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From Acting Out Stories to Telling Stories: Elicitation of Oral Narrative Productions in the Japanese Language Classroom

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1. Introduction

Language textbooks commonly utilize model dialogues for language learners as a way to introduce new linguistic and cultural elements of the target language. Although mindless mimicking and memorizations of dialogues presented in textbooks is discouraged by American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2013), there are many language educators and learners who suggest ways to effectively incorporate textbook dialogues in language studies for the development of aural and oral skills in and outside of classrooms (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011; Epstein and Ormiston 2007; Christensen and Warnick 2006; Neumanc 2018; Richards 2013, 2016; Rings 2008; Tsuchiya 2022). In the Performed Culture Approach (PCA) (Walker and Noda 2010), language learners are commonly instructed to learn assigned dialogues or scripts as a step to build a foundation by studying, imitating, and rehearsing them outside of class. Learners' performance of script rehearsals is often evaluated in contextualized situations provided in class, which is followed by variation and expansion exercises and on to more open-ended tasks. While many language learners find the routine task of learning and performing assigned dialogues useful in their language study, some find it stressful and do not see its value (Tsuchiya 2022). One major issue is that learners under stress often "just memorize" the assigned dialogues without taking the time to "learn" the new linguistic and cultural elements introduced in the assigned dialogues.

Poor study habits often lead to poor in-class performance even if students spend "hours" in preparation (Luft 2017). When many students perform poorly in class, the teacher may need to spend the majority of class time conducting practice activities that are mechanical in nature before they can move to meaningful application exercises. To address this



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issue, the teacher can meet with struggling students outside of class to go over their study habits. The teacher can observe their learning process and give some guidance for students on how to study effectively and efficiently. However, if many students continue to struggle even after they have been given guidance on their study habits, there is another potential reason at play, which is the pacing of the program. When new materials are introduced too quickly, learners tend to have a hard time internalizing the concepts introduced in each dialogue and resort to “memorizing” the scripts without “learning.” As a remedy, slowing down the pace of the program may be necessary to create more time for reinforcement activities. Giving more opportunities for learners to internalize what has been introduced to them may lead to long-term retention and skill development.

On the other hand, some language teachers may not sufficiently feel confident in their language skills to leave the comfortable zone of just filling the class time with mechanical practice activities such as just doing script rehearsals word for word. Such language teachers may feel afraid of or do not know how to conduct activities that are more open-ended in nature. Besides language skills, the language teachers’ tendency to stick with mechanical practice activities may be due to lack of teacher training or clear instruction on how to develop a lesson plan that incorporates model dialogues effectively. As a response, Tsuchiya (2022) provided an instruction on how to conduct application exercises that can stem from script rehearsals by way of variations (e. g., substituting words and phrases in the original script), expansions (e. g., adding scripts), and contextualized drill activities and open conversations. These activities can help language learners develop a foundation for initiating and sustaining a conversation, which is one of the intermediate-level skills listed on the ACTFL’s proficiency guidelines (2012).

Once the foundation is established for sustaining the intermediate-level tasks, the teacher can start incorporating practice activities to help learners develop advanced-level skills. Producing a paragraph-level narration is one of the major advanced-level skills, but its complexity makes it difficult for language teachers to conduct practice activities in a structured way. Without a structure, language learners’ narrations may have too many “problems,” to the point where it becomes difficult for language teachers to know where to start and how to give guidance. This is especially the case when language teachers are not trained to explicitly talk about the narrative structure and discourse-level features used in the target language.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a resource for language teachers to implement and contextualize in-class narrative rehearsals that are based on model dialogues typically found in language textbooks. In the following, I will provide a relevant literature review on discourse-level grammar acquisition and narrative structure (including *kishōtenketsu* 起承転結, “introduction, development, twist, and conclusion” in Japanese) and discuss specific ways to strategically elicit narrations in the classroom as well as ways to provide support for language learners to develop narrative skills in and outside of class.

2. Literature Review

There is a recent trend in Japanese language education to shift the focus of instruction from teaching the language by merely covering materials, to treating language education as a tool to help learners establish their identities and develop their character (Tohsaku 2021). Under this direction, instead of just having language learners practice Japanese in classrooms, language educators are encouraged to help learners build their character by having the learners raise their voices in social justice or work with local communities to provide meaningful service projects by using the target language (e. g., Sato and Murata 2018). Students are believed to naturally gain proficiency through solving problems that exist in the real world. While this recent trend in Japanese language education can be quite meaningful and revolutionary in foreign language education, there are some linguistic and cultural elements that may be difficult for learners to pick up on their own, such as acquiring discourse-level grammar and narrative skills in a foreign language. For instance, to illustrate the difficulty of discourse-level grammar acquisition, Bourgerie’s (1996) study compared the acquisition of Chinese discourse-level features (i.e., sentence-final particles and anaphoric reference marking) between classroom learners and in-field learners. The results showed neither the in-classroom nor in-field learners demonstrated mastery over these discourse markers despite having formal instruction or having exposure and regular contact with native speakers. As Christensen and Warnick (2006) point out, this is contrary to the common belief that learners are simply able to “pick up” discourse-level features (148). While there are probably many more studies that capture the complexity of a large variety and aspects of discourse-level grammar across different languages and dialects, providing a thorough review on such a complex matter is beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, the following section will review only a few selected studies related to discourse-level grammar acquisition of L1 and L2

Japanese speakers. It is hoped that the review of literature about discourse-level grammar acquisition in Japanese will inspire other foreign language educators and researchers to examine and synthesize the existing body of research related to the acquisition of discourse grammar in their target languages.

