

VERB TENSE CONTINUITY AND ALTERNATION:
NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS' USE OF PAST AND HISTORIC PRESENT
IN ORAL FILM-BASED NARRATIVES

by

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VERB TENSE CONTINUITY AND ALTERNATION: NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS' USE OF

PAST AND HISTORIC PRESENT IN ORAL, FILM-BASED NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined adult native English speakers' oral narratives for: a) choice of past or historic present as a predominant tense; b) maintenance of continuity of past or historic present tense. Subjects were thirty-two (sixteen male and sixteen female) volunteers from university education and psychology courses. The task required the subjects to watch a short non-dialogue film and then to recapitulate what they had seen. Two setting conditions and two elicitation prompts were involved in the study. Male and female subjects were randomly and equally divided into the following setting conditions: a) Audience Present, in which subjects produced their narratives for a listener who was present in the room with them; b) Audience Absent, in which subjects produced their narratives while they were alone in a room. Within the two setting conditions, male and female subjects were randomly and equally divided into two prompt conditions: a) Cue Present, in which an elicitation prompt cued for past tense, that is, "tell what happened in the film", was used; b) Cue Absent, in which a more "neutral" prompt, that is, "tell the story of the film", was used. Results indicated that, overall, subjects preferred to use historic present rather than past as the predominant tense for their narratives. However, half of the subjects who were in the Cue Present condition chose past as the predominant tense for their narratives, while only one quarter of subjects in the Cue Absent condition chose past. The presence or absence of an audience did not seem to affect tense

preference except for males in the Audience Present/Cue Present group. In this group all of the males chose past tense as the predominant tense for their narratives while only one half of the females in that group chose past. Generally, subjects showed very little switching between past and historic present tense in their narratives. These results suggest that in academic, experimental settings, native English speakers prefer historic present tense to past tense and are constrained in their tense use by a tense continuity discourse rule in their production of oral film narratives. This is contrary to the sociolinguistic findings of Labov, Cohen, Robins and Lewis (1968) and Wolfson (1982) for oral narratives of personal experience produced by native English speakers in informal conversational settings. In those studies past was the speakers' main tense and tense switching was frequent.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
APPROVAL PAGE	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION TO PROBLEM	1
Objective of the study	1
Research questions	4
Nature of the study	9
Summary	10
CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	12
Godfrey's study	12
Verb tense and temporal reference	15
Historic present tense and tense switching	18
Film narratives	27
Labov and Walezky's narrative framework	32
Summary	36
CHAPTER THREE - METHOD	38
Subjects	38
Listeners	38
Apparatus	38
Procedure	39
Transcription and coding	41
Analysis	43
CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS	45
Length of the film narratives	45
Main tenses of the film narratives	46
Tense switching	51
Where tense switches occurred	53
Examples of external tense switches	54
Internal tense switches	58
Summary	61

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION	63
Discussion of main tense	63
Discussion of tense switching	69
Conclusions	76
Suggestions for further research	78
Pedagogical implications	78
Activities	80
APPENDIX A - Listeners' Information and Procedure Sheets	83
APPENDIX B - Subjects' Information Questionnaire	86
APPENDIX C - Coding Manual	88
APPENDIX D - Transcripts of Film Narratives Referred to in Chapter Four	102
REFERENCES	119

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
TABLE 1 Number of Male (M) and Female (F) Subjects in Each Experimental Group	40
TABLE 2 Mean Number of Independent Clauses	46
TABLE 3 Mean Number of Independent Clauses Excluding the Shortest and Longest Narratives	47
TABLE 4 Number of Subjects Who Used Past (P) and Historical Present (HP) as Their Main Tense	48
TABLE 5 Number of Males and Females Who Used Past (P) and Historic Present (HP) as Their Main Tense	49
TABLE 6 Number of Subjects Who Made Tense Switches in the Two Audience and Two Cue Conditions	52
TABLE 7 Number of Subjects Who Made Tense Switches in the Four Experimental Groups	52
TABLE 8 Number of Males and Females Who Made Tense Switches	53
TABLE 9 Number of P and HP Narratives in Which Switching Occurred	54
TABLE 10 Number of Subjects Who Made Internal and External Tense Switches	55

CHAPTER ONE

Objective of the study

English as a Second Language (ESL) learners often run into problems with English verb tense when they try to comprehend and convey precise meanings in narrative as well as other discourse forms. This difficulty with verb tense persists for many advanced speakers even though they have had extensive practice with narrative tasks in ESL classrooms. Such tasks include composing original stories or, more frequently, retelling stories in oral or written form after listening, reading, looking at picture sequences, or watching films. To practise verb tense usage, teachers may give instructions like, "Tell the story as though it happened last year", or "as though you were watching it happen right now". Student performance on these tasks is carefully monitored for verb tense continuity, and probably most ESL teachers would assert that continuity represents the way educated native English speakers use verb tense when telling of a movie they have seen, of a story they have read or of an event which has taken place in their own lives.

The "rule" which is thought to govern tense usage in narrative goes something like this: Once a story is begun in a particular tense, that tense should be maintained throughout the narrative. While such a rule has undeniable pedagogical value, in that speakers who follow it will not usually be wrong in their productions, it tends to be more prescriptive than descriptive of English tense usage in narratives. In fact, empirical studies show that both educated and uneducated

American English speakers often switch tenses when telling stories in conversational settings (Labov, Cohen, Robins and Lewis, 1968; Labov and Walezky, 1967; Schifffrin, 1981; Wolfson, 1982a, 1982b).

If the discourse rules which ESL learners are taught in the classroom do not reflect what they hear everyday outside the classroom, learners may become confused. ESL teachers do not, of course, intend to mislead learners by teaching them that tense continuity is the "correct" strategy for narratives. The fact is that native speakers are often unaware of their own verb tense usage in narrative discourse. Labov and Fanshel (1977) make this point with reference to the use of historical present tense (that is, present tense form with past time reference) in predominantly past tense narratives:

The rules for the use of the "historical present" are not well known; in current American English, the use of this form is stigmatized socially, so most people are not aware of their own use, and only detailed observation of narratives in actual conversation will reveal this fundamental alternation of past and present forms (p. 107).

This lack of awareness applies as much to ESL teachers as to other native speakers. My own experience as an ESL instructor working with other ESL instructors suggests that it is not unusual for a teacher to decry, as "poor" English, students' examples of "rule-breaking" language heard outside the classroom. This is obviously not very helpful to the student in his or her attempts to comprehend and communicate with native speakers both on a social and linguistic

level. As ESL teachers become more aware of how native English speakers use verb tense in narrative discourse, both in academic and non-academic settings, they will be better able to help their students understand the nuances of the language they hear spoken outside, as well as inside the classroom.

The present research, therefore, has the objective of increasing ESL teachers' awareness of how native English speakers use verb tense in performing a familiar narrative task in an academic setting. The task used is recapitulation of a film. This task was chosen for several reasons. First, telling about a film one has seen is not only a typical ESL classroom task, but it is also a common conversational topic in North American society. Second, a short, dramatic, non-dialogue film is a versatile elicitation device for future research in this area, since it can be used for studying the language of ESL learners at various acquisition levels, as well as for studying the discourse rules used by native speakers of English and other languages. A final reason for choosing a film elicitation task for the present research is that some interesting investigations of the film narratives¹ of native speakers of several languages, as well as of ESL learners, have recently been reported (Chafe, 1980; Godfrey, 1980; Tannen, 1979, 1980, 1982b, 1984b). Some of these studies directly address the question of tense usage (Godfrey, 1980; Tannen,

¹ Throughout this thesis I use the term "film narrative" to refer to the entire speech sample produced by each subject in response to one of the two prompts, "Tell the story of the film" and "Tell what happened in the film".

1980). Thus I have a small body of research upon which to draw.

Research questions

The specific questions which this research addresses arose concerning the results reported in a study by Godfrey (1980). In that study, Godfrey used a film recapitulation task to examine the tense usage of English language learners at five levels of proficiency and of native English speakers. The results which he reported for the advanced learners and the native English speakers are particularly interesting. He found that three of his four native English speakers gave their film narratives entirely in historic present tense², while three of his four advanced learners used predominantly past tense. As well, only the native speaker who used past tense made tense switches between past and historic present in his narrative, while all of the advanced learners except one (also a past tense user) made tense switches in their narratives.

Godfrey's interpretation of these results is based on his assumption that, in English, narrative discourse is governed by a tense continuity rule which he formulates as follows:

Once a tense is used representing a particular temporal reference central to the topic, the tense will continue until the topic with which it is associated is exhausted. When a new topic with a new temporal reference calls for a new tense, the

2

The term "historic present" or "historical present", as used in this study, refers to any present tense form which is used with reference to past events. This includes the progressive and perfect aspects. Likewise, "past" is used to refer to all forms of past tense including the progressive and perfect aspects.

former tense is terminated and a new one is initiated (Godfrey, 1980, p. 94).

He suggests that the advanced learners' preference for past as a main narrative tense may be an avoidance of the more "difficult" to maintain present tense (Godfrey, 1980, p. 99). Godfrey concludes that "for more advanced learners, maintaining historic present tense continuities is difficult and produces high error rates when attempted" (1980, p. 109). He interprets the tense switches found in his data as "errors" reflecting the speakers' imperfect control of the tense continuity rule quoted above. He attributes some of these errors to avoidance of certain difficult verbs in the main tense, and others to "distracting" aspects of the context such as "episode boundaries" and preceding generic verbs.

Because Godfrey has no empirical basis for claiming the tense continuity constraint for narratives, his conclusions are highly questionable. We know from the findings of researchers such as Wolfson (1982a) that such a rule does not constrain the alternation of past and historic present tense in conversational narratives. It could be, of course, that such a constraint does apply to film narratives, at least in certain settings. However, this cannot be assumed without the support of empirical evidence. By making just such an assumption, and consequently concentrating his attention on finding violations of the rule and evidence of avoidance strategies based on speakers' inability to control the rule, Godfrey ignores some interesting tendencies in his data. The present research acknowledges these tendencies and asks several questions about them.

The first question regards the apparent preference of Godfrey's native English speaking subjects for the present as the main tense for their film narratives. I would like to know if present tense is generally preferred by native English speakers for giving film narratives in academic situations, or if this tendency is attributable to certain aspects of Godfrey's research task and setting.

The second question concerns the tendency of Godfrey's native English speakers not to switch tense in their film narratives. Here I would like to know if tense switching is generally prohibited in film narratives in academic settings, or if this tendency is also attributable to certain aspects of Godfrey's research task and setting.

The two aspects of Godfrey's methodology with which the present research is concerned are his narrative prompt, "Tell the story of the film", and the setting in which his subjects produced their narratives, that is, in a room alone with a tape-recorder.

We know from the research of Wolfson (1982a) and Labov et al. (1968) that native English speakers use past tense as their main tense in conversational narratives; we also know that tense switching between past and historic present is common in such narratives. It seems reasonable, therefore, to hypothesize that by making Godfrey's narrative prompt and his setting more "conversation-like", I will be able to increase the frequency of past tense usage and the amount of alternation between past and present tense in the narrative.

I believe it is safe to say that in relaxed, informal conversation

people often begin narratives in response to the question "what happened?". Therefore, this study will compare speakers' responses to Godfrey's prompt, "Tell the story of the film" and to the more conversational prompt, "Tell what happened in the film". My first hypothesis is:

Subjects who receive the prompt, "Tell what happened in the film" will produce more past tense narratives than will subjects who receive the prompt, "Tell the story of the film".

The setting in which Godfrey's subjects produced their narratives was a room in which they were alone with a tape-recorder. Since conversations are generally carried on directly with other people who can give the speaker immediate and continuous feedback, it seems reasonable to expect that the presence of a sympathetic listener will create a more conversational atmosphere which will in turn encourage more tense switching than was found by Godfrey. The present study will compare the amount of tense switching which occurs in narratives produced in a situation like Godfrey's where no listener is present and in a situation where a sympathetic listener is present. My second hypothesis is:

Subjects in the situation with a listener present will have a greater amount of tense switching in their narratives than will speakers in the situation where they are alone in a room with a tape-recorder.

As was stated above, the findings of Labov et al. (1968) and Wolfson (1982a) show that past is the usual tense for conversational narratives. Since, therefore, past tense is assumed to be a more

conversational narrative tense than is historic present, and since tense switching occurs in conversational narratives, we may reasonably expect that predominantly past tense narratives will contain more tense switches than predominantly present tense narratives. Thus I hypothesize a positive relationship between past tense and the occurrence of tense switching. The third hypothesis of the present research is:

Narratives which have past as the main tense will have more tense switches than narratives which have historic present as their main tense.

If I find evidence to support my first hypothesis, I will show that verb tense choice for film narratives in academic settings is dependent, not upon convention, but rather upon how speakers perceive what they are asked to do.

If the data support my second hypothesis, I will have evidence that there is not a tense continuity rule which can be generally applied to film narratives produced in academic settings.

Finally, since tense switching often occurs in conversational narratives, which typically have past as the main tense, support for my third hypothesis will provide evidence for the contention that past tense is a more conversational tense than is historic present for the production of film narratives.

Once I begin to see what native English speakers do in the situations presented in our study, I must ask why they use these strategies. Speculations as to what functions are served by subjects'

verb tense strategies must be put into a broader context by looking at the film narratives as a whole. For this more comprehensive look at the narratives I have found a framework for narrative analysis, devised by Labov and Walezky (1967) useful. Since this framework is described in detail in the second chapter of this thesis it is sufficient to point out here that its basis is the contention that narratives serve two functions: reference and evaluation. Reference concerns the straightforward transfer of information, while evaluation is concerned with the speakers' judgements and opinions on that information. In Labov's terminology, evaluation tells us what the "point" of a narrative is. Therefore, it is by looking at the evaluative elements in the film narratives that I will be able to understand why they are being told. The most obvious evaluative elements in the film narratives will be identified as the basis for a broader discussion of the implications of my findings on main tense and tense switching.

The nature of the study

A study such as this can in no way be called definitive. Because of the time necessary to collect and transcribe narratives from a large population of subjects, I am restricted to looking at the narratives of a relatively small number of subjects. Consequently, this study is necessarily exploratory and qualitative in its analysis. My purpose as a researcher is to look for tendencies in the data; tendencies which will in themselves: (1) lead to greater awareness of how native English speakers use verb tense in giving

film narratives in academic settings, (2) lead to further research into native speaker use of verb tense, (3) provide a basis for comparison of ESL learners' use of verb tense on similar tasks and (4) suggest ways in which verb tense in oral narrative discourse might be dealt with in the ESL classroom.

To address the questions and hypotheses described above, the following methodology will be used. A brief, non-dialogue film will be shown to 32 educated, adult, native English speakers. These speakers will be divided into two groups, one of which will be asked to tell the story of the film and the other of which will be asked to tell what happened in the film. Half of the subjects in each of the above groups will perform the task for a listener who will be present in the room, while the other half will perform the task, like Godfrey's subjects, in a room with a tape-recorder and no listener present.

Summary

In this chapter it has been stated that a verb tense continuity rule for narratives, which is commonly accepted by ESL teachers, is not supported by empirical evidence on native speaker tense usage in conversational narratives. It is argued, therefore, that until we have empirical data for native speaker verb tense usage on the types of narrative tasks which are used in ESL classrooms, we do not have an adequate basis for judging ESL learners' performance.

One researcher who assumes that a verb tense continuity constraint does apply to all narratives and consequently uses it to judge ESL

learners' performance on a film recapitulation task, is Godfrey (1980). The present research will critically examine Godfrey's study with two general purposes: a) to reveal the inadequacy of a verb tense continuity rule for narratives in general; and b) to discuss the use of past and historic present tenses in narratives and in film narratives in particular.

Two aspects of Godfrey's task and setting, that is, prompt and audience, will be varied to discover: a) if there is a "conventional" tense which is used by native English speakers in giving film narratives in academic settings; b) if tense switching between past and historic present tense is generally prohibited in the film narratives of native English speakers in academic settings.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter reviews current literature on verb tense and tense switching in conversational and film narratives. First Godfrey's (1980) study of ESL learners' and native English speakers' verb tense in oral film narratives is described. This study is then critically examined in terms of linguistic literature on English verb tense. Next, the meaning of historic present is discussed in terms of linguistic literature, particularly Wolfson's (1982) study of the alternation of historic present with past tense in conversational narratives. Tannen's (1980) findings on verb tense in American and Greek film narratives are then presented. Finally, this chapter describes Labov and Walezky's (1967) narrative framework as a means of examining the film narratives collected in the present study.

Godfrey's study

Godfrey (1980) examined ESL learners' oral film narratives for use of past (P) and historic present (HP) tense. This study did not, however, arise out of the researcher's interest in verb tense usage in narratives so much as it arose out of his interest in error analysis and how learners' error rates may be affected by their avoidance of optional structures in discourse. His express purpose in this study was to examine his subjects' oral discourse "for evidence that optional elements at the discourse level are being avoided" (p. 93). The "optional elements" which he chose to examine for this purpose were past and present tense as they are used in narratives. These tenses are "optional" in that either may be used to report past

events. When present tense is used with past reference it is called historic present (HP).

