

## **Moral Stances in Undergraduates' Reflective Narratives on English Learning**

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This study analyzes reflective narratives produced by three undergraduates in a college setting of student-professor office hour discussions in Taiwan. This study explores the following two questions to investigate how the students problematize their English learning experiences and position themselves as morally upright or less so with respect to their responsibility for learning. First, when the students delineate their learning problems, how do they portray themselves in accordance with the general rule around moral stances, the “looking good” principle (Ochs & Capps 2001), to present themselves as moral agents? Second, how are the students' moral stances (dis)established during the narrating process? I suggest that these students' stances are related to the other narrative dimensions, especially that of tellership (Ochs & Capps 2001), by which the professor contributes sense-making fragments to the students' learning and self-evaluations. The higher the teacher's involvement in co-telling is, the more fluid the students' moral stances can be. Moreover, I propose that when students attempt to explain why they do not consider themselves as good English learners, they perform a moral act. Such a moral act resides in the students' honest analysis of their problems and their determination to solve them.

Key words: English learning, interaction, moral stances, reflective narratives, tellership

### **1. Introduction**

Scholars in sociolinguistic and discourse analytic research have demonstrated that speakers' linguistic structures illuminate how they construe their experiences and position themselves in relation to others in the narratives they recount (Goodwin 1984, Chafe 1990, Linde 1993, Cole 2003, Holmes & Marra 2005, Bucholtz 2011). Stance-taking, an intrinsically social act of evaluating others, displays how speakers' perspectives are shaped in the process of narrating. Narratives and stances have been explored in different institutional settings, including schools (Vásquez 2007, Jaffe 2009, Bucholtz 2011), online communities (Hardey 2002, Langellier & Peterson 2004, Lindemann 2005), clinical settings (Kleinman 1988, Coupland & Coupland 2001), courts (Deeb 2010), asylum hearings (Maryns 2006), and the workplace (Dyer & Keller-Cohen 2000, Holmes & Marra 2005, Roberts & Campbell 2005). These studies yield insightful observations on the various functions narratives perform, including how speakers form their stances on protagonists, how their stances remain stable or become fluid as narratives unfold, and how speakers represent identities by maneuvering different stances.

In the current literature, little attention has been paid to how speakers critically reflect upon their own behavior. One important feature of narratives, as identified by

Ochs (2004:276), is that “we not only act in and on the world, we also reflect on our actions and reflect on our reflection...In narrating we do not replay an intact experience so much as bring experience into social and psychological focus.” Focusing on this function of narratives, Vásquez (2007:659) defines “reflective narratives” as those that “depict a speaker’s internal states or cognitive process, and often consist of a series of mental, rather than physical, actions.” As the primary focus of reflective narratives is on speakers’ self-evaluations of their own thoughts and actions, reflective narratives provide a lens through which to examine why tellers concentrate on a particular episode or moment of their experience, represent it to others, and evaluate it as an experiencer and “reflective practitioner” (Schön 1983).

Ochs & Taylor (1995) remark that a “problematizer”—the co-narrator who comments on the other co-narrator’s problematic actions—usually wields asymmetrical power on a “problematizee”—the co-narrator whose actions are problematized. While most of the existing literature examines the “problematizing pattern” of the negotiating process in terms of who takes the role to problematize others and who is vulnerable to criticism, this study investigates self-problematizing narratives. Specifically, I analyze the narratives produced by three undergraduates who problematize their own English learning experiences on different grounds, including incompetence, self-doubt, and the lack of correct instruction. Ochs & Capps (2001) propose that moral stances lurk under the surface of linguistic strategies and sometimes are rather strongly implicated in tellers’ attitudes. By their definition, “moral stances” refer to how tellers position themselves in relation to protagonists in the course of narrating (more details in Section 4, “Ochs and Capps’s Narrative Theory”); and most of the time, tellers position themselves as moral or well behaved to show their superiority to protagonists who engage in misconduct or inappropriate behavior. Moreover, when tellers happen to be the protagonists, they are inclined to present a positive image of themselves, which is the so-called “looking good” principle evidenced across narratives recounted by tellers from different socio-linguistic communities.

This study explores the following two questions. First, when the students delineate their learning problems, how do they portray themselves in accordance with the “looking good” principle? Second, how are the students’ moral stances (dis)established during the narrating process? I suggest that the students’ moral stances are related to other narrative dimensions, especially that of tellership (Ochs & Capps 2001), by which the teacher contributes sense-making fragments to students’ learning and self-evaluations. Through interaction, the students may insist on or revise their stances. They use narratives to appraise how they have done in learning English, and consult the teacher on ways to improve their English learning as well on how to be good learners in general. Narratives, to the students, are not only tools for reflecting

on their lives but are also constructive means to (re)define their responsibilities and learning ability in a college setting of student-professor office hour discussions.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on academic advising sections. Section 3 describes the data and methodology used in this study. Section 4 introduces Ochs and Capps's narrative theory. Section 5 presents the analysis. Section 6 discusses the implications of this work.

## **2. Academic talk at advising sessions**

Academic advising serves the pedagogical purpose of improving student performance. Scholars have conducted empirical research to assess the effects of advising systems in various higher educational institutions; for example, the instruction students receive from academic advising may improve their language skills (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1990, 1996, Ciekanski 2007). A few investigations of linguistic structures and discourse patterns in the context of academic advising sessions afford insight into this analysis.

Guthrie (1997) examines the uses of *okay* and *mmhmm* in advising sessions at American universities. The result shows that these two frequently used words in everyday conversation are indicative of speakers' institutional roles. Most of the tokens of *okay* and *mmhmm* are produced by students as backchanneling while they are listening to their teachers. Specifically, *okay* is used to acknowledge reception of the teachers' advice, and *mmhmm* is employed to give continuity to the teachers' talk. By contrast, teachers as information givers occasionally use *mmhmm* to implicitly ask for an extended turn. Guthrie maintains that such a deployment of these two words may occur in similar settings where a relative novice comes to an experienced "advisor" to solicit guidance.

Limberg (2007) proposes a prototypical five-phase discourse structure of office hour consultations at German universities. First, the "summon-answer sequence" (Schegloff 1986) is realized in a variety of interactional exchanges. Second, the opening sequence is a ritualized routine to initiate participation in the conversation, and it often involves students' self-identification. Third, the core part of office hour consultations is spent dealing with students' issues. Teachers orient themselves to institutional duties by asking questions such as "What can I do for you?" Alternatively, if teachers do not send out such an "invitation," students automatically start presenting their topics by using prefaces such as "Okay, now I have a problem...." What follows is the fourth phase, in which teachers either propose solutions to the problems or brainstorm with students if the matter is complicated. When teachers and

students discuss solutions, they tend to share the floor equally, and the conversations feature question-answer sequences. The final stage is the closing of an advising session. Students use conventional leave-taking expressions, engage in some small talk, and display their appreciation for the teachers' help.