2.1 Discourse-level grammar acquisition of L1 and L2 Japanese speakers

Studies related to discourse-level grammar acquisition of L1 and L2 Japanese speakers suggest that L1 transfer and the effect of instruction play an important role in the acquisition of narrative skills. According to Clancy (1980), L1 Japanese speakers use nominal forms (such as *otoko no ko* “boy” and *onna no ko* “girl”) and null pronouns (i. e., omission of pronouns) in their narratives. On the other hand, Clancy reports that L1 English speakers frequently use overt third-person pronouns such as “he” and “she” in their narratives in English. Based on Clancy’s observations, there are studies that show evidence of L1 transfer with regards to the use of nominal forms in narratives. For example, Inoi (2008) and Sawasaki, Terao, and Shirahata (2014) found that L1 Japanese speakers used more nominal forms than overt pronouns when they provided narratives in English. It shows that the tendency of L1 Japanese speakers to rely on nominal forms in narratives is transferred to their narrative production in their L2 (i. e., English). Interestingly, on the other hand, the same type of L1 transfer was not found in L2 Japanese narrations provided by a group of L1 English participants in Tsuchiya, Yoshimura, and Nakayama’s study (2015). Contrary to their hypothesis for their L1 English speakers to extensively use overt third-person pronouns in their L2 Japanese narratives, they observed more use of null pronouns than overt third-person singular pronouns. In other words, L1 transfer of L1 English-speaking participants using overt pronouns was not observed in their study. They attributed this finding to the effect of instruction as many of their participants were taught to use null pronouns since early in their learning of the language. These studies show that L1 transfer and the effect of instruction provide layers of complexity to the acquisition of narrative skills in foreign language education.

Another study shows how language learners’ incapability or avoidance of using certain grammar patterns affect their narrative structure in the target language. Yanagimachi (2000) observed that lower-level Japanese learner participants in his study had a tendency to switch the subject in their narration more frequently than the L1 Japanese-speaking participants

who kept the subject of their narration more consistent. Upon analyzing the structural patterns used in the narratives, Yanagimachi found that the L1 Japanese-speaking participants incorporated a set of relatively complex expressions such as the passive pattern and giving and receiving verbs to keep their subject of the narration coherent. Yanagimachi suspected that L2 learners reverted to switching the subject too often as they avoided or were unable to incorporate these complex patterns in their narrations. Yanagimachi's study shows that keeping a coherent subject in narratives is commonly observed in L1 Japanese speakers' narratives. Though this may or may not be the case in other languages, subject coherency in narratives should be an important factor to consider when providing instruction or feedback for narrative skills in foreign language education.

Finally, given the complexity and difficulty of discourse-level grammar acquisition, Christensen and Warnick (2006) suggest that L2 Japanese learners need better instruction in the classroom to acquire discourse-level grammar and narrative features. As examples, they list the following set of discourse-level grammar and narrative features with regards to Japanese language.¹

- particles (*wa* and *ga*)
- anaphoric reference (use of ellipsis)
- sentence-linking strategies
- aspect marking
- *no da* pattern

Understanding these discourse-level features can be challenging for many learners because the rationale for using these features is often not entirely clear at the sentence level but become clearer at the narrative level. Therefore, in the following section, examples and brief explanations of how these discourse-level grammar and narrative features are used in each phase of narrative construction will be provided.

2.2 Narrative structure

Narrative structure provides a structural framework for presentation of narratives or stories which consist of a series of related events or experiences. Narratives can be presented in various forms by using written words (e. g., books, novels), still or moving images (e. g., artwork and movies, etc.), or combinations of both (e. g., children's books, comic books, graphic novels). This paper will combine the following two narrative frameworks to provide analysis of spontaneous oral narratives in Japanese. The first one is the Japanese narrative structure of *kishōtenketsu*

起承転結 (introduction, development, twist, and conclusion). This framework is chosen because of its familiarity and widespread nature among L1 Japanese speakers. By using this narrative structure commonly recognized by L1 Japanese speakers, the narratives created by L2 learners of Japanese would be comprehensible and easy to follow by other L1 Japanese speakers. The second one is William Labov's (1972) six components of a natural narrative model—Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Resolution, Evaluation, and Coda. Labov's model of narrative structure is selected because of its focus on oral, not written, narrative, which effectively adds dynamic and engaging nature of oral narrations. By following the combination of these two models, Japanese learners will be able to produce stories that are comprehensible and engaging by actively co-constructing their narrations with their Japanese-speaking conversation partners.

Table 1 provides the *kishōtenketsu* phases aligned with Labov's narrative model as summarized by Simpson (2004: 115).² Following Table 1, each phase of the Japanese narrative structure and aligned components of Labov's narrative model will be introduced with three short narrations (Narrations A, B, and C) divided in phases. This is followed by an analysis of how the Japanese discourse features, namely, particles (*wa* and *ga*), anaphoric reference (use of ellipsis), sentence-linking strategies, aspect marking, and the *no da* pattern, are used in each phase.

2.2.1. Introduction—The *ki* (起) phase

In the introductory *ki* (起) phase, narrators signal a beginning of a story by telling a brief summary of the events to draw attention from the listener. This is what Labov termed as Abstract. The Abstract is often coupled with what he termed as Orientation, which is relevant information about the setting of the story, such as the location and the time frame of the setting, as well as the introduction and description of people and characters in the story. Here are some examples.

Narration A.1 (A student providing a narration to his teacher)

昨日川村さんと週末のこと話していたんですけどね…

kinō kawamura-san to shūmatsu no koto hanashite ita n desu kedo ne...

Yesterday, (I) was talking with Kawamura-san about the weekend, you know...