According to Godfrey, P and HP are optional in narratives in that one or the other, but not both, may be used to present the narrative events. This restriction is the result of a discourse constraint rule which Godfrey assumes operates in English. He contends that:

It is not the case . . . that speakers can switch indiscriminately from one tense to the other; they must obey discourse-level constraints on tense continuity . . . if their production is to be acceptable (1980, p. 93).

He goes on to describe this constraint rule as follows:

Once a tense is used representing a particular temporal reference central to the topic, the tense will continue until the topic with which it is associated is exhausted. When a new topic with a new temporal reference calls for a new tense, the former tense is terminated and a new one is initiated (1980, p. 94).

This rule provided the metric against which his subjects' narrative productions were judged. Violations of this tense continuity rule were counted as errors.

Godfrey's subjects were twenty-four adult ESL learners from two language backgrounds (Japanese and Spanish). These subjects represented five levels of English proficiency. Godfrey also included four native English speakers in his study. His subjects watched a "short, mostly non-dialogue" film, then each was left alone in a room to tape-record three segments. Only the first

segment, "the story of the film in English" is of interest to the present research.

Contrary to his expectations, Godfrey found that a gradual decrease in tense errors (that is, switches) with increase in language proficiency level did not occur for the ESL learners (1980, p. 96). For the narrative task he reports that mean error rates "for the first four [proficiency] levels all remained quite high compared with Level V, with the Level II mean being slightly higher than the mean at Level V and the mean at Level IV being slightly higher than at Level III" (1980, p. 96). He concluded that some beginning ESL learners who used present may have been avoiding using past tense, and that maintaining past tense continuities was particularly difficult for beginning learners while maintaining present tense continuities was especially difficult for more advanced learners. He thus implies that the advanced learners who used past tense may have been avoiding the more "challenging" present tense (1980, pp. 99-100).

Of his native English speakers, Godfrey found that three maintained HP and made no tense switches while one used P as a main tense and made several switches. Godfrey found that several subjects, including the native speaker who used P as his main tense, switched between HP and P at "episode boundaries". This led him to conclude that "at episode boundaries, attention to extralinguistic details can override attention to continuity maintenance" (1980, p. 109).

Godfrey's study will be referred to many times in the following sections of this chapter. The first aspect of this study which must

be examined is the tense continuity rule which he used to judge the verb tense usage of his subjects.

Verb tense and temporal reference

Perhaps the fact that Godfrey's focus of interest was on error analysis and avoidance of optional structures, rather than on verb tense usage per se, is the reason he overlooked a fundamental confusion between tense and temporal reference in the continuity rule which is the premise of his study. As we have related above, Godfrey asserts that although narrators have the option of using P or HP to report past events, they cannot "switch indiscriminately from one tense to the other". The discourse constraint rule which he assumes for English narratives says that once a tense is initiated within a topic, it must continue until a "new topic with a new temporal reference calls for a new tense" (p. 50).

A step by step summary of what I understand Godfrey to be saying shows the logical contradiction of his premises. First, Godfrey is interested in observing how subjects use P and HP in narratives. Second, P and HP tense forms both refer to past time. Third, a discourse rule governs the use of tense in English. Fourth, this rule says that one tense continues until a) a new topic is started and b) the new topic has a new temporal reference. Fifth, this rule applies to P and HP. The contradiction lies in the fact that P and HP have the same temporal reference, but the rule calls for a change of topic and temporal reference before there can be a change of tense. In other words, the discourse constraint rule which is the basis of

Godfrey's study is irrelevant to the relationship between P and HP. It seems that Godfrey is forgetting that present tense form has no intrinsic connection to present time.

Confusion between time and tense is not uncommon and it is a confusion of which ESL professionals in particular should be wary. Jespersen (1933) warned:

It is important to keep the two concepts time and tense strictly apart. The former is common to all mankind and is independent of language; the latter varies from language to language and is the linguistic expression of time-relations so far as these are indicated in verb forms (p. 230).

Jespersen laments the lack of two sets of terms, one for notional time and the other for grammatical tense, but he points out that such a distinction does exist in the terms past and preterit for past tense. The important point here is that tense refers only to grammatical form.

King's (1983) optimistic assertion that "it is safe to assume that no one any longer believes that there is a one-to-one correspondence between tense form and time in the real world, i.e., past form for past occurrence, present form for present occurrence, and future form for future occurrence" (p. 104), is belied by the confusion connected with the use of present tense in Godfrey's study. It is useful to consider further this important distinction between time and tense particularly as it relates to present tense and historic present.

King (1983) describes the meaning of present tense in the following way:

The meaning of the present form is not tied to countable time, but rather to the temporal perspective with which the speaker associates the reported situation. Thus the simple present form is used whenever the speaker includes the situation s/he is reporting within the same perspective as the TOC [time of communication]. . . . This does not mean that the situation is taking place at the moment of speaking; as an occurrence, it is reported as valid at the TOC (p. 106).

He continues to explain that past and future forms are opposed to present form in that they are excluded from the perspective of the time of communication. Regarding past tense, he says, "The meaning of the past tense form is past perspective not past time, i.e., exclusion from the perspective of the present and inclusion with the past" (p. 111).

Other linguists who clearly distinguish between time and tense contend that present tense is semantically "unmarked" and "timeless" (e.g. Twaddell, 1960; Ota, 1968; Lyons, 1969). This is a rather different point of view from King's in that King considers that present tense is semantically marked, but for present "perspective" rather than for present time. Lyons (1969) contends that the English tense system is "best regarded as a contrast of 'past' v. 'non-past'". He explains that past tense form is semantically marked as "before now", while the non-past form (present) "is not restricted to what is contemporaneous with the time of utterance: it is used also for 'timeless' or 'eternal statements' . . . and in many statements that refer to the future" (p. 306).

Linguists such as Lakoff (1970), Leech (1971) and Palmer (1975) take a different view of present tense. They see it as bringing the events referred to into a time period which includes the present moment, that is, the time of speaking. As we will see, this last view of present tense accounts for the traditional explanation of the function of HP in narrative.

Historic present tense and tense switching

When present tense is used for talking about events which are understood to have occurred in the past, it is most often called "historic" or "historical" present. Wolfson (1982a) gives the following definition:

The historical present tense, known also as the dramatic or the narrative present tense, is the use of the present tense, in narrative, to refer to events which began and ended at some time previous to the moment at which the narrative itself is told (p. 3).

Wolfson makes it clear that both the progressive and perfect aspects of present form may also function as HP. Godfrey (1980) refers to historic present as present tense used to report past events in narrations (p. 93). Godfrey's contention, in the study described at the beginning of this chapter, that P and HP tense are constrained in such a way that they do not mix within narratives is surprising considering that most standard reference texts on English grammar mention that HP often alternates with P in narratives.

Jespersen, for example, says:

This is the so-called "historic Present" (a better name would be the "dramatic Present"), which is pretty frequent in connected narrative; the speaker, as it were, forgets all about time and recalls that he is recounting as vividly as if it were now present before his eyes. Very often, this Present alternates with the Preterit (1933, p. 239).

Joos (1964) says of the use of present tense (which he calls the "actual" tense) in narrative that, "the actual tense may be used with the exact meaning of the past tense". He illustrates this with an excerpt of real speech which demonstrates how P and HP mix when two "educated and urbane British physicians" are speaking "almost with animation" (pp. 125-6).

While Joos does use an example of educated speakers mixing tenses, there is a general sense in grammatical texts that such a tense-mixing strategy is not a mark of educated speech. Even in Joos's illustration there is a sense that the speakers have, in their near "animation", forgotten themselves and have lapsed into "common" speech. It seems likely that Godfrey shared this prejudice against tense mixing.

The idea that HP and P do not mix in narratives may reflect the "literate" tradition perpetuated in schools. We are taught in school not to switch tenses and this is a generally accepted rule for written discourse in particular. We learn that tense switching is not a mark of "good English". Although there is now considerable natural data which show that most American English speakers often mix these two tenses in conversational narratives, native speakers are usually

unaware of this. The reader is reminded of Labov and Fanshel's statement, quoted in Chapter One, that:

The rules for the use of this "historical present" are not well known; in current American English, the use of this form is stigmatized socially, so most people are not aware of their own use, and only detailed observation of narratives in actual conversation will reveal this fundamental alternation of past and present forms (1977, p. 107).

Leech (1971) displays disapproval of the use of historic present in the following description which appears in a reference text written for ESL teachers and advanced students of English:

The use traditionally known by the term HISTORIC PRESENT is best treated as a story-teller's licence, whereby past happenings are portrayed or imagined as if they were going on at the present time. It is most evident where the Present Tense is accompanied, with apparent incongruity, by an adverbial expression indicating past time. . . . Such utterances are typical of a highly-coloured popular style of oral narrative, a style one would be more likely to overhear in the public bar of a village inn than in the lounge of an expensive hotel (pp. 6-7).

The implication of the above excerpt is clearly that the use of historic present is a mark of "lower class" and presumably "uneducated" speech.

Wolfson (1982a, 1982b) provides the clearest evidence against the above assumptions about the use of HP in narratives. Her data corpus is extensive and is made up of narratives collected from people from a

wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels. She points out that she "found no group of speakers of American English in which the historical present tense is not used by most speakers" (1982b, p. 65).

The above quotations from Leech, Jespersen and Joos present the traditional view of the function of HP. That is, HP is used to recount events more vividly, as if they were present. As well, it is often stated that the narrator becomes so involved in what he is saying that "forgets where he is as he speaks, and tends to place himself rather at the scene he is narrating" (Joos, 1964, p. 125). As Schiffrin (1981) puts it, "these descriptions all assume that HP makes the past more vivid because it moves past events out of their original time frame and into the moment of speaking" (p. 46). This view is consistent with one that sees present tense as referring to a time period which includes the moment of speaking.

Wolfson (1982a) argues against this traditional, "time-shifting" explanation of the function of HP. She agrees with the view that present tense form is "timeless" or semantically "unmarked" and she states the following:

Since the present tense has no meaning, and since it is not used to refer to present moment action, there is no basis for the explanation so often given that the present tense is used as CHP [conversational historical present] in order to make the audience feel that they are reliving the event (1982a, p. 34).

Her second argument against this traditional view, that CHP makes important events more vivid or present to the listener, is that it

is not supported by the data. She claims that in many stories, the most important events are given in the past tense. She asserts that CHP itself does not convey immediacy, rather it is the shift out of past tense, which has "the semantic component of remoteness" into the "neutral" present which gives the sense of immediacy.

Wolfson's findings on tense switching in conversational narratives are especially relevant to Godfrey's observation that several of his subjects made tense continuity "errors" at "episode boundaries". Wolfson's (1982a) data consists of more than 150 taped and transcribed conversational narratives of personal experience. She was interested in seeing how "the historical present functions in contemporary American conversational narratives" (p. 3). According to her definition:

CHP alternates with the simple past tense in such a way that

(a) the simple past tense is always substitutable for CHP without change in referential meaning and (b) CHP is never found in all verbs where it could have been used (1982a, p. 3).

She found that alternation between P and HP only occurs in certain kinds of conversational narratives, which she calls "performed stories". Performed stories are distinguished from stories which are not performed, which in turn are distinguished from "reports". In Wolfson's words, "a report is very simply a recounting for the purpose of conveying information" while stories are told for the purpose of presenting an individual's experience and a judgement on that experience" (1982a, p. 23).

The distinction which Wolfson makes between "reports" and

"stories" is essentially a functional one. However, she sees this distinction as a refinement of the pioneering work in narrative analysis done by Labov in which structural and functional criteria are used (see the last section of this chapter for a further discussion of Labov's work).

Wolfson's definition of "performed stories" on the other hand, is essentially structural. Performed stories are distinguished by the fact that they all contain at least some of the following "performance features":

1. Direct Speech
2. Asides
3. Repetition
4. Expressive Sounds
5. Sound Effects
6. Motions and Gestures (Wolfson, 1982a, p. 25).

The purpose of performed stories is to dramatize the speaker's point of view.

Wolfson concluded, from observation of tense switching in performed stories, that it is not the use of HP which has a dramatizing effect, since often the most dramatic events in the stories were given in P. Rather, it is the switch itself which is the significant feature in that it "serves to partition events from one another and thereby focus attention on the events which the narrator sees as most important" (1982a, p. 52).

For Wolfson, the terms event and episode are synonymous (1982a, p. 116) and she sees in Godfrey's finding that several of his subjects

made continuity errors at "episode boundaries" support for her argument that switching acts to organize a story into events or episodes.

Regarding the co-occurrence of episode boundaries and tense continuity errors in his data, Godfrey makes the following statements:

Native language group subject D, whose parents were native speakers of Japanese but spoke only English in the home, committed maintenance errors primarily at episode boundaries (1980, p. 108)

and

At episode boundaries, attention to extralinguistic details can override attention to continuity maintenance (p. 109)

and

Instead of lapsing into past tense forms after interrupting forms, subject IV, J2 committed most of his errors at episode boundaries (p. 106).

Wolfson comments on these statements as follows:

Thus we see that even a scholar whose work is not concerned with the function of verb tense switching and who, moreover, regards it as a violation of correct usage, is nevertheless forced by an honest appraisal of his data to the independent recognition that tense switching occurs at 'episode boundaries' (1982a, p. 117).

It is not clear how Wolfson, who argues that she has not defined the term "event" independently of the verb tense alternation because "the event is not a given . . . it does not exist per se in the world but is a result of the discourse" (1982a, p. 115), can so readily

accept Godfrey's use of the term "episode boundary". That Godfrey sees an episode as something objectively definable is obvious in the fact that he makes no attempt to explain what he means by "episode" but seems instead to assume that his readers will know what the term means. In spite of this confusion over terminology, it seems likely that the elements Godfrey used to recognize an episode boundary will also be found in Wolfson's data. Wolfson herself points out that tense switches often occur with the words "all of a sudden" which most people would recognize as marking the beginning of an episode or event. The important point is that, given Wolfson's analysis of tense switching, Godfrey's subjects, rather than making errors, "may have attained a high degree of control over the use of the historical present tense" (Wolfson, 1982b, p. 66).

It cannot be assumed, however, that because some of Godfrey's subjects used tense switching in a similar way to Wolfson's subjects, that they produced "conversational" narratives, much less "performed stories". The great differences which existed between the speech situations in Godfrey's and Wolfson's studies must be taken into account. In light of Wolfson's finding that the use of HP in conversational narratives "was very seriously constrained by the presence of the tape recorder and by the interview situation" (1982b, p. 58) even in informal settings, it is highly unlikely that the very formal speech situation of Godfrey's study would elicit conversational narratives, at least for the English speakers. The fact that tense switching does occur at episode boundaries for one native English speaker in Godfrey's study does however suggest that

he was incorporating conversational strategies into his narrative. To what further extent his narrative could be called conversational is not known.

It is possible that the advanced learners in Godfrey's study did not find the experimental setting as inhibitory as the native English speakers did, and that they were using the tense switching strategies which they had observed in the conversational narratives of English speakers. As we will see, Tannen's (1980) comparison of English and Greek film narratives gives credence to this possibility.

An important difference between Godfrey's and Wolfson's studies is the different nature of the narrative events. Talking about what happened in a film is obviously not the same as talking about events in one's life and we would expect speakers to use at least some different linguistic strategies in these two situations. Godfrey, by generalizing the tense continuity rule to all narratives, does not acknowledge the possibility that film narratives may differ from other kinds of narratives in many respects, including verb tense usage.

Thus, what we do not know and what the present research will examine is the nature of the verb tense strategies used by English speakers in telling about a film they have seen in an academic setting. The following section of this chapter will help us in this endeavour by presenting the insights of other researchers into the nature of film narratives.

Film narratives

In recent years, Wallace Chafe and his colleagues have taken a short, non-dialogue film around the world to elicit narratives in various languages. The data gave rise to several hypotheses which are presented in a volume appropriately entitled the Pear Stories since the film involves a pear picker and the theft of some of his pears by a young boy.

Although Chafe himself was not concerned with characterizing film narratives in particular, he does comment on the fact that a film was used as an elicitation device. He and his colleagues were interested in discovering how different people talk about the same experience. Since it was impossible to involve people in various parts of the world in the same "real" experience, they chose to have people "experience" a film and then talk about the events in the film. They assumed that, "Since people's mental processing of films appears in various ways to approach the processing of 'reality' (we remember and often talk about the events in a film; films can make us laugh and cry)", the task would represent a useful compromise (Chafe, 1980, p. xii).

In making their film, Chafe and his associates were careful not to transpose the temporal sequence of events in any way which would not be possible in reality. They also tried to keep interpretive editing to a minimum. As they admit, however, a film always interprets to some extent through cuts, camera angles, distance and so on. The experience of "seeing through someone else's eyes" is an aspect of film viewing which is quite different from the experience

of seeing real events for oneself. In recounting film events and recounting real events, different expectations come into play. Tannen, an associate of Chafe's, discusses the effect of expectations on film narratives.

Tannen (1979, 1980, 1982a, 1982b, 1984a, 1984b) has written extensively on the implications of culture for understanding differences in narrative structure. Much of the data which she discusses are film narratives collected as part of Chafe's Pear Film project.

