomes that of the current free direct or indirect the *expected cognitive subject (ECG)*. Under our hypothesis, ECS is the most acceptable *candidate* for CS of the current free direct or indirect representation.

It is another major problem why we can consider the sentences without any reporting clause such as (14b) and (14c) to be narrative representation, not the purely objective narrations of the narrator. We will discuss this problem, namely how to recognize narrative representation in a text in the next section.

2.4.2 Active Subject and the Modified Hypothesis

Sometimes a character who is the agent of the action objectively narrated by the narrator in a sentence can become ECS, if the sentence is just before the current sentence of free direct or

indirect narrative representation. An example is given below.

(16a) Jamie lay back on the clean white sheets. (16b) I got there. I made it. Everything is going to be all right now. (*op.cit.:40*)

(16a) is the sentence which the narrator objectively narrates the action taken by Jamie. Let us call this sort of sentence *objective action sentence*. (16b) is free direct thought representation (FDTR) of Jamie's thought. Thus its CS is the agent of the last objective action sentence (16a). Let us also call this agent *active subject (AS)*. In this way, we can define ECS as follows.

(17) The definition of *expected cognitive subject*: An expected cognitive subject (ECS) is the last cognitive subject or active subject that becomes the cognitive subject of the current free direct or indirect narrative representation.

We must set up our modified hypothesis accordingly.

(18) The modified hypothesis on how to identify a cognitive subject of free direct or indirect representation: The cognitive subject of the current free direct or indirect narrative representation is the same as that of the last narrative representation, or as the active subject of the last objective action sentence.

2.5 Retention Theory

Under our hypothesis given in 2.4.2, we identify CS of the current free direct or indirect narrative representation with that of the last narrative representation or with AS of the last objective action sentence. To put it another way, in reading a narrative, once we recognize an ECS, we retain it in mind until we meet the free direct or indirect narrative representation whose CS we identify with that ECS we have had in mind since we recognized it. For example, we can identify the CS as Jamie in (16b) because we have retained him as the ECS in mind since we recognized him as the AS of (16a). This is the cognitive process in identifying the exact CS in narrative representation. First, we recognize CS of narrative representation other than free direct or indirect, and retain it as ECS for the free direct or indirect that might follow. Then if the following sentence is such representation, we identify its CS with the ECS which we have retained. Otherwise, we recognize a new CS from the sentence itself and retain him as the new ECS for the next. Consider the following texts.

(19a) 'Be patient, hand,' he said. (19b) 'I do this for you.' (19c) I wish I could feed the fish, he thought. (19d) He is my brother. But I must kill him and keep strong to do it. (*The Old Man and the Sea:49*)

(20a) Jamie could feel a slow rage boiling up within him. (20b) "You gave me nothing. I paid you a hundred and twenty ponds for that equipment."

(20c) The old man shrugged. (20d) "I won't waste my valuable time quibbling..." (*Master of the Game:47*)

(19a) is direct speech representation (DSR) whose reporting clause enables us to identify its CS as *he*. *He* is thus the ECS which we retain in mind, and through this cognitive process we can exactly identify the CS of the following free direct speech representation (FDSR) (19b) with

that ECS *he*, though this representation itself does not explicitly denote its CS. Likewise, from the reporting clause we recognize CS *he* in (19c), who is therefore the ECS for the following FDTR (19d). In this way we can regard (19) in all as a series of sentences representing the speech and thought of the same CS *he*. (20a) is psychological state representation (PSR) of Jamie, who is not only its CS but also the ECS that we retain for the free direct or indirect narrative representation which might follow. Hence, it is possible to identify the CS of FDSR (20b) as Jamie, who is thus still ECS. However, since we recognize a new ECS *the old man*, AS of (20c), we now retain him, not Jamie who was the previous ECS. This leads to the identification of the CS of the following DSR as *the old man*.

From the discussions so far, we will establish the *Retention Theory* as follows.

- (21) Retention Theory: In reading a narrative, once we recognize a cognitive or an active subject, we retain it as the expected cognitive subject for the free direct or indirect narrative representation that might follow, until we recognize a new cognitive or active subject that becomes the new expected cognitive subject from then on.

We will confirm this theory further through a practical analysis of many narrative texts presented in Sawa (to appear).

3. Summary

In this paper, we showed the way of identifying the exact CS of each narrative representation, especially free direct and indirect in which no explicit CS is linguistically indicated. In these pursuits, we first clarified such important terms as *point of view* and *cognitive subject* with their strict definitions. Second, we saw some lexical and graphological features from which we can regard a sentence as narrative representation. Third, in respect of *text*, as our hypothesis we introduced the idea of *expected cognitive subject*, in order to identify the exact cognitive subject of free direct or indirect narrative representation. We finally set up the *retention theory* which makes it possible to make a clear explanation for the human cognitive process in identifying CS of each representation in a narrative text.

Appendix

Subjective Lexical and Graphological Features Typical of Narrative Representation

1. Psychological Adjectives: afraid, alert, angry, ashamed, aware, certain, conscious, curious, dying, eager, embarrassed, delighted, exasperated, frightened, frustrated, glad, happy, hurt, indifferent, indignant, impatient, loath, miserable, proud, outraged, relieved, reminded, sad, satisfied, scared, shattered, sorry, sure, surprised, taken aback, tired, undecided, unhappy, used to, wary, worried.

2. Verbs: (A) The experiencer is the subject in an SVO sentence, or the object in an SVOC sentence if the psychological verb appears in the complement: believe, care, consider, decide, despise, dwell, expect, figure, forget, feel, find, hate, hope, imagine, know, like, love, mean, notice, realize, regret, remember, say to oneself, see, sigh to oneself, suppose, think, tire, understand, want, wish, wonder, would rather, would sooner, yearn.

(B) The experiencer is the object in an SVO sentence, or the indirect object in an SVOO sentence: bother, cheer, exasperate, frighten, frustrate, remind, satisfy, scare, shame, strike,

surprise, worry.

3. Psychological Nouns: astonishment, composure, delight, feeling, happiness, hatred, hope, misery, realization, sense, spirits, thought, urge, yearning.

4. Perceptual Verbs: hear, see, smell.

5. Perceptual Nouns: glimpse, vision.

6. Seeming Verbs: seem, appear, look, feel, smell, sound, taste, mean, prove, show.

7. Psychological Action Verbs: chuckle, beam (meaning *smile*), frown, grimace, grin, laugh, scowl, sigh, shiver, shudder, smile, snort, wince.

8. Perceptual Action Verbs: examine, gaze, glance, prick up, inspect, listen, look, peer, scan, squint, stare, study, survey, watch.

9. Qualitative Nouns or Epithets: idiot, peach, devil, fool, bastard, bitch, whore, sweetheart, darling, sucker, liar, prick, ass, crook, angel.

10. Evaluative Adjectives: poor, damned, darn, divine, darling, dirty, blasted, bloody, confounded, fine, fucking, great, incredible, weird.

11. Kinship Nouns: Daddy, Mother, Nana, Grandpa, Uncle X, Comrade X.

12. Deictic Terms: this, that, now

13. Emphasized Words: those words intentionally emphasized with quotation marks (' ' or " "), underlines, or in italic letters.

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