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A STUDY OF PICTURE-ELICITED NARRATIVES

BY CANTONESE-SPEAKING CHILDREN

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Abstract

The study is about how Cantonese-speaking children and adults introduce a character into a story, maintain and re-introduce the reference to that character. It is also concerned with the effect of children's previewing a story (i.e. reading a story prior to telling it) on their use of nominal and pronominal forms in story telling. Native Cantonese-speaking children aged four, six and adults were selected as subjects in the study. The results revealed that, firstly, the adults usually reserved nominal forms for switching reference and use pronominal forms for maintaining reference; secondly, children had less sophisticated personal referencing skills than adults'; thirdly, the younger age group appeared to reserve pronouns for the main protagonists of the story; fourthly, there was no effect of previewing on the use of nominal forms and pronominal forms. These results are discussed in light of a comparable data base in English.

According to Orsolini (1990), the organization of plots, cohesive devices of discourse and decontexteualized language were the main focus of research on children's story telling. The relationships between these three aspects are still far from clear and thus it deserves further research on this area. This study aimed at providing examining some aspects of reference in spoken Cantonese which was described as a discourse-oriented language by Tsao (1979) (cited in Wong, 1990). Attention were also paid to the methodology of narrative elicitation.

The studies of Karmiloff-Smith (1981,1985) and Bamberg (1986) gave the value of wordless story books in eliciting narratives and the importance of pronominal forms in analyzing those narratives. In producing narratives, the narrator needs to introduce the participants, to maintain the reference and to show if a switch in the reference has been made. These functions can be accomplished by different linguistic devices. Nominal forms are commonly used to switch the reference while the pronominal forms (including ellipsis) are informationally adequate to maintain the reference. The coreferential relation between the nominal expressions in a text and the consecutive pronouns is one of the ways to achieve cohesion (Halliday and Hassan, 1976). It should be clear that it is not obligatory to apply nominal forms to switch the reference and pronominal forms to maintain the

reference. Different aspects of language: syntactic, semantic, discoursal, pragmatic and general cognitive factors, all came into play in the use and resolution of referential expressions (refer Wong,1990; Wong,1992).

It is generally agreed that children under six do not introduce participants nor maintain intralinguistic relations in discourse (Bavin,1987; Karmiloff-Smith, 1981,1985). In other words, listeners have to rely on the extralinguistic context to identify the referent he/she is referring to.

Karmiloff-Smith (1981,1985) studied the use of pronouns in stories told by native English-speaking children and French-speaking children. She argued that the presence and absence of *anaphoric* (coreferential) pronouns appeared to by governed only marginally by intrasentential constraint or even by local intersentential constraints such as minimal distance principle. Instead, she hypothesized that pronominalization was governed by constraints of marking discourse roles. Her study showed that there were three developmental sequences of the use of referenial devices. The level one was characterized by the deictic use of pronouns. In Level two (6;0 - 7;11), children started to use pronouns anaphorically but *thematic subject constraint* was found. That is, they tended to determine a thematic subject and imposed

a rigid structure on their narratives, by pre-empting the sentence initial slot for that thematic subject. Pronominalization was only possible for the main character but not the secondary character. This might result from the fact that these children concentrated more on organizing their narratives into story-like forms and displayed a pre-mature strategy midway between that of the preschoolers and older children who used pronominal forms more flexibly.

In Bamberg's (1986) study of picture-elicited narratives, the results indicated that adults always used nominal forms for reference switching function and pronominal forms for reference maintaining function but children used different approaches. In addition, there was evidence of thematic subject constraint in German-speaking children. He found that children (5;0 - 6;2) predominantly used the thematic subject strategy which was gradually faded out in the oldest age group (8;10 - 10;1). However, this strategy was also found to be common in much younger children aged 3;6-4;0. The results might be influenced by the methodology of elicitation of narratives and/or the specific features of the two different languages. In another similar study (Hudson and Shapiro, 1991), over half of the English-speaking preschoolers and first-graders used the thematic subject strategy. This might suggest that the variation of the

findings in Karmiloff-Smith 's study and Bamberg's study was not due to the linguistic differences between German and English.

On the other hand, Wigglesworth (1990) identified some contradictory findings to that of Karmiloff-Smith's study. Wigglesworth found that her six-year-old subject did not preferentially maintain the thematic subject in the utterance initial position. What is more important is that pronominalization was found to be present in describing the secondary character which was not found in Karmiloff-Smith's level two. In addition, Wigglesworth found that the self-repairs of the children were used to clarify the referent rather than to maintain the thematic subject in utterance initial position. These self-repairs were one of Karmiloff-Smith's important arguments to support thematic subject constraint. These results led Wigglesworth to doubt whether the thematic subject constraint was too strongly stated or not. Therefore, she postulated that

"further investigation of the thematic subject

constraint would show that this is not a strong

feature of the language of children at a certain age,

but that the results which led to its formulation

were possibly an artifact of the design of the

prompts used in that particular experiment." (p123)

McGrann and Schwartz (1988) also identified three features

which could influence children to identify the main character and how they switch and maintain the reference. The features were degree of agency, frequency of appearance and whether the character appeared at the first page of the story or not.

One of the focuses of Hudson and Shapiro's (1991) study was to investigate the effect of previewing (i.e. read a story prior to telling it) on the referential skills of English-speaking children. They tried to find out if previewing was a factor contributing to the variation of findings in studies of Bamberg and Karmiloff-Smith. The results revealed that previewing six-paged picture booklets was not strong enough to encourage the preschoolers and first-graders to use more advanced pronominal reference strategy.

The aims of the study

Only few studies have taken production data as the focus of investigation. (refer Karmiloff-Smith, 1981) The copra thus far have been very limited and the language in which studies have been conducted very few. Apart from Wong's study which focused on adults' conversation, to my knowledge, there is no other study focusing on discourse referencing in spoken Cantonese. This study aimed at providing preliminary data on how children used

pronominal and nominal forms to establish, switch and maintain referents. It was expected that there was deictic use of pronouns and thematic subject constraint in the Cantonese-speaking preschoolers and the six-year-old children respectively. In addition, the effect of previewing on the use of nominal and pronominal forms was investigated. It was expected that this study would obtain similar results as that of Hudson and Shapiro's study. The results should not be altered by applying comparable methods to children of a different langauge.