Central to Tannen's analyses is the concept of "expectations". This is the notion which, she contends, underlies talk about "frames", "schemas" and "scripts" in a variety of fields, including linguistics, artificial intelligence, anthropology, cognitive psychology, social psychology and sociology. She explains her notion of expectations in the following way:

The only way we can make sense of the world is to see the connections between things, and between present things and things we have experienced before or heard about. These vital connections are learned as we grow up and live in a given culture. As soon as we measure a new perception against what we know of the world from prior experience, we are dealing with expectations (1979, p. 137).

Of the more technical terms which capture this concept, Tannen uses "frame". Frames, like schema and scripts, may be thought of as "structures of expectations" because they lead us to "expect" that new information and experiences will conform to what we already

know. Our expectations about our performance, about what others know, as well as about how others will perceive us, determine how we will act and speak in a particular situation.

In her comparison of the oral narratives of young American and Greek women, Tannen was interested in recording how the subjects organized and altered the actual content of the movie. This information provides evidence of the subjects' structures of expectations about objects and events in the film.

Tannen (1979) identified several frames which concern the context and activity in which the narrators in her study were involved. These were: the "subject-of-an-experiment" frame, the "story" frame, and the "film" frame. The film frame involved both expectations about what is in a film and expectations about film viewers.

Two striking differences between the American and Greek narratives were found in Tannen's analysis. The first difference is that the Americans tended to discuss the film as a film while the Greeks concentrated on the events depicted without reference to the fact that they occurred in a film. Second, the Americans seemed to treat the task as a memory task. They concentrated on getting details and temporal reference correct while the Greeks tended to "interpret" the events and concentrate on the film's "message". Tannen concludes that the Americans were concerned with presenting themselves as "sophisticated movie viewers and able recallers" while the Greeks were more concerned with being "good story-tellers and acute judges of human behavior" (1980, p. 55). The subject-of-an-experiment frame was most salient for Americans while a frame for

conversational story-telling was preferred by the Greeks.

As in the conversational narratives of personal experience recorded by Labov et al. (1968) and by Wolfson (1982a), the Greek, as opposed to the American, film narratives contained many "involvement features". Tannen (1984b) says that "involvement is created by (1) immediacy, portraying action and dialogue as if it were occurring at telling time and (2) forcing the hearer to participate in sense making" (p. 361). Examples of involvement features given by Tannen are: use of direct speech, sound effects, repetition and tense switching. Since these "involvement" features closely match the "performance" features which Wolfson identified as characterizing "performed stories" (see page 23 of this thesis), we can conclude that Tannen's Greek subjects were giving their film narratives in the form of "performed stories".

Tannen (1980) also discusses how the verb tense usage of her subjects relates to the frames to which they referred in their film narratives. She found that the Greek story telling perspective was reflected in their preference for past tense while the American film viewer perspective was reflected in a preference for present tense. Of this she says:

It may be that the differences found here reflect habitual conventionalized choices. It is unclear, for example, whether the Americans were using a "historical present" associated with telling about works of art, such as films, which are presumed to exist permanently, or, as seems more likely, the present tense of vivid personal experience narration. Nevertheless, the past

tense of the Greek narratives is consistent with the perspective of recounting events which occurred once and are done, that is, events directly experienced rather than viewed in a permanent work such as a film (1980, p. 65).

Tannen's comments about the Americans' use of present tense form in the above passage are confusing. She does not explain why it is "more likely" that they were using the "tense of vivid personal experience" when her evidence seems to speak against such a view. She has shown that the Americans spoke from a subject-of-experiment, film viewer perspective; as such they tried to be accurate and objective in their recounting of the film events. This does not suggest that their narratives were comparable to narratives of "vivid personal experience". Neither does she suggest how present tense form might function with reference to the subject-of-experiment and film viewer frames. This issue of the function of present and past tense in film narratives will be discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.

With reference to tense switching, Tannen found that the Greek subjects mixed tense much more frequently than did the Americans. This is not surprising since we have already seen that the Greeks were interested in being good story-tellers and it is in "performed stories" that tense switching is most frequently found.

Tannen's research adds support to Wolfson's contention that Godfrey's advanced ESL learners were not, in fact, making errors by switching tense in their film narratives. Nor were they simply trying to avoid having to maintain present tense continuities in their preference for past tense. Rather, it is possible that their use of

past tense and tense switching reflected cultural differences similar to those found between Tannen's Greek and American subjects.

The next section of this chapter describes Labov and Walezky's (1967) framework for narrative analysis. This framework will allow us to examine the film narratives collected for the present study in a systematic way which will help reveal their overall function. Such an examination will provide a broader context for our findings on tense usage.

Labov and Walezky's narrative framework

Labov and Walezky's narrative framework was developed for the analysis of a large number of "unsophisticated" oral narratives of personal experience. Many of these were collected from Black and Puerto Rican subjects in New York City.

From these narratives, Labov and Walezky were able to abstract a "normal" narrative form. They distinguish a normal narrative from a "minimal" narrative in that a minimal narrative simply matches a series of narrative units (that is, clauses) to the temporal order of events. They claim that a narrative which serves this minimal function is abnormal in that

It may be considered empty or pointless narrative. Normally, narrative serves an additional function of personal interest determined by a stimulus in the social context in which the narrative occurs. We therefore distinguish two functions of narrative: (1) referential and (2) evaluative (Labov and Walezky, 1967, p. 13).

Evaluation in a narrative tells the listener what the "point" of the story is, why it is reportable. There are many devices which a narrator may use to produce the effect of saying to the listener, "this was terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy; or amusing, hilarious, wonderful; more generally, that it was strange, uncommon or unusual" (Labov et al., 1968, p. 300). To put it more succinctly, as Labov does, evaluation answers the question "So what?".

According to Labov et al. (1968), a fully-formed or normal narrative may show the following:

1. Abstraction
2. Orientation
3. Complicating action
4. Evaluation
5. Result or Resolution
6. Coda (p. 294).

A brief description of each of these with illustrations from Labov et al.'s data follows:

Abstract: This is an appendage which comes before the main body of the narrative. It typically consists of one or two clauses which summarize the whole story.

I talked a man out of—Old Doc Simon I talked him out of pulling the trigger (p. 294).

Orientation: These clauses give the listener information about the location, setting time and characters involved in the narrative.

It was on a Sunday

And we didn't have nothin' to do

after I--after we came from Church (p. 290).

Complicating Action and Resolution: These clauses refer to temporally ordered events. Complicating action clauses refer to events up to the evaluative high point and resolution clauses "may be regarded . . . as the termination of that series of events" (p. 294).

Evaluation: These clauses give the point of the narrative by presenting the speaker's feelings, judgements and opinions about the narrative events.

and it was the strangest feeling (p. 302).

Evaluative elements may also be found in clauses whose primary category is complicating action or orientation.

Coda: Like the abstract, the coda is an appendage to the main body of the narrative. A coda comes at the end of the narrative and is usually a succinct clause or two which "wraps things up".

And that was that (p. 296).

The coda serves to bridge the gap between the moment of time at the end of the narrative proper and the present time (that is, the time of speaking).

Clauses in Categories 1 and 6 above may be essentially referential or evaluative. Category 2, 3 and 5 clauses essentially serve the referential function, while category 4 clauses essentially serve the evaluative function. However, as will be seen, the evaluative function may be served by elements in a narrative other than essentially evaluative clauses. Because it is the main narrative clauses (categories 2, 3, 4 and 5 above) which are of main

interest in the present analysis, I have simplified Labov's classification of clauses by collapsing Categories 1 and 6 into one category which I call Appendage (see Appendix C).

Labov and Walezky (1967) neatly depict the normal narrative form as a diamond with a circle around the apex. They elaborate upon this form in the following way:

Here the originating function of the narrative is applied at the base of the diamond; we proceed up and to the left with the orientation section, then up to the apex with the complication. Frequently, but not always the evaluation suspends the action at this apex, as represented by the circle. The resolution proceeds downward to the right, and the coda is represented by the line which returns to the situation (point in time) at which the narrative was first elicited (p. 41).

Because evaluation is the key to understanding what purpose a narrative serves for the speakers, it is necessary to consider this function further. Evaluative elements can be divided into two general categories: external and internal. External evaluation involves explicit evaluative statements such as "and it was the strangest feeling", or "it is a very, very frightening situation" (Labov et al., p. 302). There are many other types of evaluation which appear in clauses which are not primarily evaluative. These internal evaluation devices may be syntactic (see discussion below), semantic (e.g., intrinsically evaluative lexical items such as swear words, or most adjectives and adverbs), phonological (unusual stress,

elongation of sounds, etc.) or may concern the general form of the narrative (suspension of the action through the use of non-narrative clauses).

Syntactic evaluation is identified by Labov et al. as deviation from basic narrative syntax. They claim that "the syntax of the narrative clause is one of the simplest structures that may be found even in colloquial language" (1968, p. 308). Deviations from basic narrative syntax include such structures as negatives, questions, modals, comparatives.

Of particular interest to the present study is Labov and Walezky's claim that narratives of "vicarious" experience, that is narratives based on television shows, or, we assume, movies, are not "normal" in that they lack evaluation. The present analysis will therefore compare the film narratives collected with Labov and Walezky's "normal" form to see if this is true.

Summary

This chapter has described Godfrey's (1980) study of ESL learners' and native English speakers' verb tense usage, and then has examined it in light of literature on tense, tense continuity in narratives, and film narratives.

The section on tense explains the logical inconsistency in Godfrey's tense continuity rule for its application to the use of P and HP in narratives. The importance of distinguishing the concepts of "time" and "tense" is discussed.

Wolfson's study makes it clear that a tense continuity rule cannot

be assumed for English narratives in general, since tense switching is a typical strategy in conversational narratives. The findings in this study also suggest the possibility that Godfrey's subjects, who violated the tense continuity rule, were using a strategy which they had learned for conversational narratives and were therefore not making errors at all.

Tannen's data on Greek and American film narratives give support to the above contention that Godfrey's learners may have been using conversational strategies. The differences between the native English speakers' tense usage and the advanced learners' usage in Godfrey's study may have been culturally determined.

Tannen's work on structures of expectations and frames, as well as Labov and Walezky's narrative framework is discussed as a means of placing our findings on native English speakers' tense usage in film narratives into a broader framework.

CHAPTER THREE

Subjects

Subjects were sixteen male and sixteen female university students enrolled in education and psychology courses at Simon Fraser University. All subjects were volunteers who were recruited directly by the researcher during visits to tutorial groups. Subjects' ages ranged between 17 and 35 years and all of the subjects were native speakers of English or had learned English in early childhood. Six subjects were bilingual. None of the subjects had seen the film used in the study within the previous two years, although five of them had seen it at some time in the past.

Listeners

Acting as listeners for the subjects assigned to the Audience Present (AP) condition were two male and two female graduate students and recent Master of Arts graduates. Three of the listeners studied in the field of Education and one in English.

Apparatus

The film was an 8½ minute, animated, non-dialogue production of the National Film Board of Canada. The title of the film is Neighbours. It tells the story of two neighbours who begin to fight over the possession of a flower which grows up between their two houses. The fight progresses from an argument, to confrontation involving weapons, to direct physical conflict. The two men eventually destroy each other's property and family as well as the

flower. Finally they kill each other and are buried. A flower then grows on each of their graves. The film ends with the message, "so, love your neighbour" in several different languages, the last of which is English.

Subjects' narratives were recorded on Sony TC 110 cassette recorders and Bell & Howell 3191C cassette recorders.

Procedure

Sixteen (8 males and 8 females) of the 32 subjects were randomly assigned to the Audience Present (AP) condition in which they each presented their film narrative to a listener present in the room with them. The remaining 16 subjects (8 males and 8 females) were assigned to the Audience Absent (AA) condition in which they each tape-recorded their film narratives with no listener present. In each of the audience conditions, the setting was a quiet room with no outside disturbance. In both cases the tape-recorder was situated directly in front of the speaker.

Within each of the two audience groups described above, 8 (4 males and 4 females) of the subjects were randomly assigned to the Cue Present (CP) condition, in which a prompt containing a past tense cue (that is, "Tell what happened in the film") was used to elicit their film narratives. The remaining 8 subjects (4 males and 4 females) in each audience group were assigned to the Cue Absent (CA) condition, in which a prompt without a past tense cue (that is, "Tell the story of the film") was used to elicit their film

narratives. As shown in Table 1, four experimental groups were thus created.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF MALE (M) AND FEMALE (F) SUBJECTS IN EACH EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Past tense cue	Audience				Total
	Present (AP)		Absent (AA)		
	M	F	M	F	
Present (CP)	4	4	4	4	16
Absent (CA)	4	4	4	4	16
Total	8	8	8	8	32

Subjects within each cue group were shown the film in small groups at the convenience of the subjects' time schedules. Before they were shown the film, subjects were cued in the following ways:

CP group: "After you see the film you will tell what happened in the film, either to a person who hasn't seen the film or into a tape-recorder while you are alone in a quiet room."

CA group: "After you see the film you will tell the story of the film, either to a person who hasn't seen the film or into a tape-recorder while you are alone in a quiet room".

After watching the film, subjects in the AP condition were immediately introduced to the listeners who took them to a private place to record their speech. The listeners said: "As Donna has

told you, I haven't seen the film and I'd like you to tell me what happened in the film" for the CP subjects. For the CA subjects, the listeners said the same thing but substituted "tell me the story" for "tell me what happened". The listeners had been instructed to respond to the subjects with normal sympathetic listening behaviour but without using full sentences or cueing the subject for tense in any way. See Appendix A for listeners' instructions.

Subjects in the AA group were taken to separate rooms where each one was told how to use the tape-recorder and was asked not to stop the recorder once it was started. Before the researcher left the room she said: "Don't forget to leave the tape-recorder on once you have started it. You can stop it once you have finished talking. Go ahead now and tell what happened in the film", for CP subjects. For CA subjects, she said the same thing but substituted "Tell the story of the film" for "Tell what happened in the film".

All speech samples were recorded within ten minutes of viewing the film. Subjects were requested to fill in a short information questionnaire immediately after they finished their recordings. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

Transcription and Coding

The narratives were transcribed to include filled pauses (uhm, uh, er), false starts, unusual word stress, elongations of sounds, clause final falling intonation, and clause final rising intonation.

Each narrative was divided into clauses and each independent clause was coded for one of the following verb tense categories:

1. Past (P)
2. Historic Present (HP)
3. Actual Present
4. Tenseless (modal, gerunds, infinitives)
5. Verbless

Categories 2 and 3 cannot be distinguished structurally because they are the same tense form (present). Thus, it was necessary to apply a functional criterion to distinguish these two categories. When the present tense form could be logically replaced with the past form of the verb, it was coded as category 2 (HP). Present tense forms which clearly referred to the time of communication or to general truths and which could not logically be replaced with the past form of the verb in the context of the discourse, were coded as category 3 (Actual Present). Only categories 1 and 2 above and only independent clauses were involved in the analysis. The reader is referred to Appendix C for a complete description of the criteria used to define clauses in this study.

Two types of tense shifts or switches were coded. These were:

1. P to HP or HP to P
2. P or HP to Actual Present

Only the first type of tense switch was considered in the analysis. Tense switches were defined as a change from P to HP or HP to P. Every change of tense was counted as one switch. For example, where P is the main tense and two consecutive clauses are given in HP, the change from P to HP is counted as one switch and the change back to P, following the two HP clauses, is counted as another switch.

Thus, we count two non-main tense clauses (HP) and two tense switches (between P and HP clauses). This can be illustrated as follows where P and HP represent clauses and the numbers represent switches:

. . . P P P 1 HP HP 2 P P P . . .

Each clause was also coded for one of five functional categories as described by Labov. These were:

1. Orientation
2. Complicating Action
3. Evaluation
4. Result
5. Appendage

The reader is referred to Appendix C for a description of the above categories. While all coding for functional categories was done by the researcher, a reliability check of the coding criteria was done by having another person independently code 15 percent (that is, 254) of the total number of independent clauses. Agreement obtained was 85 percent.

Analysis

As has been stated previously, the analysis for this study was essentially qualitative.

Independent clauses were counted and mean length was calculated for each experimental group to compare narrative length.

Each narrative was coded for main tense. This was a simple matter, since in every case from 77-100 percent of the verbs were in

one tense, that is the main tense. The number of narratives in P and HP were then compared for each experimental group.

All the narratives which contained tense switches were identified and numbers were compared for each of the experimental groups. As well, the number of tense switches in each narrative was counted and frequencies of tense switching were compared for each experimental group.

P and HP narratives were also compared for tense switching as described above.

By using these simple methods, tendencies were looked for in the data to support the hypotheses that:

1. Subjects who receive the CP prompt "Tell what happened in the film" will produce more past tense narratives than will subjects who receive the CA prompt, "Tell the story of the film".
2. Subjects in the AP condition will have a greater amount of tense switching in their narratives than AA subjects.
3. Narratives mainly told in P will have more tense switches than narratives mainly told in HP.

The next chapter reports the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

This chapter compares the film narrative data, collected for each experimental group, in terms of: a) mean narrative length, b) subjects' preference for P or HP as their main narrative tense, c) the occurrence of tense switching between P and HP. The reader is reminded that it is not the purpose of this analysis to determine significant differences. Rather, it is my purpose to identify tendencies in the data. This is done with two goals in mind: a) to direct further research with larger subject samples, b) to suggest a tentative ESL pedagogy for verb tense in oral narrative discourse.

