

Conversational Storytelling in Chinese Speech Acts

Shuling Zhang¹

¹School of Humanities, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China

Correspondence: Shuling Zhang, NO.22 Beiqing Road, Haidian District, Beijing, China, 100094. Tel: 86-1-581-024-7861. E-mail: alinger2008@163.com

Received: August 12, 2017

Accepted: September 18, 2017

Online Published: September 19, 2017

doi:10.5430/elr.v6n3p27

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/elr.v6n3p27>

Abstract

Conversational narrative or storytelling is a prevalent activity in everyday talk. This paper, drawing on the speech act theory and conversational analysis methodology, examines the conversational storytelling in performing a few types of illocutionary acts like assert, warn, object, advise in Chinese everyday talk. It is found that storytelling plays several significant roles in performing some types of illocutionary acts, i.e. to make a point, to build rapport among friends and even to reduce the face threat. Conversational storytelling may occur immediately after the expression of an illocutionary act, and sometimes before it to indicate certain illocutionary force.

Keywords: Conversational storytelling, Illocutionary acts, Everyday talk, Illocutionary force

1. Introduction

It seems self-evident that “Conversation is the natural home of narrative, and the most familiar context of storytelling for most of us” (Norrick, 2007). Narrative or story-telling is quite a prevalent and common activity in everyday conversations between friends and family members. We tell stories in conversation to persuade, to share troubles, to seek empathy, to reveal attitudes, to construct identity, to share personal news and even to entertain (Bowden, Lin, Reed, Tree, & Walker, 2016; Norrick, 2007).

While some scholars, like Ruhlemann and Gries (2015), Bertrand and Espesser (2017), just use narrative and storytelling interchangeably in their studies, a distinction still needs to be made between the two concepts. In fact, Norrick (2007) holds that “a narrative is any representation of past event, but for a text or discourse to qualify as a story proper it must be a narrative with a point in context”. Based on this distinction, it may be drawn that the concept “narrative” is broader than that of “storytelling”, but storytelling is more meaningful in a specific context. In addition, Norrick also regards “personal and contextual relevance” and “evaluation by the teller” as essential elements of storytelling rather than for narrative (ibid). Due to the fact that the conversational narratives involved in this study are not simply past events, but concern personal and contextual relevance and the teller’s evaluation, it is conversational storytelling instead of conversational narrative that will be concerned with in the present study.

Storytelling, as a significant kind of narrative, is so ubiquitous and meaningful in an everyday talk that the studies on it have been conducted from many different perspectives. As mentioned above, storytelling must have a point in context, some studies are conducted on its tellability in conversational interaction (Norrick, 2005b; Norrick, 2004; Karatsu, 2012). Some scholars research the participation of the recipient in the story, like the incorporation of the recipient’s evaluation in storytelling (Norrick, 2010; Bertrand & Espesser, 2017), the questions of recipients (Koike, 2009), etc. The functions of storytelling also draw much attention, like functions in advertisement (Harris, 2007), in sales industry (Gilliam & Flaherty, 2015), in family communication (Thorson, Rittenour, Kellas, & Trees, 2013; Frude & Killick, 2011) etc. Also in storytelling the speaker tends to display some affective stance (Voutilainen et al., 2014), such as anger, especially in complaint stories, so the recipient will respond accordingly, sometimes with complaint stories of their own to make affiliation with the speaker’s affect (Selting, 2010; Selting, 2012). Moreover, The direct and indirect reported speech in storytelling arouses the scholars’ increasing interest in recent years (Holt, 2017; Griswold, 2016). However, few studies on conversational storytelling have involved illocutionary speech acts in social interaction.

Speech act theory is launched by Austin in 1960s in the posthumously published *How to Do Things with Words*, and it is then developed and perfected by Searle in his *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* in 1969. Austin (2002) in the sense of “to say something is to do something” distinguishes three different kinds of acts: locutionary act has a meaning; Illocutionary act has a certain force in saying something, and the perlocutionary act is

the achieving of certain effects by saying something. Among them, illocutionary act deserves Austin's most attention and the term "speech act" has come to refer exclusively to that kind of act (Levinson, 2001).