Japanese narrative	Labov's Narrative category	Narrative questions	Narrative function	Linguistic form
<i>ki</i> (起) Introduction	Abstract	What was this about?	Signals that the story is about to begin and draws attention from the listener.	A short summarizing statement, provided before the narrative commences.
	Orientation	Who or what are involved in the story, and when and where did it take place?	Helps the listener to identify the time, place, persons, activity, and situation of the story.	Characterized by past continuous verbs, and Adjuncts of time, manner and place.
<i>shō</i> (承) Development	Complicating Action	Then what happened?	The core narrative category providing the "what happened" element of the story.	Temporally ordered narrative clauses with a verb in the simple past or present.
<i>ten</i> (転) Twist	Resolution	What finally happened?	Recapitulates the final key event of a story.	Expressed as the last of the narrative clauses that began the Complicating Action.
<i>ketsu</i> (結) Conclusion	Evaluation	So what?	Functions to make the point of the story clear.	Includes: intensifiers; modal verbs; negatives; repetition; evaluative commentary; embedded speech; comparisons with unrealized events.
	Coda	How does it all end?	Signals that a story has ended and brings listener back to the point at which s/he entered the narrative.	Often a generalized statement which is "timeless" in feel.

Table 1. The Japanese narrative structure *kishōtenketsu* aligned with Labov's narrative

model

In Narration A.1, the narrator introduces the topic of his narration, which is about the weekend plan. The subject of the narration is the speaker himself, so it is omitted. The narrator uses the aspect marking *-te iru* pattern for the verb *hanasu* (talk) to frame the scene as if it were happening. The *no da* pattern is used to indicate that the fact that the narrator was talking to Kawamura-san yesterday is a background information. The sentence final particle *ne* is used to signal the listener to get involved by providing some sort of response or *aizuchi* to indicate that s/he is actively listening.

Narration B.1 (A friend providing a narration to another friend)

メアリーって知ってる？アメリカから来ている留学生でさ...

Mearii tte shitteru? Amerika kara kiteiru ryūgakusei de sa...

Do you know Mary? She is an exchange student from the U.S....

In Narration B.1, a question about Mary is asked to draw the listener's attention. The sentence that follows uses ellipsis by omitting the subject of the sentence (i. e., Mary) since the fact that it is talking about Mary is established from the previous sentence. The *-te* form of *desu* (*de*) is used to link the fact that Mary is an exchange student from the U.S. to the next phase. The sentence-final particle *sa* is used to invite the listener to provide *aizuchi* to indicate that s/he is actively listening.

Narration C.1 (A friend providing a narration to another friend)

ちょっと聞いてよ。さっき電車に乗っててまじでムカついたんだけどさ...

Chotto kiite yo. Sakki densha ni nottete maji de mukatsuita n da kedo sa...

Hey listen. (I) was riding a train a short while ago and (I) was really frustrated...

In Narration C.1, the narrator starts their narrative by a request for the listener to listen. The request is followed by a summary of the narration—the speaker being frustrated by something that happened on the train a short while ago. The subject of the sentence is not mentioned, so the listener would have to assume that the speaker is talking about him/herself. The verb *nottete* (ride) makes use of the aspect marker *-te iru* to indicate what the narrator was doing. The *-te iru* form makes use of the *-te* form to connect to the next phase of the narration. The fact that the narrator was frustrated is treated as a background information with the *no da* pattern with the sentence-linking expression *kedo* to continue the narration.

2.2.2. Development—The *shō* (承) phase

The *shō* (承) phase provides a development that leads to the twist in the story. Labov terms this phase as Complicating Actions, which are actual events of the narrative. These include physical actions and occurrences that move the story ahead. These may be statements or thought processes spoken aloud.

Narration A.2 (A student providing a narration to his teacher)

川村さんがジャイアンツの試合を見に行こうって言ってたから、チケット買っておいんですけど、

Kawamura-san ga jaiantsu no shiai o mi ni ikō tte itteta kara, chiketto katte oita n desu kedo...

Kawamura-san said “let’s go see a Giant’s game,” so (I) bought the tickets in advance...

Narration A.2 marks Kawamura-san as the subject in the subordinate clause with the particle *ga*. The verb *iu* (say) uses the aspect marker *-te iru* form, which is common when quoting a third person. The sentence-linking expression *kara* is used to treat the subordinate clause as a reason for the narrator’s action of buying the tickets in advance in the main clause. Though it is still omitted, the subject of the main clause is still the narrator.

Narration B.2 (A friend providing narration to another friend)

週末何かしないかって友達のたけし君に電話で誘われたらしいんだけど...

Shuumatsu nanika shinai ka tte tomodachi no Takeshi-kun ni denwa de sasowareta rashii n da kedo...

(She) was invited by her friend Takeshi to do something over the weekend over the phone, but...

An ellipsis is used in Narration B.2. The subject of the sentence in Narration B.2 is still Mary, but overt pronoun or noun form of Mary is not present in the sentence. Instead, a passive form *sasowareru* (be invited) is used to keep the narrative from Mary’s perspective instead of switching to *Takeshi-kun*.³ The hearsay expression *rashii* is used to indicate that the information comes from a different source other than the narrator.

Narration C.2 (A friend providing narration to another friend)

1時間ぐらい立ってて、やっと前の席が空いたから座ろうとしたら、

Ichi jikan gurai tatte te, yatto mae no seki ga aita kara suwarō to shitara,

(I) was on (my) feet for about an hour, and the seat in front of (me) finally opened up, so (I) was going to sit down, then...

The subject of the sentence in Narration C.2 is still the narrator. Ellipsis is used continually by omitting the subject of the verb *tatte-te* “(I) was standing” and *suwarō to shitara* “(I) was going to sit down, then...” The sentence-linking expression *tara* is used to connect the sequence of action to the climax of the narration.

2.2.3. *Twist—the ten* (転) *phase*

The *ten* 転 (twist) phase provides the climax (a twist or unexpected development) of the story. Labov calls it a Resolution phase.

Narration A.3 (A student providing narration to his teacher)

川村さん、その日にデートの予定があったことをすっかり忘れてて、それで「悪いけどまた今度でもいい？」って。

Kawamura-san, sono hi ni deeto no yotei ga atta koto o sukkari wasuretete, sore de “warui kedo mata kondo demo ii” tte.