Pronominal systems of the third personal pronoun in Cantonese and English

Third person pronouns are commonly used in story to refer to the participants established in the previous context. Unlike English, Cantonese third person subject pronouns only distinguish in number but not in gender. The pronoun '佢' represents `he, she and it' and the pronoun '佢哋' represent `they'. In addition, the pronominal system of spoken Cantonese consists of only few person pronouns, namely *general personal pronouns* (see Wong, 1991, p62-64) which are excluded in the discussion of this paper.

Zero pronoun is commonly used in Chinese discourse and so it is included in the analysis of this study. A zero pronoun is not phonetically realized and is used when the referent is readily recognized. A more explicit referential type (i.e. noun phrase or pronoun) can substitute for a zero pronoun without causing significant change in meaning.

The differences in pronominal systems of Cantonese and English may influence the use of a particular pronoun strategy. This will be mentioned again in the discussion section of this paper.

Method

Subjects

Initially, this study planned to ask 32 preschoolers (4;3-4;8), 32 primary one children (6;3-6;8) and 16 adults to tell story with reference to the using picture booklets. However, many of preschoolers could not tell story under preview or non-preview conditions. This left a final sample of 17 preschoolers (10 under preview condition, 7 under non-preview condition), 32 primary one children and 16 adults. All the primary one children and the preschoolers were randomly selected from an ordinary

school and kindergartens respectively. They had no reported hearing, speech and language problems. They could produce narratives without specific prompting. The 16 adults, who participated in this study voluntarily, were undergraduates found randomly in the open area of the University of Hong Kong. The adults' narratives were included because they provided information about the usual pattern of the use of nominal and pronominal forms in story telling task of this study.

Materials

Two picture booklets, each consisting of six coloured wordless pictures (half of a A-4 size paper) were used (see appendices 1 and 2). Story A was a modified form from the story "Baking cookie" used in Hudson and Shapiro's (1991) study and story B was a made-up one. These two stories were matched in several areas which were identified to influence the use of nominal and pronominal forms (McCrann and Schwartz, 1988; Wigglesworth, 1990). For example, the two characters - Siu Ying and her mother - appeared on every page of the story booklets.

Procedures

All the subjects were individually asked to tell two

stories. The children told one story on one day and told the other on another day. The presentation of the stories was counterbalanced. Half of the children at each group were randomly assigned to tell the story either on a preview or non-preview condition.

After establishing the rapport, the author told the child that she would like to collect lots of stories told by children in the school. The tapes would be given to another five-year-old child as gifts later. The photograph of this imagined listener was displaced. Then the two characters of the story were introduced. Before telling the story, the children under preview condition would read the whole story by themselves first and then read it again together with the author. The children that were under non-preview condition started to tell the story once they saw the first page of each picture booklet. At the beginning, the author reminded the children to tell a clear, good story and then the children turned the page to start their stories. Only when the child came to a standstill did the author intervene, suggesting a continuation. (e.g. "go on"). The narratives were considered completed when the children verbally or non-verbally indicated conclusion.

For adults, different instruction was used. The author

told the volunteers that she would like to tape some stories told
by adults and then used the tape to assess children's
comprehension. All the adults were reminded to tell stories
clearly; otherwise, the children would not understand.

Coding

The coding procedure was mainly based on Wong's (1991)
study. All the stories were transcribed verbatim and segmented
into clauses. All introduction/reintroduction (*reference
switching*) were coded according to the expression of pronominal
versus nominal forms. All instances of maintaining reference to
one of the two protagonists (*reference maintaining*) were coded
according to the two same forms. The reference in the subject
slot of each clause was considered because Karmiloff-Smith (1985)
suggested that subject position has a privileged status in the
development of discourse for children. Based on Bamberg (1986),
the coding procedure did not proceed solely in a clause-by-clause
fashion. The non-intervening clauses (eg." 有各種顏色的氣波"
"There were all different kinds of colourful balloons") were
skipped for analysis. For details of the coding procedures,
please refer to appendix 3.

Half of the total number of stories were coded after two weeks. Fifteen percent of the stories were coded by another coder using the same procedures described in appendix 3. The inter-rater and intra-rater agreement ranged from 85% to 100%, depending on the information coded.

Results

1. Analysis of adults' narratives

1.1. Analysis of first mentions

All the first mentions of the two characters - Siu Ying and mother - were noun phrases. The adults always used the girl's name to introduce the girl and `mother' to introduce the mother. In this study, the adults seldom used the introductory statements, such as the existential clauses, suggested in Hickamann and Liang (1990) as the beginning of their stories. This might be because they had told that the stories were about a girl named Siu Ying and her mother; therefore introductory statement was not obligatory.

Table 1. Adults' linguistic devices to switch and
maintain the reference

Story A

	Switch reference	Maintain reference	Sum
Nominal	99	10	109
Pronominal	8	76	84
Sum	107	86	

Story B

	Switch reference	Maintain reference	Sum
Nominal	92	11	103
Pronominal	12	88	100
Sum	104	99	--

1.2. Switching and maintaining the reference

The distribution of the linguistic forms in Table 1 shows that, similar to English-speaking adults, the Cantonese-speaking adults tended to use nominal forms to switch the reference and pronominal forms to maintain the reference. Wilcoxon matched pairs test was applied to each story to investigate the use of nominal or pronominal forms in the situation of switching and maintaining the reference. The results showed that adults significantly reserved nominal forms to switch the reference (z = 3.52, p < .0005 in both story) and pronominal forms to maintain the reference (z = 3.52, p < .001 in Story A; z = 3.41, p < .005 in Story B).

