Quasi-Narrative: The Function of Preterit Tense Verbs and Temporal Adverbials in Non-Narrative Texts*

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1. Introduction

Of the wealth of linguistic literature investigating the differences contained in narrative and non-narrative texts, almost none of the literature has specifically investigated the presence of preterit tense verbs and temporal/diatic adverbials in non-narrative discourse. Much of the literature that compares these genre has focused on the cognitive and structural differences (and similarities) contained in oral narratives and written texts (e.g., Biber 1988; Tannen 1982; Tannen 1984; Bruner 1991; Chafe 1994; Biber 1986) or has focused on how cohesive markers are used in non-narrative and narrative discourse (e.g., Halliday and Hasan 1976; Stotsky 1983). Of the studies that have focused primarily on non-narrative discourse, most have primarily focused on the logical relations connecting texts together (e.g., Mann and Thompson 1986; 1988a; 1988b) or have looked at the function of non-narrative relations in narrative discourse (Bennett 1986). One study, Longacre's (1976) study of narrative and non-narrative discourse, has focused on the occurrence of preterit tense verbs and temporal/spatial adverbials in non-narrative texts, but investigates this issue using only qualitative analysis. And of all these studies, only Biber (1986; 1988) has used qualitative, statistical analysis to investigate any of the differences contained in non-narrative and narrative texts, albeit from the perspective of comparing oral and written discourse.

As I have stated above, only Longacre's (1976) study of narrative and non-narrative discourse has investigated the occurrence of preterit tense verbs and temporal/spatial adverbials in non-narrative texts. As a result of his investigation into this subject, Longacre concluded that

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these grammatical elements appear in non-narrative discourse as a part of non-narrative text span structures used by composers of non-narrative texts to make their texts more "vivid for the reader" and to increase the reader's interest in the material presented in the text. In this way, composers are able to underline rhetorically the information they write about in their texts and are able to allow the reader to become more personally involved in the text (Longacre 1976: 197-231). Therefore, according to Longacre, it appears that composers use these narrative-like structures to help their readers stay involved with the texts and to help them remember the information contained in the texts, since, as Bruner claims, people remember more information when it is presented to them in the narrative mode (Bruner 1986).

Because of the lack of investigation into the occurrence of preterit tense verbs and temporal/spatial adverbials in non-narrative discourse, I have chosen to investigate this topic here, using the methods of both qualitative and quantitative analysis (specifically, investigating non-narrative texts). I will use Longacre's (1976) study as a theoretical framework for my discussion of the occurrence of these elements in non-narrative discourse, adding to his conclusions in my qualitative analysis (Section 5), where I will demonstrate that narrative structures in non-narrative discourse are indicated by the presence of preterit tense verbs and temporal/spatial adverbials and are used to highlight information rhetorically. As a result of this discussion, I will also demonstrate that these narrative text spans feature a quasi-narrative structure, in which the most psychologically salient elements of Labovian narrative schema (orientation, complicating action, and evaluation) are used by composers to a) give specific examples of a phenomenon to further illustrate their points, b) compare events in the textual present with events in the textual past, c) provide additional information about a point made in
their text, d) present information in a narrative-like structure that highlights the information and makes it more "vivid" for readers, and e) indicate chronological order in a text.

However, before I conduct this qualitative analysis, I will first discuss how preterit tense and present tense verbs prototypically function in narrative and non-narrative texts in Section 2. This discussion is followed by a qualitative, statistical analysis of preterit verb and temporal/spatial adverbial tokens found in non-narrative and narrative texts in the Brown corpus (Sections 3 and 4).

2. The Function of Tense in Narrative and Non-Narrative Texts

The defining characteristic of narrative texts is that they are ordered in chronological sequence, indicated by the presence of preterit tense verbs, time adverbials, narrative clauses ordered by temporal juncture, and the reporting of narrative events that occurred, and were completed, at some time before the time at which the events were narrated in a first-person narrative voice (Labov 1972). In a narrative, the narrator tells a story at the present time that involves events that occurred at some point in the past. By arranging a narrative in chronological sequence, the narrator looks back on an experience and configures that experience into a sequence of events viewed from the vantage point of his or her present (which serves as a temporal reference point for these events). In narrating the events, the narrator places these events on a prospective time line that involves movement on the time line from the inception of the event moving forward to an "ending point" in the story which is temporally placed somewhere before the present time.