Kawamura-san completely forgot about his plan to go on a date that day, so (he) said “sorry, is (doing it) some other time okay?”

In Narration A.3, the narrator switches the subject of the narration to Kawamura-san by fronting his name at the beginning of a new sentence. The aspect marker *-te iru* is used with the verb *wasureru* to describe Kawamura-san’s state of forgetfulness. The *-te* form in *wasuretete* and *sore de* are used to transition to the climax of the story, which is Kawamura-san saying “maybe next time” to the narrator. The climax of the narration is completed with the quotation marker *tte*.

Narration B.3 (A friend providing narration to another friend)

「すみません。行けません。」って言って電話切っちゃったんだって。

“Sumimasen. Ikimasen.” tte itte denwa kicchatta n datte.

(I heard) that (she) said “(I’m) sorry. (I) won’t go” and hung up the phone.

The climax in Narration B.3 is Mary directly saying “I’m sorry, I won’t go” in response to Takeshi’s invitation. The narrator quotes Mary by using the quotation marker *tte* followed by a verb *iu* in the *-te* form, which is followed by Mary hanging up the phone. The narrator uses *kicchatta* “hung up the phone” which is a contracted form of a completed aspect marker *-te shimau* in the past tense. The climax scene is embedded in the *no da* form as an explanation, which is followed by the quotation marker *tte* to indicate that the source of information is a hearsay.

Narration C.3 (A friend providing a narration to another friend)

後ろにいたおじさんが自分が座ろうとしていた席に座っちゃって....。

Ushiro ni ita ojisan ga jibun ga suwarō to shite ita seki ni suwacchatte...

A middle-aged man behind (me) took the seat that (I) was going to sit down.

In Narration C.3, a new person in the story *ushiro ni ita ojisan* “a middle-aged man who was in the area behind the speaker” is suddenly introduced with a subject marker *ga* and takes the seat upon which the narrator was going to sit. The noun *seki* “seat” is modified by the sentence *jibun ga suwarō to shite ita* “(I) was going to sit down” to describe what the narrator was about to do by using the progressive aspect marker *-te iru*. The action of the middle-aged man taking the seat makes use of the contracted form of the completive aspect marker *-te shimau*, which often brings an unfortunate impression in Japanese language. The narrator ends the scene with a *-te* form, which marks a transition in this context, but does not state the obvious to imply his/her upsetting feeling towards this incident.

2.2.4. Conclusion—The *ketsu* (結) phase

Finally, the *ketsu* 結 (conclusion) phase wraps up the story by providing an interpretation of the plot (i. e., the narrative’s meaning) that may be specifically stated or implied. Labov calls this phase an Evaluation phase. Evaluations can be revealed internally while the story is taking place or externally after the story is told. Evaluations can also take a form of explanations embedded in the story by one of the people in the story, or by the narrator.

At the end of the story, the narrator may provide what Labov calls a Coda phase to simply indicate that the story has ended. Labov explains that the narrator may point out the moral of the story as the “result” or “resolution” during the Coda phase. The coda may be present without being explicitly stated.

Narration A.4 (A student providing narration to his teacher)

ちょっとひどいですよ。

Chotto hidoi desu yo ne.

It is a bit unacceptable, don’t you agree?

In Narration A.4, the narrator finishes his narration by making an evaluative comment about the unacceptability of Kawamura-san’s action. He uses the sentence-final particles *yo* and *ne* to invite his teacher to agree

with his opinion.

Narration B.4 (A friend providing narration to another friend)

たけし君、びっくりしただろうね。

Takeshi-kun, bikkuri shita darō ne.

(I) bet Takeshi-kun was surprised, don't you think?

The narrator in Narration B.4 makes an evaluative comment by using *darō*, which is used to assume how surprised Takeshi-kun would be in reaction to Mary's abrupt way of declining his invitation. The use of sentence-final particle *ne* implies that the listener has a shared feeling about the incident.

Narration C.4 (A friend providing narration to another friend)

こういう人にはならないようにしないとね。なんか腹立つからこの話はおしまい。

Kōiu hito ni wa naranai yō ni shinai to ne. Nanka hara tatsu kara kono hanashi wa oshimai.

(We) should not behave like this person. Well, it makes me angry so I'm done (telling) this story.

In Narration C.4, the narrator points out the moral of the story, which is not to behave like the middle-aged man. Then the narrator provides a Coda by saying *oshimai* (end) because the incident still makes the narrator angry.

3. Pedagogical Application

When and how should Japanese language teachers encourage their learners to start practicing narratives in Japanese? The ACTFL proficiency guidelines (2012) assume language learners to have the capability to, among other skill sets, carry out sentence-level conversations in the intermediate level prior to reaching the advanced level, which deals with paragraph-level speech. Thus, in preparation for practicing narratives in Japanese, language learners should have a basic understanding of sentence structure and discourse-level features such as particles *wa* and *ga*, anaphoric reference (use of ellipsis), sentence-linking expressions, aspect marking (*-te iru*, *-te shimau*, etc.), and the *no da* pattern. Once a sufficient number of these discourse-level features have been introduced and learners are at the level where they feel comfortable carrying out sentence-level conversations across various topics, teachers can incorporate narrative practice in the curriculum.

