

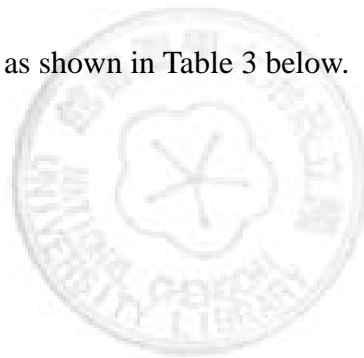
## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents a careful investigation into the structural patterns exhibited in the collected data. A general description of the results is given in **4.1**. Further explanation and discussion on the results are given in **4.1.1** to **4.1.5**. Summary of the findings and a general discussion are given in **4.2**.

#### **4.1 Narrative Structure Analysis**

Various narrative structures are observed in the collected data. The structural patterns displayed in student writings are classified into five major categories by the completeness of an episode as shown in Table 3 below.



**TABLE 3****Structural Patterns Observed in Student Writings**

<b>STRUCTURAL TYPE<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Description	5	25%
Abbreviated Story	2	10%
Complete Story	5	25%
Lengthened Story	6	30%
Complex Story	2	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Note.* Number= the number of stories demonstrate the specific structural type.

Percentage= the proportion one specific structural type taken out of the whole.

As shown in Table 3, the structural patterns observed in the writing samples include (1) Description, (2) Abbreviated Story, (3) Complete Story, (4) Lengthened Story, and (5) Complex Story. *Description* refers to a story that contains information about the characters, their regular actions, and the surroundings. An *abbreviated story* comprises some basic elements of a story but one or more of the essential components are missing. For example, a story composed of an exposition, a complication, but not a resolution is assigned to this category. A *complete story* is made up of a clear four-part schematic structure—an exposition, a complication, a resolution, and a coda. A *lengthened story* contains the essential structural features (an exposition, a complication, a resolution, and an optional coda) while too many redundant details or irrelevant statements are also included in it. A *complex story* is a story made up of

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<sup>4</sup>The terminology used in this column is adapted from Fitzgerald and Teasley (1986); Glenn and Stein (1980); Liles (1987); and Peterson and McCabe (1983).

multiple complete or incomplete episodes.

Overall inter-rater reliability for structural types categorization was .8. Through the *number* and *percentage* shown in the right two columns in Table 3, the distribution of the divergent structural patterns are manifested. Among the structural types, *lengthened story* takes the largest proportion (30%), although the predominance is not significant, compared with the second largest types *description* (25%) and *complete story* (25%). On the contrary, *abbreviated story* (10%) and *complex story* (10%) are relatively fewer in our data. An elaboration of each structural type is provided in the following sections (4.1.1 to 4.1.5). For each category, a sample composition with its structure analysis is given for demonstration. The strengths and weaknesses of each text type are also discussed accordingly.

#### **4.1.1 Description**

Five out of the twenty compositions are categorized to the structural type *Description*. One of the stories representative of this category is reproduced and analyzed below for illustration.

**Story 1: A Story of a Penguin**

1. I am a penguin, a baby penguin, and a couple of mouths old.
2. I was born in Southern Hemisphere where the temperature is so cold that few kinds of other animals can live here.
3. I am not afraid of cold for I have a layer of penguin fat under my feather.
4. My parents have told me that in warm places, we penguin just survive in the fast flowing water.
5. I have heard that there are some different kinds of penguins living somewhere in Southern Hemisphere.
6. I hope that I could grow up as fast as possible to find other kinsfolk.
7. This is my mother
8. and she is searching for fish to feed me.
9. She is good at swimming.
10. “You will become a good swimmer in the future because we are all born swimmers,” she said.
11. You may ask where is my father?
12. He is busy in sitting on the other egg that may be my younger brother or sister.
13. Father tells me that I am lucky because I will have a brother or sister to play with me.
14. “Not every kind of penguin lay two eggs,” he continues.
15. I feel pity for those who have no brothers or sisters to play with because they may endure loneliness themselves.
16. When I was a child, I always looked at the other side, thinking that if there were other penguins like me living there.
17. Now I think it is a proper time for me to take adventure to find some penguins or colonies because I am an adult.
18. Maybe I will find a land of my own and find a girlfriend.
19. What should I send for presents?
20. Oh, I think pebbles are good presents
21. and I am sure she will like them.
22. The hour of departure has already arrived,
23. and I have to go.
24. One day I will return my hometown
25. and don't worry about me.
26. Give your fingers crossed for me.