To date, very few studies have examined how students' self-evaluations are formulated in advising sessions and how students receive or resist teachers' advice, either insisting upon or modifying their original stance on learning. Moreover, interactive narrative is rarely examined in school setting. Therefore, this study fills in this lacuna in the literature by examining students' self-evaluations as their conversational narratives with teachers develop.

### **3. Data, ethnographic roles, and positionalities**

The corpus of this study consists of narrative data drawn from 12 hours of audio-recorded conversations<sup>1</sup> with three freshmen English majors in Taiwan. They participated in an English-based language course offered by the author of this paper, who is referred to as "the teacher" in the analysis. The three students, whom I call "Lin," "Winnie," and "Sandy," are middle-class female students, aged 18-19. They experienced difficulty learning English; thus, they voluntarily asked for one-on-one meetings during office hours, wanting to receive more instruction and practice. The three students' educational backgrounds and English proficiency vary. Lin, having been born in China and grown up there, had received English education in China before attending college in Taiwan. She has a good sense of grammar but her pronunciation is more oriented toward the British style, which causes her problems because most Taiwanese teachers and students receive American-style pronunciation. Winnie, who has the weakest grammar and fluency in English of the three, is from Macau. She can hardly handle textbook exercises in class, not to mention extra homework. During the meetings, Winnie often asked for my assistance with homework from my own and other teachers' courses. Sandy, a Taiwanese student who received a typical English education in Taiwan's school system, lived in the United States for a year when she was five years old. Accordingly, her pronunciation is above the average level of her classmates, yet her grammar is not as sound as her speaking ability.

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<sup>1</sup> The conversations were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. The narratives (1)-(5) present every utterance in three lines: the Chinese characters, Hanyu Pinyin, and English translations. I chose Hanyu Pinyin because it is a widely used romanization system for academic purposes, especially for readers who do not read Chinese.

As a teacher, my primary role is to help students improve their academic performance. The course I taught was a general English course focusing on the four skills; thus, it could be related to other courses the students were taking. During our meetings, I encouraged the students to talk about the problems they encountered, hoping that talking out loud helped them reflect upon what bothered them. I asked follow-up questions, proposed potential solutions to their problems, and required students to appraise what may work best in their individual cases.

My role as a researcher did not start until the meetings had been going for a while. Before we started the meetings, Lin told me that she recorded her conversations with other teachers for the purpose of practicing pronunciation, and the recordings had helped a lot. I then agreed to being recorded. As the meetings continued, I noticed that Lin's narratives revealed her evaluative stances on her learning. I explained to her that I was motivated to look more carefully into her narratives, and she kindly allowed me to use her recordings for my own academic purposes. I then also asked the other students who had regular meetings with me whether they would like to participate in my project; two of the four agreed.

Faculty members who involve students in their research may encounter ethical and methodological issues.<sup>2</sup> Since the researchers are also their teachers, the students are considered "captive" because it is a status-based relationship (Moreno 1998, Schuklenk 2000). Nevertheless, I still prefer to include my students because this method has the advantage of producing more detailed ethnographic information about the perspectives and experiences of the tellers.

To maximize the students' rights, I placed my role as a teacher higher than my role as a researcher. Even though I intended to zero in on students' reflective narratives, I let the students decide what they wanted to discuss in every meeting. Accordingly, a variety of speech events (e.g., pronunciation practice, grammatical drills, more explanation regarding homework, reviewing course materials) took place during the meetings. Additionally, participating in a research project seemed to be a unique experience for the students. They asked me questions such as what doing a Ph.D. degree may require, and what a university teacher's job responsibilities include. By sharing my experiences, I inhabited another role, "a senior sister," with my stories in pursuing my career.

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<sup>2</sup> The ethical concerns in having one's own students as research participants include that students might not dare to refuse to participate, and when they participate in a study, they may feel uncomfortable talking candidly about their experiences (Moreno 1998, Schuklenk 2000). Aware of these possible problems, I emphasized to the students that they have the freedom to decide whether they want to participate and that they may withdraw at any time without harm or loss of dignity or trust. I also guarantee the confidentiality of the research data to ensure there is no reluctance on the students' part to continue their participation.

#### 4. Ochs and Capps’s narrative theory

Vásquez (2007) investigates how novice teachers deliberate upon their teaching and interactions with students at post-observation sessions with senior colleagues. Her analysis shows that Ochs & Capps’s (2001) dimensional perspective on narratives is a useful framework to capture the detailed practices of advice taking and resistance among teachers with different institutional ranks. Different from Labov & Waletzky’s structural model (1967) on narratives, Ochs & Capps argue that a narrative, rather than being defined by a set of core components, contains five interrelated dimensions denoting a variety of degrees: tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance (summarized in Table 1).

**Table 1. Ochs and Capps’s dimensions of narratives**

Dimensions	Possibilities	
Tellership	A single teller	Multiple tellers
Tellability	High	Low
Embeddedness	Detached	Embedded
Linearity	Chronical order	Open temporal order
Moral stances	Assertive	Fluid

Tellership refers to whether a story is told by a single teller or multiple tellers; that is, is it co-narrated? Public speeches and interviews, for example, tend to have low involvement in co-telling because narratives presented in these forms of communication are mostly produced by a single teller; by contrast, conversational narratives display high involvement in co-telling because they are more likely to be produced by multiple tellers.

Tellability is concerned with to what extent events are judged by listeners to be significant or surprising, and thus worthy of being reported. Unexpected incidents have higher tellability than mundane routines, and highly tellable narratives relate unknown events to listeners of great interest or import to them.

Embeddedness means to what extent tellers narrate a story in a surrounding discourse and include it in a cluster of narratives, or, by contrast, in a context detached from the conversational environment. If a co-teller digresses to a topic irrelevant to the ongoing one, listeners may find the new story detached from the context from which it arises.

Linearity refers to the sequential order of a narrative. Historical textbooks favor highly linear narratives to explain the causes and effects of historical events. Conversational narratives are inclined to low linearity because a sense-making process often does not proceed in chronological order, and tellers go back and forth in time to figure out what happened and why.