Suggested by Levinson (2001), human communication is carried out mostly by specific classes of communicative intention, which is based partly on the kinds of effects they are meant to achieve in recipients. Since people tell stories to persuade, to share troubles, to seek empathy, to reveal attitudes, to construct identity, to share personal news and even to entertain (Bowden, Lin, Reed, Tree, & Walker, 2016; Norrick, 2007), it is evident that in telling stories, people are achieving certain kinds of communicative effects, although often indirectly. Therefore, it is rational to associate conversational storytelling with certain illocutionary acts, such as assert, warn, advise, etc., which is how present study stems from. This study will focus on the roles conversational storytelling plays in speech acts. One storytelling example by Norrick (2010) may help to understand:

Example 1

1. Bea: it was just so great to be outdoors.
2. with all these sort of you know,
3. nice people and arty people and,
4. Ally: well that was refreshing.
5. Bea: it was very refreshing.
6. and then it went into the night.
7. so I was out there at night wi-
8. Ally: yeah.
9. Bea: stars and the moon
10. and we had a campfire and singing and all that.
11. Ally: oh that's wonderful.
12. Bea: it was really great.
13. it was very,
14. Ally: good for the soul.
15. Bea: yeah really good for the soul.
16. Ally: yeah.

En_4822 F 46 18

In the example above, through claiming that "it was just so great to be outdoors", Bea is performing an illocutionary act "assert" or she is making an assertion. After the assertion, she starts telling her past experience outdoors immediately in Lines 5-7, 9-10, 12-13 and 15. The role of the story is to provide a case in point or evidence to make the preceding assertion viable. For the organization of the story in this example, it follows a pattern of "assertion—storytelling".

In this paper, more common illocutionary acts like this in Chinese everyday talk will be involved, and the different roles of storytelling in performing these illocutionary acts will be examined. Besides, the organization of the story in performing such speech acts will be referred to as well.

2. Literature Review

Previous researches on conversational storytelling have been conducted from different perspectives. Most studies have been done by western scholars and several Japanese ones, and only few Chinese scholars have contributed to conversational storytelling study. The following will focus on some main perspectives related to present study.

Some researches have been conducted on the organization of storytelling. Norrick (2010) investigates the influence of the recipient's evaluation in the organization of storytelling. He argues that the shared evaluation can benefit rapport building, and the recipient tends to ratify rather than reject in the evaluation. Also very often, the listeners will raise some questions concerning the stories told. Koike's study (2009), by focusing on the recipients' questions in Japanese storytelling, illustrates how this practice contributes to the construction of storytelling in different types of storytelling sequences. The study demonstrates that the unknowing story recipients monitor the co-storytellers and shifts participation framework by asking questions. Besides, Norrick (2005a) examines the forgetfulness and

remembering in storytelling, and finds that story tellers deploy the remembering for purposes like prefacing and closing stories, justifying tellability, marking transition and soliciting co-narration. The uncertainty showed by the story teller is meant to make the story sound more reliable. In addition, different roles of interjections in conversational storytelling are also studied by Norrick (2008), and he holds that justifying tellability, marking narrative climax, evaluating narrative points and finally commenting the storytellers' performance are the main functions of interjections in storytelling. Pauses in conversational narrative also arouse some scholars' interest, and the study by Ruhlemann, C., Bagoutdinov, A. and O'Donnell, M. B. (2011) shows that pauses are more frequent in the conversational narrative than in the general conversation and three factors account for this frequency. For "scary" stories, particularly facial expressions, such as raised eyebrows with an open mouth, are the devices usually employed by story recipients to display affiliation (Sugita, 2012).

Conversational storytelling is proven to be a locus for displays of affective stance, according to Voutilainen et al. (2014). They conduct a research on the linkages between interactional stance displays and physiological responses in the participants, and demonstrate that "the valence, especially ambivalence, of the stance displayed by the storyteller is associated with an increase in the autonomic nervous system activity in the recipient". Selting (2010) examines the display and management of affectivity in storytelling in telephone and face-to-face interaction, and the analysis shows that the display of affectivity is organized in orderly ways in sequences of storytelling in conversation. Then Selting (2012) studies the cases where the recipient tends to build affiliation with the speaker's affective stance in telling a complaint story through telling their own complaint stories. Also according to Perakyla et al. (2015), the recipients are expected to show affiliation with the emotional stance displayed by the story telling in conversational storytelling.

The recent years are witnessing the increasing research interests in the direct and indirect reported speech used by the speaker in telling a story. Holt (2017) conducts an investigation in the position, design and uses of the indirect reported speech in storytelling drawing on conversation analysis. The findings include the different positions of direct and indirect reported speech in fulfilling their different tasks. Similarly, Griswold (2016) examines how the storytellers use direct and indirect reported speech to establish the importance of particular story characters to the plot and to display the interactional goal of the story.