Because the events reported in a narrative occurred at some time in the past, narrators use the bounded, compact nature of the preterit tense to narrate these events to indicate that the events happened and were completed in the past. The temporal juncture of preterit tense verbs in
narratives functions to ground narrative clauses in the reference time of the narrative, and therefore, the sequence of these narrative clauses iconically reflects the sequence of events that actually occurred at the time of the event (Fleischman 1990: 131). Representing bounded, complete events, the preterit tense facilitates the chronological representation of temporally junctured narrative clauses, so that the narrative clauses are able to be ordered in such a way that "each event [represented by a narrative clause] is understood to have occurred after the one preceding it, and before the one following it" (Schiffrin 1981: 50). The preterit tense is seen as the "default tense" of narrative texts (Fleischman 1990: 111), and therefore, preterit tense verbs occur much more frequently in narratives than non-narratives (Biber 1988: 223).

In conjunction with the preterit tense, narrators use time and deictic adverbials in narrative discourse to establish the reference time of the narrative and to ground the discourse temporally and spatially. Grammatically, preterit tense verbs only encode chronological location in time, so narrators use temporal adverbials to help establish and ground the text in the reference time of the narrative, often using a temporal adverbial during the orientation section of a narrative to establish the initial reference time of a narrative text (Schiffrin 1981: 50). By using deictic adverbials, narrators are able to move forwards and backwards within the reference time established by temporal adverbials and the chronological sequence of the preterit tense verbs contained in narrative clauses, so that a narrator can refer back to events that he or she has already narrated in the discourse and can refer forwards to events that will occur later in the narrative.

Thus, temporal and deictic adverbials are used in conjunction with preterit tense verbs to establish and maintain the reference time of the narrative, and therefore, both preterit tense verbs
and temporal/deitic adverbials are two of the main functional components found in narrative discourse.

Since narrative texts are concerned with chronological sequence and the reporting of completed, time bound events, the present tense occurs infrequently in narrative discourse. According to Schiffrin (1981), the present tense occurs in narratives to refer to past events by occurring as the historical present tense (1981: 50). The historical present looks like the present tense but occurs "historically" in narratives, since narratives deal not with present events, but past events. Schiffrin also posits that the historical present functions in narratives as a device for separating a narrative into episode-like text spans and helping the text progress chronologically forward through time (1981: 50). Therefore, narratives are connected by the use of tense shifts between the preterit tense and the historical present to separate distinct events that occur throughout the narrative (Fleischman 1990: 98).

In non-narrative texts, the present tense is seen as the "default setting" of the discourse (Biber 1988: 224; Fleischman 1991: 295). The defining characteristic of non-narrative discourse is an atemporal text, indicated by the presence of present tense verbs, logical relations, a non-personal, third person composer voice, and the reporting of generic events implied to be important at all times. Non-narrative texts are concerned not with the telling of stories, but with the relaying of information and the making of generic truth statements (Bruner 1991). Therefore, composers of non-narrative texts use the present tense to relate habitual events, or events that are not bounded by time and are "always occurring" (Fleischman 1990: 34). Communicating habitual events, the present tense removes the focus from temporal sequencing in a text and is used as a marker of immediate situations, in which the relaying of generic information is deemed more important that the communicating of specific, story-like information.
Because the present tense appears to have no personal voice, it is often used with third person indefinite pronouns in texts to present an objective, non-personal perspective on the information relayed in a text. The preterit tense, when used in narratives, appears to be more readily associated with a personal voice, and therefore, it is often used with first person definite pronouns to present a subjective, personal perspective on the information relayed in narratives. Thus, the present tense is used in non-narrative texts to present information in an immediate, atemporal context without the personal attachment of a first-person narrative voice to personalize the generic truths it relates to the reader.