Moral stances pertain to tellers' judgment of protagonists or events in a narrative. In Ochs and Capps's theory, moral stances are not related to fundamental, collective principles of righteousness shared by members of a community. Rather, they are concerned with individual perspectives and the positive features tellers want to display. For instance, when narrating that someone left an important meeting earlier than expected, a teller could provide different versions of the story by considering these factors: Does the teller know the protagonist? Is the protagonist a friend? Does the protagonist's excuse sound reasonable? Or, does the teller want it sound reasonable?

The students' reflective narratives span the continua of some of these dimensions. The following analysis shows that when a student is cognizant of her difficulty in learning English, the narrative tends to exhibit some characteristics that fall at one end of these continua: The tellership is dominated by the student, and her stance is more constant. By contrast, a narrative created by a student ambivalent about her problems tends to fall at the other end of the continua: The tellership is moderately shared by the student and the teacher, and her stance is subject to change.

## **5. Analysis**

The moral stances taken by Lin, Winnie, and Sandy during their dyadic meetings with the teacher reveal three scenarios. Lin remains assertive about her stance. Presenting herself as a victim of a psychological issue, she has tried her best to rectify her pronunciation, but is suspicious of alternative pronunciation methods. Winnie's morale is low and she is disparaging about her own efforts to learn English. With the teacher's encouragement, she appears to accept the possibility that her efforts will eventually pay off and that her self-evaluation should not be that negative. Sandy's stance falters as she interacts with the teacher and considers the teacher's perspective.

### **5.1 Lin's narrative: Stable moral stances**

Narrative (1) is a narrative excerpt produced by Lin and the teacher. Right after the exchange of greetings, the teacher asks Lin what her problem is and what assistance she expects:

Narrative (1)

- 1 Lin: 主要是…別人經常聽不懂我在講什麼  
*zhuyaoshi bieren jingchang tingbudong wo zai jiang sheme*  
‘The main issue...is that others often do not understand my pronunciation.’
- 2 Teacher: 你是從什麼事情得到這種感覺?  
*ni shi cong sheme shiqing dedao zhezhong ganjue*  
‘What makes you think so?’
- 3 Lin: 都有啊  
*douyou a*  
‘Lots of things.’
- 4 就連講中文的時候都有  
*jiulian jiang zhongwen deshihou douyou*  
‘Even when I speak Chinese.’
- 5 我覺得  
*wo juede*  
‘I think so.’
- 6 我在想就是—  
*wo zai xiang jiushi*  
‘I am thinking it is—’
- 7 生理上的問題吧  
*shengli shang de wenti ba*  
‘Maybe it is a physiological problem.’
- 8 我小的時候  
*wo xiao deshihou*  
‘When I was little,’
- 9 嗓子不好  
*sangzi bu hao*  
‘my voice was not good.’



- 10           我講話的時候嗓子是啞的  
               *wo jianghua desh hou sangzi shi ya de*  
               ‘My voice was hoarse when I spoke.’
- 11           然後  
               *ranhou*  
               ‘And then,’
- 12           高中時候的課程不重視口語  
               *gaozhong shi hou de kecheng bu zhongshi kouyu*  
               ‘my high school (English) courses did not emphasize speaking skills.’
- 13           所以不覺得是個問題  
               *suoyi bu jue de shi ge wenti*  
               ‘So I did not consider it a problem.’

In response to the teacher’s initial question on what she thinks her problem is, Lin talks about how she came to realize that long-lasting ignorance of her voice problem, to which she ascribes her unclear pronunciation, has led to a speaking issue. Lin first identifies her issue (Narrative (1), line 1); prompted by the teacher’s follow-up question (line 2), she traces the reason for the issue to a physiological problem and her abiding disregard of that problem (lines 3-13). She portrays herself as some sort of victim. In line 1, she uses “others” as the subject. That is, rather than stating that *she* has a pronunciation problem, it is that *others* fail to understand her spoken English. She attributes this to two reasons: her hoarse voice, a physiological issue she has had since she was little (lines 7-10), and her high school education, in which little focus was placed on speaking skills (lines 11-13). By attributing her unclear pronunciation to these factors, Lin implies she is not responsible for her pronunciation problem because she was probably too young to be aware of her voice condition and was instructed to follow whatever the school taught her. This narrative excerpt establishes Lin’s evaluative point. That is, she was not given choices before she realized she had these problems; thus, she is free from blame.

Lin continues talking about how she is attempting to improve her pronunciation. Maintaining her moral stance, she recounts her efforts to adopt a new manner of speaking, even though she doubts its effectiveness:

Narrative (2)

- 1 Lin: 我之前有唸中文給同學聽  
*wo zhiqian you nian zhongwen gei tongxue ting*  
'I read Chinese aloud to my classmates.'
- 2 就是講很慢  
*jiushi jiang hen man*  
'I read slowly.'
- 3 同學說聽很清楚  
*tongxue shuo ting hen qingchu*  
'My classmates said my pronunciation was clear to them.'
- 4 但我平時就--  
*dan wo pingshi jiu*  
'But I usually—'
- 5 平時講話就用現在的聲音講話  
*pingshi jianghua jiu yong xianzai de shengyin jianghua*  
'I usually speak in the way as I am speaking now.'
- 6 突然要我用其它方式發聲  
*turan yao wo yong qita fangshi fasheng*  
'If I am suddenly required to vocalize in another way,'
- 7 我就覺得  
*wo jiu juede*  
'I just feel,'
- 8 很難習慣  
*hen nan xiguan*  
'it is difficult to get used to it (the other way).'
- 9 難道平時講話都要這樣嗎  
*nandao pingshi jianghua douyao zheyang ma*  
'Do I have to talk like that?'

- 10            可是  
*keshi*  
'But.'
- 11            我自己聽起來都一樣  
*wo ziji tingqilai dou yiyang*  
'I feel there is no difference.'
- 12            一個字一個字慢慢講  
*yi ge zhi yi ge zhi manman jiang*  
'Speaking slowly word by word;'
- 13            跟我平時講話有不同嗎  
*gen wo pingshi jianghua you butong ma*  
'is it different from my normal way of speaking?'
- 14 Teacher: 我覺得慢慢講好蠻多的  
*wo juede manman jiang hao man duo de*  
'I think speaking slowly is much better (than your original fast way of speaking).'
- 15            需要練習啦  
*xuyao lianxi la*  
'It takes practice LA.'
- 16 Lin:       嗯...練習  
*um lianxi*  
'Um...practice.'
- 17            講英文就比講中文更不容易  
*jiang yingwen jiu bi jiang zhongwen geng bu rongyi*  
'Speaking English is even harder than speaking Chinese.'