It has long been proven that the turn-taking in everyday storytelling is different from that in regular conversation (Ruhlemann & Gries, 2015). Based on two corpora of conversational narrative, Ruhlemann and Gries (2015) examine the turn order and distribution in multi-order storytelling, and the findings include the N-notN-N pattern in all multi-party narrative types examined. Moreover, Bertrand and Espesser's quantitative research (2017) demonstrates that the co-narration in French conversation storytelling affects the nature of turns, the listening responses and even the turn-taking organization.

Storytelling is also employed in different areas for different social functions. The study of Theobald (2016) shows how children manage interaction in storytelling and how children invoke and accomplish competence in their interaction. Based on the study on storytelling in advertisement by Harris (2007) and other scholars, Gilliam and Flaherty (2015) investigate the role of storytelling in personal selling, core themes and a model for storytelling in sales are identified in their study. Thorson et al. (2013) examine how individual's satisfaction as well as the ways they negotiate the telling of a family story are combined to predict their perceived quality of the storytelling interaction, to construct identity and culture. Syed (2012) studies storytelling of ethnicity-related events among college students and the findings indicate that stories are most often told to share the experience with others, then for emotional regulation and validation. Besides, Frude and Killick (2011) argue that family storytelling can have a longlasting and profound beneficial effects on children, parents and on the relationships between them.

Tellability of a story arouses a few researchers' attention. Norrick (2004) investigates the relation of humor, tellability and conarration in conversational storytelling and finds that in reminiscing, the tellability lies in its humor instead of news, and the participants try to increase the humor of presentation by providing details and dialogues. The dark side of the tellability — the no longer tellable of impropriety is also studied by Norrick (2005b). The research shows the different ways the story teller and recipient orient to the upper boundary of tellability and the discomfort they experience while approaching it, as well as the greater intimacy and entertainment they enjoy after going beyond it. Through studying conversational storytelling among Japanese women, Karatsu (2012) relates tellability to other four elements: the embeddedness of the story in the conversation, the participants' view of past events in the story, the participants' knowledge in relation to the content or elements of the story and the participants' concern about the social circumstances.

As mentioned above, most studies have been conducted by western scholars and some Japanese ones, only a few

Chinese scholars have contributed to conversational storytelling study. The one has to be mentioned is Zhao Y.-R. and Zhao Y. (2014). Their study demonstrates that conversational storytelling is a three-dimensional activity involving social interaction, interactive narration and social cognition. In this social interaction, the participants build morally positive self-image, smooth social relationship and strengthen social-cultural beliefs.

Based on the previous literature, the present study will focus on conversational storytelling in performing illocutionary acts, and the following two questions are meant to be answered in present study:

- (1) What are the main roles of conversational storytelling in performing some types of illocutionary acts in Chinese everyday talk, like assert, warn, object and advise?
- (2) How are the stories organized in the conversations in performing these speech acts?

3. The Present Study

3.1 Participants

The participants involved in the present study are altogether six Chinese females, including four graduate students in University T: Ivy, June, July, and Laura, a visiting scholar Lucy of this University, and Laura's neighbor Lily. They are all friends respectively ranging from 33 to 37 years old, and their names and names involved in their conversations are all fake for the sake of privacy.

3.2 Data

The data in the present study is conversation audio tape-recorded by cell phone or recorder when they get together for meal or fun or a ride, in cafeteria, library, or car; and the author is sometimes one of the participants. The recording is conducted with the participants' consent but without their knowledge of what it is specifically about. Therefore, the conversations may represent the everyday talk among Chinese friends and familiar people.

3.3 Procedure

After being recorded, the Chinese conversations (overall around 4.5 hours) are transcribed and sorted out. The excerpts concerning both speech acts and storytelling are translated and presented in the study.

3.4 Analyzing Framework

Speech act theory: According to Searle (2001), when uttering a sentence, one is simultaneously performing at least three distinct kinds of acts: the uttering of words; referring and predicating; and stating, questioning, commanding, promising, etc. Under the broad concept of speech acts, the three acts mentioned above are called performing utterance acts, propositional acts, illocutionary acts, respectively. Some main types of illocutionary acts are the request, assert, question, thank, advise, warn, object, etc., and "Austin claimed there were over a thousand such expressions in English" (Searle, 2001).