Since non-narrative texts are atemporal texts, logical, ideational, and intentional relations appear to replace sequential, chronological ordering. The use of the present tense refers to "paraphrase relationships" (Longacre 1976: 201) and ongoing events that are not bounded by time, and therefore, are more easily ordered by logical structures which relay the information based on non-chronological orderings of the text. The non-chronological nature of the present tense also allows the events it relates to appear open to repeated viewing by the reader, and the timelessness of the information presented in the present tense appears to make the information more "important" to any individual and not just a specific individual (for example, a narrator retelling events that happened in his or her own life that may only be important to him or her and not anyone else reading the story) because the information appears important not only in the moment it is being read by the reader, but at any moment, whether it be the present, the past, or the future.

The use of logical relations in non-narrative texts removes the need for the chronological relations provided by the occurrence of preterit tense verbs and temporal/deictic adverbials in these texts. Therefore, preterit tense verbs and temporal/deictic adverbials occur rarely in non-
narrative discourse. However, as Longacre points out, preterit tense verbs and temporal adverbials do occur in non-narrative texts, but only occur within these texts when the texts take on a narrative-like structure (1976: 207). This is due to the fact that non-narrative texts do not have a tense orientation like narrative texts, but instead, use tenses to deal with the "exigencies of the subject matter contained in the texts" (1976: 204). Therefore, composers use the past tense to indicate narrative-like text spans that rhetorically highlight sections of the text that the composer wishes to place particular emphasis on, or, as Longacre claims, to make the text more "vivid" for the reader (1976: 207).

According to Longacre, non-narrative texts, specifically expository texts, often relay information that is difficult to comprehend, which causes the composer to adopt the narrative-like form of these preterit-tense text spans to make the material easier for the reader to understand through the use of a narrative-like schema triggered by these verbs (Longacre 1976: 209). Thus, preterit tense verbs and temporal/deictic adverbials occur in a non-narrative text as a rhetorical strategy used to allow the reader to become more personally involved in the text, and this involvement strategy explains the presence of these grammatical elements in non-narrative discourse.

As I noted in the Introduction, Longacre's investigation into the presence of preterit tense verbs and temporal/deictic adverbials in non-narrative discourse seems to explain how these grammatical elements are used in non-narrative discourse. If Longacre is correct about the specialized occurrence of preterit tense verbs and temporal/spatial adverbials in non-narrative texts, then we should find a statistically significant difference in the occurrence of these grammatical elements in non-narrative discourse vs. narrative discourse, with narrative discourse containing a considerably higher percentage of preterit verb and temporal/spatial adverbial
tokens. According to Biber's statistical analysis of the LOB corpus (Biber 1986 and 1988) and my own statistical analysis of non-narrative and narrative texts in the Brown corpus, this appears to be the case.

The results of my statistical analysis of the occurrence of preterit verb and temporal/deictic adverbial tokens in the Brown corpus is detailed in Sections 3 and 4.

3. The Literary Data

The Brown corpus contains one-million words of American English in excerpts from a number of genre; all the texts were published in 1960 or 1961. The E-subcorpus of the Brown corpus contains American "skills and hobbies" literature and totals 76,472 words in thirty-six random, two-thousand word samples. In this paper, I compare the Brown E-subcorpus with the Brown K-subcorpus. The K-subcorpus contains American "general fiction" and totals 62,584 words in twenty-nine random, two-thousand word excerpts. The Brown K-subcorpus is used because it contains examples of narrative discourse, while the Brown E-subcorpus is used because it contains examples of non-narrative discourse.

4. Quantitative Analysis

Statistical analysis of the Brown E and K texts indicates that there is a significant difference in the frequencies of preterit tense verb markers in the two texts. Table 1, below, indicates that there is a significantly higher statistical occurrence of preterit tense verb tokens in the Brown K-subcorpus:

\[ \chi^2 = 1796.77, p < .001 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brown E</th>
<th>Brown K</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tokens other than Preterit Verb</td>
<td>73,472</td>
<td>56,888</td>
<td>130,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterit Verb Tokens</td>
<td>2767 (37.66 per thousand total words)</td>
<td>5696 (100.1 per thousand total words)</td>
<td>8463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>76,239</td>
<td>62,584</td>
<td>138,823</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The difference in frequencies of preterit verb tokens in the Brown E vs. Brown K texts is significant at the .001 level. In the Brown E-subcorpus, 37.66 preterit verb tokens occur per thousand words, while the rate in the Brown K-subcorpus is 100.1 per thousand total words.