Structural Features		Clause
Exposition	(a) Time	17, 22
	(b) Place	2, 4, 5
	(c) Characters	1, 3, 6 — 21, 23, 24
Complication	(a) Inciting moment	X
	(b) Developing conflict	X
	(c) Climax	X
Resolution	(a) Denouement	X
	(b) Final suspense	X
	(c) Conclusion	X
Coda		25, 26

**Figure 1 Story structure analysis of Story 1**

As shown in Figure 1, this story contains a lot of information about the characters, some information about the time and place, and a coda. However, no obvious crisis was observed in the story. Therefore, no resolution was presented as well. Similar patterns exist in the other four stories that were assigned to this category. These stories only differ slightly in the amount of content distributed to the characters, time, or location. Besides, in all five stories of this category, mental states of the characters were described and secondary characters were introduced. No actions but only descriptions were observed.

The strength of this type of compositions is in character development, which is regarded as an influential element to a story (Leavell & Ioannides, 1993). These writers are able to describe the characters by portraying their physical traits, actions, feelings, opinions, or relationship with others. This skill is valued by many writing

teachers as well as published writers (Winterowd & Murray, 1985). Also, they are able to incorporate setting (time, location, and background information) into the story, either as backdrop<sup>5</sup> or as integral. On the whole, the writers of a *description* are capable of fulfilling the part of the exposition.

On the other hand, the most salient deficiency in these texts is the absence of the crucial part of narratives—a crisis. As pointed out by Martin and Rothery (1986, p.254):

“When reading a story, we do not expect a routine account of everyday activities. Nor do we expect a simple description of some character or setting. What we do expect is a sequence of events in which something unusual or unexpected happens. This produces a kind of crisis which the rest of the story must resolve.”

Narratives in which no remarkable crises are presented are perceived much more like recounts rather than narrative stories (Martin, 1992; Plum, 1988). In this aspect, compositions of this category may be regarded as not attaining the requirements of a complete narrative story task. Moreover, the structural pattern of these compositions shows that the learners may have one or more of the following problems: (1) They do not have the concept of the conventional structure of English stories; (2) They do not

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<sup>5</sup> According to Lukens (1982), setting can be classified as backdrop or integral to the story. A backdrop setting is not significant to the development of the overall story, while an integral setting is closely interwoven with the characters, actions, and theme.

understand that it (the conventional structure of English stories) is required in this writing situation; (3) They do not have sufficient material to draw upon for developing the complication (Martin & Rothery, 1986); and (4) They are not aware of the formal devices generally used to create the complication in a story.

#### **4.1.2 Abbreviated Story**

Two out of the twenty stories belong to this category. A detailed analysis of one of them is given below for illustration.

##### **Story 2: My Paradise Lost**

1. Betty is a penguin, living in the Antarctic for her whole life.
2. These are all the members in her tribe.
3. However, she's always been wanting to leave her hometown to take a look at another new world.
4. She went to her father directly and told her father about her dream and idea.
5. " Father, I'd like to take a look at the world,
6. and I'd like to discover something of my own."
7. Her father replied, "Betty, I know that you've been wanting to be a outstanding penguin and to be different from others.
8. But the outside world is not so easy a thing as you are under our protection."
9. Though her father said this to her, these words can't move her determination at all.
10. After that, Betty started her journey of life.
11. On the day she was leaving her hometown, everybody went to see her off.
12. Betty started her journey,
13. first day, she met a new group of penguins, which also live in the Antarctica,
14. but they seldom or never saw each other before.
15. Betty took out her courage and walked to them to be their friend.
16. They welcomed her wholehearted.