Regarding slowing down her speech rate, Lin reveals a discrepancy between her own evaluation and those of her classmates and the teacher. After saying her classmates appreciate her speaking slowly (Narrative (2), line 3), Lin immediately offers a dissenting opinion (lines 4-13). Lin expresses her displeasure with the new way of speaking slowly because it makes her feel uncomfortable (line 8). Explicitly

stating that she detects no difference between her own way and new way of speaking (line 11), Lin formulates a question to elicit the teacher's opinion (line 13). Taking up the question, the teacher commits to the other classmates' evaluation, and she uses hedges to mitigate her tone: epistemic devices (line 14: 'I think speaking slowly...') and final particles (line 15: 'It takes practice LA'). Ochs & Capps (2001) remark that in telling stories, a teller often hopes to secure a particular response. However, there is no guarantee that the anticipated response will be forthcoming, as revealed in the teacher's response. Taking the matter one step further, the teacher encourages Lin to practice more to get used to her new way of speaking (line 15). Not convinced, Lin hesitates (line 16), and then switches to a related yet new topic, that is, speaking English versus speaking Chinese (line 17).

When tellers and listeners have divergent evaluations, the disagreement can lead to either open conflict or initiation of a new topic to avoid conflict (Ochs & Capps 2001). Lin adopts the latter strategy. She dodges the teacher's positive evaluation of her slow style of speaking, which she apparently does not want to continue. This is in line with current studies which show that disagreement is interactionally not preferred, especially when the teller does not want to take advice from someone having a higher institutional rank (Guthrie 1997, Vásquez 2007). To save both her own and the teacher's face, Lin uses a delay device (line 16: 'um'), repetitions (line 16: 'practice'), and topic digression, all of which are common linguistic deployments of disagreement in conversation across languages (Pomerantz 1984). Throughout the narrative, Lin represents two equivocal perspectives: her classmates' evaluations that laud her attempt to slow down her speech rate, and her antipathy toward this new way of speaking and its effects.

As shown in Narratives (1) and (2) (and all of her meetings with the teacher), Lin automatically launches narratives to delineate her efforts to practice English and enhance her proficiency. Certain about her own learning process, Lin is a dominant speaker (compared to Winnie and Sandy). The teacher rarely formulates questions to prompt Lin's narrations, and thus shows low involvement in co-telling; by contrast, Lin decides what to say and initiates a topic or switches to new ones. Moreover, the teacher does not often take turns either, since Lin rarely pauses or hesitates during her narration. In this participant structure of student-professor dynamics, even though no conclusion was drawn in this meeting on how to improve her pronunciation, Lin plays the role of a primary teller with a constant moral stance, constructing herself as a motivated learner who aspires to improve through trial and error.

## 5.2 Winnie's narrative: Ambiguous and suspending moral stances

Narrative (3) is an excerpt taken from Winnie's meeting with the teacher. Winnie starts to talk after the teacher begins the conversation with an inquiry about how she can help her.

Narrative (3)

1 Winnie: 我想改進 oral  
*wo xiang gaijin oral*  
‘I want to improve my speaking.’

2 Oral 的  
*oral de*  
‘About speaking.’

(silence)

3 Teacher: 你講的是 Oral 那門課  
*ni jiang de shi oral na men ke*  
‘Are you talking about Oral Training I,’

4 還是一般的 speaking 的問題  
*haishi yiban de speaking de wenti*  
‘or speaking in general?’

5 Winnie: 一般所有的  
*yiban suoyou de*  
‘Speaking in general.’

(silence)

6 Teacher: 你們 Oral 的課怎麼上  
*nimen oral de ke zhenme shang*  
‘How does your teacher conduct Oral Training I?’

7 你覺得少了什麼  
*ni juede shao le sheme*  
‘What do you think is missing?’

- 8           我才能知道怎麼幫你加強  
*wo cai neng zhidao zhenme bang ni jiaqiang*  
'I need (information) to help you improve (your English speaking skills).'
- 9 Winnie:   我想一下  
*wo xiang yixia*  
'Let me see.'
- (silence)
- 10           就是…老師要我們小組討論是好的  
*jiushi laoshi yao women xiaozu taolun shi haode*  
'It is...the teacher asks us to do small group discussion, which is good.'
- 11           可是  
*keshi*  
'But,'
- 12           我在討論的過程中  
*wo zai taolun de guocheng zhong*  
'while I was discussing,'
- 13           講不到我想講的那個  
*jiang budao wo xiang jiang de nage*  
'I could not express my thoughts.'
- 14           就是  
*jiushi*  
'That is,'
- 15           講到一半  
*jiang dao yiban*  
'in the midst of speaking,'
- 16           我想的事情  
*wo xiang de shiqing*  
'the ideas I had'

- 17 講不出來  
*jiang bu chulai*  
'could not be articulated.'
- 18 就中途就放棄了  
*jiu zhongtu jiu fangqi le*  
'I gave up in the middle of speaking.'
- 19 Teacher: 你給我一個例子  
*ni gei wo yi ge lizi*  
'Give me an example.'
- 20 他--老師叫你們討論什麼題目  
*ta laoshi jiao nimen taolun sheme timu*  
'He—What was the topic the teacher assigned to you?'
- 21 然後你想講什麼  
*ránhòu nǐ xiǎng jiǎng shēme*  
'And what did you want to say (about the topic)?'
- 22 Winnie: 嗯...他--他  
*um ta ta*  
'Um...he—he'
- 23 跟我們討論那個  
*gen women taolun nage*  
'(He) discussed with us'
- 24 台灣的選舉  
*taiwan de xuanju*  
'Taiwan's election.'
- 25 就是...我不太明白那個台灣選舉是怎樣的  
*jiushi wo bu tai mingbai na ge taiwan xuanju shi zenyang de*  
'It is...I do not understand very well how Taiwan's elections operate.'
- 26 可是我想講的是  
*keshi wo xiang jiǎng de shi*  
'But I wanted to say,'

- 27            在我們澳門那裡  
*zai women aomen nali*  
‘in Macau,’
- 28            選舉是—  
*xuanju shi*  
‘elections are—’
- 29            就是…你們是人民選出來的吧  
*jiushi nimen shi renmin xuanchulai de ba*  
‘that...(In Taiwan, your politicians) are elected by the people.’
- 30            還是什麼  
*haishi sheme*  
‘Or what do you call it?’
- 31 Teacher: 一人一票  
*yi ren yi piao*  
‘One man, one vote.’
- 32            人民選出來的  
*renmin xuanchulai de*  
‘(Politicians) are elected by the people.’
- 33 Winnie: 就是…在我們澳門  
*jiushi zai women aomen*  
‘That...in Macau,’
- 34            他是內部的  
*ta shi neibu de*  
‘(positions) are designated internally.’
- 35            可以說是內定的  
*keyi shuo shi neiding de*  
‘You could say official appointments are decided behind closed doors.’

