

# Evaluation During the Understanding of Narratives

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Evaluation plays a role in the telling and understanding of narratives, in communicative interaction, emotional understanding, and in psychological well-being. This article reports a study of evaluation by describing how readers monitor the concerns of characters over the course of a narrative. The main hypothesis is that readers track the well-being via the expression of a character's internal states. Reader evaluations were revealed in think aloud protocols obtained during reading of narrative texts, one sentence at a time. Five kinds of evaluative inferences were found: appraisals (good versus bad), preferences (like versus don't like), emotions (happy versus frustrated), goals (want versus don't want), or purposes (to attain or maintain X versus to prevent or avoid X). Readers evaluated all sentences. The mean rate of evaluation per sentence was 0.55. Positive and negative evaluations over the course of the story indicated that things initially went badly for characters, improved with the formulation and execution of goal plans, declined with goal failure, and improved as characters formulated new goals and succeeded. The kind of evaluation made depended upon the episodic category of the event and the event's temporal location in the story. Evaluations also served to explain or predict events. In making evaluations, readers stayed within the frame of the story and perspectives of the character or narrator. They also moved out of the narrative frame and addressed evaluations towards the experimenter in a communicative context.

This article examines how a reader monitors and evaluates the concerns of a character's life experience as it unfolds over the time course of a narrative. Our focus is on what kinds of evaluation the reader makes, what the reader evaluates, the functions that these evaluative inferences serve in comprehension, and the

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multiple perspectives (character, narrator, or presenter) taken by the reader during reading and comprehending of narratives.

### **Why is Evaluation Important?**

Narratives are the main means by which people interpret, represent, and communicate life experiences. Evaluation serves narrative functions, structures communicative exchanges, determines emotions and emotional understanding, provides the basis for identification and monitoring of the concerns of the self and of others, and employs naive theories of rationality in assessing potential or actual harms and benefits.

The narrator uses evaluation (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972) to select, structure, and communicate what is personally significant. Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) examined the evaluative functions of personal narratives. They asked narrators to tell what happened during an experience where the narrator had been in serious danger. Evaluation was "the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative, its *raison d'être*, why it was told, and what the narrator was getting at" (Labov, 1972, p. 366). In Labov and Waletzky's (1967) view, narration is a temporally ordered sequence of clauses. Evaluation was a disruption of the temporal order of events by the narrator *in order to reflect upon and express the significance of the narrative*. By departing from the temporal sequence, the narrator communicates something more important than the reference or mere recapitulation of the events. To make a point, the narrator uses evaluative devices that mark some narrative units as more important than others. The point was to show which events were dangerous or unusual, strange, uncommon, or valenced and non-neutral. The point was often accompanied by expression of emotion. One can understand through narration how the narrator construes events and expresses his concerns and possible harms or benefits from them.

Evaluation can align and organize communicative exchanges between speakers and recipients. Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) examined how people make evaluations in spontaneous conversation among multiple participants. They termed evaluations as "assessments" and assumed that these evaluations serve important interaction functions in building a conversation collaboratively. An assessment is a particular type of speech act in conversation through which the speaker evaluates objects or events. As such, the speaker takes a position or stance toward the phenomena being assessed. By assessing something as "good" or "bad," the speaker publicly commits himself to a particular evaluation of what he has witnessed and is now communicating to others. In turn, recipients are affected by the speaker's assessments and can judge whether the speaker can properly evaluate the events. The public display of the experience of one participant also

provides resources for the interactive organization of co-experience with participants. Affect displays are evaluations, pervasive in their production, and are central to the organization of experience.

Evaluation is a process by which humans reflect upon events that affect others or themselves personally. Evaluation is thus a general means for understanding the lives of others and ourselves. A key assumption in cognitive theories of emotion is that events are "appraised" in terms of one or another's well-being. In so doing, events are evaluated as to their potential or actual harms or benefits. Evaluation processes are believed to underlie all emotional experience (Lazarus, 1991; Stein & Levine, 1989; Stein, Trabasso & Liwag, 1993, 1994). For example, in Stein's theory (Stein & Levine, 1987, 1990), positive or negative affect results from success or failure in being able to attain or maintain valued goals. Evaluative understanding is what enables the formulation of goals and plans to cope with the changes that events cause in our lives (Folkman & Lazarus, 1990). Evaluation processes are the basis for personal and inter-personal emotions and emotional understanding.

The fact that evaluation occurs in narration has important implications for mental health. Stein, Folkman, Trabasso, and Richards (1997) analyzed the bereavement narratives of 30 caregivers whose partners had recently died from AIDS. They found that evaluations, expressed as valenced beliefs, emotions, and outcome appraisals in bereavement narratives by caregivers, predicted psychological well-being of the caregivers at the time of bereavement and twelve months later. The proportion of positive evaluations predicted recovery from depression, negative moods, and positive states of mind better twelve months later than did the self-report measures of psychological well-being themselves.

Evaluation, when expressed as emotion towards other, occurs when an observer is compassionate and empathic towards characters in film. Zillman (1994) interpreted identification with film characters in terms of the viewer caring about and monitoring the concerns of a character. Concerns are inferred or expressed through character's goals, plans of action, and outcomes. When one identifies with a character, one monitors and evaluates how well the character is doing. One also tracks and monitors whether the character succeeds or fails in achieving or maintaining goals.

Theories of rationality assume that people behave in ways that yield benefits and avoid harms or costs, within the limits of their resources (Rescher, 1988). The assessment of benefits and costs are essential to the formulation of efficient and appropriate means and ends. Hence, evaluation of alternative outcomes (ends) entails an assessment of the costs and benefits of the outcomes, the appropriateness of goals and plans (means), and the efficiency of action in attaining outcomes, all within the resources available to the person. Evaluation, from a rationality viewpoint, would lead readers to evaluate the impact of events and

outcomes as to the costs and benefits they entail. Further, readers should judge goals and plans as to their appropriateness, given the circumstances or events that caused them, whether the character has the ability or resources necessary to attain their goals via the means chosen, whether the goal plan or means chosen will produce the desired outcome or end effect, and whether the end justifies the means.

Taken together, these several views on evaluation converge on common properties. People make valenced assessments of their and others' well being in terms of what happens, what they or others can do about threats and harms, whether what is done will produce desired outcomes, and whether or not outcomes are beneficial or harmful.

### How Can We Study Evaluation as It Occurs?

*What Kinds of Evaluation are Expressed during Understanding?* Trabasso and Özyürek (1997) analyzed qualitatively the think-aloud protocols of Suh (1988) (see also Suh & Trabasso, 1993; Trabasso & Suh, 1993; Trabasso & Magliano, 1996) and identified five main ways in which evaluations may be expressed in comprehension of a discourse. The five ways were: appraisals, preferences, emotions, goals, and outcomes. Each of these assessments was either positively or negatively valenced. With respect to the first three evaluations, valence was expressed through either adjectives or verbs. For appraisals, these were typically "good" versus "bad"; for preferences, "like" versus "dislike," and for emotions, a positive emotional state ("happy") or a negative emotional state ("unhappy"). In this article, we use and extend Trabasso and Özyürek's qualitative analysis. We study how evaluation expressed in think-aloud protocols reveals how readers monitor the concerns of characters. We also examine quantitatively which kinds of evaluations occur and how and what is evaluated over the time course of the narrative. We now turn to defining and illustrating the kinds of evaluations identified by Trabasso and Özyürek (1997).

Appraisals, preferences, and emotions indicate whether things either are going well or badly, or previously went well or badly. When understanding a narrative via thinking aloud, these evaluations may be made from one of three perspectives. The first is where the reader assumes the role the character as an experiencer. The second is a third party perspective where the reader becomes the narrator who observes, and the third is that of the personal perspective where the reader becomes a presenter to an addressee (the experimenter) in the communicative context of the think-aloud situation. Appraisals are often expressed in general terms, e.g., "That's good" or "That's bad" from the perspective of the reader or the narrator. If the appraisal is framed as in the mind of the character, then the character's point of view is taken (e.g., "Jane thinks: 'That's good'"). Preferences

are more likely to be expressed from the character's or experiencer's perspective (e.g., "Jane likes the game"). Emotions, likewise, are often expressed from the character's as experiencer perspective (e.g., "Jane feels unhappy"). However, the reader or narrator can, within the frame of the narrative, continue it by taking authorship of the character's or experiencer's perspective (e.g., "The failure to lose weight made Jane feel unhappy").