1.3. Pronominal strategies

Based on the relationship of the referenial forms and the function they fulfilled, different pronominal strategies could be identified (Hudson and Shapiro,1991). In both stories the adults used either *full anaphoric strategy* or *indeterminable strategy*. A full anaphoric strategy was indicated when the narrator used nominal forms to switch the reference and pronominal forms to maintain the reference (see Example 1 in appendix 4). An indeterminable strategy applied inconsistent use of pronominal

Table 2. Children's introductory referential devices

	Story A			
	4-year-old children		6-year-old children	
By use of	To Siu Ying	Mother	Siu Ying	Mother
Nominals	2	8	14	16
Pronoun ('佢')	4	0	2	0
Zero pronoun	4	2	0	0
	Story B			
By use of				
Nominals	3	7	16	16
Pronoun ('佢')	4	0	0	0
Zero pronoun	3	3	0	0

forms and nominal forms to switch the reference or maintain the reference (see Example 2 in appendix 4).

2. Analysis of the narratives of children under preview condition

2.1. Analysis of first mentions

Table 2 shows that the 6-year-old children introduced the participants similarly as adults did. They used nominal forms, such as "Siu Ying" or "little girl" and "mother" to introduce the girl and the mother respectively. However, two of the first mentions of "Siu Ying" in both story A and story B were pronouns. One of the first mentions of "Siu Ying" in story A was a noun phrase with a determiner "this" (呢個). On the other hand, the existential clause or N - VP structure was not common in the beginning of each story. That is similar to the performance of the adults in this study.

The 4-year-old children, however, did not appear to be aware of the importance of introducing the referents. A couple of children did not introduce any character in both stories. Most of them used noun phrase to introduce the mother but used pronoun/zero to introduce "Siu Ying" in both stories.

Table 3. Distribution of referential devices in story A and story B

	4;3-4;8 year						6;3-6;8 year						Adults					
	Switch No	(%)	Maintain No	(%)	Sum No	(%)	Switch No	(%)	Maintain No	(%)	Sum No	(%)	Switch No	(%)	Maintain No	(%)	Sum No	(%)
Story A																		
To the mother																		
Nominal	18	(50)	7	(20)	25	(70)	53	(65)	11	(14)	64	(79)	48	(56)	8	(9)	56	(65)
Pronominal	3	(8)	8	(22)	11	(30)	3	(4)	14	(17)	17	(21)	2	(2)	28	(33)	30	(35)
Sum	21		15		36		56		25		81		50		36		86	
To the girl																		
Nominal	6	(13)	2	(4)	8	(17)	40	(45)	18	(20)	58	(65)	51	(48)	2	(2)	53	(50)
Pronominal	16	(34)	23	(49)	39	(83)	13	(15)	18	(20)	31	(35)	6	(7)	48	(45)	54	(50)
Sum	22		25		47		53		36		89		57		50		107	
Story B																		
To the mother																		
Nominal	14	(48)	9	(31)	23	(79)	41	(62)	11	(17)	52	(79)	46	(54)	3	(4)	49	(58)
Pronominal	4	(14)	2	(7)	6	(21)	4	(6)	10	(15)	14	(21)	2	(2)	35	(41)	37	(43)
Sum	18		11		29		45		21		66		48		38		86	
To the girl																		
Nominal	6	(19)	1	(3)	7	(22)	44	(52)	13	(15)	57	(67)	46	(39)	8	(7)	54	(46)
Pronominal	16	(50)	9	(28)	25	(78)	6	(7)	22	(26)	28	(33)	10	(9)	53	(45)	63	(53)
Sum	22		10		32		50		35		85		56		61		117	

2.2. Switching and maintaining the reference

Table 3 gives the raw figures as well as the overall percentages of the distribution for all the subjects under preview condition. Based on these data, the use of nominal and pronominal expressions as a reference to the mother or the girl is illustrated.

A. *Distribution of forms as a function of switching the reference.* With regard to table 3, when switching the reference to the mother, the children and the adults displayed a strong preference for the use of a nominal forms. When switching the reference to the girl, the children perform differently. The 6-year-old children showed a similar preference for the nominal forms, though not quite as strong as that when switching the reference to the mother. When referred the girl as a referent, the 4-year-old children did prefer to use pronominal forms.

b. *Distribution of forms as a function of maintaining the reference.* The adults showed a preference for using the pronominal forms to maintain reference to either the mother or the girl. The older children did not show any preference to use particular referenial forms to maintain the reference to both participants. The use of referenial forms by the younger

children showed a interesting pattern. When maintaining reference to the mother, they had no particular preference for referenial devices. When maintaining the reference to the girl, the younger children preferred to choose pronominal expression instead.

Summarizing the result displayed in 2.1 and 2.2, the younger children demonstrated the deictic use of pronoun. Many of them did not use nominal form to introduce the `girl' which was usually referred to by pronominal forms in the rest of their narratives. The older children did not demonstrate the referenial skills as sophisticated as the adults. For example, they did not predominantly use the pronominal forms to maintain the reference.

2.3. Pronominal strategy

In this study, it was initially predicted that the thematic subject strategy might be a predominant pronoun strategy used by the 6-year-old children but the result of this study did not support this hypothesis.

Apart from thematic subject strategy (see Example 3 in appendix 4) and indeterminable strategy which have been mentioned

Table 4 . Distribution of pronominal strategy used by 6-year-old

children under preview condition in story A and story B   (N = 16)

	Story A	Story B
Strategy		
Thematic subject	3	4
Indeterminable	10	11
Nominal	1	0
Other*	2	1

Note: Other* - Few of the children used pronoun once only in

their narratives so they were not categorized into any particular

pronoun strategy.

in the introduction and 1.3. of this paper, there are other pronominal strategies illustrated in previous studies. A *confused strategy* is indicated when the narrator uses pronouns which is interpreted as a reference to the picture (see Example 4 in appendix 4). In a *nominal strategy*, the narrator avoids using pronouns and only uses nominal expressions for switching and maintaining the reference (see Example 5 in appendix 4).