Unlike Lin, who launches her narrative by saying *others* cannot understand her pronunciation (Narrative (1), line 1), Winnie uses the first person pronoun, *I*, (line 1)



to explain why she calls for meetings with the teacher. Winnie's frequent use of the first-person pronoun implies she takes responsibility for not learning English well due to incompetence and not working hard enough. Winnie's narrative is characterized by pauses and silences that indicate a lack of certainty. In lines 10-18, Winnie makes evaluations and meta-comments<sup>3</sup> on her performance in speaking English: first, a summary of her unsuccessful attempts (lines 12-13), and then a reiteration of the process with more details (lines 14-18). Winnie conceptualizes this process—thinking and searching for words in English—as an arduous journey in which she feels lost (line 17); accordingly, she had no choice but to quit midway (line 18). Moreover, cutoffs, questions (line 30), mitigations (line 25: 'I do not understand very well...'), hesitations (lines 10, 14, 25, 29, 33: *jiushi*), and verbs with negative connotations (line 18: 'I gave up...') pervade Winnie's narrative.

Both Winnie and the teacher show high involvement in tellership. Aware that Winnie seems less articulate, the teacher becomes an active co-teller. She pursues details (lines 3-4, 6-8, 19-21), and shows engagement with Winnie's narrative by supplying narrative clauses to complete what is left unsaid by Winnie (lines 31-32). Take lines 19-21 for example. The teacher not only elicits but scaffolds the details: an explicit instruction (line 19), the topic the other teacher assigns (line 20), and Winnie's ideas on the topic (line 21). Namely, to impel an exploration of Winnie's narrative, the teacher organizes the thematic content of the narrative. The elicitation orients Winnie toward a particular instance of her trouble speaking English and shapes the course of her narration.

Following the teacher's questions, Winnie relates an embedded narrative, a story she regards as highly tellable, to exemplify her troubles in speaking English. Lines 22-30 reveal Winnie's sense-making process of how and why she finds herself unable to express her ideas about Taiwan's election. Winnie's meta-commentary—her mental actions (line 25: 'I do not understand very well...'; line 26: 'But I wanted to say...')—explains her failure to elaborate upon her ideas on Taiwan's election. According to Ochs & Capps (2001), a teller usually chooses to share a story that touches her life. Here, Winnie's explanation of how and why she cannot express her ideas is probably pertinent to her status, i.e., she is from Macau, and new to Taiwan. While discussing Taiwan's election may not be that difficult for Taiwanese students, it is significant to Winnie's sense of well-being and condition. As a freshman who has

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<sup>3</sup> Vásquez (2007:669) remarks that meta-comments appear more often in reflective narratives than other types of narratives such as interviews because a reflective narrative "brings into psychological focus a particular moment." As tellers use language to explore their reflections on their own behavior, their meta-comments function as "windows to both the content of the mind and its ongoing operation" (Chafe 1990:79).

lived in Taiwan for only a few months, she is still a novice to Taiwan's socio-cultural issues and does not know Taiwan well enough to discuss this topic.

Winnie leaves the thread of the story on Taiwan's election dangling without resolution. What follows Narrative (3) is a new, parallel story launched by the teacher. She explains that an election is a topic that requires a specific set of vocabulary as well as knowledge of the sociocultural context in which the election takes place; therefore, without background knowledge, it may indeed be difficult to talk about such an issue. The teacher cites an example from the textbook of the course she teaches and Winnie takes. For instance, words such as *robberies* and *get caught* keep popping up in news reports on bank robberies. Similarly, terms such as *candidates*, *voting*, and *democracy* would be appropriate for an election vocabulary word list. This "touched-off telling" (Ochs & Capps 2001:32) of a bank robbery from their discussion is a product of active co-telling, because the co-teller, the teacher, contributes her experience to the discussion and shows her engagement with Winnie's narrative. By doing so, the teacher attempts to normalize Winnie's implied moral stance that she is incompetent at articulating her thoughts in English. The tellability of this touched-off story is justified in relationship to the surrounding talk in which it is embedded; more importantly, this story conveys the teacher's positive attitude toward Winnie's learning ability.

Finishing the parallel story, the teacher offers advice. She suggests Winnie start with vocabulary, and one effective way to expand her vocabulary is to memorize a certain number of English sentences every day from readings in different courses she is taking. Winnie says she prefers to work with more entertaining materials, such as US TV programs. The teacher agrees, and encourages Winnie to pursue whatever she finds interesting. That said, however, the following excerpt begins with Winnie's concern about learning English from US TV programs:

Narrative (4)

- 1 Winnie: 我看美劇的話  
*wo kan meiju dehua*  
 'If I watch US TV programs,'
- 2 只會 focus 在 XX 上  
*zhi hui focus zai XX shang*  
 '(I) only focus on XX.'

- 3 Teacher: 什麼上?  
*sheme shang*  
'On what?'
- 4 Winnie: 劇情  
*juqing*  
'The story.'
- 5 而且我會忍不住看字幕  
*erqie wo hui renbuzhu kan zimu*  
'And I cannot help but read the (Chinese) subtitles.'
- 6 Teacher: 有中文字幕  
*you zhongwen zimu*  
'If there are Chinese subtitles,'
- 7 就會依賴中文字幕  
*jiuhui yilai zhongwen zimu*  
'(one will) rely on the Chinese subtitles.'
- 8 其實很正常  
*qishi hen zhengchang*  
'It is normal.'
- 9 我也會  
*wo ye hui*  
'I do the same too.'
- 10 但是要強迫自己只聽英文發音或看英文字幕  
*danshi yao qiangpo ziji zhi ting yingwen fayin huo kan yingwen zimu*  
'But you need to force yourself to follow the English dialogue or English subtitles.'
- (...)
- 11 Winnie: 我昨天跟我姊說  
*wo zuotian gen wo jie shuo*  
'I told my sister yesterday'

- 12 就是…我在高中學英文也學這麼久了  
*jiushi wo zai gaozhong xue yingwen ye xue zheme jiu le*  
‘that...I have learned English for a very long time since high school.’
- 13 沒—你不懂一千兩千個單字  
*mei ni bu dong yi qian liang qian ge danzi*  
‘Not—you do not recognize (even) one or two thousand words of English,’
- 14 但總應該懂幾百個生字吧  
*dan zong yinggai dong ji bai ge shengzi ba*  
‘But at least you should have recognized hundreds of words.’
- 15 一些簡單的生字  
*yixie jiandan de shengzi*  
‘Some simple words.’
- 16 可是…我現在講話  
*keshi wo xianzai jianghua*  
‘But...when I speak,’
- 17 就是講的時候想不出來  
*jiushi jiang deshihou xiang bu chulai*  
‘I just cannot express myself.’
- 18 就是…不知道為什麼  
*jiushi bu zhidao weisheme*  
‘I just...do not know why.’
- (silence)
- 19 Teacher: 太少練習  
*tai shao lianxi*  
‘You don’t practice enough.’
- 20 我覺得…語言就是這樣子  
*wo juede yuyan jiushi zheyangzi*  
‘I think...this is how language (learning) is.’