Goals and purposes are often narrated as explicit concerns of characters in narratives. When expressing goals or purposes, people are communicating which objects, activities, or states they would like to attain, maintain, avoid, or escape. The expressed concerns are communicated through explicit goals and purposes. These expressions communicate future states that are either desired or not. Goals that indicate positively valenced desires are stated with "want" or its paraphrases; goals that are negatively valenced are stated in the negative as "not want" and its paraphrases. Goal states are intentions and are clearly marked by verbs as internal states that exist prior to action. In contrast, purposes are often conjoined with actions by infinitival ("to become thin") or prepositional phrases ("for her mother's birthday"; "in order to lose weight"). Purposes are more likely to be expressed with future oriented actions and in a positive form than goal states. Goals, as explicit desires, express the character's or experiencer's perspective (e.g., "Jane wanted to learn racquet ball"). Purposes, on the other hand, focus on external actions that are attempts to attain goals and appear to be authored from the reader's or narrator's perspective (e.g., "Jane signed up for lessons in order to learn racquet ball").

### Example Protocol with Evaluative Inferences

In order to see how evaluations occur in think-aloud protocols, the explanatory and predictive functions they serve, and the perspectives that readers take, we now present an excerpt from a protocol obtained by Suh (1988). This protocol illustrates how the first seven episodic categories of a story are understood and evaluated during reading. The protocol is that of an undergraduate female at The University of Chicago. Each episodic category and text are presented first followed by the reader's commentary to the experimenter.

#### Episode Story

**Setting (1).** ONCE THERE WAS A GIRL NAMED BETTY.

*Reader:* "There's a young female person whose name is Betty."

**Initiating Event (2).** ONE DAY, BETTY FOUND THAT HER MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY WAS COMING SOON.



*Reader:* “Betty, like all, like most children who love their parents, Betty found out that her mother’s birthday was coming soon. Most children eventually discover that their parents birthday is around the corner or somebody tells them.”

**Goal (3).** SHE REALLY WANTED TO GIVE HER MOTHER A PRESENT.

*Reader:* “This shows that Betty loved her mother and she wanted to thank her for all the things she had done by giving her something for her birthday.”

**Attempt (4).** SHE WENT TO THE DEPARTMENT STORE.

*Reader:* “Betty decided that, you know, something really fancy would suit, show her feelings toward her mother instead of some homemade card that may or may not look any good.”

**Outcome (5).** SHE FOUND THAT EVERYTHING WAS TOO EXPENSIVE.

*Reader:* “This is Betty discovering that on her childhood budget, she really has not the money necessary to buy the kind of gift that she wants to give to her mother.”

**Outcome (6).** SHE COULD NOT BUY ANYTHING FOR HER MOTHER.

*Reader:* “This was because everything was so expensive.”

**Internal Response (7).** BETTY FELT SORRY.

*Reader:* “Uhm, this is because she wanted to give her mother something special, as you can buy in a department store, but she didn’t have the money and she felt that maybe she’d be short-changing her mother, without giving, if she didn’t give her something from the department store.”

In this protocol, we have underlined those words that index an evaluation of the text events by reader. The first evaluation is made to (2), the initiating event, from the perspective of the character and involves a positive emotion expressed as “love.”

The goal of the story character in (3) is explained by the character’s emotional disposition (love) towards her mother. The goal is also explained by another, positive superordinate goal of wanting to thank her mother. This goal, in turn, is explained by what the mother has done for Betty in the past. The attempt in fourth sentence is evaluated and explained in terms of purposeful actions (“to express her feelings” and “to find something”). The goal objects of the gift are appraised with character appraisals as “really fancy,” and not something “homemade” and that would not look “good.”

The outcome in the fifth sentence is interpreted as a goal failure and is explained by the reader in terms of a lack of money. This explanation is repeated for the explicit goal failure in the sixth sentence. The narrative then expresses the

character's emotional reaction to the failure in her goal. The reader now explains why the character feels this way in terms of her goal, the circumstances that lead to its failure, and not being able to provide an appropriate goal of value for her mother. This is consistent with the Stein and Levine's (1987, 1990) theory of emotional understanding.

In this protocol, evaluations occur throughout the episode and provide coherence of interpretation. The valences of the evaluations were positive or negative. The evaluations were expressed from the perspective of the character or as a narrator and as explanations of goals, attempts, or emotions or as causal consequences of events and outcomes.

### **How are Particular Events in an Episode Evaluated?**

The example protocol above illustrates how one reader understood and evaluated a sequence of events in an episode. In order to understand the monitoring and evaluation of characters as to their concerns, we use the Episodic Categories to talk in general terms about the clauses that occur in narrative discourse. We are also interested in how the content of these categories affects the kinds of evaluations that are made.

Trabasso and Özyürek (1997) adopted the episodic categories of Trabasso, van den Broek, and Suh (1989) who, in turn, had based their classification of narrative clauses upon episodic structures originally described by Stein and Glenn (1979) and Mandler and Johnson (1977). Table 1 illustrates the episodic categories of one of sixteen stories generated by Suh (1988). The parsing of a narrative into episodes allows one to reveal how the content of the narrative is structured, in general, and provides a basis for understanding how different kinds of events in a narrative are evaluated with respect to how well things are going for a character.

In the first sentence (1) of the Jane Story in Table 1, we are introduced to the main character via an Initiating Event. This Initiating Event opens the first episode and begins the story. Initiating Events happen to or are experienced by the main protagonist. They are the key events of personal significance in that they typically have profound effects on the protagonist's goal states and well-being (Stein et al., 1993, 1994). The effects may be harmful or threatening or they may be beneficial. As such, they have to be evaluated by the character. They would be evaluated by the reader in order to understand how the concerns of the character are affected. The Initiating Event(s) is thus an important source of information in a narrative from which one can infer whether things are going well or going badly for a character.

If one shares the concerns of a character, one can infer the causal consequences of Initiating Events to the character. In Stein et al. (1993, 1994) analysis, the character evaluates what occurs in the Initiating Event and expresses

**TABLE 1**  
**Example Story, Episodic Categories of Sentences, and**  
**Total Number of Sentences per Category across 16 Stories**

Jane Story	Episodic Category	Total Number of Sentences
Jane became very heavy	Initiating Event 1	72
Jane wanted to lose weight	Goal 1	64
Jane jogged for a while	Attempt 1	72
Jane did not become thinner	*Failed Outcome 1	36
Jane was frustrated	*Negative Emotion 1	36
Jane became very thin	**Success Outcome 1	40
Jane was happy	**Positive Emotion 1	32
One day, Jane saw a racquet ball game	Initiating Event 2	56
Jane decided to learn to play racquet ball	Goal 2	64
Jane took lessons	Attempt 2	108
Jane learned quickly	Success Outcome 2	64
Jane played racquet ball with her friends	Attempt 3	128
Jane became thin/a good player	Success Outcome 3	120
Jane was pleased with herself	Positive Emotion 3	40

*Notes:* \*Goal failure version only; \*\*Goal success version only.

these evaluations as valenced beliefs (appraisals), preferences, or emotions. Thus, in Table 1, Jane's becoming very heavy, as an Initiating Event provides information for evaluative inferences by the reader. These inferences, in particular, could include appraisals by the reader, and preferences or emotions by the character. For example, readers might infer that things are going badly for Jane and express these evaluations as "This is not good," "Jane does not like being heavy," and/or "Jane feels unhappy." Initiating Events also psychologically cause goals in the characters. These goals may be inferred and expressed as desired or undesired states, actions, or objects. In the present example, Jane may desire a change in state, from being heavy to being thin. Thus, readers might infer that "Jane does not want to be heavy" and/or "Jane wants to become thin." Further, they may infer possible goal plans which are expressed as purposes conjoined with attempts. For example, they may predict that "Jane will go on a diet in order to become thin" or that "Jane will do something to lose weight." Purposes conjoined with attempts form a goal plan and are thus one step further, causally, from a goal. Goals are, in Searle's (1983) terminology, intentional states whereas purposes are intentions in action.