According to the standards for the preparation of foreign language

teachers set by ACTFL (2013), language teachers are encouraged to use the target language in the classroom 90% of the time. They are instructed to provide meaningful target language input, and assist students in understanding this input, as well as guiding students to negotiate meaning and to take risks with the language to express meaningful thoughts and ideas (64–65). In following this standard, there are many language programs that provide immersive experience for learners by requiring them to communicate in the target language during classes that focus on the development of listening and speaking ability. This type of class is referred to as an ACT class in PCA (Walker and Noda 2009; Christen and Warnick 2006). In ACT class, the teacher provides situations in the target culture for students to practice performing in the target language. Language learners attending the ACT class typically have a contextualized dialogue or script assigned to them to perform in class. They are often required to learn the dialogue in preparation for class and study and practice the new vocabulary and grammatical patterns introduced in the dialogue prior to coming to class. As mentioned in the introduction, students' dialogue performance is often evaluated, and application exercises based on the new dialogue and expressions follow the script rehearsals (Tsuchiya 2022). Narrative rehearsals can be part of the application exercises that follow the script rehearsals for beginning-level students soon to enroll in intermediate-level courses or take the place of script rehearsals in intermediate-level courses. In an ideal ACT class, a small portion of class time (e. g., 15 %) should be spent on “dialogue performance check” in beginning-level courses or narrative rehearsals in intermediate-level courses. The majority of time (e. g., 75%) should be spent on improvisation or application exercises that stem from the script or narrative rehearsals. The remaining time (e. g., 10%) can be used for scaffolding to help learners focus on forms as needed. The better prepared the students, the more time can be spent on improvisation.

Another common component of a language curriculum is a type of instruction that deals with the theoretical components of language learning to help students gain knowledge about the language (Christensen and Warnick 2006). This type of class is referred to as the FACT class in PCA and is commonly carried out mainly in the students' first or proficient language to facilitate learning by discussing learning strategies, grammar patterns, and relevant culture points.

In the following, a discussion as to how to elicit oral narrations based on assigned dialogues in the ACT type of class will be given. Then a brief

discussion as to how to provide support for learners' development of narrative skills in the FACT type of class will follow.

3.1 Elicitation of oral narratives based on assigned dialogues in ACT class

Production of oral narratives about a dialogue requires learners to synthesize the actions and other relevant information provided and/or implied by the context in which the dialogue takes place. This section will discuss ways to elicit narrations based on assigned dialogues by using a script from ACT 10 Scene 1 of the *NihonGO NOW!* series (Noda et al. 2020) (Table 2).

Context: Brian invites Kawamura-senpai to a baseball game.	
Brian	Kawamura
川村さん、野球とか好きですか。 <i>Kawamura-san, yakyū toka suki desu ka?</i> Kawamura-san, do you like baseball and things like that?	うん、好きだよ。 <i>Un, suki da yo.</i> Yeah, I do.
よかったら、来週の週末一緒に試合見に行きませんか。 <i>Yokattara, raishū no shūmatsu issho ni shiai mi ni ikimasen ka?</i> If you'd like, why don't you go with me to see a game next weekend?	あ、いいね。ジャイアンツでしょ？行こう、行こう。 <i>A, ii ne. Jaiantsu de sho? Ikō, ikō.</i> Oh, good (idea). The Giants, right? Let's go, let's go.
じゃ、僕、チケット買っておきますので。 <i>Ja, boku, chiketto katte okimasu no de.</i> Okay then, so I'll buy tickets ahead of time.	いい？じゃ、よろしく。久しぶりに楽しみだなあ。 <i>Ii? Ja, yoroshiku. Hisashiburi ni tanoshimi da nā.</i> Is that all right? Well then, please (do). It's been a while and I can't wait!

Table 2. A dialogue from ACT 10 Scene 1 from *NihonGO NOW!*

By this point in the textbook, learners have been introduced to the basic concepts of Japanese sentence structure as well as discourse-level features such as particles *wa* (ACT 2, 3) and *ga* (ACT 4), the use of ellipsis (ACT 2), sentence-linking expressions such as the *-te* form (ACT 5), *kedo* for contrasting and providing background information (ACT 2), and *kara* for providing reasons (ACT 5). Further, the aspect marker *-te iru* pattern has been introduced to describe progressive and resultative states (ACT 6), and the *no da* pattern to provide background information and explanations (ACT 6 and 7). Learners have also been introduced to the dictionary forms of verbs, adjectives, and nouns, and how to incorporate them in quotations (e.g., *X to iu*) (ACT 7). The *-te aru* form (ACT 9) which allows a narrator

to turn the object of the sentence into the subject has been introduced as well. Even though narratives are not formally introduced until ACT 11 in the *NihonGO NOW!* series, there are ways to elicit and practice simple oral narratives with these discourse-level features being introduced.⁴ In the following, seven steps to elicit narrations about assigned dialogues in an ACT type of class will be discussed. These suggestions can be implemented by using dialogues from other language textbooks. In addition, they can be incorporated in place of or as an application exercise after the script rehearsals, as time permits.

3.1.1 Step 1. Setting a context suited for narrative production

The first task that classroom teachers need to think about as part of their lesson planning is to come up with situations that are natural for language learners to share narratives about the assigned dialogues in the target culture. For example, the dialogue from ACT 10 Scene 1 is about college students making weekend plans, so a context of discussing weekend plans can be used as a way to set up a situation to talk about the assigned dialogue. Here is an example.

T: 皆さん、来週の週末は何をしますか？
Mina-san, raishū no shūmatsu wa nani o shimasu ka?
 Everyone, what are you planning to do next weekend?
 S: (Open response)
 T: へえー、そうなんですネ。
Hee, sō na n desu ne.
 ‘Oh, I see.’

This is a warmup activity so teachers can form small groups or pairs to have students discuss their weekend plans on their own to get them started.

3.1.2. Step 2. Prompting a narration

After setting up the appropriate context for narrative production about the dialogue, teachers should give a prompt to effectively elicit a narration from students about the assigned dialogue following the warmup activity. For ACT 10 Scene 1, the teacher can simply ask about Brian’s weekend plan as discussed in the assigned dialogue.

T: じゃあ、ブライアンが来週の週末何をするか知ってる人はいますか。
Jaa, Buraian ga raishū no shūmatsu nani o suru ka shitteru hito wa imasu ka?

‘Well, does anyone know what Brian is up to next weekend?’