- 21 如果你持續在用  
*ruguo ni chixu zai yong*  
'If you keep practicing,'
- 22 語言就是你的  
*yuyan jiushi ni de*  
'the language is with you.'
- 23 可是一旦你一陣子...遠離它  
*keshi yidan ni yizhenzi yuanli ta*  
'But if you...stop practicing for a while,'
- 24 它就遠離地很快  
*ta jiu yuanli de hen kuai*  
'it will be gone quickly.'
- 25 任何人都會這樣  
*renheren duo hui zheyang*  
'This holds true for anyone.'
- (silence)
- 26 Winnie: 嗯  
*em*  
'Em.'
- 27 唉  
*ai*  
'Sigh.'
- 28 Teacher: 學習的過程本來就是這樣  
*xuexi de guocheng benlai jiushi zheyang*  
'This is how learning is.'
- 29 難免都會有壓力  
*nanmian dou hui you yali*  
'Pressure is usually inevitable.'

- 30 所以…看你啦  
*suoyi kanni la*  
‘So… it depends on you LA.’
- 31 如果你願意  
*ruguo ni yuanyi*  
‘If you are willing,’
- 32 每週半小時來這裡練習  
*mei zhou ban xiaoshi lai zheli lianxi*  
‘(you can) come here and practice for half an hour every week.’
- 33 然後…你還有 tutorial assistant 的學姐  
*ranhou ni haiyou tutorial assistant de xuejie*  
‘And… you can also get help from your upperclassman, your tutorial assistant.’
- 34 她也會幫你進步  
*ta ye hui bang ni jinbu*  
‘She will also help you make progress.’
- (silence)
- 35 Winnie: 希望啦  
*xiwang la*  
‘I hope so LA.’
- 36 Teacher: 不是希望  
*bu shi xiwang*  
‘You do not hope so.’
- 37 是一定會  
*shi yiding hui*  
‘You believe so.’

In Narrative (4), lines 1-10, Winnie voices her concern that she relies on Chinese subtitles; in lines 11-18, Winnie expresses her frustration with her English ability and says that all her efforts seem in vain; in lines 26-27 and line 35, Winnie is hesitant

about the teacher's encouragement and is uncertain whether she will make any progress. This entire narrative reveals Winnie's lack of confidence and her claimed ineptitude as the ultimate reasons for not progressing in English. The teacher uses many evaluative devices to bolster Winnie's morale, constructing learning as a collective effort among Winnie, the teacher, and the tutorial assistant.

Winnie expresses her frustration syntactically (lines 2, 5, 14, 18) and paralinguistically (e.g., hesitations, false starts, and short, seemingly lukewarm responses). The moral stance constructed as a result of these responses is that of an unqualified learner who cannot understand why her efforts fail to increase her English proficiency. For example, the disappointment she expresses in her meta-commentary on her learning over the years (lines 12-18) suggests she is at her wit's end in trying to figure out what her problems are. Winnie amplifies the description of herself as lost in learning by claiming she should have been able to recognize hundreds of words, the simple ones, and does not know why she fails even at that task.

On the other hand, the teacher evinces her involvement in a variety of ways. She asks for clarification (line 3) and offers solutions: reading or listening to English (line 10), practicing more (lines 19-22), and practicing with the teacher and Winnie's tutorial assistant (in lines 32-34). The teacher tries to boost Winnie's morale by showing empathy (lines 6-9, 19-24). Moreover, through the linguistic structures of predicates (line 8: 'It is normal'), indefinite pronouns (line 25: 'This holds true for anyone'), and epistemic modality (line 29: 'Pressure is usually inevitable'), the teacher convinces Winnie that the frustration she feels is normal, even to the teacher herself. In lines 32-34, the teacher delineates Winnie's English learning as a joint effort. Such a redistribution of responsibility implies that learning is a constructive process and no one should take sole responsibility.

Although the teacher takes a rival moral stance to Winnie's, Winnie appears hesitant about this new moral stance that she should not blame herself for her failures. She neither aligns with nor rejects this new stance; rather, she offers the polite response, 'I hope so LA' (line 35). Again, conversational analysis studies show that partial agreement usually indicates disagreement (Pomerantz 1984). However, compared to Lin's digressing to another topic, Winnie's disagreement is subtler and more mitigated. Thus, the teacher further affirms her stance by rejecting Winnie's ambivalence and taking up a stronger voice (lines 36-37). This conforms to the findings that at American advising sessions, if advisors believe their advice will benefit students (e.g., taking a particular course would be helpful to their theses), advisors stand firm and use longer turns to explain why students must not reject their advice (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1996). In this narrative, the teacher adopts the

same strategy to block Winnie's reluctance to take up the new moral stance proposed by the teacher.

### 5.3 Sandy's narrative: Fluid moral stances

Sandy's narrative discloses yet another scenario of moral stances which lies at the other end of the scale; that is, moral stances are flexible. The teacher knows Sandy better than Lin and Winnie because they chat from time to time during class breaks. Sandy is worried about the gap between her English speaking and grammar proficiency. She begins her narrative by recounting a recent event that took place in her Oral Training I course:

Narrative (5)

- 1 Sandy: 昨天口訓課的時候  
*zuotian kouxunke deshihou*  
'In yesterday's Oral Training class,'
  
- 2 老師給一個題目  
*laoshi gei yi ge timu*  
'the teacher gave us a (discussion) topic,'
  
- 3 如何學好英語  
*ruhe xuehao yingyu*  
'how to learn English well.'
  
- 4 我們小組有一個人說天賦  
*women xiaozu you yi ge ren shuo tianfu*  
'Someone on our team said it was talent.'

(silence)

- 5 天賦當然不是唯一的  
*tianfu dangran bushi weiyi de*  
'Talent is not the only factor for sure.'
  
- 6 但是很重要  
*danshi hen zhongyao*  
'But it plays an important role.'