The Jane Story in Table 1 does not contain any internal responses made by Jane in response to the Initiating event other than a Goal (she wants to lose weight). The inferred internal responses expressed as appraisals, preferences, and emotions could just as well have been expressed by the narrator and would have



preserved the causal coherence of the story. Leaving them out in this and the other stories created by Suh (1988) allows the reader the opportunity to evaluate text events and express the results of the evaluation in terms of internal responses caused by Initiating Events or antecedents to Goals.

In evaluating a character's Goal, readers could make evaluations that serve as reasons for the Goal. These reasons would be causal antecedents of the Goal and mirror the causal consequences of the Initiating Event. Thus, readers could infer that the reason that Jane wants to lose weight is that: "It wasn't good for her to be heavy. She did not like being heavy. She is unhappy with being heavy. She does not want to be heavy. She wants to become thin. She is going to diet in order to become thin." Thus, appraisals, preferences, emotions, goals, and purposes each could be inferred and serve to explain the text goal of the character. Appraisals may also reflect norms, goals, or values of the readers. Readers may use evaluations to justify the character's Goal as appropriate given the circumstances of the Initiating Event(s) or according to norms and social expectations. In this sense, the character may be seen by the reader as behaving reasonably in establishing a goal to undo some untoward event that is adversely affecting him or her. They may thus judge a desired end state (Goal or Purpose) as appropriate in the circumstances, one criterion for rationality (Rescher, 1988).

From the Goal, readers can infer possible plans of action, and these may be stated as future-oriented purposeful actions. Within an episode, Attempts typically follow Goals but plans are omitted. In Table 1, "Jane jogged for a while" can be inferred as an attempt by Jane to attain her goal of becoming thin. Readers can evaluate attempts in two main ways. Attempts can be seen as appropriate to the goal plan or as likely to achieve a purpose (e.g., "This is a good way to lose weight"). Attempts can also be evaluated according to the resources of the character (e.g. "Jane is athletic"), a position also consistent with theories of rationality that focus on resources (Rescher, 1988). In either case, appraisals are ways of evaluating attempts. Appraisals are evaluations of appropriateness of attempts. They are evaluations of character dispositions, abilities to achieve an outcome, and personal resources or adequacies. Attempts can also be understood in terms of evaluations made of them by characters and expressed by the reader or narrator as preferences by characters (e.g., "Jane likes to jog"). Finally, attempts, being part of goal plans, are also understood and evaluated in terms of goals that motivate them or purposes that guide them.

One of the main consequences of attempts is failure or success in achieving a goal. In the Suh (1988) stories, there were two structural variations: Goal Success and Goal Failure (see Suh & Trabasso, 1993; Trabasso & Suh, 1993). The variation in goal success or failure in Table 1 is differentially indicated as Failed Outcome 1 followed by Negative Emotion 1 or Success Outcome 1 followed by

Positive Emotion 1. Outcomes inform the reader as to the results of a character's attempts to achieve a goal. Readers can evaluate outcomes as to whether they benefit the character (a success) or whether they are harmful to the character (a failure). The outcomes themselves often do not indicate explicitly that the character failed or succeeded. The reader has to infer success or failure of a goal in terms of the outcome. "Jane did not become thinner" is not, in itself, an indicator of success or failure. Given that Jane wanted to lose weight, then becoming thinner is a success. If Jane had wanted to gain weight, the same sentence would be viewed as a failure.

Outcomes may be appraised as "successful" or "unsuccessful." They can also be evaluated in terms of their reasons, causes, or causal consequences. Successful outcomes or failed outcomes could be evaluated and explained by appraisal of character's abilities or goals and purposes. Jane could be seen as being successful in losing weight because she was conscientious and worked hard or as failing because she was not conscientious and didn't work hard enough. Successful or failed outcomes could predict emotional reactions as causal consequences of a positive or negative quality, respectively.

Emotions, when inferred by the reader as reactions by the character to the outcomes, convey evaluations from the perspective of the character. Emotions in the text are explicit evaluations of success or failure (benefits or harms) to the character's well being. Emotions can be understood and evaluated in terms of their causes (goals that succeed or fail) or in terms of preferences or emotions. Following Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) emotions, in the narrative text, may serve as an invitation by the author to the reader to provide similar evaluations.

Thus, each category of an episodic category may be evaluated. The evaluations, however, appear to be constrained by the nature of the category's content. Initiating Events have causal consequences to the character. We therefore anticipate that the evaluations will focus on the consequential harms or benefits to the well-being of characters. The evaluations can be expressed as appraisals, preferences, or emotions. Since the goal states of the characters are also effected by initiating events, we expect that goals will be inferred as consequences for characters. Goals, on the other hand, may be explained by the same kinds of evaluations as were predicted to Initiating Events. Goals are likely to be explained as a consequence of appraisals, preferences, emotions, and other goals. Attempts, on the other hand, are likely to be appraised as to their appropriateness to the Goal Plan and to achieving the ends envisioned as purposes. Outcomes are likely to be evaluated as to success or failure and to their consequences in a manner like Initiating Events. In order to explore these possibilities, we examined the kinds of evaluations that occurred in the think-aloud protocols for each episode of the stories used by Suh (1993) to obtain the protocols.

## METHODS

### Participants and Texts

In the Suh (1998) study, eight college students each read eight 3-episode stories in which:

1. A protagonist was engaged in personal problem-solving and experienced events that affected personal well-being,
2. The protagonist tried to do something about, and
3. The protagonist expressed positive or negative emotions when goal success or failure occurred.

For example, in Table 1, a young woman named Jane, who is overweight, tries in the first episode to lose weight by jogging. In the Goal Fail version, she fails to lose weight. In the Goal Success version, she succeeds in losing weight. In the Goal Fail version, she is "frustrated over her failure" at the end of the first episode but is "happy" with success at the end of the third episode.

Across the sixteen stories of Suh (1988), there were differing numbers of episodic categories. The total number of sentences corresponding to each of the categories is given in the right column of Table 1. These total frequencies of occurrence are important since quantitative analyses will center on the relative frequency or probability of an evaluation per sentence. The stories were identified by the character's name. Half of the characters were female; half were male. There were eight stories with two versions each and each version had either a success or a goal failure in the first episode. In the Betty Story versions, the character wants to give her mother a birthday present and either succeeds or fails by buying a gift or not at a department store. She then knits a sweater which she either gives to her mother or puts away. In the Bill Story versions, the character is initially blind and tries to regain his eyesight medically. He either succeeds or fails. He then goes and takes water from a magical lake that either makes him younger or restores his eyesight. In the Ivan Story versions, an archer tries to kill a giant who has been terrorizing a village and succeeds or fails in his first attempt with a bow and arrow. Ivan then learns to use a sword and returns to the village as a hero or finally succeeds in killing the giant. In the Fred Story versions, a student who is poor in mathematics, takes a math course and either passes or fails an exam. He then forms a study group and becomes a good student or he finally passes the math exam. In the Jane Story versions, Jane is overweight and tries dieting. She either succeeds or fails. She then takes up racquet ball and enjoys it or finally loses weight. In the Jimmy Story versions, a boy asks his mother for a bicycle and either gets it or is refused. He then obtains a delivery job at a grocery store, earns money,

and buys a basketball or finally buys his bicycle. In the Mickey Story versions, a hungry mouse tries to get into a barn and either succeeds in finding food or fails to get in. He then gets into a house and has a lot of fun or finally finds food. Finally, in the William Story versions, a second son wishes to become king. He attempts to impress his father and succeeds or fails. He becomes king and kills his brother or he kills his brother and then becomes king.