17. A few days later, when Betty was walking on the ice with her new friends, a terrible sounds appeared,
18. and all of a sudden, the whole world seemed to be moving.
19. It was the ice where they stood that broke into pieces.
20. Everybody was scared, especially Betty.
21. This is her first time to feel much afraid, far more afraid than the time she decided to leave home to the new world.
22. This is also the first time she need to learn to be strong and try to calm down to face the situation, no more hiding in the back of her father and mother.
23. Actually, that was just because of the rising of the temperature.
24. However, she can never forget the feeling of trying to save herself and her new friends as well.
25. Now she learns to know a little more about the environment she lives and others she has to get along with.
26. To Betty, Antarctica is just a paradise.
27. For it coldness and it location, seldom human beings can come near here,
28. and she can have a real world of her own.
29. This journey is a growing experience of Betty,
30. and she really made some new friends.
31. Now she is inviting them to go to her hometown and take a look at her family and old friends as well.
32. Perhaps this would become another growing journey for Betty's new friends.

Structural Features		Clause
Exposition	(a) Time	11, 13, 17, 25
	(b) Place	1, 3
	(c) Characters	1—16
Complication	(a) Inciting moment	17
	(b) Developing conflict	18, 19
	(c) Climax	20, 21, 22
Resolution	(a) Denouement	X
	(b) Final suspense	X
	(c) Conclusion	23, 24
Coda		25—32

**Figure 2** Story structure analysis of Story 2



In the first half of this story, the writer did an adequate job in setting the stage. The main character (Betty) and the supporting characters (Betty's father and other members of her tribe) are introduced at the outset. The location (Antarctica) is built into the story as the main reason why the heroine wants to make a change. Besides, the dialogue between Betty and her father implies the inevitability of Betty's fate. The sense of inevitability is a common feature of stories (Cameron, 2001; Lukens, 1986). In addition, the writer employs parallelism at the climatic point as shown in (21) and (22) to ensure that the readers would not miss it. This strategy is commended by Longacre (1983, p.27) as "one of the simplest and most universal devices for marking the important point not only of a narration but of other sorts of discourse as well". On the whole, the first half of this story—the parts of exposition and complication—is appropriately developed.

However, after the climax, it is expected that an "event" would take place in order to resolve the crisis. But the writer simply ends the turmoil all up with one sentence "Actually, that was just because of the rising of the temperature" (23). No more information is provided, such as how the turbulence is controlled, how the characters tide over the difficult situation, and so on. What the story characters encounter during or after the crisis can only be implied through the sentence "...she can never forget the feeling of trying to save herself and her new friends as well" (24).

This simple account would probably be insufficient for satisfying a reader. Besides, as suggested by many skilled writers, it is better to *show* the readers what happened rather than *tell* about it. In other words, using action and dialogues is a better way to keep the story moving along (Dupie, 2003).

The other text categorized as an *abbreviated story* displays a similar pattern to Story 2. The story starts with a description of the setting and the main characters' situation, and then proceeds to a problem. However, the problem is not well-developed. The writer only produces "the inciting moment" but no any further conflict is developed. Nor is the problem physically solved. Instead, it is responded with a dialogue between the characters by which they encourage each other to be strong and optimistic and the difficulty will be over. The dialogue is actually of no help in forwarding the plot; it only reveals the thoughts of the story characters. In spite of the lack of a resolution to the problem, the writer still makes a coda for this story. The coda is composed of a further description of the characters and a moral suggestion.

From the two stories exemplified above, it is found that the writers possess the basic knowledge of the structural conventions of narrative stories. However, they still have difficulty in developing some of the components in an appropriate way. The factors may be that the writers' concepts of the conventional structure are not

completely clear. Or, they do not have enough material to develop the required parts adequately. Moreover, in these stories, secondary characters and relationships among them were described. Mental states of the characters were illustrated. Moral advice is given in both stories through the thoughts or words of the story characters.

### 4.1.3 Complete Story

Five out of the twenty stories are regarded as *complete stories*. The following sample is one representative of this category.

#### Story 3: The Migration of Penguins

1. Have you been wondering about why penguins live in the cold, and abandoned area--the South Pole?
2. A long, long time ago, in the depth of the forest, all kinds of birds gathered in their chamber to hold a convention.
3. And the committee announced that the annual pageant would be held in two months.
4. This was the greatest honor to be the winner of that competition.
5. There was going to be a parade, which various species of birds would take part in,
6. and the committee should pick up the winner.
7. The penguin families fell into tremendous dread and panic for their feathers were so plain and,
8. they were nearly out of shape since that they failed in parades almost every time.
9. Some said, "Why don't we just give up and renounce the right of participation?"
10. The opposite sides said, "We should never look down on ourselves,
11. and if we could set out to practice exercise everyday, there was still some chance to win."
12. Ho-Ho wandered around on the grassland, pondering the difficult situation of his families.