- 7 我在想是不是我天賦不好  
*wo zai xiang shibushi wo tianfu buhao*  
 ‘I am thinking that probably I do not have talent (for English).’
- 8 Teacher: 如果 talent 對語言學習有影響的話  
*ruguo talent dui yuyan xuexi you yingxiang dehua*  
 ‘If talent has any effect on language learning,’
- 9 我覺得也是很小的  
*wo juede ye shi hen xiao de*  
 ‘I think it is small.’
- 10 真的  
*zhende*  
 ‘I mean it.’
- 11 不是因為我要安慰你才這麼講  
*bushi yinwei wo yao anwei ni cai zhenme jiang*  
 ‘I am not saying this to make you feel better.’
- 12 而是我真的相信  
*ershi wo zhende xiangxin*  
 ‘But I truly believe’
- 13 語言是可以努力得來的  
*yuyan shi keyi nuli delai de*  
 ‘you learn a new language through hard work.’
- 14 Sandy: 在上你的課的時候  
*zai shang ni de ke deshihou*  
 ‘In your class,’
- 15 你有時候問我文法問題  
*ni youshihou wen wo wenfa wenti*  
 ‘sometimes you ask me grammatical questions.’
- 16 然後我答不出來(笑聲)  
*ranhou wo da bu chulai*  
 ‘And I did not know how to answer them.’ (laughter)

- 17 我會講  
*wo hui jiang*  
'I can speak (English).'
- 18 你知道我可以講  
*ni zhidao wo keyi jiang*  
'You know I am capable of speaking (English).'
- 19 但文法問題我--  
*dan wenfa wenti wo*  
'But grammar questions, I—'
- 20 沒辦法立刻回答出來  
*meibanfa like huida chulai*  
'I cannot answer the questions immediately.'
- 21 Teacher: 那如果我說  
*na ruguo wo shuo*  
'If I say,'
- 22 I will give you some time to think about it,
- 23 這樣可以嗎  
*zheyang keyi ma*  
'will that be okay?'
- 24 Sandy: 可以啊  
*keyi a*  
'Yeah.'
- 25 可是我不想--  
*keshi wo bu xiang*  
'But I do not want to—'
- 26 就是不好意思  
*jiushi buhaoyisi*  
'I feel embarrassed,'

- 27           想不出來很尷尬  
*xiang bu chulai hen ganga*  
 ‘if I do not give the correct answers.’
- 28 Teacher: 不會啊  
*buhui a*  
 ‘Do not think that way.’
- 29           每次我給你一點時間想  
*meici wo gei ni yidian shijian xiang*  
 ‘Every time I give you some time to think’
- 30           再回來問你  
*zai huilai wen ni*  
 ‘before I get back to you,’
- 31           你就都能回答  
*ni jiu dou neng huida*  
 ‘you can answer well.’
- 32 Sandy:   可是就想得很慢啊  
*keshi jiu xiang de hen man a*  
 ‘But I think slowly.’
- 33 Teacher: 我跟你說  
*wo gen ni shuo*  
 ‘I am telling you,’
- 34           你的口說很好  
*ni de koushuo hen hao*  
 ‘your speaking is good.’
- 35           不代表文法一定那麼好  
*bu daibiao wenfa yiding name hao*  
 ‘(But) it does not mean your grammar is just as good.’
- 36           文法需要花時間  
*wenfa xuyao hua shijian*  
 ‘Grammar takes time.’

- 37            只要花時間就能進步  
*zhiyao hua shijian jiu neng jinbu*  
‘You will make progress as long as you spend time (on it).’
- 38 Sandy:    所以  
*suoyi*  
‘So,’
- 39            只要不斷唸  
*zhiyao buduan nian*  
‘as long as I keep studying,’
- 40            就算很慢  
*jiusuan hen man*  
‘even if it is very slowly,’
- 41            也是會進步  
*yeshi hui jinbu*  
‘I will make progress.’
- 42            是嗎  
*shi ma*  
‘Is that right?’
- 43 Teacher: 當然  
*dangran*  
‘Of course.’

That Sandy and the teacher are better acquainted is collaborated in several ways. The teacher does not need to elicit narratives from Sandy (e.g., *How can I help you?* as in Lin’s and Winnie’s conversations); they both show active involvement in the recounting of the narrative; the narrative has few hedges. Sandy starts with a story about a classmate in Oral Training I who thinks talent is significant in learning English (Narrative (5), lines 1-4). She pauses after line 4, expecting the teacher to comment on and maybe concur with this opinion. Yet, the teacher does not respond, but waits for Sandy to continue. Not knowing what the teacher thinks, Sandy first uses a negative sentence (line 5) to modify her tone in what she is about to say, and then immediately displays her alignment with the idea that talent plays a crucial role in

learning English (line 6). After these orientation clauses, in line 7, the reporting clause, Sandy attributes her poor grammar proficiency to a lack of talent. The teacher politely yet firmly disagrees with Sandy's view. She employs a hypothetical clause (line 8) to create a "buffer zone" (Brown & Levinson 1987) in order not to hurt Sandy's feelings, and then indicates that the effect of talent is modest (line 9). Aware that Sandy may not accept what she says, the teacher uses an emphatic response (line 10) and a meta-commentary (line 11), elaborating on her idea that effort matters more than talent (lines 12-13). From lines 14-20, Sandy launches into another story to delineate her anxiety with grammar in class discussions. Her frustration is expressed in negative sentences (lines 16, 20). Sandy also contrasts her speaking competence with her failure in grammar in an emphatic tone (lines 17-18). The phrase, 'you know' (line 18), reveals that Sandy is confident about her speaking ability and is also certain that the teacher recognizes it, yet grammar weakens her morale. In lines 21-23, the teacher focuses on the possible ways to make Sandy more comfortable with grammar exercises in class; however, Sandy seems more concerned with her grammar ability than with how to deal with grammar exercises. The teacher further constructs Sandy as an adaptive and smart learner who can always answer correctly if given time (lines 28-31). Sandy does not accept this compliment, but rather focuses on her slow responses to grammatical questions (line 32).

With these unsuccessful attempts—politely refuting the idea that talent matters most and portraying Sandy as an active learner, the teacher takes an explicit stance to formulate her opinion as a well-established truth. She launches her statements with an authoritative and instructive preface (line 33). The subsequent clauses comprise different components: the teacher indicates what confuses Sandy (lines 34-35), proposes a solution (line 36), and predicts that Sandy can make progress (line 37).