Table 4 shows the distribution of the pronominal strategy by the 6-year-old children. The findings reveal that 25% or less than 25% of children demonstrated the thematic subject strategy. That is, few of the 6-year-old children reserved the pronoun particularly for the central protagonist of the story (usually the child character), while the mother was always referred by nominal forms - `mother'.

A couple of the 4-year-old children did not introduce any characters of the two stories and displayed confused strategy. Some of the children (six in story A and three in story B) preferred to use pronominal forms only for the girl but used nominal expressions to refer to the mother. It appears that thematic subject constraint was evident. However, about half of the children, who seemed to have thematic subject constraint, did not introduce the girl at the beginning of the stories.

Therefore, they could also be categorized into the group of using confused strategy because listeners had to rely on the pictures of the story booklets to identify the referent of the pronoun (7%). Most of the rest of the 4-year-old children were not categorized because they used pronoun once only in their narratives.

3. Comparison of the use of nominals and pronominals by children under two treatment conditions

The Wilcoxon matched pairs test was used to determine if the different use of nominals and pronominals would be influenced by the condition. The number of nominal forms used in reference-switching situation was weighed. It was because the occurrences for maintaining the reference is fewer than those for switching reference. Then if the number of nominal forms used for switching the reference was statistically more significant than that for maintaining the reference, the result would not be due to the unequal occurrences of switched references and maintained references but the children's preference of using referential devices to perform reference-switching or reference-maintaining function. The result revealed that there was no effect of previewing on the use of nominals and pronominals by the 6-year-old children. These children reserved nominal forms for

switching the reference (z = 3.26, p < .001 for preview condition; z = 2.74, p < .007 for non-preview condition) and reserved the pronominal forms for maintaining the reference only in story B (z = 2.90, p < .005 for preview condition; z = 2.82, p < .005 for non-preview condition) in a statistically significant way. The absence of treatment effect is congruent with that of Hudson and Shapiro's study. It confirms that the variation of the findings in Bamberg's (1986) and Karmiloff-Smith's (1981,1985) is not because of the effect of previewing.

Because of the small sample size, statistical analysis was not made to analyze the narratives of the 4-year-old children.

Discussion

The following discussion will focus on investigating the earlier form and function relationships of referential devices found in the children's narratives. It should be stressed that the sample size of the children, especially the youngest group, is small. Therefore, the discussion may provide some insight to the referential skills of Cantonese-speaking children rather than a conclusive statement.

Referring back to table 3 and 4, we find that the children

as well as the adults have a higher preference for referring to
the girl, irrespective of form and function. This may to suggest
that the two characters in the story are dealt with differently.
Despite of this, adults used pronominal forms predominantly
`anaphorically' and nominal forms mainly to switch the reference
to one of the characters under consideration. The younger
children, however, preferred pronominal forms when switching
reference to the girl, while the older children - more like the
adults - tend to prefer the use of nominal forms; when switching
to the mother as referent, all the children as well as the adults
showed a preference toward the use of nominal forms. On the
other hand, for reference-maintaining function, the older
children did not have preference to use nominal and pronominal
forms. However, the younger children did prefer to use
pronominal forms for maintaining the reference similarly as
adults. All these data support that there is a thematic subject
constraint in younger children. That is, the 4-year-old children
tended to reserve the use of pronoun for the girl only, no matter
it is for switching or maintaining the reference.

It should be clear that the thematic subject constraint
described here only means that pronomininalization is governed by
the constraints of marking the discourse role. The constraint is
slightly different from those described in Karmiloff-Smith's

study because the sentence initial position is not particularly reserved for the central participant of the story. In this study, not many of the 4-year-old children particularly reserved the clause initial slot for the girl. However, many of them did use more pronouns to refer to the girl than to the mother. This restricted use of pronouns can be explained by Karmiloff-Smith's terms that there is an interplay of various processing levels.

Bates and MacWhinney (1979) suggested that when a fantasy narrative is being narrated, the storyteller 's story term memory is likely to experience particularly strong competition between processing semantic content and conveying lexical, mophosyntactic and pragmatic information (cited in Orsolini, 1990). The cohesive devices, including references, may be negatively affected when the storyteller paid more attention on the semantic aspects. Therefore, the restricted use of pronoun may be viewed as the midway between deictic use of pronouns and anaphoric use of pronouns. It is the result of the constant trade-off between the discursive organizational features, local sentential relations and lexical choices (Karmiloff-Smith, 1981).

On the other hand, many of the 4-year-old children did not introduce the girl but used pronominal forms consistently to refer to the girl. This young children appear to fail to take

account of their audiences' knowledge of a referent that is similar to the findings in Warden (1976). It is interesting to find that in this study, the children tended to refer to the mother with nominal forms at their first mentions. This result suggests that the use of different referential expressions to introduce a character cannot be attributed solely to the children's egocentricity. The thematic subject constraint may influence the choice of the referential devices to introduce the character but further research is required to explain the result satisfactorily. In addition, this study found that the young children have not acquire the anaphoric use of pronouns even though few of the pronominal forms are correctly used to refer to the established referent - mother. This finding supports Karmiloff-Smith's (1985) and Bavin's (1987) that the younger children stressed actions rather than participants in story telling. Pronominalization is predominantly deictic in nature at this age.

The 6-year-old Cantonese-speaking children did not predominantly use the thematic subject strategy as suggested by other related studies. The language specific features of Cantonese and the methodological differences may account for the findings in this study. The findings of this study will be discussed mainly with reference to her study. It is because

Karmiloff-Smith's study is one of the influential studies in this area and is described in more detail in terms of methodology.

Because of the lack of gender difference in Cantonese pronouns, the possibility of occurrence of thematic subject strategy may be lower than in English. The following example illustrates the thematic subject constraint which is possibly found in a narrative told by an English-speaking children.