13. Unexpectedly, he met a goddess, who disguised herself as a female shepherd.
14. Ho-Ho told her everything about the competition and his dilemma, and sought for aid or some advices from her.
15. The goddess revealed to him that there was one kind of magic fish in Arctic Ocean.
16. They are brightly colorful,
17. and it was said that the one who ate them would acquire their shining , and flamboyant color.
18. Ho-Ho brought the news to his folk,
19. and all of them were so excited that the whole families decided to embark on their adventure to the Arctic Ocean in research of that magic fish.
20. With great wisdom, and courage, they arrived there at last,
21. and with the help of that goddess, they found the colorful fish.
22. And the magic did work.
23. All the penguins turned into colorfulness.
24. Unfortunately, it was too far for them to come back to their forest to join in the parade.
25. Thus, none of them shown up.
26. However, in order to contain the whole family's glory, they made up their mind to settle down in Arctic area--an extremely rigorous, and desert land.
27. Thus, from then on, they led a tough but happy life with great pride.

Structural Features		Clause
Abstract		1
Exposition	(a) Time	2
	(b) Place	2
	(c) Characters	2
Complication	(a) Inciting moment	3, 4, 5, 6
	(b) Developing conflict	7, 8
	(c) Climax	9, 10, 11
Resolution	(a) Denouement	12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
	(b) Final suspense	18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
	(c) Conclusion	24, 25
Coda		26, 27

**Figure 3 Story structure analysis of Story 3**

As shown in Figure 3, the structure of this story complies with the conventional structure of English stories. The exposition, the complication, the resolution, and the coda are clearly laid out in the story. Aside from the four-part schematic structure, an abstract is inserted in the beginning, which outlines the theme of this story and prompts the readers' curiosity to some extent. Moreover, the exposition of time, place, and current situation is effectively presented within one sentence as in (2) and the complication starts immediately after it. This is also a characteristic of Western-style stories (Soter, 1988). No dialogue is presented in the story until the climax is reached. Apparently the writer understands that "heightened vividness" is one of the effective ways to present the peak of a story and dialogue is one of the devices for marking vividness (Longacre, 1986).

It is worth noticing that the resolution of this story involves the assistance from "a goddess disguised as a shepherdess." This element is frequently found in Western literature but not in Chinese culture. Moreover, in another text of this category, the writer creates a story in which the main character named "Moses" leads his people to travel a long way from home in order to tide over the difficulty. This plot design is evidently a derivation from English stories. Therefore, we may speculate that these learners have acquired the narrative conventions through the exposure to Western literary works.

In addition, unlike all the other stories in the collected data, one text of this category begins with dialogue through which the main problem of the story is brought out as exemplified below:

#### **Story 4: Far Away from Home**

"My fellow villagers," distressingly addressed by Foresight, the most powerful and respectable patriarch of the Penguin Village, in the annual assembly, "today I have to announce the news that our Penguin Village has to immigrate to a new continent." "What?" "Why should we move?" Chaos continually pervaded among the crowd. To leave a place where they have inhabited from generation to generation for more than a hundred years is never an easy task. No wonder the villagers reacted so turbulently....

Opening a story in this way is favored by many skilled writers because it is intrinsically attention-grabbing (Dupie, 2003; Klingensmith, 2003; Murphy, 2003).

Moreover, this story distorts the normal order of exposition — complication — resolution — coda, while still displaying all of the essential features of a typical story.

As suggested by Freedman (1987), it is a characteristic of gifted young writers to “consciously flaunt conventions of story-telling in their story writing” (cited from McCabe, 1996, p. 186).

On the whole, writers of a *complete story* appear to understand the conventional structure of narratives and are able to develop all of the elements in a clear way. In terms of narrative structure, these writers have successfully accomplished the

story-writing task. Besides, certain characteristics of English stories, such as effective initiation of the actions in the story and elements borrowed from Western cultures are observed in stories of this category. However, elements which might be influenced by Chinese culture were also found. For example, three of the stories point out the importance of environmental protection explicitly in the end of the stories. Two of them imply the importance of bravery and honor. These writers used their stories to instruct but not to entertain the readers.