Sandy's moral stance changes as the narrative unfolds. Although she holds a certain moral stance at the beginning of the conversation, it starts to falter in line 38. At the outset of the conversation, Sandy speaks with a moral stance that shows she believes in the theory of predetermination, and seems prepared to give up on grammar because it falls so far behind her speaking competence. After the teacher's "lecture" on what matters most in English learning, Sandy's evaluation of her grammar ability appears to be destabilized. She rephrases the teacher's idea (lines 38-41) and adds a tag question (line 42) for the teacher's further confirmation. The teacher's emphatic response (line 43) encourages Sandy to adopt the teacher's stance on language learning. Ochs (2004:284, 279) observes that tellers are motivated to tell stories "precisely because they are unsure of how to morally evaluate a life event," and it is during such narration that the speakers will be "raising and responding to doubts, questions, speculations, challenges, and other evaluative stances." Puzzled and

anxious, Sandy regains approval and receives suggestions from the teacher by telling stories of her experiences.

## **6. Discussion and conclusion**

If, as Havel (1989:355) writes, “Human identity... is not a ‘place of existence’ where one sits things out, but a constant encounter with the question of how to be and how to exist in the world,” then examining narratives can be a rich arena in which to explore how self is positioned and formed in the course of narrating. This study has investigated how undergraduates orient themselves in exploring their own positions in English learning trajectories. I suggest that the narratives of Lin, Winnie, and Sandy reveal three types of moral stances in relation to the other narrative dimensions, especially tellership. In Lin’s narratives, the teacher’s involvement in co-telling is passive as Lin is the dominant teller. She is the one who most often takes the floor in the dialogue, decides what stories to share, and makes evaluations on the stories. Her moral stance, in which she projects herself as a motivated learner, remains stable throughout her narration. In Winnie’s narratives, the conversation is co-constructed by both tellers, and the stories are impelled mostly by the teacher’s specific questions and instruction. In other words, the tellership is not only shared by, but leans upon, the teacher, who guides the direction of the conversation. Winnie considers herself an inept learner who has made no progress in English for years. Disputing this stance, the teacher proposes a different interpretation on learning as a joint effort, and thus the responsibility cannot be ascribed to Winnie alone. In Sandy’s narrative, active co-telling is obvious and the interaction is bidirectional. The flow of the conversation and the content of the narratives are established mostly by Sandy. The teacher gives her opinions, which either disagree or concur with Sandy’s ideas. The high involvement in co-telling changes Sandy’s original stance, galvanizing her into accepting the teacher’s stance that diligence, rather than talent, is the primary factor for successful English learning and that she will make progress by being assiduous.

Motivated to seek advice, the three students call for one-on-one meetings with the goal of improving their English proficiency. They relate stories they think are worth telling in order to explain their situations, identify their problems, and ascribe their failures to their perceived cause in learning English. The narratives produced by the three students are all highly tellable, as they facilitate the teacher’s comprehension of the students’ situations. Any information that reveals the students’ learning processes is worth telling because that is what inspires the students and teacher to hold the meetings. Most importantly, these tellable events open up a space for the tellers to do sense-making and allow for an interpretation of the students’ learning morale and attitudes.

Moreover, all the narratives are embedded in the surrounding discourses as the stories recounted are part of the master narrative of how to improve English ability. This is distinguished from Ochs & Capps's observation (2001) that conversational narratives are usually suffused with unscheduled topics. I suggest that the institutional setting of dyadic student-professor meetings imposes a constraint on the narratives the students produce. As both students and the teacher know the purpose of the meetings beforehand, which is to locate the student's learning difficulty and find solutions, they are geared to work toward this goal. Therefore, the students' thematically related narratives become a specific discourse in this particular setting, and "the sense-making arises as part of the flow of an event" naturally (Agar 2005).

On linearity, the students' narratives are non-linear, and the flow of their stories slips and slides all over the place. Although the students possibly decided what to say before the meetings, their narratives are open-ended and contingent, hinging on interaction with the teacher. As Ochs & Capps suggest (2001), the sense-making process is usually non-linear; even the narratives of articulate tellers such as Lin and Sandy, whose logical links are better than Winnie's, drift, wander around, and loop back onto themselves in terms of time and cause.

The distinguishing factors of the three students' narratives are tellership and moral stances. The higher the involvement in co-telling is, the more fluid the moral stances can be. This accords with the established tenet that stance is socially grounded and consequential (see Englebretson 2007 and Jaffe 2009). Self-positioning is achieved through constant forms of evaluation, calibration of responsibility, and claims to particular social roles. The "looking good principle" is manifest in all three students' narratives, even though they position themselves vis-à-vis their learning difficulty divergently. To some extent, one-on-one office-hour meetings with a professor impose an institutional order that defines the narratives and the participant structures. Because the professor is the agent of evaluation and a relatively more mature English user, the students naturally hope to present positive representations of themselves. The three students' moral stances—a motivated student who takes the initiative for rectifying her problems, a baffled student who confesses her ineffective learning ability, a frustrated student who aspires to improve her grammar to equal her speaking proficiency—tally with the conventional image of a "good student" in Taiwan's education system. Their endeavors to improve their English learning conform to the definition of a motivated student in Taiwanese society. I consider the students' attempts to find solutions to improve their English competence as an act of moral stances, which explains how they make sense of a series of causes and effects in their learning process. Prior studies on institutional talks have shown that whereas experts or professionals are savvier at presenting a positive self-image (Holmes & Marra

2005), novices or the less professional are more likely to “spill the beans” on how they evaluate themselves. This holds true for the students’ reflective narratives. A moral act resides in their honest analysis of their problems and their determination to solve their problems. Their reflective narratives, saturated with different moral stances, reveal how the students and teacher build accounts of their experiences turn by turn in the course of the conversation.

### Appendix

Transcription conventions

---	false start/restart
(...)	text omitted
...	short pause
XX	unclear words
LA	the Chinese particle <i>la</i>

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## 大學生學習英文之反思性敘事與道德觀點

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本研究探討在台灣就讀之三位大學生在一對一面談時間與老師討論學習英文困境的反思性敘事。本研究著重甚少被注意的敘事情境：學生如何透過反思性敘事講述英文學習困難。本篇文章的研究問題為：第一，學生在講述自我學習困境時如何呈現道德觀點？第二，學生如何在與老師討論的過程中確立或修改道德觀點？本文採用 Ochs & Capps 的敘事理論（2001）為分析架構，研究結果顯示，道德觀點和參與投入程度兩者互相影響的程度最大，當老師對敘事的參與投入程度愈高，學生的道德觀點愈可能受老師影響而改變。此外，學生自省地闡述學習困境本身即是一種道德觀點，因為他們的敘事呈現了對困境的坦白分析和解決問題的決心。

關鍵詞：英文學習、互動、道德觀點、反思性敘事、參與投入程度