Although "Illocutionary acts are characteristically performed in the utterance of sounds or the making of marks" (Searle, 2001), the specific words mentioned above will not always be used in performing an illocutionary act. In fact, "illocutionary force is indicated by a variety of devices, some of them fairly complicated syntactically (ibid).

Conversation analysis methodology: Conversation analysis (CA) methodology will also be drawn on to analyze present data. CA emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in the work of the American sociologist Sacks and his colleagues Schegloff and Jefferson. For Schegloff (1996), talk is "the primordial scene of social life...through which the work of the constitutive institutions of societies gets done". It is through talking that we live our lives, build and maintain relationships, and establish "who we are to one another" (Drew, 2005).

CA involves transcribing the recordings of various talk and study on them, focusing on the turns of the organization of talk. The methods and procedures the speakers employed to produce orderly and meaningful conversational actions will be mainly concerned. Patterns and topics studied in CA include how people take turns in conversation, what it means to overlap with another speaker or produce a delayed response, how conversations are opened and closed, how actions (complaining, questioning, assessing, etc.) are accomplished (Speer & Stokoe, 2011)

4. Results and Discussions

The present study mainly focuses on the conversational storytelling concerning performing some types of illocutionary acts. It is found that in performing speech acts like assert, advise, warn and object, conversational storytelling usually occurs to play multiple roles, which will be examined one by one.

4.1 In Performing the Illocutionary Act of Assertion

Excerpt 1. June and Ivy are graduate students at University T, and they are walking after lunch and gossiping about

the male classmate X from Taiwan.

1. June: Have you noticed? X is definitely a hunter. He is always staring at other girls.
2. Ivy: Of course, he is still single.
- 3.→ June: Last time, I had dinner with him in the cafeteria. Across the table sat a girl. You know
4. what he said to me?
5. Ivy: What?
6. June: (Imitating X's Taiwanese accent) "She has a flat chest, why she wears such a dress?"
7. Ivy: (Laugh) Really?
8. June: I said "Why do you always look at people this way? Your eyes seem to always on this
9. kind of thing.", and he said (Imitating X's Taiwanese accent), "I am just telling the truth."
10. Ivy: Actually many boys look at girls this way, they just don't say it.
11. June: Right, but they Taiwanese thinks it doesn't matter to say it.

In asserting a proposition, "speaker has evidence (reasons, etc.) for the truth of P" (Searle, 2001). In this excerpt, an illocutionary act "assert" is performed at Line1, "X is definitely a hunter". In uttering this sentence, June is making an assertion. If only this sentence is provided, the assertion "X is definitely a hunter" seems groundless and weak. Therefore, in the following turns, June tells a self-involved story happening to her and X in the cafeteria at Lines 3-4, 6, and 8-9. This story is a good case in point in helping Ivy believe that X is really a hunter who always stares at girls. Otherwise, this assertion will seem extremely baseless. The storytelling in performing the illocutionary act "assertion" plays the role of illustration, evidence or support. Also, sharing this funny and interesting boy-related experience may contribute to rapport building between good friends.

Looking into the organization of this excerpt again, it is not difficult to find this conversational storytelling follows the assertion immediately, in the next turn of the story-teller. It seems the storytelling in this illocutionary act is very essential to make the assertion viable through facts. This "assertion — storytelling" pattern is not rare in Chinese daily conversation.

4.2 In Performing the Illocutionary Act of Warning

Excerpt 2. July and Laura are friends. Laura has just got pregnant, and July is the mother of two children. They are having lunch together in the cafeteria.

1. July: See, the change of flavor is very strange.
2. Laura: Yeah, I don't like rice any more, I prefer steamed bread or anything made of flour now.
3. July: I can see that.
4. Laura: I also like noodles.
5. July: You know I couldn't eat any spicy food before, but since I carried my first baby, I
6. wanted to eat Maouxuewang everyday. Since then, I have become one who can eat hot
7. food.
8. Laura: (Laugh) Heavy taste!
9. July: Yeah, when I felt sick I had to take some Maouxuewang. No matter what kind of restaurant
10. we were in, if there was this dish, I needed to order one right away and got better as soon
11. as I took some.
12. Laura: You didn't avoid any sensitive food? Like Maouxuewang.
13. July: Actually, I think except for certain sensitive food, it doesn't matter at all. For what you
14. eat is in your stomach, which has been screened by your stomach. Isn't it? Spicy food is
15. also a kind of nutrition.
16. Laura: The other day, I searched on the internet and it turned out lots of common food should be
17. forbidden.