Note that the embedded clause pattern used in the prompt has not been formally introduced at this point in *NihonGO NOW!*, but the intentional use of unfamiliar expressions in this manner can help prepare students to make use of conversational strategies such as identifying what is not understood, making an educational guess by piecing together what is understood, asking for clarifications, and rephrasing a question, etc.⁵ These strategies are quite useful in real-life situations outside of class. At the same time, it is critical that the teacher does not overwhelm his/her students by using too many unfamiliar expressions. Some language programs use a different set of textbooks for beginning and intermediate levels. Therefore, it would be important for the teacher who is implementing narrative rehearsals in their intermediate-level courses to familiarize him/herself with what has been covered in beginning-level courses. As part of lesson planning, it would also be important for teachers to keep track of vocabulary and grammar principles introduced within the same semester. If the class is taught by a teaching team in which the same person does not always teach the same group of students, some coordination meetings may be necessary among different instructors to share and discuss their lesson plans.

3.1.3. Step 3. Warmup activity for narrative production

As a process to help learners prepare for narrative production about the assigned dialogue, giving opportunities for them to collectively brainstorm ideas would help them gather ideas they need to produce a narration. In response to the prompt, learners may give a simple sentence-level answer such as *yakyū no shiai o mi ni ikimasu* ‘(he’s) going to see a baseball game.’ This type of response is actually a sufficient response to the prompt and provides a good base for learners to add more details in follow-up conversations. The teacher can ask follow-up questions to fill out the background information in Table 1 such as *dare to?* ‘with who?’ or *dono chiimu no shiai?* ‘which team’s game?’ As needed, the teacher and learners may need to collaborate on a story together to provide missing information for orientation. For instance, the dialogue itself does not specify when and where the dialogue took place, so the teacher can guide the learners to come up with a likely location and occasion of the dialogue by using the fact that it was between two college students (e.g., dorm, campus) and the fact that the learners heard this dialogue recently in preparation for class

(e.g., yesterday, a short while ago, etc.). Once modeled, the teacher can have the learners practice asking the follow-up questions as a way to practice giving *aizuchi*.

During the brainstorming process, the teacher can fill out a narrative chart by writing on a board or typing the response on a digital document on the screen (Table 3). The chart can be used as a guide or crutch at the beginning of narrative production practice.

ACT 10 Scene 1

Japanese narrative	Narrative category	Narrative questions	Notes
	Abstract	What was this about?	Next weekend's plan
<i>ki</i> (起) Introduction	Orientation	Who or what are involved in the story, and when and where did it take place?	Brian Kawamura-san (a short while ago) (campus)
<i>shō</i> (承) Development	Complicating Action	Then what happened?	Brian and Kawamura-san are going to see a Giants game next weekend.

Table 3. Notes for narrative production about the dialogue from *NihonGO NOW!*

3.1.4. Step 4. Beginning of narrative production—Introduction and development phases

After sufficient information is gathered during the warmup activity, the teacher can assign the students to assume the role of Brian or Kawamura-san and practice narrating the introduction and development phases from their perspectives. Narrations A.1 and A.2 provide an example of the introduction and development phases of a narration from Brian's perspective. The other conversation partner should be assigned a role of someone who would be interested to hear Brian or Kawamura-san's story (e. g., Brian's teacher). Before assigning another student to play this role, the teacher should provide a model of an engaging conversation partner by asking for relevant background information and providing *aizuchi* in

response to student's narration. By doing so, the teacher can show how a conversation partner can help co-construct a narration. Then the teacher can switch roles and assign a student to play the conversation partner role while s/he plays the role of Brian or Kawamura-san to model a narration. By doing so, the teacher can not only make sure that the students know how to actively engage as a conversation partner but also provide a natural model of a narration for students. After sufficient models are given, the teacher can assign students to work in pairs.

As part of the lesson planning process, it is crucial that the teacher rehearses the narration from different points of view. This is to see if it is possible to produce a natural narration by only using the expressions that the students are familiar with. In other words, as part of lesson planning, in addition to rehearsing a narration from Brian's perspective (Narration A.1–A.4), the teacher should try providing a narration from Kawamura-san's point of view as well. It would also be useful to have the students practice providing a narration from the third person's point of view in which a narration is provided by someone who happened to have heard the conversation between Brian and Kawamura-san. Many learners find narrative production to be a difficult and overwhelming task at first, so rehearsing and determining from which perspective to have the students practice producing narratives is a crucial step in lesson planning.

3.1.5. Step 5. Expansion by creating a twist and conclusion

Once the students are comfortable with the introduction and development phases of narration, the teacher can expand the story by creating a twist and conclusion that are worth sharing and linguistically sharable by learners. As part of the lesson planning, the teacher needs to go through the glossary to make sure that the learners have the grammar patterns and vocabulary needed to describe the twist and conclusion. For example, in ACT 10, it would be best to not require learners to use giving and receiving verbs (introduced in ACT 11), the *-te shimau* pattern (introduced in ACT 12), and passive pattern (introduced in ACT 18), so that the learners are not overwhelmed by the number of unfamiliar expressions to use, in addition to the new materials they are learning. Learners may benefit from hearing the teacher's occasional use of unfamiliar expressions, but being required to use unfamiliar expressions they have not learned raises the difficulty level of narrative production practice.

Helping students produce a natural sounding narration with a limited number of discourse-level expressions may be a difficult task at first, but it is possible with careful planning. The following dialogue is an example

of a twist that, along with the follow up conversation about the conclusion, may be possible for learners to provide a narration by using the *no da* pattern and the quotation pattern.

Dialogue expansion for twist (the teacher plays Kawamura-san, assigns one of the students to play Brian)

T (Kawamura-san): あ、ブライアン？来週の週末のジャイアンツの試合なんだけど、また今度でもいい？

A, Buraian? Raishū no shūmatsu no jaiantsu no shiai na n da kedo, mata kondo de mo ii?