The data indicate that preterit tense verbs occur rarely in non-narrative discourse, which correlates with the non-statistically-based findings of Longacre on the subject (Longacre 1976). The infrequent occurrence of preterit verb tokens in the Brown E-subcorpus indicates that non-narrative discourse is primarily written in the present tense, as well as indicates that the occurrence of preterit tense verbs in non-narrative discourse appears to be a relatively rare phenomenon, seemingly occurring only when non-narrative discourse adopts a narrative-like structure, as pointed out by Longacre (1976: 207-209).

If this is the case, then there should also be a statistically significant difference in the occurrence of time/deictic adverbial tokens in the Brown E and K texts as well, since the literature indicates that "temporal and deictic adverbials signal a text that moves through time" (Fleischman 1991: 303).

Table 2, below, indicates that, indeed, there is a significantly higher statistical occurrence of time/deictic adverbial tokens in the Brown K-subcorpus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brown E</th>
<th>Brown K</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tokens other than</td>
<td>75,352</td>
<td>61,762</td>
<td>137,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Deictic Adverbial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Deictic Adverbial Tokens</td>
<td>887 (11.77 per thousand total words)</td>
<td>822 (13.31 per thousand total words)</td>
<td>1709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>76,239</td>
<td>62,584</td>
<td>138,823</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ² = 6.23, p < .05

The difference in frequencies of time/deictic adverbial tokens in the Brown E vs. Brown K texts is significant at the .05 level. In the Brown E-subcorpus, 11.77 time/deictic adverbial
tokens occur per thousand words, while the rate in the Brown K-subcorpus is 13.31 per thousand total words.

The statistical data in Tables 1 and 2 correlate, revealing that there is an extremely low occurrence of temporal sequencing tokens in the Brown E-subcorpus and indicating that non-narrative discourse is atemporal. This further indicates that non-narrative discourse is concerned with the relaying of information and not the narration of events unfolding chronologically through time. Therefore, it appears that both temporal adverbials and preterit tense verbs occur in non-narrative discourse at only specific points in the texts, further implicating that Longacre's (1976) qualitative analysis is correct.

As my qualitative analysis in Section 5 will demonstrate, the lower frequency occurrence of preterit tense verbs and temporal/deictic adverbials in non-narrative discourse is significant, because this low frequency of occurrence shows that the occurrence of these tokens in non-narrative discourse is a specific, rarely occurring phenomenon in non-narrative texts, occurring when composers of non-narrative texts adopt a quasi-narrative structure in text spans of their texts that utilizes the most psychologically salient elements of Labovian narrative syntax to highlight information rhetorically.

5. Qualitative Analysis

As I stated in the Introduction, Longacre (1976) posits that composers of non-narrative discourse utilize narrative-like text spans to underline rhetorically information presented in the discourse, as well as to make the information appear more "vivid" and personal to the reader. The data I analyze in this section of the paper show that Longacre's (1976) conclusions about the function of narrative structures in non-narrative discourse appear to be true, as well as show that his conclusions can be expanded upon, as I will illustrate in the following pages.
Example (2), below, is an example of a narrative text span, found in the Brown E-subcorpus, which is used to underline rhetorically the points made by the composer in the preceding non-narrative, present tense discourse (shown by (1)):

(1) The placement of your pool, however, will not of itself solve the two major problems of pool owning—those that involve your social life and those pertaining to safety. Coping with them demands stern discipline—of yourself as well as of your family, neighbors, friends and anyone you ever talked to on a transoceanic jet.

(2) (a) Eight years ago while we were going through the mud-sweat-and-tears construction period, we were each solaced by the vision of early morning dips and evening home-comings to a cool family collected around the pool with a buffet table laid out nearby for the lord and master's delectation. (b) But not even our first pool-side gatherings came anywhere near those rosy fantasies. We seemed to be witnessing the population explosion right in our own backyards. Our respective families looked as if they had quadrupled. Had we taken a lien on a state park? Not at all. We had merely been discovered by the pool sharks. We were in business!