"A boy and a girl went to a beach. The boy was very happy. She was not happy because she could not find a pretty shell. Then the boy went to buy an ice-cream. She was smiling now."

In this example, the English pronoun "she" is clear to listeners what it referred to. However, when we substitute the pronoun "she" with the Cantonese pronoun "佢", the same story will create potential ambiguity . If the 6-year-old children are aware of the potential ambiguity of the references in their narratives (Bavin, 1987; Karmiloff-Smith, 1981,1985), Cantonese-speaking children may tend to use nominal forms to replace the pronouns underlined. Therefore, the thematic subject strategy will be less obvious in Cantonese than in English.

Moreover, even if the two protagonists are of the same sex,

the peculiarity of the syntax of spoken Cantonese may influence
the occurrence of the thematic subject strategy. In Cantonese,
it is possible to have two preverbal noun phrases for the same
referent in a clause.

eg.

啋 小 英 呢 佢 想 食 蛋糕,
UP Siu Ying UP she want eat cake
"Siu Ying wanted to eat a cake."

In this example the pronoun '佢' (i.e. she) and Siu Ying
refers to the same referent. This syntactic structure allows one
to assign a pronoun to maintain the referent established in the
topic. Therefore, it appears that the use of pronoun is less
constrained.

As mentioned in the introduction, zero pronoun is very
common in spoken Cantonese. The noun phrases that are understood
from the context do need to be specified. One common situation
in which noun phrases are unspecified is the *topic chain* (Li and
Thompson, 1989). It seems that Cantonese speakers can use the
zero pronoun more freely because the topic chain is one of the
salient features found in spoken Cantonese. In fact, Wong (1990)
found that the use of zero favours the subject position while the
noun phrase favours the non-subject position. In addition, the
occurrence of noun phrase is lower than the pronoun or zero
pronoun in spoken Cantonese. These suggest that the use of zero

is less constrained than noun phrase. Therefore, the Cantonese-speaking children are less restricted to use pronoun or zero pronoun only to refer to the central character in the subject position when this linguistic ability is increased.

In Karmiloff-Smith's (1981, 1985) study, she used four types of stories with different internal structures to investigate pronominal strategy. In her study, story type A and type B was designed on purpose to ensure that the children could establish a main protagonist. As reported in Karmiloff-Smith's (1981) study, the most revealing data in her study came from type A where the secondary character of the story appeared only in two pictures of the story-booklet. It *may* argue that the low frequency of occurrence of the secondary character minimizes the opportunity to use pronominal or even nominal forms when being referred.

Finally, Karmiloff-Smith's method to elicit narratives from children *may* also increase the opportunity of occurrence of thematic subject strategy. In her study, the experimenter turned the pages at the approximate rate of normal speech output in order to discourage children from describing any one picture in detail. From my study, it is clear that the children as well as the adults tended introduce the central participant (i.e. the

girl) first. If we turn the pages of the story booklets for the children, it is true that we can prevent them from describing the pictures too much in detail. However, at the same time, we will also discourage the children to talk about the participants other than the girl. That is, the children will continue to develop their narrative around the girl and put the referential devices for the girl in the sentential initial slot to maintain the reference. Therefore, the thematic subject strategy *may* be an artifact of the methodology.

At this point, the discussion has suggested that the deictic use of pronouns and thematic subject constraint are evident at certain stage of the narrative development of Cantonese-speaking children. However, the study fails to provide a clear picture of the developmental change of the use of referential devices to perform different functions in the narratives by Cantonese-speaking children. The reasons for that included the small sample size of children and the lack of consideration of other age groups, such as the 5-year-olds. Further research on this area will provide useful information to the people interested in the development of narratives. This study also postulated that the specific linguistic features of Cantonese may influence the development of the use of pronouns.

Conclusion

This paper has revealed some insights into the relationship between referential forms (nominal and pronominal forms) used and the functions (reference-switching and reference-maintaining) they fulfil. It shows that adults usually reserve nominal forms for switching the reference and use pronominal forms to maintain the reference but the pronominal strategies of the children are less sophisticated. The thematic subject constraint appears to be evident in younger age group who usually use pronouns deictically. The constraint does not seem to be common in 6-year-old children and the methodology as well as the language specific feature of Cantonese *may* account for the result. The study also provides evidence to support the absence of the effect of previewing on the use of nominal and pronominal forms by 6-year-old children.