Hey Brian? About the Giant's game on next weekend, is it okay to postpone it?

S (Brian): え、どうしてですか？

E, dōshite desu ka?

What, how come?

T (Kawamura-san): ちょっと大切な試験があって.....。

Chotto taisetsu na shiken ga atte...

Well, I have an important exam, so...

S (Brian): ええー、そうですか.....。

Eee, sō desu ka...

Oh, I see...

Conclusion (the teacher plays the teacher role and speaks to the class)

T: 川村さん、キャンセルしましたけど、どう思いますか？

Kawamura-san, kyanseru shimasita kedo, dō omoimasu ka?

Kawamura-san cancelled (the get together), what do you think?

S: ひどいと思います。

Hidoi to omoimasu.

(I) think (it's) terrible.

T: ブライアン、どんな気持ちだったと思いますか。

Buraian, donna kimochi datta to omoimasu ka?

What kind of feeling do you think Brian had?

S: 悲しかったと思います。

Kanashikatta to omoimasu.

(I) think (he) was sad.

Based on these short conversations, the teacher can fill out the remaining phases of the narrative chart (Table 4). A.3 and A.4 provide an example of the twist and conclusion phases of a narration from Brian's perspective. The teacher can repeat the practice discussed in Step 4 by assigning a role of Brian to a student to give a full-fledged narration and another student to produce *aizuchi* in response. The teacher can and should provide models and guidance for students as needed.

Japanese narrative	Narrative category	Narrative questions	Notes
<i>ten</i> (転) Twist	Resolution	What finally happened?	Kawamura-san called Brian a short while ago and said he had an important exam, so he postponed (canceled) the baseball game appointment
<i>ketsu</i> (結) Conclusion	Evaluation	So what?	(What Kawamura-san did is) terrible
	Coda	How does it all end?	Brian looked sad

Table 4. Notes for narrative production about the dialogue from *NihonGO NOW!* ACT 10 Scene 1 (continued)

3.1.6. Step 6. Keeping a coherent subject in narration

As Yanagimachi's (2000) study suggests, keeping a coherent subject in narratives is an important skill to practice for L2 Japanese learners. The instructor can direct the learners to start practicing it once they have been introduced to grammar patterns necessary to do so. The use of receiving verbs is especially useful in that it allows the narrator to keep the same subject by describing a favor without switching the subject to another entity that gave the favor (e. g., (I) had someone do a favor vs. Someone did a favor). The passive patterns and the *-te aru* form are also useful in that they turn the object of the sentence into the subject of the sentence. These expressions allow the narrator to avoid switching the subject of the narration to characters or objects that do not play a crucial role in narration.

As time permits, scripts from previous scenes can be revisited to help students work on keeping a coherent subject in their narratives. Revisiting familiar stories that students have previously practiced should make it easier for them to focus on the new task. For instance, after giving and receiving verbs have been introduced in ACT 11, learners can revisit ACT 10 Scene 1 and practice providing narrations by using a receiving verb to keep a coherent subject. Narration D makes use of a receiving verb in D.2 to keep the subject of the narration consistent as the speaker himself (as Kawamura-san) from D.1 through D.3.

Narration D (Kawamura-san talking to a teacher)

D.1

ブライアンと来週の週末にジャイアンツの試合を見に行こうって話をしている、

Buraian to raishū no shūmatsu ni jaiantsu no shiai o mi ni ikō tte hanashi o shite ite,

(I) was talking with Brian about going to see a Giant's game for next weekend,

D.2

ブライアンにチケットを買っておいてもらったんですけど、

Buraian ni chiketto o katte oite moratta n desu kedo,

‘(I) had Brian buy the tickets in advance,’

D.3

その日に試験があったことをすっかり忘れてて、ブライアンに「悪いけどまた今度でもいい？」って謝ったんですよ。

Sono hi ni shiken ga atta koto o sukkari wasuretete, Buraian ni “warui kedo mata kondo demo ii” tte ayamatta n desu yo.

‘(I) completely forgot (I) had an exam on that day, so (I) said “sorry, maybe next time.”’

D.4

ブライアン、がっかりしてましたね。

Buraian, gakkari shite mashita ne.

Brian was disappointed, you know.

3.1.7. Step 7. Narrative variations for different audiences—adding background information and evaluative comments

Successful storytellers know how to construct their stories and how much information to share depending on the occasion and their roles in relation to the audience. The ability to supplement narrations with necessary background information and relatable evaluative comments to keep the audience's attention is a crucial skill in storytelling. To do so, the storyteller has to pay attention to the audience and adapts their narration by providing necessary background information and evaluative comments at appropriate junctures. For instance, if Brian is telling the same narration from ACT 10 Scene 1 to his host mother (instead of his teacher who knows Kawamura-san), he needs to start his narration with something like the following to introduce who Kawamura-san is at the beginning of the introduction phase.

Variation of Narration A.1 (Brian providing a narration to his host mother)

川村さんって知ってますか？野球が好きな先輩なんですけど...

Kawamura-san tte shitte masu ka? Yakyū ga suki na senpai na n desu kedo...

Do you know Kawamura-san? (He) is (my) senpai who likes baseball...

If the student assuming the role of Brian neglects to explain who Kawamura-san is in this situation, the instructor may need to act the role of Brian's host mother and ask a clarification question such as *Kawamura-san tte?* ('Kawamura-san?') to help the student understand the needs to provide additional background information. After providing a model of a listener as the host mother, the teacher can assign a student to play the role of the host mother to practice providing *aizuchi*. The teacher can incorporate other characters in this manner to provide more opportunities for students to practice providing necessary background information in their narrations. It may seem redundant to practice telling the "same" narrations; nevertheless, developing the ability to perceive the needs of the audience and providing adequate background information is a critical skill for narrative production.