The stories ranged from 14 to 18 sentences in length ( $M = 15$  sentences). Each of the eight college students who participated as readers in the study was instructed to read the stories, one sentence at a time, and to tell the experimenter about his or her understanding of the events referred to in the sentence in the context of the story. The reader's communication was tape recorded and transcribed.

### **Identification of Evaluations, Perspectives, and Functions of Clauses**

The classification of evaluations in the think aloud protocols is based upon the analytical scheme of Trabasso and Özyürek (1997). There were the five types of evaluation described in the introduction: appraisals, preferences, emotions, goals, and purposes. In addition, the perspective taken by the reader during thinking aloud was coded (see the Results section below for definitions and examples). The functions of evaluative inferences, namely that of explanation, association, or prediction, were based on the analysis by Trabasso and Magliano's (1996) of the think-aloud protocols.

In the think-aloud protocols, the readers generated an average of 2.70 clauses per sentence as they communicated their understanding. Of these, 75% were inferences. Of the inferences, 68% were explanations. Thus, explanations of the content of the sentences predominated (Trabasso & Magliano, 1996).

## **RESULTS**

The sixteen stories contained 932 sentences. For the 932 sentences, there were 516 evaluations or a rate of .55 per sentence. Of the 516 evaluations, .26 were appraisals, .08 were preferences, and .15 were emotions. Goals and purposes constituted .30 and .21 of the evaluations, respectively.

Table 2 displays examples of appraisals, preferences, and emotions. We shall present evidence on each of the three evaluations in turn, providing data on their variations and their frequency of occurrence.

### **Appraisals**

*Appraisal Expression.* All episodic categories of the stories were appraised. Table 2 provides a sample of the kinds of appraisals made by readers for each sentence in the Jane Story of Table 1. The Initiating Event is evaluated from the nar-

**TABLE 2**  
**Examples of Appraisals, Preferences, and Emotions for the Jane Story**

Jane Story	Appraisals	Preferences	Emotions
Jane became very heavy	Maybe she did not look good because of it	She does not like to be so	I immediately feel sorry for Jane
Jane wanted to lose weight	It is especially difficult when you are a teenager	You don't like you body	She is not happy
Jane jogged for a while	She thought jogging would be a very good idea	She probably likes sports	She might enjoy it
Jane did not become thinner	It's really too bad	***	I image Jane being upset
Jane was frustrated	It is hard	***	You feel you are isolated
Jane became very thin	She was successful	***	She is probably very happy
Jane was happy	This is good	She really liked jogging	Jane is proud of herself
One day, Jane saw a racquet ball game	This a good way for to stay fit/lose weight	She thought if looked like fun	***
Jane decided to learn to play racquet ball	She thinks that this is a good sport	Jane likes sports	She is feeling self-confident
Jane took lessons	She picked the best looking instructor and got a really nice racquet	She found an instructor she liked	She really enjoyed this sport
Jane learned quickly	She was no dummy/ obsessive compulsive	***	She really enjoyed this sport
Jane played racquet ball with her friends	Good way to learn	She is playing a game she likes	She is probably having a good time
Jane became thin/a good player	This is good	***	Jane was very happy
Jane was pleased with herself	She successfully lost weight	***	She is grateful

Notes: \*Goal Fail Version; \*\*Goal Success Version; \*\*\*rare or no occurrence.

rator perspective in terms of how "good" the character looks as a causal consequence of becoming overweight. The Goal is evaluated in general terms as to its personal "difficulty" for young women and serves to explain her motivation to lose weight. The Attempt is evaluated and explained in terms of its appropriateness by the character ("good" idea). The Failed Outcome is appraised negatively as "too bad." The Negative Emotion of frustration is explained by a reader or narrator appraisal ("hard"). The Success Outcome is appraised as "successful."

The Positive Emotion is appraised positively ("good"). The second Initiating Event is appraised in terms of it being a "good" means (purpose) by which to achieve her goal. The second Goal is explained by a character appraisal of the sport ("good"). The Attempt of taking lessons is explained in terms of appraisals of the instructor ("good looking") and equipment ("nice"), both of which are necessary to taking them. Her second Success Outcome is explained in terms of narrator appraisals of the character's abilities or dispositions ("no dummy," "obsessive," "compulsive"). The third Attempt is appraised in terms of its appropriateness to the goal ("good"). The third Success Outcome is appraised in general terms ("good"). The third Positive Emotion is appraised and explained in terms of "success" in goal achievement.

TABLE 3  
Positive or Negative Appraisals

Positive	Proportion	Negative	Proportion
good	.47	not good	.19
better	.02	poor	.04
best	.04	too bad	.04
great	.03	bad	.04
noble	.01	corny	.07
special	.02	difficult	.07
not bad	.01	hard	.04
nice	.13	useless	.04
kind	.02	obsessive	.11
polite	.02	compulsive	.07
loyal	.01	nerd	.07
dutiful	.01	wimp	.04
ambitious	.01	greed	.04
brilliant	.01	rink (cheap)	.04
keen	.03	not admirable	.04
self-motivated	.01	bizarre	.04
no dummy	.01	lacks (ability)	.04
success(ful)	.13		
effective	.02		
very well	.01		
Total Frequency	112	Total Frequency	27

**Kinds of Appraisals.** Table 3 summarizes the probability distribution of the kinds of appraisals found in the think-aloud protocols for the sixteen stories. The majority of appraisals were positive (81 versus 19%). The modal forms of positive versus negative appraisal were "good" versus "not good." The appraisals are grouped in each column of Table 3. For positive appraisals, one cluster of appraisals are variations of intensity of "good" and constitute 60% of all appraisals. Another cluster is that of adjectives that are applied to persons, including those adjectives from "nice" to "no dummy." This cluster constituted 25% of the appraisals. The remaining appraisals accounted for 16% and pertained to successful goal outcomes. Negative appraisals, on the other hand, were more variable. For negative appraisals, 31% of the expressions pertain to "bad" or "not good." Two terms (11%) were applied to plans of action ("difficult" or "hard"). Negative character appraisals constituted a modal 41% ("obsessive" to "not admirable"). A small number (8%) of negative appraisals were applied to objects (8%) or to the story ("corny").

**Appraisal of Episodic Categories.** Figure 1 shows the rate of appraisal per episodic category over the course of the story. The average proportion of appraisals per sentence was .14. Figure 1 shows that the highest rate of appraisals occur during the reading of the success outcomes in the first, second, and third episodes. Goal Success appraisals were significantly higher than Goal Failure appraisals ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.30, p < .05$ ) and Success Outcome appraisals were higher than average ( $\chi^2(1) = 4.37, p < .05$ ). Appraisals are used the least (7%) for goal failures. The higher level of appraisals of the third attempt did not differ statistically from the average.

## Preferences

**Preferences Expressions.** Returning to Table 2, preferences, unlike appraisals, were not used for all episodic categories. They were used at a lower rate (5 versus 14% per sentence). In the Jane Story, for example, preferences were used only for Initiating Events, Goals, Attempts, and Positive Emotions. The main expression was that of "like" or "does not like" and was used to predict consequences of Initiating Events ("does not like" a state) and explain Goals ("don't like your body"), Attempts ("like" an activity), and Emotions ("liked jogging").

