

Development of narrative ability in L2 French: relations between linguistic knowledge and learner self-regulation

Rosamond Mitchell
University of Southampton

Within spoken language the narrative genre is familiar to everyone from early childhood and plays a significant role in the development of the sense of self, so that even young children are sophisticated storytellers. However in L2, the linguistic means may be lacking to accomplish smooth and integrated narrative performance (e.g. the means for distinguishing between new and known entities, for maintaining reference, for distinguishing points of view, and for locating events in time). The study of L2 narratives at different proficiency levels can help us understand how learners initially solve these problems using pragmatic means, and gradually deploy their growing linguistic resources to produce more integrated and autonomous speech (i.e. achieve self-regulation).

This paper will report a pilot analysis of two different sets of L2 French narratives represented in the FLLOC database: the “Loch Ness” picture based narratives, and the “Modern Times” narratives (film clip retelling). Narratives produced by learners at different proficiency levels will be evaluated for completeness, integration and autonomy from context; the interaction between these narrative features and the linguistic resources deployed will be examined. Particular attention will be paid to the evolution of the linguistic means used to sustain reference to new and given information (determiners, pronouns etc) and to locate events in time (adverbials, verb morphology etc). In conclusion the extent to which narrative activity itself promotes appropriation of new language forms will be considered.