18. July: Definitely. Don't believe it.
19. Laura: Even watermelon is forbidden, did you eat watermelon at that time?
20. July: Of course, why not? Watermelon is very effective in dieresis.
21. Laura: So why is it forbidden?
22. July: Unless there is some food, like crab, which should be totally avoided.
23. Laura: Right.
- 24-> July: Yeah, it happened to me once. when I, probably carried my first baby, there was once a
25. sign for threatened abortion.
26. Laura: Really?
27. July: I was scared that time.
28. Laura: What did you eat?
29. July: I guess because I took some crab meat stick. Actually, crab meat stick is not crab at all.
30. Laura: Lots of starch and other stuff have been added into it.
31. July: Definitely. However, maybe due to a psychological effect, I felt very nervous. Later on, I
32. went to see the doctor, the doctor said, "everything goes well, and take more rest". It got
33. better naturally.
34. Laura: [At which pregnancy period?]
35. July: It should be over 3 months.
36. Laura: Oh, over 3 months means the condition is stable.
37. July: However, my mother-in-law thought it is nothing serious, saying "are you very nervous?",
38. I said "of course I am very nervous, what do you think?"
39. Laura: She was blaming you for being too careless?
40. July: She thought I was too scared to do anything, she couldn't understand?
45. Laura: Shouldn't it be like this?

...

In this long conversation excerpt, there are actually two stories being told. The first is Lines 5-7, and 9-11. In this storytelling, July is providing her own experience to make her assertion at Line 1 "the change of flavor is very strange" believable and convincing. Since this "assertion — storytelling" pattern has already been discussed above, it won't be illustrated here again.

The other storytelling is from Line 24, July begins to introduce her experience of threatened abortion caused by eating some forbidden food. How does this storytelling come up? If looking backward, it can be found in her last turn, Line 22, July presents her opinion "Unless there is some food, like crab, which should be totally avoided". As a matter of fact, in uttering this sentence, July is making a warning "If you eat any sensitive food, it would be dangerous!". However, if she only says this sentence without any support, her warning seems quite weak, although a warning is not necessarily an attempt to get you to take evasive action (Searle, 2001). Therefore, in her next turn, Line 24, she immediately tells her own experience of threatened abortion due to inappropriate food-taking. So the second storytelling in this conversation excerpt also serves as a counterexample, illustration, evidence, and her personal experience sharing may also make them much closer.

However, after being examined closely, this conversational storytelling is not self-contained. Although it follows the illocutionary act of warning immediately, it seems to bring up more information than needed. After Line 37, July remembers her mother-in-law's attitude towards this matter and feels angry again. In fact, there are more turns of evaluating her mother-in-law and their relationship during that period, which is loosely related to the illocutionary act of warning and is omitted here. This "warning — storytelling" pattern can be easily identified in Chinese everyday talk, and this kind of follow-up evaluation is not rare as well.

4.3 In Performing the Illocutionary Act of Objection

Excerpt 3. Lucy is a visiting scholar of University T. She is a friend of Ivy, who is a Ph.D student at this university. They are walking after lunch talking about which professor to follow for Lucy in her future Ph.D entrance exam.

1. Lucy: It isn't possible to ask someone to make a recommendation? Is it?
2. Ivy: (Not catching her) sorry?
3. Lucy: Ask someone to recommend.
4. Ivy: Recommend to whom?
5. Lucy: For example, could I ask professor L to recommend me to professor W. It isn't possible, Is
6. it?
7. Ivy: You have already known professor W, haven't you? You think you still need professor L
8. to make a recommendation? It's better to recommend yourself. If you ask Professor L to
9. → recommend, he may not be willing to do it. You know, at that moment, my former MA's
10. supervisor and my present supervisor once followed the same supervisor in University P.
11. Lucy: Yeah, I heard you once mentioned that.
12. Ivy: When I was going to take the interview for Ph.D entrance exam, I asked my former
13. MA's supervisor "Could you make a recommendation for me?", but my former
14. supervisor said, "every supervisor has their standards for recruiting their Ph.D students"
15. and he didn't help me. Even he does recommend, what should my present supervisor do?
16. If she doesn't follow the recommendation, it may hurt their relationship, but if she does,
17. she may go against her own will.
18. Lucy: Yes, your former supervisor can not say anything.
19. Ivy: Definitely, besides, he is younger than my present supervisor, if he is her supervisor, that
20. may work. He might say...
21. Lucy: [please consider my former student]
22. Ivy: Right, he is younger, how can he ask his elder academic sister to help?