**Kinds of Preferences.** Table 4 summarizes the probability distribution of preferences. The majority of preferences were positive (81 versus 19%). The modal form of positive versus negative preference was "like" versus "not like." "Not like" was, in fact, the only negative form for a preference. The first five preferences in Table 4 represent 58% of the total. These preferences either expressed differences in intensity, had emotional qualities, or were held towards people or activities ("like" through "respect"). Preferences towards activities were also

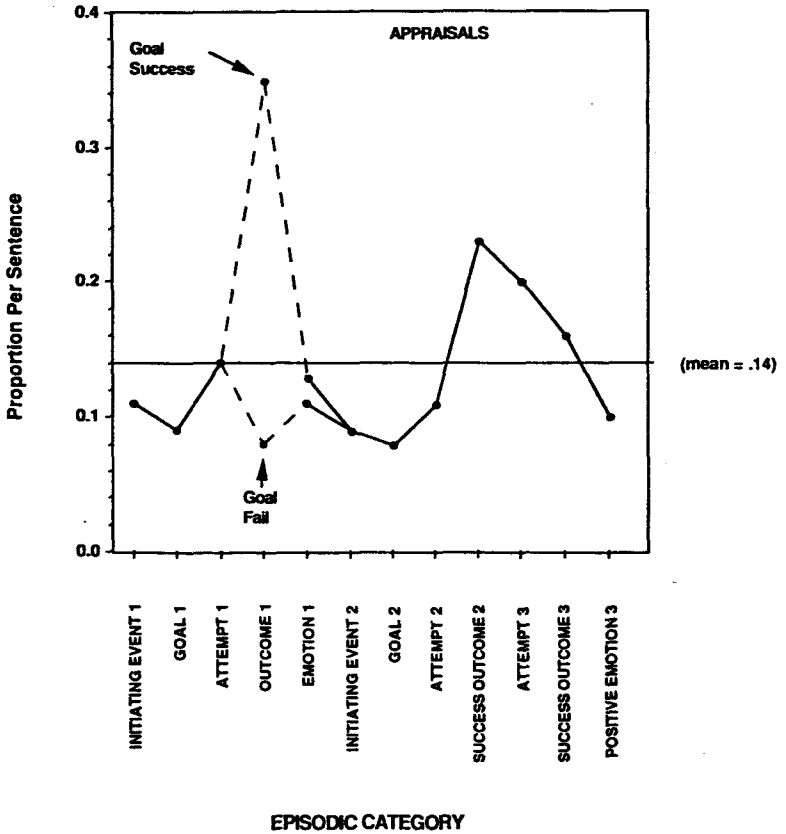


Figure 1. Proportion of appraisals per sentence in each episodic category over the course of the narrative

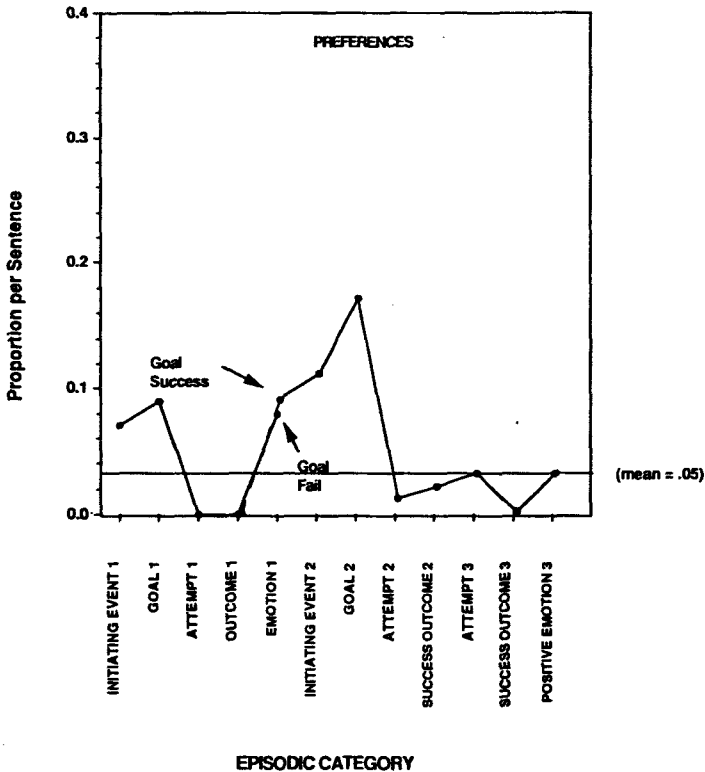
expressed as “fun” or “tempting.” “Pleased” was expressed towards objects or outcomes.

**Preferences for Episodic Categories.** Figure 2 shows the rate of preferences per episodic category over the course of the story. The average proportion of preferences per sentence was .05. Figure 2 shows that the highest rate of preferences occur during the reading of initiating events ( $\chi^2(1) = 7.30, p < .05$ ) and goals in the first and second episodes ( $\chi^2(1) = 29.75, p < .01$ ). All other Episodic Categories had few or no preferences.



**TABLE 4**  
Positive or Negative Preferences

Positive	Proportion	Negative	Proportion
like	.38	not like	1.00
love	.09		
care	.15		
appreciate	.03		
respect	.03		
fun	.21		
tempting	.06		
pleased	.06		
Total Frequency	34	Total Frequency	8
Proportion Positive Preferences	.81	Proportion Negative Preferences	.19



**Figure 2.** Proportion of preferences per sentence in each episodic category over the course of the narrative

## Emotions

**Emotion Expressions.** Table 2 indicates that emotions were used to evaluate all episodic categories except the second Initiating Event. Emotions were, for the most part, expressed from the character's perspective by internal state verbs (e.g., "feels"). For the first Initiating Event, there was a reader emotion of compassion for the character ("feel sorry"). These reader emotions were, however, rare (see Table 5). For the Goal, an emotion of being unhappy is a reason. In this example, "unhappy" functioned as a preference and expressed the character's stance toward her physical state.

Enjoying an activity was offered three times in explanations for why Jane made Attempts 1, 2, and 3. The negative emotion, "upset" was a consequence of goal failure. The general statement of feeling "isolated" was a narrator perspective on emotions that accompany other emotions and was a consequence of the Failed Outcome. "Happy" was a consequence and indicates a positive evaluation of all three Goal successes. "Proud" accompanied the text "happy" as positive evaluation of success. For the second Goal, "feeling confident" was an antecedent cause of the decision to try to learn something. The final emotion, "grateful," accompanied the text positive emotion, and was a consequence of the Success Outcome.

**Kinds of Emotions.** Table 5 reports the probability distribution of the types of emotions expressed by characters or by readers. Positive emotions occurred twice as often as negative ones, reflecting the overall evaluation that things are

TABLE 5  
Positive or Negative Emotions

Positions	Proportion	Negative	Proportion
happy	.47	not happy/unhappy	.15
enjoy	.14	frustrated	.12
satisfied	.02	upset	.12
fun	.02	disappointed	.08
good time	.02	scared/afraid	.08
joy	.02	anxious	.08
loved	.02	angry	.04
proud	.16	desperate	.04
admires	.02	sad	.04
pleased	.02	jealous	.04
grateful/thankful	.07	tough on	.04
		did not care	.04
		isolated	.04
		hurt	.04
		sorry	.04
		sympathy	.04
Total Frequency	43	Total Frequency	26
Proportion Positive	.62	Proportion Negative	.38

going well for the characters. The positive emotions were less variable than the negative emotions. "Happy" and related emotions down to "joy" constituted 69% of the positive emotions. "Unhappy" was the modal negative emotion (15%). Negative emotions were indicative that things are not going well or failed to go well. They also signal that things are threatening or harmful to the character. There were only two reader emotions, "sorry" and "sympathy."

**Emotions and Episodic Categories.** Figure 3 shows the rate per sentence for each Episodic Category over the course of the entire story. The overall rate of