(Brown E19; lines 0450-0590)

Example (2) shows us that the occurrence of preterit verbs and temporal/deictic adverbials in a non-narrative text signals the occurrence of narrative-like text structures that, although rare, are used rhetorically to highlight portions of non-narrative texts. In (2), the composer of this non-narrative pool advertisement uses this narrative-like text span rhetorically to underline the point he makes in (1), which is that someone owning a pool will experience increased social popularity as a result of owning a pool. This claim, stated in the personalized, first-person structure of a narrative text span, is used to manipulate the reader into believing that owning a pool will make his or her life more exciting, and thus, more appealing. (2) makes the pool ad more "vivid" for the reader because it relates a personal story, told by the composer, that is used to draw the reader further into the pool ad. This personal story allows the reader to become more personally involved in the story by his or her relating to the composer's story, and it is used rhetorically by the composer to distract the reader from noticing that he or she is, indeed, reading a pool ad.
This narrative-like text span is written in the preterit tense, is introduced by an introductory time adverbial phrase (*eight years ago*) which grounds the discourse spatially in time and disrupts the equilibrium of the non-narrative discourse, and appears to have an *orientation section* (2a) which serves to switch the register of the ad from non-narrative, third-person indefinite pronominal reference to the narrative-like, first-person plural pronominal reference of (2). (2a) is written using clauses that resemble *narrative clauses*; however, these narrative-like clauses are not *narrative clauses* because they are subordinate clauses. Labov argues that subordinate clauses are not *narrative clauses* (1972: 362), so these clauses are written in the preterit tense to mimic the structure of *narrative clauses* as they are used in the *complicating action* of a narrative. The clauses present in (2b) are *evaluative clauses* because they comment on the information presented in (1) and because they serve to provide evidence that the claim put forth in (1) (that pool ownership will improve the reader's social-life) has come true in the composer's own life.

By switching to this narrative-like text span, the composer is using what I refer to as a *quasi-narrative* structure, because it mimics the structure of narrative discourse (it has an *orientation* section, a quasi-*complicating action* section, and an *evaluation* section) without actually containing the full elements of narrative discourse as they are present in Labov's narrative syntax schema (1972: 376).

The *quasi-narrative* structure of narrative text spans contained in non-narrative text is further demonstrated in example (4), below:

(3) The many and frequent performances of the Trout serve to emphasize the dual nature of its writing. Some renditions are of symphonic dimensions, with the contrabass given free rein. Other interpretations present the music as an essentially intimate creation. In these readings, the double bass is either kept discreetly in the background, or it is dressed in clown's attire - the musical equivalent of a bull in a china shop.

(4) *(a)* Recently I was struck anew by the divergent approaches, when in the course of one afternoon and evening I listened to no fewer than ten different performances. *(b)* The occasion for this marathon: Angel's long-awaited reissue in its "Great Recordings of the Century" series.
of the Schnabel-Pro Arte version. (c) Let me say at the outset that the music sounded as sparkling on the last playing as it did on the first. (5) Whether considered alone or in relation to other editions, COLH 40 is a document of prime importance.

(Brown E04; lines 0090-0250)

In (4), the composer uses a quasi-narrative structure to make the non-narrative discourse contained in (3) and (5) more "vivid" for the reader by switching the register of the discourse from the third-person, impersonal pronominal reference of (3) to the personalized, first-person reference of (4). By switching to first-person reference, the composer hopes to make the reader personally connect with the discourse and remain interested in his review of this recording of Schnabel's music. By personalizing the discourse, the composer also appears to be trying to convince the reader to trust his opinion as a music critic because he is "personally involved" with Schnabel's music, not only as a critic, but as a personal fan and listener, as well. Therefore, the composer rhetorically highlights the critical statements he makes in (3) and (5) with the quasi-narrative text span contained in (4), and he appears to be providing additional information about the point he makes in (3), which is that the divergent approaches that the musicians are taking in interpreting the music on this Angel recording are interesting and worth listening to.

Example (4) again shows us that preterit tense verbs and temporal adverbials signal the occurrence of narrative-like text spans in non-narrative discourse. (4) is also another example of a quasi-narrative structure because it features a temporal adverbial (recently) that disrupts the equilibrium of the non-narrative portion of the text (3) and establishes the bounded, temporally situated nature of (4) in relation to (3) and (5). (4a) features preterit tense verbs that function in a quasi-narrative clause (which is not a narrative clause because it is a subordinating clause) functioning to indicate chronological order, while (4b) features the verb reissue, which is in the historical present, another tense which helps the composer to mimic a narrative-like structure in
(4c) contains an *evaluative clause* that comments on the statements the author makes in (3) and (5). Thus, all of the clauses contained in (4) are used in this text span to serve narrative-like functions.