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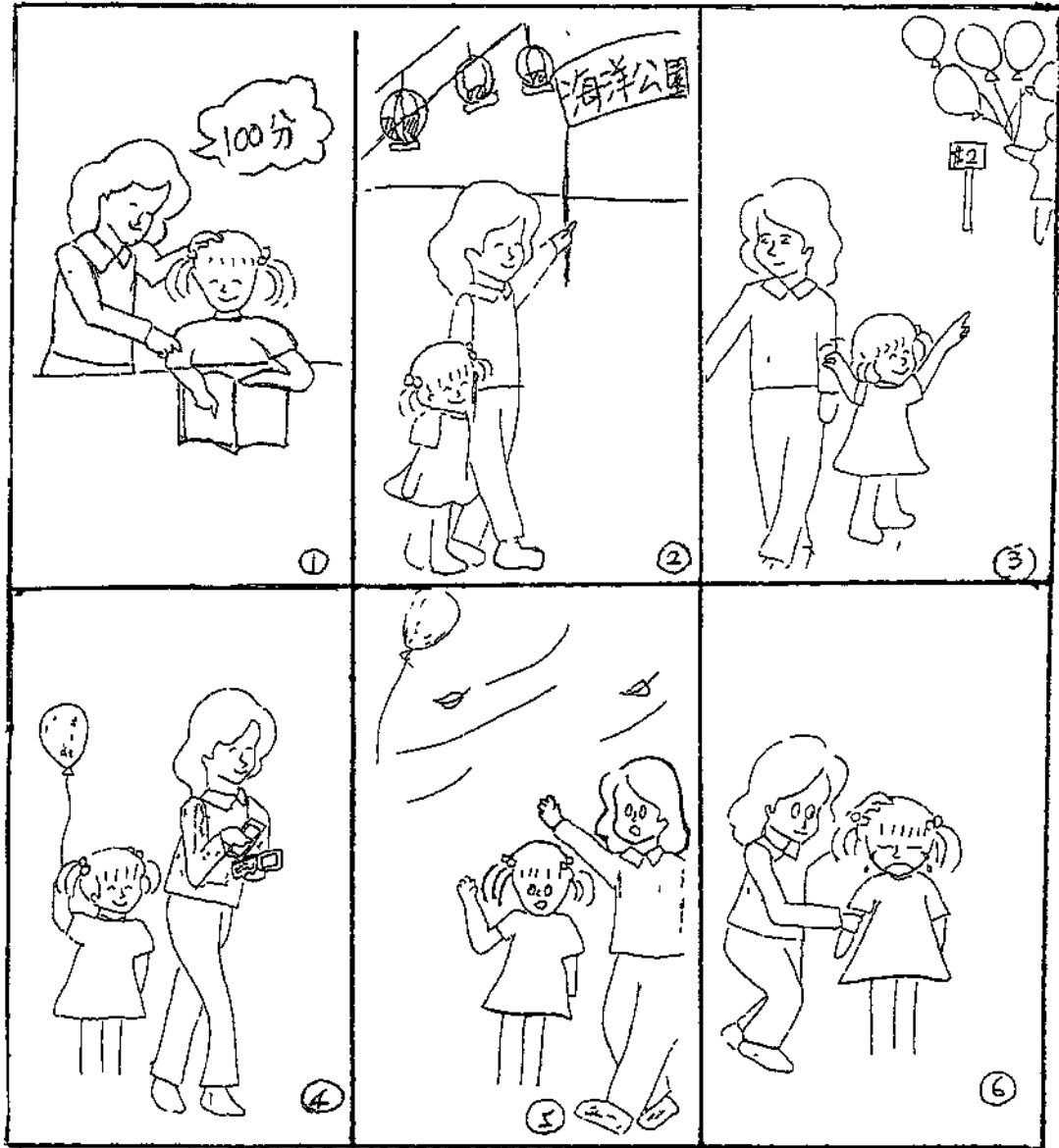
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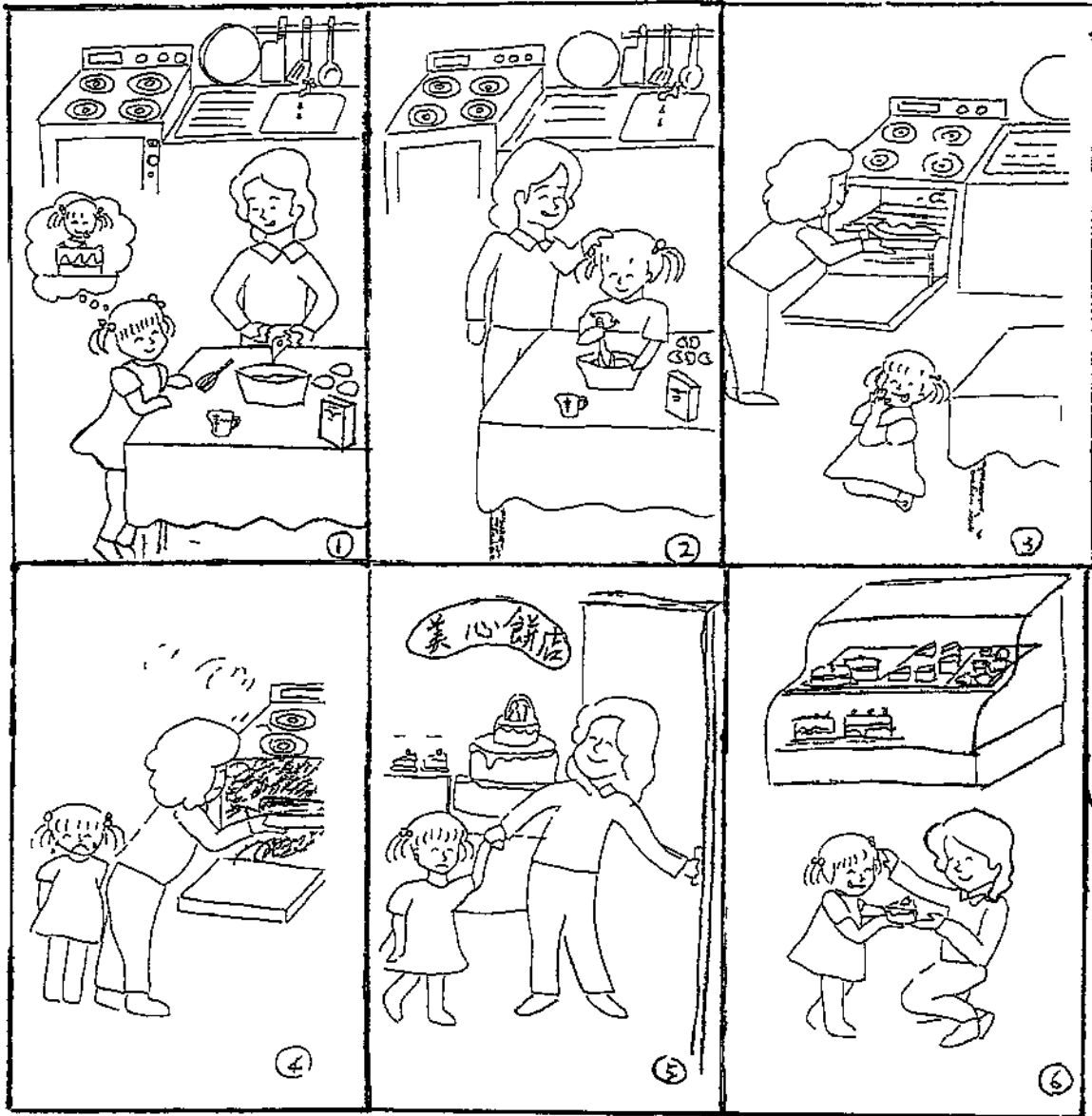
Example of picture sequence: Story A

Example of picture sequence: Story B

Coding procedures

The utterances are transcribed and segmented into clauses using the procedures described by Wong (1992, p 48 - 83). Then the scorer will identify the possible three forms (ie. noun phrase, pronoun or zero) representing the referring expression for the two main characters (the mother and the girl) in the samples studied. Finally the scorer will code how the subjects use these three forms to switch back and forth between the two main characters of the two stories.