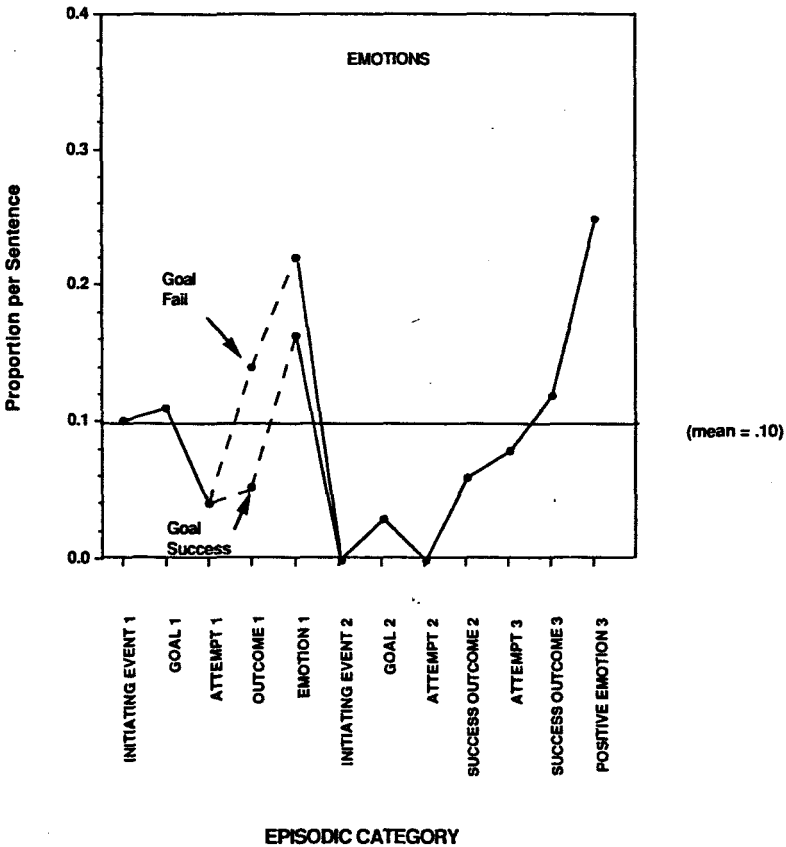


Figure 3. Proportion of emotions per sentence in each episodic category over the course of the narrative

emotions was .10. Emotions occur most to other Emotions ( $\chi^2(1) = 52.42$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Emotions to the Success Outcome 1 did not differ statistically from those to the Fail Outcome 1 ( $\chi^2(1) = 1.35$ ). Likewise, Positive Emotions did not differ from Negative Emotions ( $\chi^2(1) = .44$ ). Emotions were virtually absent during the reading and understanding of the entire second Episode.

### Are Things Going Well or Badly?

How do readers indicate that they think things are going well or badly for characters over the course of the story? One way to answer this question is to examine the valence across appraisals, preferences, and emotions as positive or negative indicators. Figure 4 plots the conditional probability of a positive evaluation given that an evaluation was made for the sentences in each of the episodic categories of the stories.

Figure 4 shows that the Goal Fail and Success story structures were monitored by readers by expression of appraisals, preferences, or emotions over the entire course of the narrative. In particular, positive evaluations began low,

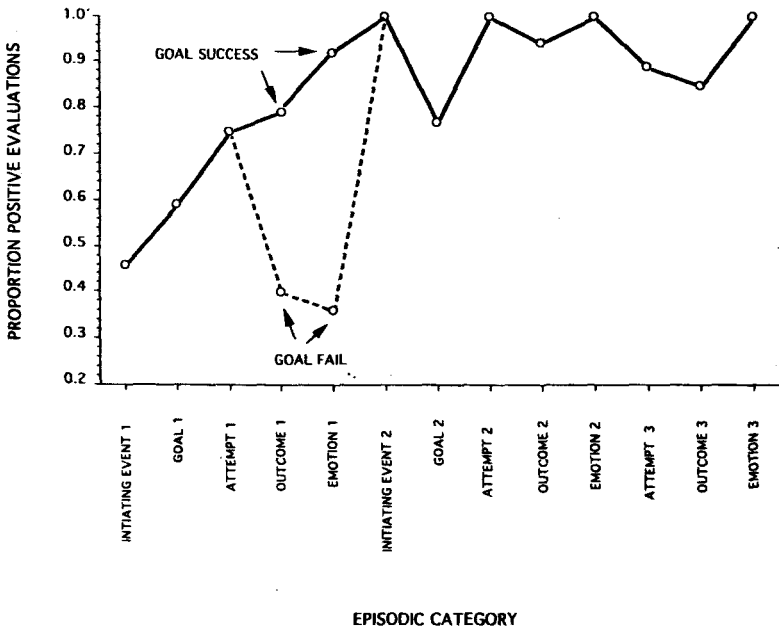


Figure 4. Proportion of positive evaluations (appraisals, preferences, and emotions) for each episodic category over the course of the narrative

reflecting the majority of untoward Initiating Events. Things began to look better as the character formulated positive Goals and carried out Attempts related to a goal plan. However, Goal Failure and Negative Emotions in the first episode were evaluated negatively in sharp contrast to Goal Success and Positive Emotions. From that point on, however, things went well and the rate of positive evaluation was high. These data suggest that valence alone is sufficient as a semantic indicator of reader's monitoring of the concerns of the characters. This finding is consistent with that of Stein et al. (in press) who found that the proportion of positive evaluations was a valid indicator of psychological well-being.

### **Functions of Appraisals, Preferences, and Emotions**

Evaluations serve two main functions. They reflect how the reader monitors the concerns of the character and reacts to the events as an observer. They also function to construct a coherent interpretation of events. In this regard, evaluations serve as explanations of (causes), predictions from (consequences), or associations to (concurrent events, states, or actions) witnessed events. These inferences form causal chains and elaborate and fill in the situation model being constructed by the reader. They are the connections between conceptualizations based on the text clauses. Together with the text, the causal inferences form a network of conceptualizations and their relations in the situation model.

Trabasso and Magliano (1996) identified the explanations, associations, and predictions made by readers during comprehension in the Suh (1988) think-aloud protocols. They found that explanations predominated, accounting for nearly two-thirds of the inferences made during comprehension. Associations accounted for a quarter and predictions accounted for the remainder. In order to examine the inference function of evaluations, we carried out an explanation, prediction, and association analysis of the think-aloud data following the procedures and criteria of Trabasso and Magliano (1996).

In the Trabasso and Magliano analysis, associations co-occur temporally with the event. Explanations are antecedent reasons or conditions. Explanations are causally prior to the event being explained. Explanations meet Trabasso and Magliano's (1996) criteria of logical necessity (see also Mackie, 1980). Predictions are causal consequences and occur temporally after the event. They also satisfy the necessity in the circumstances criteria. That is, if event A is a cause of event B, then the absence of A (not A) would lead, in the circumstances of the story, to the absence of B (not B). In other words, A is necessary for B in that if A does not occur, in the circumstances of the story, B does not occur. Predictions, likewise, meet these criteria since B is a necessary consequence of A.

TABLE 6  
Explanation and Prediction Functions of Appraisals, Preferences, and Emotions

Function	Type of Evaluation		
	Appraisals	Preferences	Emotion
	Proportion		
Explanation	.36	.76	.43
Predictions	.10	.22	.47
Associations	.54	.02	.10
Total Frequency	135	41	77

Each evaluation was tested by the causal, temporal, and logical necessity procedures of Trabasso and Magliano (1996). The results of this analysis are shown in Table 6.

In Table 6, Appraisals were more associative than were Preferences or Emotions ( $\chi^2(1) = 23.58$  and  $39.51$ , respectively,  $p < .01$ ). Preferences did not differ significantly from emotions in occurrence as associations ( $\chi^2(1) = 2.63$ ). Preferences were used to explain events more than Appraisals ( $\chi^2(1) = 19.75$ ,  $p < .01$ ) or than Emotions ( $\chi^2(1) = 11.57$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Emotions and Appraisals were about equally frequent in their use as explanations ( $\chi^2(1) = .054$ ). Emotions were predicted more than either Appraisals or Preferences ( $\chi^2(1) = 77.61$  and  $7.07$ , respectively,  $p < .05$ ).

This finding that Emotions were predicted by readers is consistent with a study by Gernsbacher, Goldsmith, and Robertson (1992). They studied whether emotional inferences were made during the reading of narrative texts. Gernsbacher et al. (1992) used speed of reading sentences with emotion words to indicate that readers had predicted matching emotions during reading of causal antecedents in the text. It is possible that the readers did not predict the matching emotions and the observed facilitation in processing occurred when readers read the target emotion words. The emotion words used in the target tests prompted inferences that readers would not have made under normal reading circumstances. The facilitation in processing is accomplished by the readers' and "checking" the particular emotions for coherence against the prior context. Those emotions that fit the context were processed more quickly than those that did not fit the context.

However, in this study, emotions are predicted from their antecedents when readers read them and there were not any target emotion words that would prompt readers to make these inferences. The present findings support the Gernsbacher et al. (1992) findings and obviate backward checking explanations.