Length of the film narratives

Tannen (1980) found that her Greek subjects, whom she described as speaking within a "conversational" frame, produced considerably shorter narratives than her American subjects, whom she described as speaking from a "subject-of-an-experiment" frame. If the "conversational" versus "subject-of-an-experiment" frames account for differences in length (regardless of culture), then the AP condition in the present study should have elicited relatively shorter narratives than the AA condition. Such a finding would support the hypothesis that the presence of an audience (AP) is more conducive to the production of conversational narratives than is a situation where an audience is not present (AA), even in an academic, experimental setting. Such was not the case.

Table 2 gives the mean number of independent clauses for all the narratives in each of the Audience/Cue groups.

TABLE 2
MEAN NUMBER OF INDEPENDENT CLAUSES

Past Cue	Audience	
	Present (AP)	Absent (AA)
Present (CP)	56	50
Absent (CA)	56.625	65.875

The difference in length between the AA/CP and the AA/CA groups suggested that these groups may contain outliers in the data. This was found to be so. The AA/CP group contained a narrative which was considerably shorter than any other narrative in the data corpus (18 independent clauses). Likewise, the AA/CA group contained a narrative which was considerably longer than any other narrative (131 independent clauses). These two outliers were dropped and mean length was recalculated for these two groups. The revised means are given in Table 3. Clearly the Audience and Cue variables do not affect the narratives in terms of length.

Main tenses of the film narratives

The data supports the hypotheses that:

1. AP subjects will produce more narratives in which P is the main tense than will AA subjects.

TABLE 3
 MEAN NUMBER OF INDEPENDENT CLAUSES EXCLUDING
 THE SHORTEST AND LONGEST NARRATIVES

Past Cue	Audience	
	Present (AP)	Absent (AA)
Present (CP)	56	56.571
Absent (CA)	56.625	54.875

2. CP subjects will produce more narratives in which P is the main tense than will CA subjects.

Table 4 clearly shows, however, that neither the presence of the Past Cue (CP) nor the presence of an Audience (AP) alone accounts for the difference in the use of P as a main tense. Rather, it is the interaction between the AP and CP conditions which accounts for this difference.

Overall, HP was the preferred tense for giving film narratives. The AP/CP group, however, showed a definite preference for P. Interestingly, the finding that P was the preferred tense for the subjects in the AP/CP group contrasts with Tannen's (1980) findings for native English speakers in a comparable speech situation. Tannen's twenty English speaking subjects were, like my AP/CP subjects, asked to "tell what happened" in the movie to a listener (Tannen herself) who was present at the time of the telling. Of her twenty subjects, Tannen reports that only two chose to give their film

TABLE 4
 NUMBER OF SUBJECTS WHO USED PAST (P) AND HISTORICAL PRESENT (HP)
 AS THEIR MAIN TENSE

Past Cue	Audience					
	Present (AP)		Absent (AA)		Total	
	P	HP	P	HP	P	HP
Present (CP)	6	2	3	5	9	7
Absent (CA)	2	6	2	6	4	12
Total	8	8	5	11	13	19

narratives using P as their main tense. Looked at in terms of percentages, we see that 10 percent of Tannen's subjects chose P, while 75 percent of subjects under similar conditions chose P in the present study. While Tannen's larger sample may account for some of the difference, there is another possible explanation, related to the subjects' gender, which is suggested by the present data. Unlike Tannen's study, which involved only females, the present research used both males and females as subjects and as listeners. Table 5 shows the number of narratives given in P and HP by males and females in the present study.

Three times as many males as females used P as their main narrative tense in the AP condition. The AP/CP combination was especially effective in eliciting P narratives from the male subjects.

TABLE 5
 NUMBER OF MALES AND FEMALES WHO USED PAST (P)
 AND HISTORIC PRESENT (HP) AS THEIR MAIN TENSE

Past Cue	Audience					
	Present (AP)		Absent (AA)		Total	
	Males					
	P	HP	P	HP	P	HP
Present (CP)	4	0	1	3	5	3
Absent (CA)	2	2	1	3	3	5
Total	6	2	2	6	8	8
	Females					
	P	HP	P	HP	P	HP
Present (CP)	2	2	2	2	4	4
Absent (CA)	0	4	1	3	1	7
Total	2	6	3	5	5	11

It should be noted that the single male subject (no. 29) who used P in the AA/CA group actually started his narrative in HP. After he had produced 18 independent clauses, he was interrupted by someone entering the room. When he began his narrative again he used past tense to repeat what he had already said in a summary form. In this situation, P clearly referred to the time of his previous telling, rather than to the event time itself or to the time of his watching

the film. There is no reason to believe that, had he not been interrupted, this subject would not have continued his narration using HP.

There was no apparent tendency for the female subjects to produce P narratives in the AP condition. It is not clear if the AP/CP combination influenced the two females in that group who used P or whether they were simply responding to the presence of a cue as were the two females who used P in the AA/CP condition. Overall it appears that the presence of a past tense cue was more effective in eliciting P narratives from the females than was the presence of an audience.

The gender of the listener did not appear to be a decisive factor in the speakers' choice of main tense in this study. Of the six males who used P, three spoke to males and three spoke to females. Likewise, one of the two females who used P spoke to a male while the other spoke to a female.

It is understood that by looking at the narratives of each sex separately, we have reduced the number of subjects in each group to four. This is obviously too small a sample to generalize upon. However, the gender differences in choice of main tense observed here may be great enough to warrant further investigation.

In summary, it appears that the presence of the past tense cue combined with the presence of an audience created the most effective condition for eliciting P narratives. Past tense cue alone was more effective in eliciting P narratives from females than from males and presence of an audience alone was more effective in eliciting P

narratives from males than from females. The overall tendency was for more subjects to prefer HP as the main tense for their film narratives (19 out of 32 or 59 percent) than P (13 out of 32 or 41 percent).

Tense switching

Overall the occurrence of tense switching between P and HP was very limited in this data. Of a total of 1829 independent clauses, only 45 contained non-main tense verbs (see page 43 for definition of non-main tense). Altogether only 40 tense switches between P and HP were counted in the data. While 16 of the 32 subjects made some tense switches, only 1 (subject 15) made more than 4.

Table 6 shows the number of subjects who switched tenses and the frequency with which they switched in the two audience and two cue conditions. Table 7 gives the same information for the four experimental groups in the study.

It appears that Audience may have had some effect on the frequency of tense switching in this study. While the same number of subjects in both the AP and the AA groups made switches, those in the AP group tended to switch more frequently.

The presence of the past tense cue also appears to have had some effect on tense switching. Subjects in the CP condition gave more narratives containing tense switches than did those in the CA condition. As well, subjects in the CP condition who switched tenses switched more frequently than did subjects in the CA condition who switched tenses.

TABLE 6
 NUMBER OF SUBJECTS WHO MADE TENSE SWITCHES IN THE TWO AUDIENCE
 AND TWO CUE CONDITIONS

	Number of switches			
	0	1-2	3-4	5-8
Audience				
Present (AP)	8	3	4	1
Absent (AA)	8	7	1	0
Past Cue				
Present (CP)	7	5	4	0
Absent (CA)	9	5	1	1

TABLE 7
 NUMBER OF SUBJECTS WHO MADE TENSE SWITCHES
 IN THE FOUR EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

Group	Number of switches			
	0	1-2	3-4	5-8
1 (AP/CP)	4	1	3	0
2 (AP/CA)	4	2	1	1
3 (AA/CP)	3	4	1	0
4 (AA/CA)	5	3	0	0

Table 8 indicates that more females than males switched tense. The difference is accounted for by the larger number of females who made one or two switches and not by any difference in the higher frequency ranges.

TABLE 8
NUMBER OF MALES AND FEMALES WHO MADE TENSE SWITCHES

Gender	Number of switches			
	0	1-2	3-4	5-8
Males	10	3	2	1
Females	6	7	3	0

Finally, Table 9 shows that P narratives contained switches more often than did HP narratives. P narratives had higher frequencies of tense switching than HP narratives. In terms of percentages, 62 percent of the P narratives contained tense switches, while only 42 percent of the HP narratives contained switches. Of the HP narratives which contained switches, only 13 percent contained three or more switches, while 75 percent of the P narratives which contained switches contained three or more.

Where tense switches occurred

Tense switches between P and HP occurred in clauses which either preceded or followed the actual recounting of events and in clauses within the actual recounting of events. To use Labov's terms,

TABLE 9
NUMBER OF P AND HP NARRATIVES IN WHICH SWITCHING OCCURRED

Main Tense	Number of switches			
	0	1-2	3-4	5-8
P	5	2	5	1
HP	11	7	1	0

switches occurred in clauses which preceded or followed the complicating action and results sections of the narratives, and in clauses within those sections. When switches occurred outside the actual recounting of events, they acted as a kind of framing device; I have referred to these as external switches. Switches inside the event section served to emphasize certain information or events; these are referred to as internal switches.

Of the 40 tense switches counted in the data, 16 were internal switches and 24 were external switches. Table 10 shows the number of subjects who made internal and external switches and indicates the number of each type of switch. Two subjects (numbers 5 and 15) made both internal and external switches.

Examples of external tense switches

Examples of the external switches found in the data and all the internal switches are given below. The numbers refer to the narratives which can be found in Appendix D. The main tense is indicated in parentheses next to the number. The clause containing

TABLE 10

NUMBER OF SUBJECTS WHO MADE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TENSE SWITCHES

Number of Switches	Type of Switch	
	Internal	External
1-2	5	8
3-4	0	4
5-8	1	0

the non-main tense is given along with the immediately preceding and following main tense clauses.

The first three examples of external switches given below all occurred in final clauses:

a) 14 (P) And it ends by saying, "so . . . love your neighbour".

And that was I guess the theme of it.

b) 23 (P) And it said "love thy neighbour, yes".

And that's it.

c) 29 (P) They did get that object when it was too late.

This is kind of funny.

The final clauses in examples a, b and c are what Labov calls codas.

Codas indicate that the speaker has finished talking. They also

serve to bridge the gap between the "world" of the film and the

"world" of the communication. Not all codas in the data contained

tense shifts, but when they did the shift served to emphasize the

change in perspective to the time of communication, indicating that

it was the listener's turn to respond in some way.

The following are examples of external switches which occurred before the actual recounting of narrative events.

d) 16 (HP) It was very interesting.

Um and it started out uh there were two men, who were neighbours and lived side by side.

And basically had a lo# they each other had uh# they were equal in that they both had a house and ...

And the story begins.

e) 17 (HP) Um the movie's called Neighbours.

And I expected it to be different somehow.

It was actually quite funny at first.

Um these two guys are sitting there, reading a newspaper on the front of a lawn.

f) 19 (HP) The film was called Neighbours by the National Film Board.

And it's basically about these two guys that live right beside each other.

Example f is simply an introduction to the film, something quite incidental to the film events. Examples d and e both tell what the speaker thought of the film. Speaker 16 also gives information which orients the listener to character and location. This is obviously information which the speaker considered necessary to an understanding of the narrative events. It is interesting to note that Tannen (1980) reports a similar use of P for the orientation section of the HP narratives of four of her American speakers.

Speaker 17 commented on her reaction to the film by stating that her expectations were violated. This speaker gave the actual narrative in HP and then at the end she switched back to P to summarize how her expectations were violated.

Other speakers, such as 8 in example g, followed the recounting of narrative events with interpretive commentaries which involved the use of a different tense.

g) 8 (P) And there was a cross on the graves.

And then it says "love your neighbour".

And it's all about war and peace and all the stupid things that we fight over.

This speaker continued her commentary for several more clauses using HP and the actual present tense.

The external tense switches illustrated above generally occur in clauses which are externally evaluative in Labov's terms (see p. 35 of this thesis). That is, the clauses in which the non-main tense is found are overt expressions of the speakers' feelings, judgements or interpretations. This is not, however, the case with simple codas such as that in example b above, nor is it the case with example f. In example f, the tense switch served as an internally evaluative element (in Labov's terms) in that it drew attention to the clause and a point that the speaker was making. In this case the speaker was mentioning the film producer's name, making the point that she is an astute observer and that she has a good memory for detail.

Internal tense switches

The internal tense switches found in the data appear within the event sections of the narratives and draw attention to information or events that the speakers found particularly interesting or important. Since so few internal tense switches were found in this data, all of them are given below.

h) 5 (P) He knocked the house down.

/?/ there's a woman inside with a babe in arms.

And he hit the woman.

i) 6 (HP) And they tend to fight for it.

They end up that# well they fought for about two minutes I suppose.

And the flower stayed there.

But the flower showed a means of being very upset, like by moving, and as if it was a person covering its head.

And then it shows the two men.

j) 10 (HP) And a flower sprouts right in between them.

There's no fence along between them.

And uh oh I should# oh I forgot something.

They were both smoking or started to smoke um pipes.

And one neighbour lit the other neighbour's pipe basically.

That /?/ they're neighbours is sort of established

k) 15 (P) And these two sort of animated houses suddenly slid

into the middle of the field from the side.

And from these houses # they're just like I don't know wooden houses just the fronts.

These lawn chairs sorta slid out from the front of the houses.

l) 15 (P) And they looked back.

And the hou# the flower was sorta right between their houses.

And one of them goes# well he just sort of points with his finger, like where his property line would be, saying the flower is on his side of the property. And the other guy didn't agree.

m) 28 (HP) One flower moves up.

And sits on top of the coffin on the right hand side of the screen and the left hand side of the screen.

And then # uh the pickets in the fence had moved ...

And then the pickets moved back.

And all the fence is in perfect order.

n) 32 (HP) And the same thing happens to him.

They even went on a little bit of a trip

Around the yard um off and on.

Both neighbours exchange um sniffing of the flower.

The internal tense switches given above mark clauses which are, in Labov's terms, primarily orientative (examples h, i, j, k) or complicating action (examples l, m, n). The non-main tense in these

clauses served as an internally evaluative element (once again Labov's terminology). That is, the non-main tense distinguished these clauses as important in terms of the "points" that the speakers were making. When tense alternation functions to emphasize particular aspects or "episodes" of the narrative, it functions in the way described by Wolfson for conversational narratives.

It is interesting to note that four of these switches (i, k, l, n) emphasized the film-viewer perspective of the speakers. In example i, the speaker's reference to "two minutes" clearly referred to film viewing time. This speaker was also obviously impressed by the "unrealistic" liveliness of the flower which is a result of the film technique of animation. Speaker 15 in example k also drew attention to the "unrealistic" nature of the setting. By doing so he revealed his desire to be an accurate reporter of what he saw. The same speaker in example l once again seemed concerned with accuracy of reporting and with film technique (that is, there was no dialogue). Finally, speaker 32 in example n showed that he was impressed and amused by the "unrealistic" speed and movement of the two characters. He presented the non-main tense clause in the form of an aside in which voice intonation showed that he found the event to be particularly amusing.

Examples j and m are somewhat different than the other internal switches given here. These speakers used P primarily to indicate that the information given in that tense should have been related before the event which they had just finished relating. Thus, P was used to emphasize the correct temporal sequence of the events the

speakers were relating and referred to the time of their telling of the story. At the same time, however, the change in tense marked the information as aspects of the narrative which the speakers considered essential to a clear understanding of the story.

In general, it can be said that tense switches occurred in two positions:

1. External to the recounting of narrative events
2. Within the recounting of the narrative events

Overall, very little switching occurred. The majority of the switches which did occur were between clauses external to the actual recounting of events.

Summary

This chapter has presented the following findings:

1. HP is the preferred main tense of the majority of the subjects in this study for their productions of film narratives.
2. More than half of the subjects who were given the prompt cued for past tense chose P as their main narrative tense, while only one quarter of subjects who were not given the past tense prompt chose P as their main narrative tense.
3. The presence of a listener (AP) and the use of a prompt cued for past tense (CP) was a particularly effective combination in eliciting P narratives from males but not from females.
4. Switching between P and HP was very limited in the film narratives collected in this study.

5. The majority of the tense switches which did occur were external switches. That is, they occurred before or after the presentation of the event sections of the narratives.

These findings are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the implications of speakers' choice of P or HP as the main tense for their film narratives. As well, I will discuss the implications of this study's findings on tense switching. The discussion of main tense and tense switching will then be put into a broader perspective, by looking at the film narratives as a whole using Labov's narrative framework, and by further examining the narratives for evaluative features as described by Tannen, Wolfson and Labov. The final section of this chapter suggests some practical implications of this study for the teaching of verb tense using oral narrative tasks in the ESL classroom.