#### **4.1.4 Lengthened Story**

Six out of the twenty stories are categorized as a *lengthened story*. The major characteristic of this type of story is that they often contain an exposition, a complication, a resolution, but also too many unnecessary details, which may hinder the comprehension of the readers. To illustrate this point, one text is illustrated and analyzed below.

**Story 5: (No title is available)**

1. Under a starry night, Guava, who has just reached his mating age, was singing “Are you lonesome tonight?”, expressing imperative concern about his unpredictable marriage.
2. His solitude grows even more whenever he sees those infant penguins sleeping in their parents’ arms.
3. The hard weather in Antarctica seems a perfect match for his lonely heart.
4. One day, when Guava again solitarily sang songs at the top of the cliff, it dawned on him that why not start doing something about his life.
5. “Yes, it is a family that I am in desperate need of.”, said Guava,
6. “I cannot afford to waist my time fooling around.
7. It is said that a wife helps support a family.
8. To establish a family, I should get married first.”
9. “Yes, that’s it,
10. but what can I do to have a wife?”
11. After thinking for a while, Guava gradually realized that the most outstanding ability that God endows him is to dance beautifully in front of the opposite sex.
12. And that is the social way for wooing the mate, which is called the mating ritual.
13. “No wonder I saw lots of penguins do that before.” said Guava,
14. “Actually this sort of dancing bears a specific meaning.”
15. From that moment on, Guava seized every opportunity to demonstrate his gorgeous dancing.
16. Along with his touching singing that he had practiced a lot during the lonesome days, Guava soon won a beauty’s heart, and lived a happy life ever after.
17. The speed of an arrow may not enough to describe the passing of days.
18. A few months later, Guava as well as his son takes part in a bustling festival that is traditionally set up to greet the coming spring.
19. Little as his son is, Guava encourages him to give everything a shot.
20. Not informing his son the enormous pressure from numerous competitors, Guava instill his son the concept that life is challenges;
21. to survive from the passages of rites is to conquer ever challenge that he will face in the future.



Structural Features		Clause
Exposition	(a) Time	1, 4,
	(b) Place	3, 4
	(c) Characters	1, 2, 3
Complication	(a) Inciting moment	4, 5, 6, 7
	(b) Developing conflict	8, 9
	(c) Climax	10
Resolution	(a) Denouement	11, 12, 13, 14
	(b) Final suspense	15, 16
	(c) Conclusion	16
Exposition	(a) Time	17, 18
	(b) Place	18
	(c) Characters	18, 19, 20, 21
Coda		X

**Figure 4 Story structure analysis of Story 5**

This story starts with an exposition in which the age, state of mind, and the current condition of the main character (Guava) are clearly described. The setting is also skillfully employed to reflect the feelings of the main character and create the atmosphere for the story. Besides, the problem of the main character is woven into the story from the very beginning, which is helpful to grab the readers' attention and provide them clues about what the main character would go through and overcome (Murphy, 2003). Then the problem takes place as the readers expect. Although the process of resolving the problem is somewhat simplified, the crisis is logically resolved. As soon as the crisis is over, the writer employs the formulaic phrase "...lived a happy life ever after" (16), which generally signifies the ending of a story.

This makes the readers expect that the story is going to end. However, after the formulaic phrase, the writer appears to try to start a new episode in which a new character (the son of Guava) is introduced and a new event is initiated. This extra “episode” turns out to be a plain description in which no significant crisis is produced. As a result, it is plausible to suggest that, instead of adding the extra exposition, the writer should give more details for the parts of complication or resolution.

Another five stories categorized as a *lengthened story* have the same problem of comprising too much redundant information in them. Unlike Story 4 exemplified above, three of the stories spend too many paragraphs on detailing the routine activities of the story characters. The extra information given in these stories is of little help in developing the plot; rather, it blurs the theme. Moreover, because the redundant information takes a large part in the story, relatively small proportion is allotted to the major parts of complication and the resolution. This makes the stories appear to be ended in haste.