### Perspective and Appraisals, Preferences, and Emotions

As readers understand each sentence, they have options as to whose perspective they take (Segal, 1994). They may assume the role of the character and experi-

ence thoughts and feelings from the character's perspective. They may co-participate with the author and continue the story as a narrator. They may address the experimenter in a conversation as a third party presenter of the narrative.

When they adopt the character perspective, their clauses involve the character as an agent with *internal state verb*, e.g., "thinks," "likes," "feels" etc. Referring to Table 2 for examples, "Jane thinks 'Wow, that's a fun game'" represents an appraisal from the character's perspective. "She thought that jogging would be a very good idea" is another example of an appraisal from this perspective. Both of these employ subjective verbs of thinking. The first example uses quoted speech. "Jane thought it looked like fun" is a preference stated from the character perspective. "Jane is feeling self-confident" is an example of character emotion.

When they adopt the role of narrator, readers become observers and mainly describe the character's states and actions. "She picked the best looking instructor and got a really nice racquet" are appraisals stated from the narrator perspective. In these examples, the reader continues the story by describing what Jane did and its outcome. "Jane was successful in losing weight" is an outcome appraisal. "Jane was very happy" and "She might enjoy it" are emotions stated from the narrator perspective since they do not involve subjective verbs of feeling.

When they adopt the presenter role, readers omit the character and talk in general terms. "That's good" or "It is hard when you are a teenager" are appraisals that seem to be addressed to the experimenter. "You don't like your body" is a preference stated as a generalization that moves outside of the narrative frame and constitutes a communication about the text to the experimenter. "I immediately felt sorry for Jane" is clearly a reader emotion expressed in reaction to the character's plight. Empathic emotions of this type are those experienced by the reader and not the character. As such, they lie outside of the narrative and do not continue it. Although we did not observe them, it is possible for readers to have emotional reactions to events (e.g., being afraid of dark rooms). Zillman (1994) distinguishes between emotions towards characters and events versus emotions felt by characters in his discussion of identification.

In sum, character perspectives occur in clauses with the character and a cognitive or emotion verb and an evaluation. Narrator perspectives occur in clauses with the character and a state or action verb plus the evaluation. Presenter perspectives occur in clauses that are first person comments or generalized evaluations without the character. We used these criteria to classify each evaluation according to one of three perspectives. The results are summarized in Table 7.

Preferences were used with the Character perspective more than Appraisals or Emotions ( $\chi^2(1) = 68.16$  and  $29.96$ , respectively,  $p < .01$ ). This is a result of the subjective verb "like" predominating in these evaluations. Emotions were also used more with this perspective than Appraisals ( $\chi^2(1) = 15.04$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This finding is a consequence of the use of "feel" to signal a character emotion. Emo-

TABLE 7  
 Perspective of Appraisals, Preferences, and Emotions

Perspective	Type of Evaluation		
	Appraisals	Preferences	Emotion
	Proportion		
Character	.07	.78	.26
Narrator	.50	.17	.66
Presenter	.43	.05	.08
Total Frequency	135	41	77

tions, however, were communicated mostly in state terms from a Narrator perspective ("Jane is unhappy"). Within this perspective, Emotions occurred more than Appraisals ( $\chi^2(1) = 5.22, p < .01$ ) or Preferences ( $\chi^2(1) = 26.05, p < .01$ ). Appraisals were split between the Reader/Narrator perspective and Presenter/Addressee. In the Narrator perspective, Appraisals occurred more than Preferences ( $\chi^2(1) = 14.06, p < .01$ ). The Narrator perspective was adopted frequently when there was making an appraisal of an object ("Jane chose a nice racquet"). Appraisals occurred more frequently than either Preferences ( $\chi^2(1) = 20.46, p < .01$ ) or Emotions ( $\chi^2(1) = 28.99, p < .01$ ) in the Presenter perspective.

Appraisals may take on the Presenter perspective more than the other evaluations for two reasons. Preferences and emotions are subjective states that are more often experienced by the characters or described by narrators who observe expressions of these states by characters. Appraisals, however, allow the reader to move outside of the narrative, to be more reflective, to omit reference to the character, to state evaluations as generalizations based upon narrative events, to employ the first person pronoun, or to address one's thoughts as talk to the experimenter. The data on Presenter perspective are consistent with the idea that thinking aloud methodology obtains data in a communicative context and is subject to the rules of conversation. Appraisals, in their reflection upon and departure from the text or story, seem to be prototypic of what Labov and Waletzky's (1967) had in mind with respect to evaluation. On the other hand, the subjective and objective character evaluations are part of the narrative and are more consistent with Goodwin and Goodwin's (1987) concept of assessment. All perspectives in evaluation, however, are consistent with Zillman's (1994) notions of identification and emotion that people experience when they read, hear, or observe vicariously the lives of others.

The perspective data also support the idea that the reader engages in different roles during understanding narrative texts (Segal, 1994). They show that readers take on the character roles and experiences, co-participate as a narrator and continue the story, and reflect and communicate with a third person about what is going on in the narrative.



Readers may identify with characters (monitor their concerns) by assuming the character's perspective, by narrating the character's experience, or by reacting to or reflecting upon the experience of the character.

### Goals and Purposes

Character goals and purposes signal the concerns of the character. Goals and purposes may be explicitly stated in the text or they may be inferred by the reader. With respect to evaluation, Goals may be stated in positive or negative terms. The character either "wants" or "does not want" a state, object, or activity. While related to goals, purposes are planful actions with expressed desires. They are stated as attempts conjoined with goals. Goals and purposes are causal consequences of appraisals, preferences, or emotions (Stein, Trabasso & Liwag, 1993). Because they are outcomes of the evaluations, goals and purposes accompany but occur later in a causal sequence of inferences by readers (see Trabasso and Özyürek, 1997, for the persuasiveness of goals and purposes with other forms of evaluation and examples of causal evaluation chains).

### Goal and Purposeful Expressions

Table 8 provides examples of Goals and Purposes that occurred in the think-aloud protocols during understanding of the Jane Story. The main form of Goals were "want" and "not want." Other rare goals were: "decided," "had to," "needed," or "desired." Purposes omit these auxiliaries and couple the goal object, state, or activity with a verb. In coupling the goal with verbs, infinitival or prepositional phrases are used. In Table 8 examples of verbs coupled with purposes are "try," "do," "go," and "worked hard." Examples of infinitivals are "to be," "to look," and "to lose." Examples of prepositional phrases are "about it (losing weight)," "on a diet," and "in it (racquet ball game)".

There were a total of 153 Goals and 110 purposes. Of these, 95 and 92% were respectively positive. Goals functioned as explanations 81 % of the time. The majority, 68%, of the Purposes were explanations. Purposes occurred proportionately less than Goals as explanations ( $\chi^2(1) = 6.76, p < .05$ ). However, purposes were predicted more often than Goals (30 versus 14%,  $\chi^2(1) = 8.32, p < .05$ ). Goals were stated from the perspective of the Character 86% of the time whereas Purposes were given from this perspective only 15% of the time ( $\chi^2(1) = 260.38, p < .01$ ). This occurs because readers use the name of the character with a mental state verb (want) more often to describe goals than general forms such as "One would want to be thin." Purposes, on the other hand, are conjoined with actions by the characters and the actions do not involve mental verbs very often. Purposes were therefore mainly stated from the Narrator perspective (74%). Goals occurred only 9% in this perspective ( $\chi^2(1) = 208.64, p < .01$ ). Presenter/Addressee forms

**TABLE 8**  
**Examples of Goals and Purposes**

Jane Story	Goals	Purposes
Jane became very heavy	Jane weighed more than she wanted to	This is very different from other girls who try very hard to be very skinny
Jane wanted to lose weight	She wants to become thinner	She'll probably do something about it
Jane jogged for a while	Because she didn't want to be fat	People will love me and ask me out on more dates
Jane did not become thinner	Now she probably wants to do something else	She should go on a diet
Jane was frustrated	Because she wants to loose weight	She's not losing it
Jane became very thin	Because of her determination to loose wight	Because she tried to lose weight
Jane was happy	She really desperately wanted to lose weight	She worked hard to lose weight
One day, Jane saw a racquet ball game	She might want to try it herself	She is probably going to get involved in it.
Jane decided to learn to play racquet ball	She wanted to have nice legs	She's going to play to look thinner, to be better looking, and probably healthier
Jane took lessons	She wants to learn how to play it well	So she could learn racquet ball better
Jane learned quickly	Its something she wanted to do	Jane was able to lose weight and stay fit
Jane played racquet ball with her friends	She wanted to lose weight	So they could learn together
Jane became thin/a good player	She wanted to become skilled.	She was trying to lose weight
Jane was pleased with herself	***	***

Notes: \*Goal Fail Version; \*\*Goal Success Version; \*\*\*Rare or no occurrence

of Goals and Purposes were less frequent but occurred 5 and 12% of the time, respectively.