A. Identification of clauses:

According to Wong (1992), "Semantically, a clause represents an action, an event, or a state. Syntactically, a clause contains a single nuclear predicate around which other predicate- like items may cluster without themselves constituting independent predicates. A predicate in spoken Cantonese can be a verb or an adjective." (p 52-55)

eg. 咁 小 英 就 好 開心
    UP Siu Ying then very happy
    "Then Siu Ying was very happy"

eg. 咁 媽媽 就 帶 小 英 去 海洋公園 玩
    UP mother then take Siu Ying go Ocean Park play
    "Then the mother took Siu Ying go to Ocean Park to play."

eg. 媽咪 仲 買 一 個 屋糕 俾 佢 食
    mother also buy one C cake give her eat
    "Mother also bought a cake for her."

Not all the clauses will be further analyzed. Incomplete clasues, repetitions, ungrammatical clauses and non-intervening clauses will be exluded. Let's consider the following examples.

eg. 啲 呢 小 英 就 見 個D 汽球 好
    UP UP Siu Ying then see those balloons very
靚
beautiful
    "Then Siu Ying saw those very beautiful balloons."

有 各 種 顏色 嘅
have all kinds colour UP
"The balloons have different colours."

咁 佢 就 揀 咗個紅色 汽球
UP she then choose AM C red balloon
"Then she chose one red balloon."

The second clause is not analyzed because it did
not contribute to the thematic progress of the story
(Bamberg, 1986). In other words, the reference to the
characters is not interrupted and there is actually no
new referents introduced. These non-intervening
clauses include the quoted or direct speech and those
descriptive statements about the object other than the
two characters. Therefore, we should keep in mind
that the coding does not proceed purely in a clause -
by - clause fashion. Moreover, if there is self-
repair of the references, the repaired clauses will be
analyzed instead of the false starts.

B. Identification of the three forms of referring
expression of the two characters in the stories:

A referring expression may establish a new
referent or refer back to one previously mentioned.
There are three forms to represent the two main
characters of the stories. They are noun phrase (NP),
personal pronoun (Prn) and zero mention (Z).

          Examples of NP found : Proper name eg. 小英 (Siu Ying)
          in the samples of this   Common name eg. 妹妹 (girl)
          study   媽媽 (mother)
                                    Modified NPs eg. 小英嘅媽咪
                                                     (Siu Ying's mother)

We always use third personal pronouns (佢 /佢地
)to refer to the characters of a story, except in the
case of quoted speech. However, in one or two
language sample(s) of the children in this study, we
find that the subject took a first or second speaker's
perspective to tell their story. In other words, they
use the first or second personal pronouns to refer to
the main characters throughout the story. Since the
goal of this study is to see how well children switch
and maintain the references in their narratives, this
incorrect referring expression for the two characters

will also be considered.

According to Wong (1992), there are two criteria to recognize the elliptic mentions:
"1). A zero mention is located if and only if an elliptic surface case frame requires an argument which is not phonetically realized.
2). An elliptic mention can always be substituted by a more explicit referential form, namely a pronoun or a noun phrase without a significant change in the acceptability of the clause." (p 84)

a. The presence of multi-predicate constructions

eg.   於是乎   呢 媽媽 就 幫 小 英 去 買
As a result UP mother then take Siu Ying go buy
蛋糕 嘞)
cake UP
"As a result, the mother took Siu Ying to go to buy a cake."

b. The occurrence of two preverbal NP for the same referent in a clause

eg. 唉 小 英 呢,   就 好 傷心
UP Siu Ying UP, ∅?? then very sad
"Then Siu Ying was very sad."

In this case, the NP is the subject and there is no elliptic mention. "The separation of the subject NP and the rest of the clause is an intonational phenomenon." (Wong,1990, p 91)

c. Noun phrase coreferential with the subject

eg.   佢 好   傷心 喎 嗰個 小 英
she very   sad UP, that Siu Ying
"Siu Ying was very sad."

In this case, the NP at the end of the clause is an afterthought which may be a clarification or an emphasis. Therefore, the pronoun is the subject instead of the NP.

C. Coding of the use of the three forms in switching and maintaining references:

All re-introductions of the two characters

[Reference switching] are coded according to nominal vs pronominal expression - forms (i.e. pronoun or ellipsis). All instances of maintaining reference to one of the two characters [Reference maintaining] are coded according to the same forms. The pictures of the stoires will help one to identify whether there is a switched reference or maintained reference.

Karmiloff-Smith (1985) stated that "pronominalization in the object slot is not as constrained as it is in subject slot. It is probable that subject position has a privileged status for children in the development of discourse." (p 83) Therefore, only references shown in the subject slot will be analyzed when there are two references in both subject and object positions.

However, there are few cases where references placed not in in the subject position were analyzed. Let's see the following example first.

eg. 媽媽而家喺 廚房
mother now in kitchen
"Mother was in the kitchen now."

小 英 呢 佢 好 想 媽媽 整 蛋糕 俾
Siu Ying UP she very want mother make cake give
佢 食
her eat
"Siu Ying wanted her mother to make a cake for her."

According to Wong's study, `Siu Ying' is treated as the topic while the pronoun is the subject of the clause. Even though `Siu Ying' is not in the subject poition, it will also be coded as switched reference. The following pronoun is assigned to perform reference maintaining function.