Discussion of main tense

It has often been suggested that HP is the "conventional" tense for speaking about works of art such as books, plays and films. Wolfson (1982b), for example, states: "Other genres in which the historical present frequently occurs are travelogues, sportscasting and reviews of books, plays and movies" (p. 54). Elsewhere she says that, "in each of these genres the historical present tense is the conventional tense for narration" (1982a, p. 7). Tannen (1980) states that her American subjects may have been using "a 'historical present' associated with telling about works of art such as films, which are presumed to exist permanently" (p. 65). It is my contention that historical present is "associated with telling

about works of art such as films" as a literary convention, in that reviews and plot synopses of books, plays and films are essentially written or literary discourse forms (as opposed to oral forms such as story-telling or conversation). There is evidence that HP is seldom, if ever, used as the sole or predominant tense in conversational narratives (Wolfson, 1982a; Schiffrin, 1981). When present tense is used throughout a narrative, as it was in the majority of the film narratives collected in the present study, I believe it has a very different effect from the one it has when it alternates with past tense in conversational narratives. It does not create the sense of immediacy or "vivid experience" which is often attributed to the use of HP in narratives. Nor does it dramatize aspects of the narrative by separating it into episodes through alternation with P as discussed by Wolfson (1982a, 1982b). Rather, it has the effect of objectifying and, in a sense, distancing the events being described from real life experience. The main point I wish to make here is that verb tense forms must be considered in the context of the whole discourse in order to understand how they function. When HP occurs in a high switch situation, such as that typical of oral conversational narratives, where it is not the predominant tense, its "meaning" or "function" is dramatization. In such situations it serves to emphasize the personal experience of the speaker. When HP occurs as a predominant tense in a context of little or no switching into past, typical of written discourse, its meaning or function is "objectification" or

"neutralization". In such situations it de-emphasizes the speaker's personal experience.

This objectifying and distancing effect comes about because, as King (1983) says, a speaker "may avoid the confinement of real time by using the present form" (p. 108). The use of the present tense simply means that an occurrence is "reported as valid" at the time of communication (King, 1983, p. 106). Thus, present tense seems to be a logical form for talking about events which in themselves exist outside time.

In other words, the effect of using present tense to talk about a film, itself a depiction of events, is to remove it from real time, from time as the viewer subjectively experiences it in his own life. Instead, the events of the film are raised out of time and transformed into a series of empirical data. Far from making the events of the film more vivid or real, the effect of the use of the present tense is to make them more abstract, more neutral in relation to real life experiences of the viewer.

At this point it should be noted that after what has been said above about the "meaning" of present tense and its use in film narratives, the term historical present is not really appropriate for this use. HP has been defined as present tense form used for reporting past events (see page 18 of this thesis). Thus, present tense must appear in a context which is clearly marked for past before it can be called historical present. This is not the case for the film narratives in which it is the main tense. In spite of this objection to the use of the term historical present for its use

as a main tense in film narratives, I have, for convenience, followed Wolfson, Godfrey, and Tannen in retaining this term in the present study.

What I am saying about the apparent preference of the majority of English speakers in the present study for HP as a main tense, supports and elaborates upon what Tannen (1980) said of her American subjects. Tannen stated that the film-viewer perspective of her American speakers was reflected in their use of present tense for their film narratives. What I have tried to do, which Tannen hasn't done, is explain why present tense reflects a film-viewer perspective (as opposed to a story-teller perspective). As well, I would now like to suggest that present tense also reflects a subject-of-an-experiment perspective in that it functions to support the empirical tradition which calls for the non-involvement or "objectivity" of the observer.

Tannen also asserts that, "to the extent that Americans were preoccupied with accuracy of detail and correct recall, they were adhering to strategies associated with the literate culture of schools". The fact that more than half of the subjects in the present study chose present tense as their main narrative tense, often regardless of the presence of an audience or a past tense prompt, suggests that for these subjects the academic, experimental aspect of the speech situation may have been the most determining factor in their choice of main tense.

The 13 subjects who chose P as their main narrative tense, consciously, or more likely unconsciously, added a degree of

subjectivity to their narratives which is not possible with present tense. As King (1983) and Lyons (1969), among others, point out, it is only present tense which has no connection to real world time. However, when speakers use past tense they do connect with real world time in that past has the meaning "before now" (Lyons) or exclusion from the perspective of present time (King). Thus, no matter how objective speakers are, or try to be, in other respects in their recounting of events, the choice of past tense has the psychological effect of placing the events in the realm of the speakers' past experiences.

While I agree with Tannen (1980) that the use of P is "consistent with the perspective of recounting events which occurred once and are done", this does not mean that her Greek subjects or my Canadian subjects who used P used it to suggest that these events were completed in real world time. Rather, I believe the past tense is related to their viewing and experiencing of the film events (which are understood to be infinitely repeatable by virtue of the fact that they only exist in the film). Thus subject 20 in the present study clearly links her use of past tense to the time of her viewing of the film when she begins her narrative with, "the story that I saw . . .".

There are different reasons why speakers in the present study may have chosen P as the main tense for their film narratives. For subjects in the CP condition, one possible reason for choosing P is similar to the reason for choosing HP. That is, speakers may have been paying attention to another literate "school rule", namely,

"answer a question in the same tense in which it is given". In this case, the use of P may have nothing to do with the speakers' desire to be more "conversational" or to tell a good story. Rather, it may reflect their need to be seen as speakers of "good English", as well as "observant experimental subjects". On the other hand, subjects may have responded to the P cue as an invitation to be more conversational. One would expect this last reason to be more likely in the AP condition than in the AA condition, since it is difficult to be conversational alone with a tape-recorder.

As has been stated above, the presence of an audience did not seem to affect the female subjects in their choice of tense. The presence of the past tense cue, however, regardless of whether or not an audience was present, did seem to influence half of the female subjects in the CP condition to choose past tense. This suggests that the females in the CP group were paying attention to the literary convention for film synopses in their choice of present tense or to the literary "school rule" that calls for answers in the same tense as the question, in their choice of past tense.

For the males in the CP condition, P is their preferred tense only if an audience is present. Therefore the possibility that they are drawing upon conversational conventions rather than upon literary academic ones appears greater than for the females. However, this is not necessarily the case. It may simply be that, for some reason, the "answer in the same tense" rule only becomes salient when a listener (teacher?) is present.

The most important point which I have tried to make in this

discussion of main tense is that, no matter what the reason for choosing P as the main narrative tense might be, P narratives are more subjective and more conducive to the incorporation of conversational strategies, like tense switching, than are present tense narratives.

Discussion of tense switching

The finding that tense switching was very restricted in the film narratives collected for this study suggests that the subjects were following a tense continuity constraint. This finding seems to support the contention of the previous discussion on main tense, that speakers were influenced by the academic, experimental setting of the study to use narrative forms and strategies they had learned in school. The speakers who made no tense switches were most likely adhering to a tense continuity rule which is associated with written discourse and is taught in school as "good" English. However, because there is no informal conversational data for film narratives, I cannot be sure that such a tense continuity rule would not also apply for film narratives in such situations. We do know, however, that it is not a general rule for conversational narratives of personal experience. Only further research will indicate for certain whether the constraint on tense switching observed in the present study was actually due to the academic, experimental setting or whether the literate genre of the discourse (that is, recapitulation of a film) would also extend the tense constraint to other less formal settings.

The majority of switches which occurred in the present data were external to the actual narratives and, therefore, did not violate the tense continuity rule which in effect says that once a story is begun in a certain tense, it should continue in that tense. The external switches observed in the data marked the beginning or end of the story and marked sections of speakers' commentary on the story or film. This type of switching does not violate the above continuity rule and, in fact, emphasizes a way of dealing with facts and stories which is taught in schools. That is, first of all present the facts or story and then interpret, analyze, answer questions about, summarize and comment upon those facts or the story. This pattern of presentation followed by commentary (that is, by a series of externally evaluative clauses in Labov's terms) contrasts with the conversational narratives described by Labov and Walezky and Labov et al. In Labov's conversational narratives externally evaluative clauses were included within the body of the narrative in a way that suspended the action at various points. While the narratives collected in the present study also included externally evaluative clauses within the narrative, there was a strong tendency to concentrate such clauses outside the complicating action and results sections of the narratives. Such external commentaries were not typical of the conversational narratives described in the literature.

The few internal switches which occurred in the narratives collected in the present study appear to be of the type that Wolfson found in "performed stories". That is, they serve the purpose of

emphasizing certain scenes or episodes. As was explained in Chapter Four (p. 63) this may not be true of the switches in narratives 10 and 28 since the function of these switches was primarily to emphasize temporal order. Excluding these two speakers, only one of the four remaining speakers who made internal switches was female. Thus it appears that, although the females switched tense more often, the switches they made were of the external type which do not violate the literate tense continuity rule for narratives. This leaves three males (15, 32, 5) and one female (6) who made "conversational" switches typical of performed stories. Of these, only the female used the non-main tense for more than one consecutive clause. These findings regarding tense switching seem to support my speculation about main tense choice, that females may be especially attentive to the academic, literate "rules" for "good" English. It must be reiterated, however, that the number of males who used conversational (that is, internal) tense switching is too small (three out of sixteen) to conclude that males in general use conversational strategies such as internal tense switching more frequently than do females. What I have revealed in this data is an interesting tendency which requires further investigation. Further evidence for sex differences in the verb tense use of native English speakers would have implications for ESL teachers. Since ESL learners' perceptions of native speaker talk may be affected by such sociolinguistic differences, instructors (and researchers) would have to be aware of these differences when evaluating their students' (or subjects') performance on discourse tasks.

In conclusion, it must be said that tense switching is highly constrained in the narratives collected for this study. The presence or absence of an audience or of a past tense prompt had little effect on the occurrence of tense switching, and therefore I cannot conclude that the presence of an audience or a past tense prompt creates a more conversational climate for these speakers. My findings thus support those of Godfrey (1980) and Tannen (1980) which reported very limited use of tense switching by native English speakers in their production of film narratives in academic, experimental settings.

The next section of this chapter puts my findings on tense and tense switching into a broader perspective.

First I examined the narratives in terms of Labov and Walezky's "normal" narrative form. I found that all of the narratives except number 7 (which is almost entirely interpretive) conform to the normal shape. That is, all the narratives begin with orientation sections, which are followed by complicating action sections, which are often punctuated with evaluative or orientation clauses. The complicating action leads up to a climax which is typically marked with a suspension of the action by orientation or evaluation clauses or is marked by various types of internal evaluation. The climax is followed by a result section. As has been discussed above, the result section is often followed by an evaluation section which gives the speakers' interpretation of the film.

This finding does not support Labov's contention that narratives of "vicarious" experience are poorly formed because they contain no

evaluation and therefore have no "point". The reader is reminded that Labov based this contention on his analyses of the descriptions of favorite television programs given by pre-adolescent boys in central Harlem.

It is not surprising that the subjects in the present study produced narratives with "normal" form since this form is the typical structure for written stories as well. Labov and Walezky (1967) themselves contended that the basic narrative structure, which characterizes the "unsophisticated" oral narratives which they collected, are also the basis of more complex products of long-standing literary or oral traditions" (p. 12). Obviously the subjects in the present study have had many years of experience in recognizing and analyzing such stories in school. Such analytic experience was, however, probably not a typical experience of Labov's pre-adolescent subjects; thus they were not able to reproduce the narrative form when dealing with the television stories. What is interesting in these narratives is how the film viewer perspective surfaced in the way the speakers dealt with the story form. They did not use the form to create their own version of the story, so much as they reported on how the story form was used effectively by the film makers. This is especially obvious in remarks such as the following which are taken from the data:

- a) 10 That they're neighbours is sort of established.
- b) 30 It's a very symmetrical scene, in which the film shows us that the two men seem to be quite neighbourly.
- c) 24 The climax # the film climaxes when you have one fellow

knocking down the house of the other fellow.

Once again I have evidence that my speakers were concerned, not with being good story-tellers themselves, but with presenting themselves as knowledgeable film viewers and also as good story comprehenders.

Since tense switching is only one involvement feature or performance feature, to use Tannen's and Wolfson's terms, I informally examined the data for evidence of the other features which these researchers found in the conversational narratives in their studies. Readers are reminded that these other involvement/performance features are direct speech, asides, repetition, expressive sounds, sound effects and motions and gestures.

Direct speech appears very occasionally in the present data. When it does occur it is usually followed by a film viewer qualification as in the example below where the speaker is going to use a direct quote then corrects himself:

24 The other fellow comes along and says # well actually there is no talking in the film it's just beeps.

Only one speaker (number 10) uses direct speech in a way typical of the story-teller.

Asides also appear very occasionally in the present data. When they do occur they relate to the speech processes of the speaker as in "a" below or to the film itself as in "b":

a) 1 And um # try not to use "um" so much. (sotto voce)

b) 31 Nice home movie here, (sotto voce)

something for the kids. (sotto voce)

Repetition does occur quite frequently in the data. Sometimes this is merely a stalling tactic, but often it involves the repetition of phrases or much more frequently, single words, for emphasis. This repetition most commonly involves emphasizeers such as "very".

Expressive sounds and sound effects do not occur at all in the data, unless elongations of syllables and unusual word and sentence stress can be classified as expressive sounds. Elongations and unusual stress are used quite frequently to emphasize certain words, usually adjectives or adverbs.

Obviously I cannot comment on the use of motions and gestures, except to say that there is nothing in the recorded data to suggest that any utterances were accompanied by motions or gestures.

My conclusion from these observations is that these narratives do not contain the features typical of stories or conversational narratives as described by Labov, Wolfson and Tannen. My finding that tense switching, which is also a feature of conversational narratives or stories, was very infrequent in the data, supports this conclusion.

Once again, an informal observation of the data indicates that the following types of evaluation do occur very frequently:

1. evaluative words, mainly adjectives and adverbs
2. quantifiers (e.g. both, all, each, just, one, two)
3. emphasizeers (e.g. really, very, virtually, in fact, actually, too)
4. false starts, corrections and restatements

5. hedges (e.g. well, sort of, I guess, say, or something, and everything)

Types 1, 2, 3, and 4 above all emphasize the speakers' need to appear literate and highly verbal, as well as to appear as accurate and precise observers and recallers. Type 5 also reflects this need, in that it shows the speakers' unwillingness to be "wrong" or to commit themselves to something they are not really sure of.

Most subjects in this study also made many overt and implicit references to the film, thus portraying their film viewer stance. Overt references included the use of words such as "props", "scene", "makeup", "screen", "front", "the directors", and statements such as "you could see" or "they showed". Less overt references were statements such as "well they fought for about two minutes I suppose" (speaker 6), where it is obvious that the speaker is referring to film time.

Overall the evaluative features found in the film narratives in this study suggest that the speakers were interested in presenting themselves as accurate observers and recallers, as sophisticated film viewers, as speakers of good English and as good story comprehenders. They were not interested in entertaining their listeners by being good story-tellers.

Conclusions

In Chapter One of this thesis, it was suggested that some of the difficulty which ESL learners have with English verb tense usage may be due to the discrepancy between the English they are taught and

hear in the classroom and the English which they hear outside the classroom. ESL teachers tend to rely on their intuition, as native English speakers, about how tense is used by educated, native English speakers. Often such intuitions about "good" English are based on the teachers' cultural biases associated with the literate, empirical tradition of schools. ESL professionals, including textbook authors and researchers as well as teachers, are not always aware of the ways that verb tense functions in discourse outside of academic settings.

The present study has shown that native English speakers in an academic setting follow culturally learned "rules" for verb tense usage which are associated with that setting. Teachers and researchers must be made aware that such usage is culturally determined and is intimately connected with the speech situation in which it occurs. Other verb tense strategies which violate such "literate" rules as the tense continuity constraint, are used by native speakers in different speech situations such as informal conversation. Learners from other cultures may have quite different expectations associated with academic settings, and may therefore use tense strategies which are more "natural" for them and which they have learned from native English speakers outside the classroom. If teachers are unaware that such tense strategies exist for native English speech, they may generalize the "literate" rules of which they are aware, as Godfrey (1980) did, and seriously misjudge the extent of their students' mastery of the English tense system.

Suggestions for further research

It is hoped that further research into native English speakers' as well as advanced ESL learners' verb tense usage on typical classroom tasks will follow this study. Specifically, I see the present study as preliminary to an investigation of advanced ESL learners' performance on the same task under the same audience/cue conditions as are reported here. Learners for this follow-up study would be drawn from two language groups. One group would have the HP/P option for presenting a film narrative in their native language while the other group would not. Data would be collected in the speakers' native languages and in English. By comparing the performance of the native English speakers in the present study and the speakers in the study described above, we could learn much about the linguistic and cultural influences upon ESL learners' verb tense use in English discourse.

Other interesting studies which the present study suggests involve further investigation of male and female verb tense usage. If such differences do exist, the question arises, are ESL learners aware of them even though their teachers may not be?

Pedagogical implications

The following ideas for developing awareness of verb tense in oral narrative discourse are appropriate for intermediate and advanced adolescent and adult ESL learners. Although I address them to teachers of such learners, I also consider them to be useful techniques for ESL methodology classes.

Before presenting these ideas, I wish to stress that the findings of the present study in no way imply that ESL teachers should teach their students to maintain either past or present tense or to switch tenses in giving film narratives. Any of these strategies may be appropriate depending upon the speech situations. What students at this level need to know is: (a) What do native English speakers do with verb tense when producing narratives in various speech situations? (b) Why do native English speakers use these tense strategies? (c) How do these strategies and purposes relate to the students' own understanding of the speech situation and their own purposes in producing narratives in those situations? The obvious way to bring students to such awareness is to bring "natural" narratives produced by native English speakers in a variety of speech situations into the classroom for analysis and discussion.