**Goals, Purposes, and Episodic Categories.** Figure 5 shows the rate of Goals or Purposes per sentence for each Episodic Category over the course of the entire

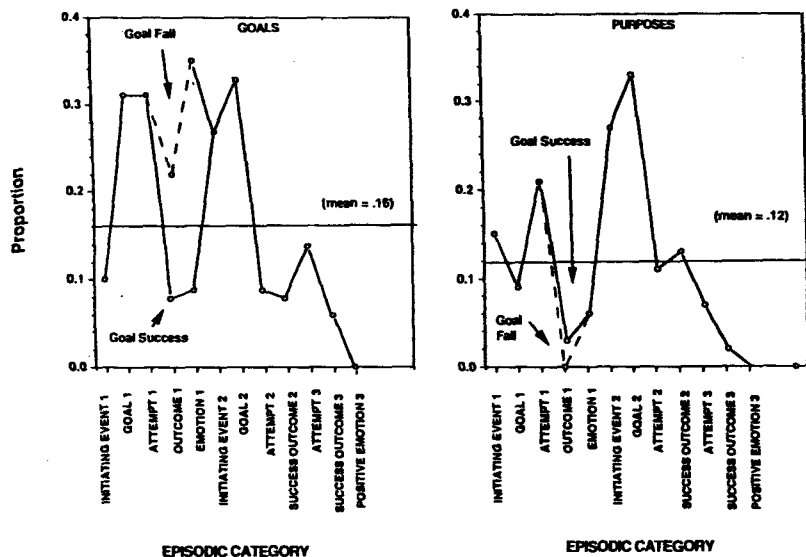


Figure 5. Proportion of goals (left graph) or purposes (right graph) per sentence in each episodic category over the course of the narrative

story. The overall rate of Goals was .16 per sentence while that for purposes was .12. All totaled, Goals and Purposes were inferred at a .28 rate per sentence. Thus over one-fourth of the sentences were understood directly in terms of the character's concerns. Goals occurred most frequently in the beginning of the story during the first episode and explained Goals, Attempts, Failed Outcomes and Negative Emotions. These were generated to Initiating Events or explained Goals and Attempts in the second episode. Purposes were inferred mostly at Attempts in the first and second episodes and at the first Initiating Event and second Goal. As the story winds down and concludes, both Goals and Purposes drop out, suggesting that readers are fairly confident that things are turning out well (see Figure 4).

### DISCUSSION

The results of the present study provide strong support for the idea that readers monitor and evaluate the concerns of characters over the entire time course of a narrative. An evaluative clause occurred on half of the sentences of the stories. The clauses were evaluated over the entire course of the story. Labov and Waletzky's (1967) claimed that evaluation occurs primarily during the complica-

tion and resolution of a narrative. Our evidence indicates pervasive evaluation. Labov and Waletzky (1967) defined evaluation in terms of departures from the narrative. Only those evaluations from the perspective of the reader as a presenter support this claim. The high rate of evaluation within the narrative frame, from the perspective of the character or the narrator, indicate that evaluation is a part of the narrative itself and not merely a reflection by the narrator on the events.

The valence of appraisals, preferences, and emotions indexed whether things were going or went well or badly for a character. We found that the valence of evaluations was sensitive to changes in character's goal states and attainments. When initiating events impacted negatively on a character at the beginning of a story, the valences tended to be negative. When characters formulated positive goals and executed their plans through attempts, more positive evaluations occurred. However, when the characters failed to attain goals versus when they succeeded, positive and negative valences differentiated these outcomes. When characters reformulated goals as subordinate goals or as new goals, the valences returned or continued to be positive. As characters moved towards successful attainment, the valences continued to be positive. Taken as a semantic index of evaluation, the valence may be a powerful indicator of how well things are going. As pointed out earlier, the valence of evaluations in bereavement narratives was found to be the best predictor of mental well-being for caregivers of partners who died from aids, both at the time of bereavement and twelve months later (Stein et al., 1997). The present findings indicate that readers participate in narration when they monitor concerns of the characters. When they either appraised events or described emotions, they did so by co-narrating the story and taking a narrator perspective. However, they adopted character perspectives when they expressed preferences or, less frequently, emotions towards events, people, or objects. These data are consistent with the idea of multiple perspectives of readers (Segal, 1994). Of interest is the evidence that thinking aloud during comprehension is a communicative context in which readers act as presenters and address the experimenter by going outside the framework of the narrative and stating their own generalized appraisals or, less frequently, their emotional reactions or preferences. The presenter perspective does represent a departure from the temporal sequence of the narrative and may be the form of evaluation that was the focus of Labov and Waletzky's (1967) analysis. The other two perspectives, however, participate in the construction and continuation of the narrative, and do not represent departures from the causal-temporal sequence of narrating.

The observed evaluations served narrative functions other than monitoring and assessing the concerns of the characters (Trabasso & Magliano, 1996). Preferences, goals and purposes explained goals and actions substantially over the course of the narrative. Emotions are reactions by characters or, less frequently,

by readers and thus are predicted causal consequences of events in the narrative. Emotions, however, but also served to explain events about half the time. Appraisals were mostly associative but also served an explanatory function about one third of the time.

The kinds of evaluations that occurred during reading depended upon what was being evaluated. Outcomes were largely appraised as to their success. Preferences tended to occur as causal consequences of initiating events and as causal antecedents of goals. Emotions were predicted causal consequences of outcomes and they co-occurred with other emotions, suggesting an alignment of feelings between the author of the narrative and the reader in line with Goodwin and Goodwin (1984) analysis of assessment functions in communicative contexts. While negatively valenced goals were relatively infrequent, they did occur to initiating events that affected the well-being of characters. Goals also were inferred more often early in the narrative and served to explain other goals and attempts. Purposes were predicted from initiating events and were conjoined with and used to explain attempts. As characters neared success in attaining their goals or purposes, these evaluations dropped out and were replaced by appraisals. In short, different categories of internal states serve to index what and how readers monitor and evaluate the concerns of characters over the course of a narrative. These data support Zillman's (1994) analysis of emotions by viewers in watching film.

The present research adds to the continued effort to identify the kinds of inferences that readers make as they try to construct coherent situation models of a text (Graesser, Singer & Trabasso, 1994). Evaluative inferences are a new category of inferences, are content and context dependent, and serve to explain or predict. Their occurrence is taken as an indication that readers track agents in narratives and add this information to their situation model (Graesser, Millis & Zwaan, 1997; Graesser, Bowers, Bayen & Hu, in press). In tracking agents' concerns, however, readers identify with characters, show that they care, and monitor their well-being from multiple perspectives. Tracking agents is more than who they are, who is being referred to, who knows what, and who does what to whom. Tracking agents is an inter-subjective enterprise where internal states and feelings are monitored and inferred depending upon what is happening to agents and what agents are doing. In short, understanding of narratives is not only referential but is highly evaluative:

No utterance can be put together without value judgment. Every utterance is above all an evaluative orientation ... the disjuncture between referential meaning and evaluation is totally inadmissible. Referential meaning is molded by evaluation and it is evaluation after all which determines that a particular referential meaning may enter the purview of speakers (Voloshinov/Bakhtin, 1973, p. 105).

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