In this excerpt, the sentence in Line 8 and 9 "If you ask Professor L to recommend, he may not be willing to do it." indicates that Ivy is objecting to her friend Lucy's idea of asking another professor to make a recommendation. Uttering this sentence, She is making an objection. However, if she only says that without any account, Lucy will get unhappy or even feel offended. Therefore, Ivy provides at once her own experience in taking the interview for Ph.D entrance exam, — her failure example of asking her former MA's supervisor to make a recommendation for her, which lasts from Lines 9-10, and 13-16. What's more, It seems that Ivy doesn't think the story is enough and makes lots of evaluation on the event at Lines 15-17, 19-20, and 22.

Objecting to or disagreeing with one's idea is undoubtedly face-threatening. Based on Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987), expressions of disapproval, contradiction or disagreement may threaten the positive-face want of the other. Therefore, If one objects to the other's opinion or idea without explanation or support, they would be regarded impolite or rude. Taking this into consideration, the conversational storytelling by Ivy plays a double role, to mitigate the face-threat of Lucy in objecting to Lucy's idea and to contribute to the viability of Ivy's idea per se as well.

The storytelling in this conversation differs from the last two excerpts in that the storytelling begins in the same turn with the illocutionary act expression, not in the next turn. It might be due to the face-threat of objection, which needs to be mitigated as soon as possible. The immediacy of the storytelling and the illocutionary act expression demonstrate the necessity of storytelling in reducing the face-threat and making a point.

4.4 In Performing the Illocutionary Act of Advising

Sometimes, the storytelling can go first before the illocutionary act expression. In this case, the illocutionary force is indicated by the story, so to speak.

Excerpt 4. Laura and Lily are neighbors and friends. Lily takes a ride with Laura to work, and they are talking about Laura's pregnancy.

1. Lily: It depends. If you think your mother is ok, it would be fine. However, when my son was
2. born, I thought the more
3. Laura: [the messier]?
4. Lily: Exactly! They were not willing to come, either. Besides, I found maybe it's better for
5. → them not to come. My post-natal care was not very happy. Mainly because my mother
6. and I have been living apart for a long time, only these two years her help with the baby
7. makes the relationship better.
8. Laura: After your son was born, it was your mother-in-law and father-in-law who helped with
9. the baby-sitting ?
10. Lily: My mother was also here for my post-natal care, as well as my mother-in-law. My
11. mother and I, you know, I went to school early, and only went back home in summer and
12. winter vacation. I didn't realize the problem between us until after I gave birth to my son,
13. our living habits, thoughts, and many other things. So she left half a month after my son
14. was born.
15. Laura: Oh, she left without finishing the first month.
16. Lily: She didn't feel easy, either. She also thought my thoughts were different from hers. So
17. when she planned to leave, I didn't ask her to stay. For I didn't want us to be unhappy.
18. Now, she lives with us and it becomes better. But at that moment, I hadn't thought
19. about this problem and my post-natal period was not joyful.
20. Laura: Yeah, I haven't thought about it either.
21. Lily: But you often go back home.
22. Laura: Right!
23. Lily: You often go back home. So it would not be a problem. I just go back home on vacations, 24.
- when we tended to understand each other. After working, I went back home only on
25. holidays, and she hadn't been with me for a long time, either.
26. Laura: Oh, you are meant to look like your father. Last time I saw your mother and couldn't tell
27. any similarity between you.
28. Lily: Yes, ...
- ...
29. Lily: I am telling you this because this is the biggest problem I came across at that moment, so
30. I tell it to everyone. It doesn't mean I don't get along with my mum, I only think you
31. should consider this before hand.
32. Laura: I can get along with my mum, I am sure, but my mother might only help me out for
33. one month.
34. Lily: One month is enough, so if you think your mother and you can get along, you should
35. definitely ask her to come.

“Advising is more like telling you what is best for you” (Searle, 2001). In this long conversation excerpt, the storyteller Lily tells the story between her mother and herself during her post-natal care. It lasts several turns and goes with lots of her explanation or account. The recipient of the story could figure it out that the storytelling is meant to imply “if you want anyone to come to help you out with your post-natal care, you have to consider whether you can get along”, which is for the benefit of Laura. So the storytelling indicates the illocutionary force of advising,

for as mentioned above, “illocutionary force is indicated by a variety of devices, some of them fairly complicated syntactically (Searle, 2001). Conversational storytelling is complicated syntactically in indicating this illocutionary force or performing the illocutionary act, but it seems powerful and workable.