The importance of the kinds of activities suggested below for increasing ESL teachers' linguistic awareness is, I believe, considerable. By engaging with their students in these activities, instructors will come to realize that students are not necessarily making "errors" when they use oral narrative tense strategies, which are appropriate in informal conversation, in performing classroom tasks. What students may be doing is using speech registers that teachers feel are inappropriate to academic situations and to the purposes of the narrative task as the teachers perceive them. The following types of activities are meant to increase teachers'

awareness that learners from other cultures may have quite different purposes in presenting narratives than those that ESL instructors take for granted in academic settings.

Activities

1. Students as well as teachers can act as ethnographers and collect oral narratives from as many different situations as possible. Before embarking on such an activity, the class must carefully discuss how it will be carried out. The narratives should be listened to for content and discussed in terms of the various aspects of the speech situations in which they were produced. After such a general discussion, the narratives can be analyzed for verb tense usage and the findings compared and discussed in terms of the various aspects of the speech situation and the speakers' perceived purposes.

2. In most high schools and colleges it is possible to gain the cooperation of other teachers and native English speaking students. These teachers could have their students perform the following activities. Ideally these instructors will present their own objectives for the tasks and only afterwards ask the students for permission to use the tapes for listening comprehension in the ESL class. Teachers of native English speakers may have some of their students watch a short film and then tell the story of the film either to a good friend or to an adult (if the students are adolescents) or to professionals within the school. It would also be interesting to have some of the students tell the story of the

film to advanced ESL learners. The speech samples of the native English speakers may also be varied by giving instructions such as, "Make the story as interesting as you can; try to convince your listener to see it", or "Give an accurate and detailed report of what happened in the film". Narratives collected in these ways would provide a wealth of material for the ESL classroom.

3. Have a professional story-teller come in to the classroom to tell a story. Afterwards discuss elements of performed stories. Have students practise telling stories (for each other, or for younger children).

4. Have students write and present orally, stories, book reports and film reviews. Discuss what "points" writers and speakers are trying to make. Analyze the productions for verb tense (or other linguistic elements) and relate findings to the discourse in general.

The ideas given above are only outlines. Obviously, the activities would have to be well-planned by the teacher. He or she would have to be sure not to include too much material in any one lesson and be sure that the material was not beyond the students' linguistic capabilities. It is important in all of the above activities that discussion involves the students in talking about their own culturally determined expectations for the production of oral and written narratives in various speech situations.

The English verb tense system is extremely complex and is probably the most difficult aspect of the language for learners to

master. Only by exposing students in the classroom to discourse from a great variety of speech situations from outside the classroom can insight into the subtleties of tense usage be gained. This is the purpose of activities such as those outlined above.

Appendix A

Listeners' Information and Procedure Sheets

Information sheet for listeners

One of the purposes of this study is to compare the ways subjects describe a film they have seen in the following two conditions:

- a) alone with a tape recorder (Audience Absent or AA condition)
- b) to another person (Audience Present or AP condition)

You are the vital ingredient in the AP condition!

It is important to know if there are differences in the language people produce in these conditions since both methods of data collection are used in research.

The main variable which I am looking at is verb tense. I want to know if the presence of a tense cue in eliciting the narrative affects the tense(s) used by the subject in his or her recapitulation. Thus there are two cue conditions:

- 1) uncued -- "tell me the story of the film" -- this is what you will say to the first two subjects that you listen to.
- 2) cued -- "tell me what happened in the film" -- this is what you will say to the second two subjects that you listen to.

Because I am looking at verb tenses, it is important that you do not cue the subject in any way. Therefore, you should not talk to the subject about the film. Do not ask them their opinion of the film anytime before they have completed making the tape. Also do not comment on their narrative or ask them questions about it.

What you will do is be an interested listener. All normal non-verbal listening behavior is acceptable, as are any exclamations of interest, surprise, etc. Just do what comes naturally.

PROCEDURE FOR LISTENERS

1. After each showing of the film (it's $8\frac{1}{2}$ minutes long) collect your subject and take him or her to your listening station.
2. Make sure S is facing the microphone in the tape recorder.
3. Turn on the recorder (press play and record together). Ask S's name and introduce yourself if you haven't already done so. My objective here is to get S's name on the tape.
4. Tell S that you haven't seen the film, then say:
For subjects 1 and 2: "Tell me the story of the film"
For subjects 3 and 4: "Tell me what happened in the film"
5. Be an attentive listener, using any natural non-verbal behavior. Verbal expressions (e.g. mmm, uh huh, oh, really, etc.) and laughter or tears are fine. Just avoid cueing tense in any way. If S seems to have finished but you're not sure you can ask "Is that all?" or "Is that it?"
6. When S is finished ask her or him to fill out the questionnaire.

Appendix B
Subjects' Information Questionnaire

INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIREFILM RECAPITULATION STUDY

Name: _____

Sex: male female

Country of Birth: _____

Length of residence in Canada: _____

Native language: _____

Languages, other than English, in which you are fluent: _____

Age (circle one below):

17-25

26-35

36-45

over 45

Have you seen this film before today: yes no

If yes,

where: in school outside school

how long ago: _____

Appendix C
Coding Manual

Clauses

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., and Svartvik, J. (1972), A Grammar of Contemporary English was used as the primary reference for identifying clauses. According to this source, a clause is "a unit that can be analysed into the elements S(subject), V(erb), C(omplement), O(bject), and A(dverbial)" (p. 343). Three pattern types for clauses are identified by these authors. These are:

a two-element pattern	SV
three three-element patterns	SV + A C O
three four-element patterns	SVO + A C O

(Quirk et al., p. 343)

While these patterns served as basic guidelines for clause identification, there were, of course, normal deviations such as S and auxiliary (Aux) ellipsis and other types of ellipsis more typical of spoken language than of written language, to be considered. Since the division of speech into clauses is not always as straightforward as the above patterns suggest, certain conventions were established for the identification of Independent Clauses (IC) and Dependent Clauses (DC). These conventions are described below and examples from the data are given where it is deemed necessary. Examples from the data are identified as follows:

2/15 And they both unfold the newspapers

/15.1 that they're reading.

2 = Subject

15 = IC number

15.1 = DC number embedded in IC 15.

The conventions are:

- a) Every clause must contain a V. (See exception f below).
- b) Coordinate clauses in which S is ellipped in the second clause are both counted as ICs.
 e.g. 2/19 And they both turn.
 2/20 And look at the same time.
- c) Every IC must contain a tense marker.
- d) As a consequence of (c), in coordinate clauses where S and Aux (that is, the tense marker) are ellipped, the first clause is counted as an IC and the second clause is counted as a DC.
 e.g. 14/17 And they start dancing around,
 /17.1 and sliding all over the place.
- e) Non-finite clauses in which V is a gerund or an infinitive are counted as DCs. This includes prepositional phrases which include non-finite clauses, like 16.1 below.
 e.g. 1/5.1 to light one's pipe and the other's cigar.
 1/16.1 by taking out a roll of pickets.
- f) Occasionally verbless utterances are understood to be ICs and are counted as such.
 e.g. 1/4 And er # not cigarettes. (i.e., it wasn't cigarettes that they took out)
 2/1 Um short or long form? (i.e., do you want me to tell you what happened in a short or a long form?)

Tense

Each clause (both IC and DC), was coded for one of the following tense categories:

1. Past (P)
2. Historical Present (HP). That is, any present tense verb which could have been logically replaced within the context of the narrative with a past tense was considered to be HP.
3. Actual Present tense (Pr). Present tense verbs which did not fit into category 2 above.
4. Clauses containing verb elements not marked for tense. Some modals and category e clauses above.
5. Verbless clauses. Category f clauses above.

Tense Switches

Although I was mainly interested in switches between P and HP, switches into Pr were also coded. Thus two categories of tense switch were coded. These were:

1. P <—> HP (switch from P to HP or HP to P)
2. P or HP <—> Pr (switch from P/HP to Pr or from Pr to P/HP).

Functions

Each independent clause was coded for the categories in Labov and Walezky's 1967 narrative framework. Each category is described below and examples from the data are given.

Category 1: Orientation (0)

The purpose of 0 clauses is to set the scene for the narrative

events. These clauses are generally clustered at the beginning of the narrative and orient the listener to the characters and their ongoing behavior, to the places, objects and time at which the events occurred, as well as to durative actions and to general conditions which prevailed at the time of the narrative. O clauses may occur anywhere during a narrative. When they occur outside the opening orientation section, however, they serve an additional evaluative function in that they suspend the action of the preceding complicating action (CA) clause.

Because the film which was used for the present data collection introduces the characters and objects of the setting one after another, the clauses in the initial orientation section often look like CA clauses, (e.g. 2/5 It starts out uhm on grassy # on a grassy law:n. 2/6 And suddenly two uhm wooden houses appear.). Such clauses are never coded as CA since they clearly describe the setting and occur before the first CA clause which always involves the appearance of the flower.

It is possible for a narrative to have more than one Orientation section. Many of the narratives collected in this study have two orientation sections: one at the beginning of the story and one after the men have killed each other, that is, after the Resolution (R) section. This second orientation section introduces the burial sequence at the end of the film.

Sometimes a CA clause is categorized as O. This happens when a CA clause is repeated after some kind of interruption. In such cases the repetition is considered to serve a re-orienting function

for the listener. This is clearly illustrated by subject 29 after he was interrupted when someone entered the room where he was taping.

- 29/17 They start fighting over the flower.
 /18 They start pushing each other away,
 /18.1 when one smells it.
 /19 (Excuse me, I was just interrupted.)
 /20 (I'll get back to it now.)
 /21 Okay, the men they were fighting over the flower.
 /22 And every time one man would go to smell it,
 the other would push him away.
 /23 And then the second man would smell it.
 /24 And they'd push each other.

Clauses 22 to 24 repeat information which was given before the interruption reported in clause 19. Thus, these clause re-orient the listener to what was happening before the interruption. Another example of repetition of a CA clause to reorient the listener can be found in narrative 10.

- 10/10 And a flower sprouts right in between them.
 /11 There's no fence a along between them.
 /12 And uh oh I should # oh I forgot something.
 /13 Um they were both smoking
 or started to smoke um pipes.
 /14 And one neighbour lit the other neighbour's pipe
 basically.
 /15 That /?/ they're neighbours is sort of established.

/16 And this flower sprouts.

16 clearly orients the listener to what had happened before the speaker flashed back to the previous orientation section to supply missing information.

Examples of typical O clauses are:

13/4 It looks pre-World War II. (time)

/5 [the men] are sitting on lawn chairs. (ongoing activities)

/6 They're smoking a pipe.

/8 One newspaper says on the back it says, "if there's peace there'll be no war". (objects)

/38 And it proceeds along for about the next five minutes
(durative action)

Category 2: Complicating Action (CA)

CA clauses refer to temporally ordered actions leading up to the climactic action. Generally, each CA clause refers to a specific event. While these actions usually follow each other in time, they may also occur simultaneously as in the following example:

15/32 He was smelling it all by himself,

/32.1 while the other was dancing around.

There is one situation where a CA clause does not refer to a separate event from one or more immediately following CA clauses. This happens when a CA clause makes a general statement about an action and then a number of subsequent CA clauses elaborate upon that action, as in the example below:

15/74 So the other guy went over to the other guy's house.

/75 And did the same thing.

/76 And knocked down the house.

/77 And punched the wife.

/78 And threw the baby away.

Clauses 76-78 give details of the action referred to in 75, and it could be argued that 75 is more a commentary upon the action than an action clause itself. However, it can also be argued that clause 75 could stand on its own without the subsequent clauses and the action of the story would still be preserved. It was decided that in all cases of a general statement followed by elaborative clauses, all the clauses would be coded as CA.

Clauses referring to changes in the intensity of an action or to the continuation of an action are also coded as CA.

e.g. 30/19 The the fighting becomes more fierce, more violent.

29/43 They continued to fight.

Also clauses which report a change in the men's appearance are coded as CA.

e.g. 32/39 Their faces begin to change.

Examples of typical CA clauses:

5/9 Um there was a little bit of uh movement behind them.

/10 And a flower came up uh through the earth.

/11 They both turned around.

10/28 Until finally one comes back.

/29 And puts his a:rm around it.

28/71 And this fight's getting really violent now.

/72 They're ripping at each other's shirts,

/72.1 and punching each other

Category 3: Evaluation (E)

Unlike O and CA clauses, E clauses do not serve a referential function, that is, they do not, as their primary purpose, simply report on character, setting, events, etc. Rather, they present the speaker's commentary on characters, objects, events, the film itself, the experimental situation, and even the speaker's own performance. E clauses present speakers' judgements about various aspects of the narrative, speculations about characters' motivations, feelings, desires, inferences about the causes of events.

Examples of typical E clauses:

15/22 They didn't know what this was.

15/28 And one of them liked the flower so much

/28/1 he danced around or something.

11/13 And their greed shone through.

1/8 And um # try not to use um so much.

30/40 It's like a senseless ravagery of everything that they have.

30/46 It's a wonderful film.

8/13 And then um I can't remember.

/14 Hate talking into tapes.

The above clauses are "externally" evaluative in that their primary purpose is evaluation. The types of externally evaluative clauses identified in the data are described below:

1: Clauses which make overt statements about the experimental situation. This includes speakers' comments on their own memory processes or performance

8/13 And then um I can't remember.

/14 Hate talking into tapes.

1/8 And um # try not to use um so much. (sotto voce)

10/12 and uh oh I should # oh I forgot something.

30/48 But I don't think that's why we're here.

2: Comments about the film as a film

30/46 It's a wonderful film.

31/42 Nice home movie here.

31/43 Something for the kids.

8/25 It's an older movie.

2/38 And there's no dialogue.

2/39 Um um it's simply uh motions?

3: Overt judgments, inferences about people, events, objects in the film

12/22 And um they're really enjoying this.

12/32 But they seem to be using some type of magic power.

28/13 It's a beautiful yellow flower.

4: Comparative, similes and metaphors

15/4 They're just like I don't know wooden houses just the fronts.

28/77 So he really looks like some kind of devil.

5: Explanations and Causes

26/27 The other one uh takes down the pickets

26/27.1 uh just by pointing at them.

13/40 And eventually they become so involved in their violence

13/40.1 That their faces start to change.

The most frequently occurring types of internal evaluation found are described below:

1: Repetition of words or phrases for emphasis

2/56 So they they appear more and more terrifying?

2/36.2 It's on his side.

2/36.3 It's on his side of the property line.

13/42.1 that the da # poor dandelion's just getting trodden on, back and forth, back and forth.

2: Quantifiers and emphasizeers. These include words such as the following:

Quantifiers: both, all, each, just, one, two

Emphasizers: very, really, virtually, in fact, actually, too

3: Lexical. Most adjectives and adverbs and many words per se which have strongly evaluative meanings. Also included in this category are reflexive pronouns.

- 30/8 And must be an incre:dible smell
 /8.1 because they go absolutely wi:ld.
 22/44.1 they're getting injured severely.
 10/46 It becomes painted like an aborigine or something.

4: False starts, corrections, restatements

- 14/20 One of them begins to # they they begin arguing
 about who # the possession of the flower.
 9/32 And they both start to fight
 /32.1 over who owns the plant.
 And they # or the flower I should say.

5: Phonology. Unusual word or syllable stress, elongation of sounds, questioning (rising) clause final intonation.

- 9/11 And then a plant uh suddenly pops up from the ground?
 29/15 And it smells ni:ce.

6: Hedges. These are words or phrases which suggest that the speaker is uncertain about the accuracy of his or her statement. They get the speaker "off the hook" of total commitment to his or her statement. They also allow the speaker to stall for time. Some hedges frequently found in the data are: well, sort of, I think, I suppose, I guess, say, or something, and everything, or anything.

7: References to the film. These are generally lexical items which remind the listener that what is being talked about is a film. They help maintain a film-viewer frame of reference.

28/91 They're right at the back of the screen.

17/7 And you see these two cardboard set-up props.

24/58 The next scene shows the two graves.

5/61 They did show a close-up of their faces.

Category 4: Result (R)

Like CA clauses, R clauses refer to events. These are the events that result from the climactic action of the story. In most narratives the climactic action is highly evaluated and is easily identified by the suspension of the action by E and/or O clauses. A high concentration of internal evaluative elements is also generally found at this point. Occasionally a speaker comes right out and identifies the climactic action as in the following example:

24/26 The climax # the film climaxes when you have one fellow knocking down the house of the other fellow.

Category 5: Appendage (A)

These are clauses which are attached to the main body of the narrative at the beginning or the end. Clauses which precede the initial orientation section are coded as A. An appendage at the end (called a coda by Labov) brings the story to a conclusion and signals to the listener that the speaker has finished. A coda usually consists of one or two succinct clauses.

Examples of Appendage clauses:

At the beginning of the narrative:

9/1 O.K. Do you want me to recapitulate the whole,
the entire storyline, the plot?

27/1 Basically the film was about loving your neighbour.

Codas:

1/85 Then it ended, there.

3/52 That was it.

Appendix D

Transcripts of Narratives Referred to in Chapter Four

The following are transcripts of the film narratives referred to in Chapter Four. Certain transcription conventions are used here and in the excerpts quoted in that chapter.