Besides, one of the *lengthened stories* contains redundant information not in the form of description but of evaluation. Below is an excerpt from that story:

### **Story 6: The Trial of Confidence and Bravery**

...Difficult situation can always arouse the potential power to strive for survival.  
Arthur remembers that his father always says to him: "Some day you will become an

independent man to live by yourself." Much of what parents say about future is probably myth when we are young, but there is no doubt that Arthur should start to get a life with confidence and bravery.... life is not always easy for him to be a frontiersman. But we all know that heaven always helps those who help themselves. In spite of tough situations and countless difficulties ahead his road, Arthur has never expressed fearfulness towards future....

From the excerpt shown above, it can be observed that the writer tends to insert evaluative comments to the story as signified by the underlined sentences. However, these phrases occur too frequently in the story. They are of no help in forwarding the plot and may interfere with the readers' comprehension.

Still another story of this category contains an extra paragraph between the complication and the resolution. The inserted paragraph, mainly about the attributes of minor characters of the story, is hardly related to the complication or the resolution of the story and appears much more like a lengthy digression.

To sum up, the structural patterns of these compositions reflect that the writers understand the essential components of a story. However, they still have difficulty in organizing their compositions in an appropriate way. As a result, they may need to learn to determine which information is redundant and should be crossed out, and which information is important and needs to be developed further.

#### 4.1.5 Complex Story

Two stories belong to the category of *complex story*. The common point of these stories is that they are composed of more than one episode, whether complete or incomplete. One composition of this type is reproduced and analyzed below for illustration.

##### Story 7: The Homeland Defender, Pingu

1. In Antarctica, there are thousands of penguins living there.
2. In winter, sometime there are blizzards in the habitat of them.
3. However, the blizzards seemed to be more violent one year.
4. Therefore, the Dinos decided to move to a safer place.
5. Due to the over- exploration of humans, the suitable habitats for penguins became fewer and smaller.
6. After great efforts, Mr. Dino finally found a wonderful cave located in a small hill where it took one hour to the Antarctic Ocean.
7. With some necessities, they set out for the cave in the morning.
8. On the way to the cave, a bird tried to peck one egg of Mrs. Dino's.
9. That thief bird silently trots near the egg and put his long bill forward.
10. Where is Mr. Dino?
11. He was exhausted and fell asleep.
12. Also, he forgot his egg on the seashore.
13. Fortunately, an adult penguin named Wade saw that and kicked the thief away.
14. Wade was a traveler.
15. He could not find the egg's parents, so he decided to take care of it.
16. After hatching for a few days, the small penguin pecked the egg and got out of it.
17. Wade called the small guy Pingu, who got special spots on his head.
18. To survive in the fierce blizzard, Wade and Pingu had to move to the northern Antarctica.
19. On the way, Wade taught him how to survive alone in the bleak plain.
20. He also told Pingu that penguins were getting fewer because of the green house effect.

21. Humans were using tons of spray products containing CFC, which had disordered the normal circle of climate.
22. For example, CFC made the ozonosphere so thin and weak that the ultraviolet rays can pass through.
23. That was why the ice on earth had been melting step by step.
24. After hearing that, Pingu looked up to the blue sky and determined to set his sight on saving his homeland.
25. Time flied.
26. Now Pingu is an adult penguin.
27. One day, when he and his mentor, Wade, is going to prey, they see a large group of penguins strolling on the other end of the icy road.
28. They approach those penguins
29. and Pingu feels ambivalent.
30. He hopes that his parents would be among the group;
31. however, he cannot afford the hopelessness if they are not.
32. The more he gets close, the faster his heart beats.
33. Finally, one of those penguins cries "My kid, is that you?"
34. The heart-warming cry comes from an elder penguin who has the same spots.
35. After hugging with each other, Pingu tells his parents that he decides to talk all the penguins into defending their own homeland.
36. Knowing that, both his parents feel proud of their son and encourage him to continue protecting our homeland.
37. When they want to appreciate Wade's help, they find that he's disappeared in the white plain.
38. Pingu ponder that Wade is a real hero because he never wants reward.
39. And this is the last lesson Wade teaches him.