The most common use of *quasi-narrative* text spans in the E-subcorpus is the backgrounder of historical information about a referent referred to in a non-narrative text span. This backgrounder functions like an *orientation* section in the text, and the *quasi-narrative clauses* contained in these clauses function to indicate that these spans are chronologically ordered, although these clauses are not linked by the temporal junctures associated with *narrative clauses* in Labovian narrative syntax.

Example (7), below, shows us that *quasi-narrative* text spans function to background historical information about referents in a text:

(6) Whole blocks are disappearing and more are scheduled to vanish to make room for wide boulevards that will show off its treasures to better advantage - the great domes and graceful spires of its mosques, the panorama of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. Even when they are finished, however, the contrast will remain, for Istanbul is the only city in the world that is built upon two continents. For almost 3,000 years Europe and Asia have rubbed shoulders in its streets.

(7) *Founded in the Ninth Century B.C. it was called Byzantium 200 years later when Byzas, ruler of the Megarians, expanded the settlement and named it after himself. About a thousand years after that, when the Roman Empire was divided, it became capital of the Eastern section. On May 11, 330 A.D., its name was changed again, this time to Constantinople after its emperor, Constantine. In 1453 when the last vestige of ancient Roman power fell to the Turks, the city officially shifted religions - although the Patriarch, or Pope, of the Orthodox Church continued to live there, and still does - and became the capital of the Ottoman Empire. When that was broken up after the First World War, its name was changed once more. (8) Rich in Christian and Moslem art, Istanbul is today a fascinating museum of East and West that recently became a seaside resort as well with the development of new beaches on the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara only a short distance from the center of town. Easy to get to, and becoming more popular every year, it is only fourteen hours from New York by Pan American World Airways jet, four hours from Rome.*

*(Brown E13; lines 0130-0310)*

Example (7) presents historical information about *Istanbul*, which is referred to in the non-narrative text spans of (6) and (8). By backgroundering historical information about *Istanbul* in (7), the composer of the text is able to underline rhetorically the tour guide information which talks about present-day events in *Istanbul* by comparing these present day events with events that
occurred in the past. Thus, example (7) shows us the comparative use of the preterit tense in non-narrative texts.

Example (7) also shows us that backgrounded information presented in quasi-narrative text spans have some of the same features as quasi-narrative structures we have seen in previous examples. All of example (7) appears to be an orientation section, if looked at from the perspective of Labovian narrative syntax. In other words, (7) relays information about the time, place, setting, and events that have occurred in "historical Istanbul." (7) relays this information in quasi-narrative clauses (again, these clauses appear to be narrative clauses because they contain preterit verbs, but they are not narrative clauses because they are subordinating clauses) which indicate that the text span is temporally ordered, although they do not constitute complicating action in (7), since (7) is more like an orientation section that a complicating action section in Labov's schema (Labov 1972: 376).

Example (9), below, shows us an additional example of a quasi-narrative text span that is used to compare present day events (events expressed in the present time of the text) with events that happened at a time prior to the time of the text:

(9) AT ONE TIME, to most Americans, unless they were fortunate enough to live near a body of navigable water, boats were considered the sole concern of fishermen, rich people, and the United States Navy.

(10) Today the recreational boating scene is awash with heartening statistics which prove the enormous growth of that sport. There are more than 8,000,000 recreational boats in use in the United States with almost 10,000,000 the prediction for within the next decade. About 40,000,000 people participated in boating in 1960. Boating has become a giant whose strides cover the entire nation from sea to shining sea. Boats are operated in every state in the Union, with the heaviest concentrations along both coasts and in the Middle West.