However, after several rounds of their conversation about whether Lily looks like her mother (which isn’t presented completely), she came back to the original story and mentioned her purpose in telling the story. The Line 30, 31 “I only think you can consider this before hand” is her advice, which is the same with that has been indicated. And the following Lines 34-35 further make the advice more explicit. Usually, the following advising lines are not necessarily presented, for the illocutionary force is indicated and the recipient can figure it out through the story being told. Its occurrence in Line 30, 31 may be regarded as an emphasis of the illocutionary force. Besides, what needs to be mentioned is the position of the storytelling, it may also occur after the advice is given as an example or evidence, just like that in speech act of warning. Therefore, the pattern “storytelling — advice” or “advice — storytelling” may both occur in Chinese everyday talk.

To sum up the conversational storytelling in performing some types of illocutionary acts, assert, warn, object and advise based on present data, it can be drawn that conversational storytelling usually occurs after the illocutionary acts are performed, mostly in the next turn of the conversation, sometimes in the same turn. The conversational storytelling can also occur before the illocutionary act is performed, and the illocutionary force is indicated in the story. However, it is noteworthy that this is the conclusion based on present data, a larger data set might lead to a slightly different conclusion. In the cases discussed above, the roles of the conversational storytelling are to provide evidence, account, example, to build rapport between friends, even to mitigate the face threat in performing the particular illocutionary act, like object.

5. Conclusions and Limitations

The present study examined the conversational storytelling in performing several types of illocutionary acts, assert, warn, object and advise in Chinese everyday talk. The roles of conversational storytelling in performing an illocutionary act and the possible patterns were investigated above, and the following conclusions may be drawn:

- (1) In performing the illocutionary acts of assert, warn, object and advise in social interaction, storytelling frequently occurs in the conversations to make it happen.
- (2) The roles of conversational storytelling in performing some illocutionary acts are: to make a point in providing facts, evidence, account, example, to build rapport between friends through sharing private experience, even to mitigate the face threat in some particular illocutionary act, like object. This is comparable to Norrick’s argument (2007) in that stories are told for a reason and to fulfill multiple simultaneous functions, like revealing attitudes, entertaining listeners, etc.
- (3) As for the position of the stories in conversations, it usually occurs immediately after the expression of illocutionary acts, in the next turn or even in the same turn to mitigate the face-threat as soon as possible. Sometimes, it occurs before performing any illocutionary acts, for the story per se might indicate the illocutionary force and the following expression of illocutionary act is only to emphasize the illocutionary force.

As a ubiquitous activity in everyday talk, conversational storytelling plays many roles to make the conversation go smoothly. Through being told some stories, the recipients figure out why the story tellers make such an assertion, provide such a warning, offer such a piece of advice, or object to a certain idea. Conversational storytelling makes these illocutionary acts powerful, viable, interesting and even more polite. Through telling the stories, the story tellers and recipients have the chance to know more about each other, which contributes to their closer interpersonal relationship.

Although this study makes some contribution to the different perspectives in studying conversational storytelling, there are still some limitations. As a pilot study, the biggest limitation of this paper is the data set. Due to time constraint, only several conversations are recorded for the source of data. Also, the conversations mainly occur among people with the similar age and experience. Therefore, in the following study, a much larger data set should be built to include more various conversations, which might make the study more valid and comprehensive. Moreover, the study only focuses on the conversational storytelling in performing several types of illocutionary acts, but many other types of illocutionary acts also need to be considered in the future study.