Structural Features		Clause
Exposition	(a) Time	2, 3
	(b) Place	1, 2, 3, 5
	(c) Characters	1, 4, 6, 7
Complication	(a) Inciting moment	8, 9
	(b) Developing conflict	10, 11, 12
	(c) Climax	X
Resolution	(a) Denouement	13
	(b) Final suspense	14, 15, 16, 17
	(c) Conclusion	X
Event		18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
Exposition	(a) Time	25
	(b) Place	27
	(c) Characters	26
Complication	(a) Inciting moment	27
	(b) Developing conflict	28, 29, 30, 31
	(c) Climax	32
Resolution	(a) Denouement	33, 34
	(b) Final suspense	35, 36
	(c) Conclusion	37
Coda		38, 39

**Figure 5 Story structure analysis of Story 7**

As shown in Figure 5, the story is composed of two major episodes, the first one abbreviated and the second one complete. In the first episode, the main characters (the Dinos) and the setting (Antarctica, winter) are introduced. The complication in the first episode is initiated by an outsider (a bird) who tried to do harm to one of the main characters. This plot design (the resort to an outsider) is one that “proved enduringly popular” (Rogers, 1992, p. 112). However, as shown in (8), the writer

simply states the fact without heightening the newsworthiness. Thus the readers may easily pass on this important point without noticing it. The resolution, also coming from an outsider (Wade), successfully resolves the problem and creates the cause of the conflict of the second episode at the same time. To connect the two episodes, the writer develops an event in which the plot moves on and the relationship of the two characters is delineated. In the second episode, the time and location are different from that of the first episode. The complication in the second episode is mainly created by the inner conflict of one of the main characters. Parallelism, as shown in (32), is used by the writer to highlight the climax. At the end of the story, the resolution is provided, with a moral advice given implicitly.

As one can observe, the writer understands the essential structural features of English type stories and has tried to develop the structure of his story in a complicated way. However, too many dimensions are involved in the story, such as the separation and reunion of the Dinos, the issue of environmental protection, the ambition of Pingu, and Wade as a role model. Covering too many diverse dimensions in a story may confuse the readers. For a short story (around 1000 words in length), it is suggested to “use one major obstacle and focus on how the hero/heroine works to overcome the conflict” (Dupie, 2003), not to mention the 300- to 500- word stories in this study. Moreover, given the title of the story “The Homeland Defender, Pingu,” this story is

actually close to being off-topic. Therefore, to improve the quality of their writings, these students may need to learn to narrow down the scope of their stories, focus on one theme, and develop it to the best.

## 4.2 Summary and Discussion

Based on the conventional English story structure, twenty EFL texts composed by twenty Taiwanese junior English majors were analyzed. Through a careful investigation into the structural features of each story, divergent structural patterns are discovered in student writings. Different structural uses not only reflect the learners' writing styles but also represent their strengths and weaknesses in writing.

In **4.1.1 Description**, it is found that students who produced the text type *description* are capable of depicting the characters, their regular actions, and the environment. In other words, they are able to fulfill the first part of the typical structure of an English story—exposition. However, crisis, the most crucial component of a narrative story, is absent (or not explicit) in their compositions. This deficiency makes these texts read more like recounts instead of stories. As a result, the compositions of this category may be regarded as not attaining the requirements of a complete narrative story task. Besides, the absence of a major crisis in the compositions reveals that these learners may have one or more of the following



problems: (1) They do not have the concept of the conventional structure of English stories; (2) They do not understand that it (the conventional structure of English stories) is required in this writing situation; (3) They do not have sufficient material to draw upon for developing the complication (Martin & Rothery, 1986); and (4) They are not aware of the writing conventions of creating the complication in a story.

In **4.1.2 Abbreviated Story**, the writers include some basic elements of a story in their compositions, but other essential features are missing. In one story, the complication is under-developed and no resolution is provided; in the other story, the description of the resolution is insufficient. The structural patterns presented in these *abbreviated stories* reveal that the writers have the basic concept of the conventional story structure and they are aware of the necessity of a crisis in a story. However, these students still cannot develop some of the components in an appropriate way. The factors of the inappropriate or insufficient development of stories may be that the writers do not have clear concepts of the conventional story structure, or they do not have enough material to develop the required parts adequately.

In **4.1.3 Complete Story**, the writers are able to develop all of the structural features in a clear way. The narrative structures displayed in the writings show that the learners understand the conventional structure of narratives. Besides, elements from Western literature are found in writing samples of this category. This reveals that the

students may have acquired the structural patterns through constant exposure to Western literary works. In terms of narrative structure, these writers have successfully accomplished the story-writing task.