- . independent clause (sentence) as syntactically defined in this study. This usually corresponds to sentence final falling intonation. Independent clauses are also marked by beginning capital letters.
- ? clause-final rising intonation. May or may not be sentence final.
- , clause final (but not sentence final) falling intonation.
- : preceding segment elongated.
- # false start.
- .. incomplete clause.
- /x/ may not be an accurate transcription.
- /?/ segment unintelligible.
- xx underlined portion given extra stress.

Unfilled pauses were not transcribed, though pause fillers (er, uh, uhm, etc.) were.

Speaker 5 AP/CP (male)

Okay. From the beginning to the end then? Well as you said, I think I missed sort of the beginning of it. But uh but uh the first scene was um a couple of men sitting uh reading a paper, uh smoking a pipe. And um uh from here on in I guess I'll refer to them, as one with the blue shirt and one with the white shirt, because they both looked quite the same. Uh they had# there was houses in the uh background. One had a blue roof. And the other had a white roof. Um there was a little bit of uh movement behind them. And a flower came up through the earth. They both turned around. And looked at it. And uh then went to explore it further. Put the paper down. And went to explore it further. And uh they both uh started looking at it. And sat down. And looked at it. And uh then one of them

sniffed it. And uh it seemed to give him a lot of pleasure, uh from sniffing it. Uh so the other one tried it. Uh and they both uh proceeded to sniff the flower. Um there were smiles on their faces. You could tell they were quite pleased from that. Uhm they uhm sort of made indications that uh well that it gave them a lot of pleasure, the flower itself. Uh they sort of hugged it. Or caressed it a lot. Uh both of them, um off and on. Then um your first indication of um something going wrong was a little bit of uh say pushing. One of them wanted the flower for himself. Uh he wanted to try and keep the other one away from it. Um this uh sort of escalated into uh quite a battle. Uh so that uh they started hitting each other, and uh trying to keep each other away from the flower, trying to keep the flower all to themselves. Uh one of them then proceeded then to build a gate, uh so that uh# I should say a fence, so that the flower was on his side of the property and to keep the other one out. The other one uh took away the uh fence. And put the fence, uh so that the flower was on his side of the property. Um this continued for quite a while. They uh started coming# they came to blows. Uh they started fighting. Um they picked up uh parts of the fence. And started hitting each other with it to keep each other away from the flower. And uh are you going to comment at all on this or. . . ? [No.] Okay. Um this uh continued for quite a while. They uh started really fighting. Uh you could see that they were quite uh physical over this, uh uh to the extent that the gate# uh the fence was eventually uh all uh over uh the place. Uh they were uh really coming to blows. They were really fighting quite hard, quite a bit. Um this took# this went on for about I would say a minute or so, uh different types of uh battle. Uhm until uhm one of them uh took a a piece of wood from the fence. And knocked the other one's house down. Um inside the house there was a woman with a baby. Then proceed to knock the woman down and kick the baby around a little bit. And the other one did the same thing with the house# uh the other person's house. He knocked the house down. /?/ there's a woman inside with a babe in arms. And he uh hit the woman. And knocked her away. And hit the baby. And knocked him away. And then the uh change in their faces was very very explicit. Uh they did show a close-up of the faces uh say when they started and uh# when they started fighting and um and uh say at the end of the fight. Their faces had changed quite a bit to indicate violence uh on their face. Uh very dark. And uh then also blood# you could see blood after while too. Became quite so sort of explicit. Eventually ending up that uh they both kill themselves over this flower. And um you# the last scene was basically them uh both lying down and uh and they# a grave forming around them. And the cross on the grave was made out of the wood from the fence. Flowers uh sprouted up around the graves of the two. And uh the la# the moral I suppose of the story in a number of languages flash on the screen was love thy neighbour.

Speaker 6 AP/CP (female)

Okay. It begins with two men who are sitting on their own lawns. And their homes are behind them. And it turns out their wives and children are in there# or child. And all of a sudden a little flower pops up out of the ground. And as they're reading their papers, they look back. And realize this. And they both think it's very nice. But they question it. And then both of them go back there. And the first one, who is on the right hand side as I look, smells it. And he's quite intrigued. Then the second one does the same. And let's see now. Then they# as they both realize how nice it is, rather than agreeing with each other, they tend to fight for it. And they both want it. Um then they make a decision to make a fence. And it's actually directly on the centre line. However one, the first person who makes the fence, puts it a bit over on his side. And then the oth# the other person takes it down. And puts it on the other side. So that they're fighting also. Then they take the fen# bits of the fence, as it's easy to put up and come down, like a little rule. And they tend to fight for it. They end up that# well they fought for about two minutes I suppose. And the flower stayed there. But the flower showed a means of being very upset, like by moving and as if it was a person covering its head. And then it shows the two men. And after some# quite a bit of fighting, they don't look quite so very nice. They look like they've been boxing or something, or more like tigers with the scratches. And uh then one of them goes back to the opposite house. And knocks it down. And gets rid of the wife and child. And the sa# then the other man does it to the other home. Incidentally these homes are actually# they look like half homes, like the way you would usually draw a home. Just actually one# the way they used to make old films. Just seems to be ha# part of it. But after they've got rid of# gotten rid of the wives and children, then they do a bit more fighting and hitting and boxing. And then, they're unaware of it because they're fighting so much, but they're stepping and rolling all over the flower. And soon the flower is dead. And when the flower is dead, it's# both men seem to fall on their own sides. And they're dead. And then the fence collapses. And it makes itself a little fence around each one. And a s# forms a cemetery, like a grass covered up on each one. And at this time there are no flowers. However all of a sudden two pop up right in the centre, rather than one. And the flowers move on their own directly to the centre and then up and to the centre of the cemetery. Like it's actually seems to be grass covered up in the shape of a# what would be a box that we put a body in? I can't think of the exact word for that right now. Um and then the little fences form fences around each other and with the flowers on top. Then there are two sticks that make way from the# each of the fences and go up and make little "x"s. And that's the end of the story.

Speaker 8 AP/CP (female)

Okay. Um it started off with two men, who lived in well identical houses, coming out and sitting in their similar chairs, in their similar clothing, and reading papers, which # . . . Well their headlines were different. But they meant about the same thing. And was talking about war and peace. And you know they seemed friendly and everything. And then a flower came up. And they # it made them both happy. And they both liked it. But well they both liked it so much that they both wanted it. And so they started fighting over who it belonged to. And so they started building fences. And then um # I can't remember. Hate talking into tapes. Um okay. So they started building the fence. Then they argued about where the fence was supposed to go. And then they started fighting over it. And these two people, that were friends before, started you know, this one thing. And the fence going back and forth was magic too. And uh anyways and so they started using the fence to beat each other up. And they got each other onto their own territory. And # oh, you've never seen this have you? That's right. It's interesting. It's an older movie. Um anyways, and so they started using this picket of the white picket fence to beat each other up. And um I'm trying to remember now. Okay. The# and they started destroying the fence. And they started destroying each other. And then they had# war paint came up like an Indian or something like that. Supposedly you know just kind of appeared on their faces. Supposedly meaning they were savages, or something. I don't know. Anyways and um oh and then it# okay they continued on fighting. And they had the the nice little white picket fence all over the place. And um then one of them attacked the the # knocked down the house. And threw away the wife and kid. And the other one did the same thing. All this in only eight minutes. Yeh they just /went/ like that. And uh# but I can't think. Okay. And so then they eventually # they hit each other some more. And then they end up dying. And the graves came up. The little white picket fence surrounded them. And then there were two flowers, rather than one. And there was a cross on the graves. And then it says "love your neighbour". And it's all about war and peace and all the stupid things that we fight over. And and how what can be so important at first# well the # I mean something that gives you pleasure, you'll fight over and /may/ totally destroy yourself for. It's really # it's it's # I mean you can see what they're talking about. As soon as you see the war and peace headlines, you start looking for it. And I mean you can see it. Mind you actually while I was watching it, I started thinking about um how you can see that it's really stupid, the way we fight over things like that. But when you get them on a larger scale, they don't seem so dumb, when you're fighting over goldmines or whatever it is. But # and the whole thing was that the two people were very similar. And they lived in these identical houses. Very suburbia. And um # but it was very interesting. And uh they had all the language flash on in different

languages. /And told you/ love your neighbour. And it was good. Yep I'd recommend your seeing it. It's not worth five dollars but

Speaker 10 AP/CA (female)

Okay. Um the story begins with a blank meadow. And then two houses come in. And then uh two chairs appear, two lawn chairs. Then two men appear, sitting in the lawn chairs, reading the newspapers. And one of the headlines in the newspaper says uh uh "there will be war if there's no peace". And the other one says "there will be peace if there's no war". And that's the beginning. And then they sort of pay attention to something over their shoulder. And a flower sprouts right in between them. There's no fence a a long between And uh # oh I should# oh I forgot something. Um they were both smoking or started to smoke um pipes. And one neighbour lit the other neighbour's pipe basically. That /?/ they're neighbours is sort of established. And this flower sprouts. And uh they both go back to look at it. And they both sit down. And look at it. And s:mell it. And apparently go into transports of delight. They are s:liding around the meadow on either side. And "oh this is lovely, this is lovely". Come back. And smell it. And look at it. Until finally one comes back. And he puts his ar:m around it, as if it's it's his flower. And smells it. And they have a little bit of an argument about that. And then they start talking about, or seem to be talking about, boundary lines. And one says, "oh", pointing back at his house, "this is where the line goes". And the other one says, "no no no this is where the line goes". And then one of them gets up. And builds a fence or puts up pickets of a fence. And then # it's animated so the other person uhm sort of moves the fence by magic. It goes from one side of the flower to the other side of the flower, from one side of the flower to the other side of the flower. Until finally it stops. And then they pick up pickets of the fence. And they're fencing. And then they really come to blows with each other. And they're actually fighting. And as one overcomes the other you can see his face change. It becomes painted like uh an aborigine or something. 'N blood drips down one side of his face. And then you can see both of their faces have changed. And they're really ugly and horrifying. And um one seems to overcome the other. And yet they don't. And then one goes back. And knocks down the house. And kills the child and wife I suppose of the other neighbour. And the other neighbour does the same to the other side. And uh the fence gets destroyed. And afterwhile it looks like a battlefield. And and um then they finally kill each other. They're both dead. Lie there dead. And then they appear# it appears two graves neatly beside each other on either side of this fence in this mess of a field with houses falling all over and the fence pickets every which way. And then uh a little bit of

irony at the end of the film. The uh the pickets form into a neat fence around. And come up. And set themselves on the graves. And that's the end. The end just says uh in many languages, uh love thy neighbour.

Speaker 14 AP/CA (female)

Okay. It begins with two men outside on their lawns. And they're just # they're both reading the paper, next door to one another but on their own property. And one man pulls out a pipe. And lights his. And then he sees that his neighbour has a pipe, so he light the pipe for his neighbour. And they're both reading the paper, sitting there. And all of a sudden one of them sees a flower sprouting up right in about the middle of of their property line. And um one one turns around. And the other turns around. And one goes. And smells the flower. And they both begin to smell the flower. And when# and on smelling the flower, they are both kind of in a trance I guess, a trance state. And they start dancing around and sliding all over the place. No. They start dancing around and sliding all over the place. No. They start dancing around and# all around and# the lawn. And um as they do this, one of them begins to# they they begin arguing about who# the possession of the flower. Um first of all they just starts by saying "this is mine". And the other one says "no this is mine". Well they don't say this. But they show this in their actions. And what happens is uh they start arguing about it. And they they start# one man puts up a fence. And although it is in the middle of the property line, one of them puts a fence up to make it look like it's on his property. And the other man does this. And they keep on doing this back and forth for awhile. And then they start getting physically abusive with one another. They start fighting with pieces of fence. And they go to the point where um they're almost like savages. They're just ripping each other apart. And uhm in in # while this is happening, the flower is getting ruined. But I guess they're so into the possession of the flower, the gree# they want the flower so#.. Um then they're as# I think they're in # at the stage of savagery. One of them goes. And rips down the other's house. And um I guess abuses the the child and wife. And the other does this to the to the other man's hou# family. And at the end they result in dy:ing. And /?/ and the flower dies. And when they die um they # it is shown that they both get the flower on their grave with a fence around. And it ends by saying "so" and in a bunch of different language I suppose because I think it was in French and all those# Chinese and all kind of languages, "love your neighbour". And that was I guess the theme of it.

Speaker 15 AP/CA (male)

Okay. Kay it started off in this field with some trees in the background. And these two sort of animated houses suddenly slid into the middle of the field from the side. And from these houses# they're just like I don't know wooden houses just the fronts. These lawn chairs sorta slid out from the front of the houses. And they were flat on the ground. And then they opened up, you know so you could sit in them. And suddenly two men appeared in them. These men had newspapers. And sat there. And they were reading the newspapers. And they looked friendly. And then they pulled out a pipe. And one lit his pipe. And he lit his friend's pipe. And they sat there in front of their houses sort of in their lawn chairs, reading their papers. Then suddenly when they were sitting there reading the papers, there was this flashing glow of light sort of between their lawn chairs behind them. And they both looked around. And saw it. And suddenly this this flower came out of it. And so they looked at this. They didn't know what this was. They went back to look at look at it. And it was this nice flower. And they bent down. And they were smelling it. And they liked this flower. And one of them liked the flower so much he danced around or something. And the other fell on his back. And started sliding around on the ground and these kind of crazy things. And suddenly one of the men went back to the flower. He was smelling it all by himself while the other was dancing around. And he noticed this guy was sort of coveting the flower. So he went back. And he started to smell it too. And the guy sorta wouldn't let him in. So they started a fight over uh over who could sort of obtain possession of this flower. And they were rolling around, and fighting. Then suddenly they stopped. And they looked back. And the hou# the flower was sorta right between their houses. And one of them goes# well he just sort of points with his finger, like where his property line would be, saying the flower is on his side of the property and the other guy didn't agree. And he made his own imaginary line that was on his side. So that didn't work. So one of them just motioned with his hand. And a fence came up between the houses on um # and like separated the flower. Put the flower on his side of the fence. And kept his neighbour on the other side. And the other guy sorta waved his hand. His neighbour. And the fence disappeared. And came back, so the flower was on his side. And they kept doing this for awhile. And then suddenly: they they got into a fight, yeah, over it. And they were rolling around. And they they ended up knocking down the fence. And the fence was all over. And they were fighting more. And suddenly they started stomping on the flower. And the flower was getting destroyed. And they# both their faces were all black and scarred. And it looks like they were sort of turning into animals. Is what it looked like to me. And they started scratching each other. And their clothes was all wrecked. And then um oh yeah one of them went to # he# one of them went over. And knocked his neighbour's house down. Which was just a board anyways. And he went in. And punched his wife, or something, who

was sitting there. And picked up his little baby. And threw it aside. So the other guy went over to the other guy's house. And did the same thing. And knocked down the house. And punched the wife. And threw the baby away. And then he came back. And they started fighting some more, and fighting. And finally they just fell on the ground. And looked like they died. And suddenly these graves sort of formed over them, these mounds of grass. And a picket fence sort of went around the graves. And and a couple of things went up. A couple of pickets went up. And made crosses on their graves. And then these flowers appeared. And they grew on the graves. And that was the end of that. Then suddenly the screen went blank. And there was um messages on the screen in all these different languages. Like it looked like it was going to be the moral of the story. But you know first it was in Chinese, and Japanese, and Arabic, and German and French. And finally in English it says um "love thy neighbour". And that was the end.

Speaker 16 AP/CA (female)

Okay. It was very interesting. Um and it started out uh there were two men, who were neighbours and lived side by side. And basically had a lo# they# each other had uh# they were equal, in that they both had a house and . . . And the story begins. They're sitting out on their front lawns, reading the paper. And uh the papers or their headlines have something to do uh with war and peace. And as the story progresses, a flower springs up between their two houses. And there's one flower right on the border of of their their two houses. And they notice this flower. And both fa:ll madly in love with it, and in total ecstasy with it, with this silly little flower. And begin to# they want the flower very much for themselves. So they they try to divide# each divides the uh the line between their two properties, so the flower's included on their side. Uh begins the great war. Suppose it it's to show you how silly the things begin war are. And they end up physically beating each other up with fence posts. And uh going in# uh really doing really doing damage to each other. Finally it ends up that they go and destroy each other's families and each other's property. And uh then finally they end up killing each other. And they end up falling side by side. And meanwhile as they've been fighting, they've also trampled this little flower that they've been fighting over. So they end up buried by each other in in two graves side by side. And the irony of the story is is# it ends up with just their two graves, there beside each other. And a flower springs up in # on each of their graves. So they each did get their flower in the end. And it /?/ how silly it really is. And the moral of the story is that you should love your neighbour. Is that it?