References

- Austin, J.L., (2002). *How to Do Things with Words*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Bertrand, R. & Espesser, R. (2017). Co-narration in French conversation storytelling: a quantitative insight. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 111, 33-53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2017.02.001>
- Bowden, K. K., Lin, G. I., Reed, L. I., Tree, J. E., & Walker, M. A. (2016). M2D: monolog to dialog generation for conversational story telling. In F. Nack and A. S. Gordon (Eds.). *ICIDS 2016*, LNCS 10045, pp. 12-24, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-48279-8_2
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Drew, P. (2005). Conversation analysis. In K. L. Fitch & R. E. Sanders (eds.), *Handbook of Language and Social Interaction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Frude, N. & Killick, S. (2011). Family storytelling and the attachment relationship. *Psychodynamic Practice*, 17(4), 441-455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14753634.2011.609025>
- Gilliam, D. A. & Flaherty, K. E. (2015). Storytelling by the sales force and its effect on buyer-seller exchange. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 46, 132-142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2015.01.013>
- Griswold, O. (2016). Center stage: direct and indirect reported speech in conversational storytelling. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 73-90. <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/19b8197x>
- Harris, M. B. (2007). Getting carried away: Understanding memory and consumer processing of perceived storytelling in advertisement. PhD dissertation. The University of Minnesota.
- Holt, E. (2017). Indirect reported speech in storytelling: its position, design and uses. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 50(2), 171-187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2017.1301302>
- Karatsu, M. (2012). *Conversational Storytelling among Japanese Women*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.16>
- Koike, C. (2009). *Interaction in Storytelling in Japanese Conversations: An analysis of story recipients' questions*. PhD dissertation. UCLA.
- Levinson, S. (2001). *Pragmatics*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Norricks, N. R. (2004). Humor, tellability and conarration in conversational Storytelling. *Text*, 24(1), 79-111. <https://doi.org/10.1515/text.2004.005>
- Norricks, N. R. (2005a). Interactional remembering in conversational narrative. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37, 1819-1844. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2005.04.005>
- Norricks, N. R. (2005b). The dark side of tellability. *Narrative Inquiry*, 15(2), 323-343. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.15.2.07nor>
- Norricks, N. R. (2007). Conversational storytelling. In Herman, D. (Ed.) , *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (127-141). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521856965.009>
- Norricks, N. R. (2008). Using large corpora of conversation to investigate narrative. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 13(4), 438-464. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.13.4.03nor>
- Norricks, N. R. (2010). Incorporating recipient evaluations into stories. *Narrative Inquiry*, 20(1), 182-203. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.20.1.09nor>
- Perakyla, A., Henttonen, p., Voutilainen, L., Kahri, M., Stevanovic, M., Sams, M. & Ravaja, N.(2015). Sharing the emotional load: recipient affiliation calms down the story teller. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 78(4), 301-323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272515611054>
- Ruhlemann, C., Bagoutdinov, A. & O'Donnell, M. B. (2011). Windows on the mind: Pauses in Conversational Narrative. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 16(2), 198-230. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.16.2.03ruh>
- Ruhlemann, C. & Gries, S. (2015). Turn order and turn distribution in multi-party storytelling. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 87, 171-191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2015.08.003>
- Schegloff, E.A. (1996) Issues of relevance for discourse analysis: Contingency in action, interaction and co-participant context. In E. H. Hovy & D. R. Scott (eds.), *Computational and Conversational Discourse:*

Burning Issues- An Interdisciplinary Account. New York: Springer.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-03293-0_1

- Searle, J. R. (2001). *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Selting, M. (2010). Affectivity in conversational storytelling: an analysis of displays of anger or indignation in complaint stories. *Pragmatics*, 20(2) 229-277. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.20.2.06sel>
- Selting, M. (2012). Complaint stories and subsequent complaint stories with affect displays. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 44, 387-415. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2012.01.005>
- Speer, S. A. & Stokoe, E. (2011). *Conversation and Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511781032>
- Sugita, Y. (2012). Minimal affect uptake in a pre-climax position of conversational “scary” stories. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 44, 1273-1289. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2012.05.012>
- Syed, M. (2012). College students’ storytelling of ethnicity-related events in the academic domain. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 27(2), 203-230. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558411432633>
- Theobald, M. (2016) Achieving competence: The interactional features of children’s storytelling. *Childhood*, 23(1), 87-104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568215571619>
- Thorson, A. R., Rittenour, C. E., Kellas, J. K., & Trees, A.R. (2013). Quality interactions and family storytelling. *Communication Reports*, 26(2), 88-100. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08934215.2013.797482>
- Voutilainen, L., Henttonen, p., Kahri, M., Kivioja, M., Ravaja, N., Sams, M., & Perakyla, A. (2014). Affective stance, ambivalence, and psychophysiological responses during conversational storytelling. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 68, 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2014.04.006>
- Zhao, Y. R. & Zhao, Y. (2014). A corpus-based discourse analysis of conversational storytelling in Chinese adults. *Chinese Language and Discourse*, 5(1), 53-78. <https://doi.org/10.1075/cld.5.1.03zha>