(Brown E06; lines 0010-0110)

In (9), the quasi-narrative text span contained in the opening line of this article is established through the use of the temporal adverbial phrase at one time. The verbs in the span are in the preterit tense, which indicates that the text occurs at the time established by the
inceptive time adverbial phrase. The preterit tense of these verbs also indicates that the event relayed in (9) occurred before the events illustrated in (10), which occur in the present tense and are grounded by the deictic adverbial *today*, which causes a disruption of the equilibrium of the opening text span and establishes the present tense time frame used in (10). By using this opening comparative sentence, the composer is able to underline rhetorically his point that the boating situation in America has changed since prior times, which shows that the *quasi-narrative* structure can also be used rhetorically to help the author evaluatively elaborate on a specific point he is trying to make in a non-narrative text span.

Example (12), below, further evidences the rhetorical use of the *quasi-narrative* structure in non-narrative texts to make a specific point:

(11) Throughout history, the man who showed superior performance has become the commander of others - for good or bad. Since the Industrial Revolution, when factories emerged, this classical pattern has been followed.
(12) *Until recently. There have always been tales of disillusionment - the competent technician who became an administrator, willingly or not, and found he didn't like it; the scientist who rebelled against the personnel and paper work; and much more commonly in recent years, the engineer who found that other duties interfered with - or eliminated - his engineering contributions.*
(13) There have been many extremely competent men who have been converted into very incompetent managers or submerged in paper work, to their own and the public's dissatisfaction and loss.

*(Brown E32; lines 0010-0190)*

In (12), the composer elaborates on a specific point that he makes in (11), that "men who are have showed superior performance over others are no longer leaders in industry." He uses the *quasi-narrative* structure of (12) to make this point, and the personal, narrative-like register of (12) allows him to appeal rhetorically to the reader personally. In this way, the *quasi-narrative* structure of (12) allows the composer to elaborate on the point he has stated in (11) and to embed *evaluative* comments in the preterit tense verbs contained in this structure. Therefore, (12) is another example of a case where the composer uses the *quasi-narrative* structure to highlight
rhetorically the point he makes in the previous discourse, as well as to allow him to background information that will help him to make his point in the following text span (13).

6. Conclusion

As the data in this paper demonstrate, composers of non-narrative texts use quasi-narrative text spans to a) give specific information of a phenomenon to further illustrate their points, b) compare events in the present with events in the past, c) provide additional information about a point made in their text, d) present information in a narrative-like structure that highlights the information rhetorically and makes it more "vivid" for readers, and e) indicate chronological order in a text. These quasi-narrative structures feature preterit tense verbs and the use of temporal/deictic adverbials which disrupt the equilibrium of non-narrative text spans and temporally/spatially ground the preterit tense discourse in relation to the present tense discourse of the non-narrative text spans. According to the evidence presented in my analysis, quasi-narrative structures use the most psychologically salient elements of the Labovian narrative schema (orientation, complicating action, and evaluation) to accomplish the five points I have listed above, which ultimately allows the composer to underline rhetorically the points that he or she makes in the non-narrative portions of these texts.

I say that orientation, complicating action, and evaluation are the most psychologically salient elements of the Labovian narrative schema because they are the elements which most readily appear as rhetorical strategies used by the composers in the data in this paper. The frequent occurrence of these elements in the non-narrative data analyzed in this paper shows that these elements are somehow unmarked in comparison to other elements of Labovian narrative structures, and their unmarked status seems to explain why composers use these elements in quasi-narrative portions of non-narrative texts. This also indicates that these elements are the
most recognizable elements for readers, since composers most commonly use these elements to manipulate readers, as I have shown in my analysis. Thus, the frequent occurrence of these elements shows that these elements are somehow more psychologically salient for English readers and composers.

Ultimately, then, my data illustrate that, while occurring infrequently, preterit tense verbs and temporal/deictic adverbials serve an important rhetorical function in non-narrative discourse. Their infrequent occurrence in non-narrative discourse illustrates that, while non-narrative discourse is predominately written in the present tense, the use of preterit tense in non-narrative occurs at specific, specialized points in the discourse, points where the composer wishes to highlight rhetorically the points that he or she is making in the text. Consequently, my data concur with the conclusions made by Longacre (1976) and illustrate, through the use of statistical analysis, that, while quasi-narrative structures appear to be statistically insignificant in non-narrative discourse, this statistical insignificance is significant, because it illustrates the specialized nature of quasi-narrative structures in non-narrative discourse.

References