Abbreviation:
Ø   - zero pronoun
UP   - utterance particles
AM   - aspect markers
C   - classifier

The following examples show different pronominal strategies found in the subjects of this study.

<u>Example 1</u> *Full anaphoric strategy* (adult, story B, preview condition)

yesterday UP Siu Ying then in one C maths test
get AM one hundred mark
"Yesterday Siu Ying had one hundred mark in a maths test."

UP mother then see her so good UP
"Then the mother knew she was such a good girl."

(mother) then reinforce her
"Then the mother reinforced her."

(mother) then Sunday and she go Ocean Park play
something UP
"Then she go to the Ocean Park with her."

UP UP Siu Ying then see AM those balloon very
beautiful
"Then Siu Ying saw those beautiful balloons."

have all kinds colour UP
"There were all kinds of colourful balloons."

UP she then choose AM C red balloon
"Then she chose one red balloon."

跟住 媽咪 就 買 俾 佢 喇
then mother then buy give her UP
"Then the mother bought one for her."

点知 有D 風 呢 就 吹 走 個 泡球 喇
who know some wind UP then blow away C balloon UP
"Then the wind blew away the balloon."

咁 小英 呢 又 喺到喊 喇
UP Siu Ying UP also cry UP
"Siu Ying cried again now."

咁 媽咪 呢 就 喺到"冰"番 佢 喇
UP mother UP then comfort her UP
"Then the mother comforted her."

Example 2 *Indeterminable strategy* (6;5, story B, preview condition)

咁樣呢 小英 哦 就 讀書 一 百 分 喇 喎
UP UP UP Siu Ying UP then read one hundred mark UP UP
"Siu Ying got one hundred mark."

媽咪 話 佢 默書 一 百 分 喎
mother say her dictation one hundred mark UP
"The mother said she got one hundred mark in a dictation."

∅ 就 帶 佢去 海洋公園 玩 喇
(mother) then take her Ocean Park play UP
"Then she take her to go to the Ocean Park."

咁 佢呀 小英 見 到 泡球 呢
UP she UP Siu Ying see AM balloon UP
"Siu Ying saw some balloons."

∅ 就 問 媽咪 買 啲D 泡球 喎
(Siu Ying) then ask mother buy those balloon UP
"Then she asked her mother to buy thsoe balloons."

咁 然之後 ∅ 就買咗個 泡球 ↓
UP then (mother) then AM C balloon UP
"Then the mother bought a balloon."

咁 然之後呢 有 D 風 吹 咗個 泡球 上去 喇喎
UP then UP have some wind blow AM C balloon up UP
"Then the wind blew away the balloon."

小英 呢就 喊 喇喎
Siu Ying UP then cry UP UP
"Then Siu Ying cried."

媽媽 就 "氹" 番 佢 喇 嗚

mother then comfort UP her UP UP

"Then the mother comforted her."

(mother) 叫 佢 唔好 喊

(mother) asked her not cry

"The mother asked her not to cry."

Example 3 *Thematic subject constraint - the child used
pronoun only to refer to the girl*
(4;8, Story A, non-preview condition)

媽媽 煮 嘢 食

mother cook something eat

"The mother cooked something to eat."

佢 就 睇 住 媽媽 煮 嘢 食

she then look AM mother cook something eat

"Then She looked at the mother who cooked something."

咁 佢 又 幫 媽媽 做 嘢

UP she also help mother do something

"She also helped mother to do something."

媽媽 就 讚 佢 叻

mother then praise her good

"Then the mother praised her."

咁 媽媽 做 嘢 個時候

UP mother do something when

"When the mother did something,...."

咁 佢 就 屙口水

UP she then drool

"then she drooled."

媽媽 呢 就 好 痛 嗚

mother UP then very painful UP

"Then the mother looked very painful."

(girl) 喺訓 喊

(girl) cry

"The gril cried now."

媽媽 帶 佢 去 街

mother take her go street

"The mother took her to go outside."

媽媽 仲 買 一 個 蛋糕 俾 佢 食

mother also buy one C cake give her eat

"The mother also bought a cake for her."

Example 4 *Confused strategy* (4;7, story A, preview condition)

∅ 食 嘢
(girl) eat something
"The girl ate something."

∅ 整 蛋糕,
(mother) make cake
"The mother made the cake."

∅ 擺 入去 雪櫃
(mother) put (cake) into refrigerator
"The mother put the cake into the refrigerator."

∅ 爆咗
(cake) overcook
"The cake was overcooked."

∅ 買 蛋糕,
(mother) buy cake
"The mother bought a cake"

∅ 食 蛋糕,
(girl) eat cake
"The girl ate the cake."

Example 5 *Nominal strategy* (6;8, story B, non-preview condition)

有 一 日 小 英 考試 有 一 百
have one day Siu Ying examination have one hundred
分
marks
"One day, Siu Ying had one hundred marks in an examination."

咁 佢 媽媽 就 好 開心
UP her mother then very happy
"Then her mother was very happy."

咁 佢 媽媽 就 帶 佢 去 海洋公園 玩
UP her mother then take her go Ocean Park play
"Then her mother took her to go to the Ocean Park."

咁 小 英 就 好 開心
UP Siu Ying then very happy
"Then Siu Ying was very happy."

小 英 呢 就 想 買 嗰D 汽球
Siu Ying UP then want buy those balloon
"Then Siu Ying wanted to buy those balloons."

咁 媽媽 呢 就 買 咗 個 紅 汽球 俾 小 英 啦
UP mother UP then buy AM C red balloon give Siu Ying UP

"Then the mother bought a red balloon for Siu Ying."

跟住 嗰D 風 一 吹 個 汽球 就 走 咗
then those wind one blow C balloon then run AM
"Then when the wind blew, the balloon ran away."

咁 呢 小 英 喊 喇
UP UP Siu Ying cry UP
"Siu Ying cried."