In **4.1.4 Lengthened Story**, the structural patterns of the six stories vary. Three of them contain too many details about the routine activities of the characters. The extra information is of little help in forwarding the plot; rather, it blurs the theme. Besides, one story of this type constantly inserts evaluative comments into it. The inserted phrases occur too frequently, which may interrupt the readers' comprehension. Another story of this category inserts a paragraph between the complication and the resolution. The insertion is hardly connected with the crisis or the resolution and appears more like a lengthy digression. Still another story of this type presents the structural pattern that an additional event is attached when the story is supposed to end. The common point of stories belonging to this category is that they contain too much redundant information in them. Therefore, the major obstacle these writers have to overcome may be to determine which information to delete and which information to keep and expand. In other words, they have to learn about organizing and editing their compositions in an appropriate way.

In **4.1.5 Complex Story**, the writers composed their stories with more than one episode, whether complete or incomplete. The structural distribution in these

compositions displays that the writers understand the basic structure of a story and have tried to develop it in a more complicated way. However, too many diverse dimensions are covered in a short story, and this often results in diluting the theme. As a result, the writers may need to narrow down the scope of their stories, focus on one theme, and develop it to the best.

In spite of the fact that this group of students has never received direct instruction in the conventional English story structure, there are still five students (i.e. the writers of *complete stories*) who have composed their stories closely conforming to the typical four-part schematic structure—an exposition, a complication, a resolution, and a coda. We may speculate that these five students have acquired the structural conventions through their exposure to Western literary works since elements derived from Western literature are observed from these stories. However, not all of the participants are able to transfer this input knowledge into output performance. The students who have produced the structural type of *description* have neglected the most crucial features of a story—i.e. a complication along with its resolution. Moreover, the writers of *abbreviated stories* have missed certain important components of a story, such as climax or resolution. The result shows that these learners may need help from the teacher to clarify the genre required in the writing situation. In addition, the

writers of *lengthened stories* display that they have problems not in conforming to the structural conventions, but in editing their texts in an appropriate way. Likewise, writers of *complex stories* are aware of the essential components of an English story, but they incorporate too many dimensions into a short story, which leads to obscuring the theme. For these learners, specific instruction in skills of organizing and revising may be needed.

On the whole, this group of students was able to accomplish the part of exposition in a story. This is likely owing to the fact that “they have had more opportunity to write recounts than narratives in their academically-oriented exposure to writing” (Tickoo, 2001, p.23). Although the appointed topic “penguins” may not be a familiar field for these learners, they have done a good job in collecting information about the physical traits, species, living environment, potential danger, traditions, and customs of penguins. This demonstrates a major benefit of computer-assisted teaching and learning—the learners can easily have access to the knowledge they need. It is observed from the data that these students have tried hard to interweave the collected information into their compositions. However, it is important for the teacher to remind the learners, especially the writers of the structural type *Description*, not just to cram their compositions with all of the detailed information. Rather, they should slip the

information into the stories at strategic points to make the stories more realistic (Klingensmith, 2003).

Cultural characteristics are evident in student writings. First, about two-thirds of the compositions end with a moral. This may be influenced by the fact that narratives are generally used “to pass on moral lessons” to children as well as adults in Chinese culture (McCabe, 1996, p. 87). Second, the students in this study tend to detail the mental states of the story characters. This is also a testified trait influenced by Chinese culture (Domino & Hannah, 1987). Third, the students use more descriptions than actions in their compositions. This may be affected by the fact that Chinese is a vertical society, in which “‘who a person is’ is much more important than ‘what a person does’” (Javidi & Javidi, 1997, p.88). Fourth, presences of secondary characters as well as illustration of the relationship among story characters are discovered in almost every story. This usage may originate from the fact that Chinese culture values group concept instead of self-maintenance (Javidi & Javidi, 1997). Interestingly, the preferences presented above greatly coincide with the characteristics of narrative writings produced by Bhutanese (Stein, 2004), Vietnamese (Soter, 1988), or Thai (Indrasuta, 1988) students. As a result, this study may serve as supporting evidence for the high similarity existed in Asian cultures.