Speaker 17 AA/CP (female)

Well I'm not too fond of talking into tapes. But I'll give this a try. Um the movie's called Neighbours. And I expected it to be different somehow. It was actually quite funny at first. Um these two guys are sitting there, reading a newspaper on the front of a lawn. And you see these two cardboard set-up props behind them. And all of a sudden a little flower appears. And the two of them seem to notice it. It appears directly behind them. And they both notice it at the same time. They're kind of like Charlie Chaplin movie figure types. They move really fast, 'cause the movie has been speeded up. Um both of them fall in love with this little flower. And they dance. And and they smell this flower. And they think it's absolutely the best thing in the world. And of course what happens they both become jealous. And they both want this flower for themselves. Instead of compromising and saying "okay you can have it one day, and I'll have it the other day", they decide to fight about it. And they: try to prove that the flower is on their lawn in front of their house by magically propping up this fence. And the one guy has the fence lined with the flower on his side. And the other guy then erases that. And has the fence with the flower on his side. Well what happens is the two of them start fighting. They take up pieces of the fence. And have a sword fight. And it kinda parallels it seems like to me with with the world powers fighting over a little beautiful thing, like the earth or something. And and they both get really savage and violent. And just forget all their um I don't know their normal human behavior. And become real real almost barbarians. And um the directors have put paint on them, so that they really do in a sense become savages. And the# they end up tearing their clothes, and bashing each other. And then the house props, which were set up for them, have a mother and child behind each of them. And each of the men knocks down the houses in a sense. Throws the mother and the child. Er er violently gets rid of them. So all you have left are these these two savages. And of course the flower in the meantime has been trampled on, abused. And um what happens at the end is the two of them have fought so much they've worn themselves out. And both of them lie down on their side. And um a little grave is built up for them. A cross is put up for them from the si# the fence posts. And a little flower grows on each of their graves. And then at the end you have the title, the main moral of the f# of of the movie, um love thy neighbour. So it was a it was a turn around. I thought it would be a very funny almost a comedy type of movie at the beginning. And it really turned into a savage savage um deal at the end. And I thought it was really interesting. I kind of liked it.

Speaker 19 AA/CP (female)

The film was called Neighbours, by the National Film Board. Um and it's basically about these two guys, that live right beside each other. And at the start of the film they get along great. That's evident because they have their um lawn chairs right beside each other. And they're reading the paper. And in the background is # are these little cardboard cutouts of their houses. And they're basically exactly the same, except that they face# or the angles are on different sides or whatever. But as they're sitting there reading their paper, a flower grows right in in the middle of the two houses. And they go back to check it out. And one guy gets down on his knees. And he sniffs it. And he just loves the smell. And the other guy watches him. And sees that# this one sees that his neighbour is really happy. So he gets down. And smells the flower. And he loves it too. And they love the flower a lot. And for a while they can share it. But then it starts getting really awkward, because they both go down to sniff it and their heads bang, or one guy is always there with his arm around the flower and the other guy can't get in to smell it himself. So they start to fight about it. And they uh they have an argument about whose property the flower is really on. And they draw imaginary lines. And of course one neighbour says, "it's on my side". And the other neighbour says it's on his side. And they disagree. And disagree. And finally one guy gets up. And builds a fence, that puts the flower squarely on his side. But that doesn't settle it because the other guy with a flick of his wrist makes the fence vanish. Then builds it so the flower is on his side. And anyway this goes on for a while. And it gets progressively more violent as the film continues. Let me see now. The fence is a picket fence. And it gets to such a state that finally one neighbour picks up a stake. And hands it to his other neighbour. And then picks up a stake for himself. And then they have a sword fight. And pretty soon the sword fight just turns into a big brawl. And they're punching, and kicking. And and in the meantime they're destroying the fence. And it gets worse. And it gets more violent. And they're getting more and more beat up all the time. And uh there's one scene where one of the neighbours is on top of the other, punching him out. And every time he lifts his head up he's got more and more warpaint on. And what finally happens is that they destroy their fence. They destroy a lot of their property. And they destroy the flower. So pretty soon it even gets so that one neighbour goes to the other guy's house. And rips it off its foundation. And throws his wife and kid out the door. And the other neighbour does that to the other guy's wife and kid and house. And finally they end up killing each other, just for the sake of this flower. And um all the picket fence stakes are lying around in a bit schmoz. And they they pick themselves up, because it's an animated film. And they make a nice little fence around these two guys that are dead. And then these de# two dead guys, it it turns out that it's their grave site. And uh the picket fences make a nice little cross on top of their their

coffins. And two flowers grow. And each one goes to each of the neighbour's coffin. And rests there. And then that's the end of the film. And then they have all this# all these different languages that go by really quickly. And you're wondering what it says. And then finally it gets to English. And it says, "so- love your neighbour". And that's it.

Speaker 23 AA/CP (male)

The film I watched was called Neighbours. It was about uh two men, who were sitting around reading a newspaper. One of them was reading a newspaper that had headlines about war. And one had headlines about peace. I noticed that in certain ways the two men were kind of opposite. Their clothes were opposites of what they were wearing. All of a sudden a flower grew in the middle of their yard right between their two yards. The two men sort of looked at the flower. Then they went over to to smell it. After each one of them had uh sniffed at it, they seemed to get high or stoned. And they did kind of crazy things. They were floating around the yard and what not. Each of them went back to to have another sniff. And then after a couple of sniffs of the flower, they started to have an argument over whose flower it was. The argument started out just basically trying to define on whose yard the flower was growing. Each of them then sort of proceeded to build a picket fence, to show that the flower was on their side of the yard. And the other one would take the fence down and put it on their side. After sort of arguing in a verbal sort of sense, they started to have a physical fight. This fight was uh very very violent. They proceeded to hit each other with the picket fence, scratch and claw at each others' faces. And as that continued, the fight grew briskly worse. And each time they sort of hit each other, their faces sort of became uh painted up, as if they were sort of reverting back to some kind of uh cannibalistic type of person. Uh the fight continued like this for a while. And then one of the uh men went over. And proceeded to beat on the other person's house with a piece of the picket fence. And as he beat the house down, uh inside was a woman nursing a baby. And uh he then kicked at the woman. And kicked at the baby. And the other man went over and did exactly the same thing. Beat on the other guy's house. Kicked at his wife. Kicked at the baby. After that uh the two men went back to fighting again. And they were hitting each other with the picket fence. And eventually they hit each other. And they fell down on the ground. And they appeared to be dead. Uhm the uh there was a grave, sort of mound put on top of these two people as if they were dead. And then uhm a picket fence was built around them. Two of the pickets went up on the mound. And formed a cross laying down on top of the mound. And uh while that was happening uh it was getting to be the end of the movie. And uh two uh two flowers came out. Two flowers grew this time. And each one of them popped up out of the ground. And one went on one mound /of/ grave. And one went on

the other mound /of/ grave. And then there was a series of words written in different languages. And it ended# started with Japanese type of writing. Ended with English. And it said "love thy neighbour, yes". And that's it.

Speaker 28 AA/CA (female)

As the film begins, we see two houses, one on either side of the screen. And then two lawn chairs come sliding out of the houses. And then two men appear, each one on each lawn chair. The men each have a pipe. And they have a newspaper that they're reading. Kay. They light each other's pipes. They're neighbours. And they're friends. They're sitting and quietly reading. And then all of a sudden they hear a sort of popping sound. And then a flower pops up. And it appears to be right on the property line. It's a beautiful yellow flower. Both men slowly look over their shoulders. And then look at the flower. They look at each other. And then slowly put down the newspapers. They get out of their chairs. And they walk over to the flower. One man smells the flower. And smiles. And looks very contented. Then the next man smells the flower. After he's smelt the flower he falls back over. And lays on his back. And he slides around the grass, all the way around. But he's not making himself slide. It's as if some kind of power's making him slide. Then they both come back to the flower. And at first they appear to be taking turns sniffing the flower. And then they start pushing one another. They both want the flower to be their flower. The first man makes a motion. He points to himself and then to the flower, as if "the flower's mine". The second man shakes his head. And he points to the flower and then himself. "No the flower's mine" he says. Then they get into an argument. And they're pointing to the property line. The first man lines up the property line so the flower's on his side. The second man says "no no no". And he lines up the property line so the flower's on his side. They both really like the flower. And they both want the flower to be theirs. So then the first man makes some kind of motion with his hand. And then a whole stack of uh like metal pipes appear? And he runs down the property line really quickly sticking these pipes in all the way down. They're like fence post pipes. And of course they're on # so the flower's on his side of the property. That's the way he puts them up. Well the second man shakes his head. And waves his hand. And moves them to the other side. And this goes on for a little while. And then finally the second man gets them moved over so the flower's on his side. And he puts up pickets in between these poles. So now it's as if it makes a picket fence. But now the picket fence is right on the line where the flower is. And the flower is kind of grown up in between two of the pickets. The two men start to push and shove and fight. They both want the flower to be on their side. They're knocking the fence out of the ground and wrecking the yard. They run around. And chase after each other. And beat up on one another. First it's

it just starts with them chasing each other around and pushing each other down on the ground. It's not very violent to begin with. But then it gets more and more violent as the two men# two men fight over whose side the flower's on. So they're beating up on one another. And finally um one man pulls a picket out of the ground. And he hits the other man with it. And then they start pulling out pickets and hitting each other with the pickets from the fence, and knocking down more pickets from the fences# fence, and making the whole yard just a big mess. And this fight's getting really violent now. They're ripping at each other's shirts and punching each other. And all of a sudden at a point where it appears to get really violent, paint starts appearing on the men's face. Uh white red black. I think that's all the colours that it was. And they look like a demon or a vulture or something something evil. And then the one man, when you# when the screen shows him, it's as if he's missing two front teeth? So he he really looks like some kind of devil. And they're really beating up on each other now. They've ripped almost all of each other's shirts off. But this time when they're really beating up on each other it doesn't seem to be about the flower anymore. It's as if they've forgotten about the flower? Because before when they were beating up on one another, um they were staying away from the area where the flower was, because they# well of course they liked this flower so much and it gave them such a sense of satisfaction, just the smell of it and its beauty, that they didn't want to ruin it. But now it's as if they've forgotten about all that. And as they're fighting they step on the flower. And stomp on it. And crush it. And it's almost as if they killed the flower. It's laying there half dead on the ground as the two men are fighting. They've ruined the fence. And each of them is pretty badly beaten up. Then the one man runs back to where the two houses were, that I said were there in the beginning. They're right at the back of the screen. And the first man runs. And he knocks down the second man's house. And inside the house is the second man's wife and the second man's child, a little infant. And the first man punches the wi# the second man's wife. And throws the baby away. And kicks the wife away. So the second man runs up to the first man's house. He knocks down his house. And he hi:ts the first man's wife. And he chucks# he throws away the first man's baby. So now both the first man and the second man, both their families are gone. The people that they cared about the most, their whole environment is ruined. It's knocked down. And it's almost as if it will never be the same again. And the flower, the thing that started all this destruction, is gone too. It's dead. The:n a whole new picture is created. The area that we were looking at before, well we're looking at it again. But only now tow coffins pop up, one on either side of the remains of the fence. The pickets are laying everywhere. And then all of a sudden the pickets begin to stand up. And they all move in a square around the two coffins of the dead men. Or perhaps it's the coffins of the whole families, one family on either side of the# where the fence was. Now uh anyway the fence has made a square right around it. And then two of

the pickets um in front of either coffin move up. And lay on the coffin to make a cross. And then the popping sound occurs again, that created the first flower. And the first# two flowers form this time. One's a yellow colour. And the other one I think that sort of a taw:ny red? sort of color? with a little bit of orange in it? And they slowly move up making a sort of a bleeping sound as if they're growing, like when the first yellow one grew? at the beginning of the film? One flower moves up. And sits on top of the coffin on the right hand side of the screen and the left hand side of the screen. And then # uh the pickets in the fence had moved to let this flower grow up, you know, move up the side onto the coffin, the grave. And then the pickets moved back. And all the fence is in perfect order, squarely around the two graves of the two families, that are now dead, due to this fight. And then the film's over. And then uhm a message comes up on the screen. And I think it comes up in about ten different languages. And finally at the end of the film, it says "love thy neighbour".

Speaker 29 AA/CA (male)

I've been asked to talk about the film Love Thy Neighbour. And um in the beginning of the film you see two men. They're sitting on a lawn. They're obviously neighbours. They have houses next door to each other. And they're just sitting, reading a paper, when they notice that a flower sprouts up in the middle of their# in# oh: # just behind them in between them and their houses. They're sitting out front of their houses. And they go and# both men get out of their chairs. And they go and look at this flower. And they examine it. And both of them realize that they do like it you know. Both men are interested in this flower. They smell it. And it smells ni:ce. And they're both trying to keep the other man away so that each one can have control over the flower. Eventually after a little bit of time they start fighting over the flower. They start pushing each other away when one smells it. [Excuse me. I was just interrupted. I'll get back to it now.] Kay, the men they were fighting over the flower. And every time one man would go to smell it, the other would push him away. And then the second man would smell it. And they'd push each other, and each try to smell it and look at it and examine it. And eventually after a little bit of time one man went over to his house. Brought out some boards. And built a fence along the property line. Just# and it so happened that the flower, the way he built the fence, happened to be on his side of the fence. The other man did not appreciate this because he thought that the property line was a li:ttle to the side, making the flower on his side. So he took the fence down. And built the fence so the flower would be on his side of the lawn. Back and forth the men took down the fence. And rebuilt it so that they had the flower on their side. Well this wasn't enough. They finally got frustrated with this. And then one man picked up one of the boards of the fence. And started hitting the other man with it.

Eventually they were both# they both had sticks. And they were both fighting. They were both hitting each other. And they were knocking the fence down and coming very close to stepping on the flower, but not quite. They continued to fight and run and chase each other. And until it is very evident by the um # by their face they're becoming quite violent. Um paint# warpaint uh as in na# you know native warpaint was beginning to appear on their face. They were becoming quite animals. And one man sent over to the other man's house. Knocked down the house. The houses were just um models. They were just cardboard. So one man knocked down the house. And behind the cardboard model of the house was a woman with a baby. Obviously it was the other man's wife and baby. The man conti# he then went on to hit the wife and baby and knock the wife and baby right out of the picture. Upon this the the other man went over to the# oh boy . . . Okay. The man, his wife and baby had just been beat up, then went over to the other man's house. He then proceeded to beat up on the wife and baby in the same manner that the first man had beat up on his. Then both men went and began to fight again. Upon this they fought very heavily. And eventually they trampled the flower. And killed themse# they both killed each other. The flower was dead. They were dead. The fence was wrecked. The houses were wrecked. And each of their families were killed. The men then were seen covered in graves. Each man had a grave right next to each other. And the fence formed around them. And a flower similar to the one they were fighting for was the# then went and rested on each of the graves. So throughout the story they fought for one silly little object. Ruined their houses. Ruined their families. Killed themselves. And they didn't# and then they eventually killed the object they were trying to get. But as soon as they died they did get that object when it was too late. This is kind of funny.

Speaker 32 AA/CA (male)

I'm going to tell you the story of the film. The film starts with two houses appearing on the screen. From within the two houses two men appear in two lawn chairs in front of their house. They're both reading a paper. On each# on the ca# the caption on the front of their paper is two different um titles. On the one neighbour's paper the caption reads "war is certain if no peace". And on the other neighbour's uh the front of the newspaper is the caption "peace is certain if no war". As the two men are reading all of a sudden they are sort of awakened with a start, or possibly um how can you say it, startled by the appearance of this flower between the two houses right down the middle of the yard. As they both get up, the one neighbour goes over. And smells it. And is taken back, sort of like an opium# like he's on some sort of drug, like the flower is uhm an opium flower. He uh falls back in a daze sort of like he's on a drug trip. The uh other neighbour uh walks up to the flower. Uh takes a sniff. And the same thing happens to him. They even

went on a little bit of a trip around the yard, um off and on. Both neighbours um exchange um sniffing of the flower. They sniff sniff it. And then they go on little bit of a trip. They're dancing all over the yard. Gradually each neighbour becomes more possessive of the flower. They# uh the one neighbour doesn't want to let the other neighbour uh have a have a smell of the flower. And the other neighbour wants to. And they end up getting in a fight. Um actually before that the# as they become more possessive, the one neighbour says to the other well "this flower's on my side of the line um if you draw a line diagonal the flower's on my side". And uh they draw a picket fence. And the one neighbour puts it# the picket fence so the flower's on his side. The other neighbour changes the fence so that the flower's on the other side, on his side. Um gradually this goes on for a while. They exchange fences from one side to the other so the flower's on either their side or or on the side that they want it to be. Um they get into a fight. One member picks up one of the uh the strips from the uh picket fence. And hits the other neighbour. They begin to hit each other. A fight breaks out, fist fight, um punching like crazy. Um gradually he uh# as they're fighting their faces begin to change uh shape and structure. They begin to look like they're cannibals. They're fighting like crazy. Um one's as they're beating up on each other it gets carried away. Um their fighting goes from from # from the beginning they're trying to possess the flower. Now they're trying to kill each other. They they go overboard. The one neighbour goes over to the other neighbour's house. Uh knocks down his house. Kills his wife and his child. And the other neighbour sees this. Does the same thing to his house. They gradually fight some more. And the fighting continues until both of them kill each other. And they're lying there. Um the end of the film comes where they're both sitting in their grave. The fence which was used to uh divide the two houses in half is now around the two graves. And uh rather than just one flower growing two flowers grow. And uh /mosey/ their way on top of the grave. The moral of the story is be kind to your neighbour. Thank you.

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