Evaluative comments can be inserted at any stage of the narration. For instance, the narrator can add a comment about how expensive the tickets were in A.2 or D.2 to emphasize how horrible it was for Kawamura-san to cancel the appointment. The narrator can also add a comment about how excited Brian was to see the Giant's game in A.4 or D.4, which in turn puts more emphasis on how disappointed he was when it was cancelled.

By sharing necessary background information about the narration and making appropriate evaluative comments in this manner, the narrator and listener can share the intended feeling associated with the climax or the punchline of the narration.

3.2. FACT class

In preparation for or in support of narrative production practice in the ACT type of class, the teacher can use the learners' first or proficient language to discuss the narrative structure and discourse-level features that are useful in narrative production in the FACT type of class. In FACT class, the teacher can introduce learners to the Japanese narrative structure of *kishōtenketsu* (起承転結) and William Labov's (1972) six components of a natural narrative model. The teacher can also discuss how discourse-level features such as particles (*wa* and *ga*), anaphoric reference (use of ellipsis), sentence-linking strategies, aspect marking, and the *no da* pattern are used in the narrative.

The teacher can also lead a discussion for learners to reflect and discuss their learning strategies in FACT class (Tsuchiya and Moody 2020). The teacher can function as a facilitator to lead the discussion, which

should preferably be done in learners' first or proficient language, to allow them to freely share their success stories and challenges. During these "debriefing meetings," the teacher can guide their learners to share resources and strategies they have found to be useful. The teacher can also encourage learners to share any challenges that they are facing as they try to tackle the task of understanding and producing narrative-level discourse.

To encourage regular narrative listening practice outside of class, as a class assignment, the teacher can assign learners to look for and spend time listening to media resources such as podcasts and video channels to look for and practice listening to a variety of Japanese narratives. As necessary, the teacher can select and analyze one or two narratives during FACT class to identify the narrative structure components and discourse features with students. This type of discussion can help learners develop the metalinguistic ability to effectively analyze how narratives are constructed and discourse features are used.

To encourage regular narrative production practice outside of class, the teacher can also give an assignment for learners to practice producing narratives to other Japanese speakers on a regular basis. If students have access to other proficient Japanese speakers in the area or online, one beneficial practice that can be added to the narrative production assignment is to have the proficient Japanese speaker tell the same story back to the student. That is, after the student finishes telling a story, the student can ask the proficient Japanese speaker to tell the same story back to the student. By doing so, the student can study how the same story can be told differently and perhaps more effectively by the proficient Japanese conversation partner. An instruction can be added for students to record and analyze the model narration told by the proficient Japanese speaker. Having a recorded narration allows students to re-listen to the model as many times as needed. Students can analyze the narrative structure and discourse features as well as any background information or evaluative comments that the proficient Japanese speaker incorporated. If students do not have access to other proficient Japanese speakers, the teacher can encourage his/her students to practice with him/her during office hours. This type of one-on-one practice sessions with students allows the teacher to provide individualized feedback and, as appropriate, share collective feedback and any insights that might benefit the learners during FACT class.

4. Conclusion

This paper discussed ways to elicit oral narratives about assigned dialogues in a classroom setting. It reviewed the Japanese narrative structure of *kishōtenketsu* 起承転結 (introduction, development, twist, and conclusion) along with William Labov's (1972) six components of a natural narrative model—Abstract Orientation, Complicating Action, Resolution, Evaluation, and Coda. Sample narrations were provided to discuss how discourse-level features may be used in each step or component of the Japanese narrative structure. The discourse-level features discussed in this paper were based on the list provided by Christensen and Warnick (2006), namely, particles (*wa* and *ga*), anaphoric reference (use of ellipsis), sentence-linking strategies, aspect marking, and the *no da* pattern.

As pedagogical application to conduct narrative rehearsal activities based on assigned dialogues during the ACT type class, the following seven points were discussed:

1. Setting a context suited for narrative production
2. Prompting a narration
3. Warmup activity for narrative production
4. Beginning of narrative production—Introduction and development phases
5. Expansion by creating a twist and conclusion
6. Keeping a coherent subject in narration
7. Narrative variations for different audiences—adding background information and evaluative comments.

This paper also discussed ways to provide support and opportunities for narrative skill development through FACT type of class. It also outlined ways to encourage learners to receive individualized narrative models and feedback through listening and speaking practice outside of class.

Though this paper attempted to address the complexity of the narrative structure, it only covered a selected set of discourse-level features with a limited number of explanations and examples. Covering a wide variety and complexity of discourse-level features is beyond the scope of this paper, though, to my knowledge, there are a limited number of pedagogical resources that discuss practical and specific ways to elicit narrative production in the classroom. Further research would be useful to study the effectiveness of this approach in showing how learners' abilities to narrate

stories have improved through qualitative and/or quantitative analysis. Conducting a survey to collect feedback from learners about this approach would also be useful. It is hoped that the points discussed in this paper will be useful to both language teachers and learners as they tackle the complexity of narrative production in foreign language education.

NOTES

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¹ Note that the list above is merely a start and not a comprehensive list. There are potentially many more patterns such as the passive pattern and giving and receiving verbs mentioned in Yanagimachi's (2000) study that play an important role in narrative construction, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze other patterns that have not been mentioned so far.

² Note that not all six of these components must be present in every narrative and the order of these components may appear differently in a variety of ways. For example, some narratives may start without an abstract, while others may not end with a coda. Additional information about the setting (orientation) or reflection about the event or their action (evaluation) may be added when delivering the plot of the story (complicating action).

³ Note that in 2.2., a receiving verb *sasotte morau* (receiving an invitation as a favor) can be used in place of the passive form.

⁴ In fact, narrative rehearsals can be incorporated as early as when the *no da* pattern is introduced in ACT 6 and 7.

⁵ The embedded questions are introduced in ACT 12.

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