An Analysis of the Discourse of Advanced Low and Advanced Mid Speakers of Spanish

when Talking about the Past

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I. Introduction

In recent years, language teachers have been becoming increasingly acquainted with the "ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines" in speaking. Many of them are being trained in one way or another on how to conduct an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), and on how to rate speech samples. There are several reasons for this recent trend: the belief that proficiency-oriented instruction is the best method for improving students' speaking skills (and the OPI, the best manner to test them); the fact that more and more states in the country are now requiring prospective language teachers to have a specific oral proficiency level (as defined by ACTFL) in order to grant them licensure; and the instructors' desire to become oral proficiency testers, for their classes, school, and the community where they live; and others. It is very important, therefore, to make sure that we properly understand the Guidelines' descriptions, and that these keep being revised for the sake of accuracy and clarity. It is the hope of this paper that its conclusions will result in a better understanding of the distinction between Advanced Low and Advanced Mid Speakers. It will provide possible suggestions on how to improve the descriptions of these two sub-levels, and will try to offer some insight into the process of second language acquisition, especially on the manner in which heritage and non-heritage speakers learn how to speak about the past.

This research project was born out of a sabbatical leave that Minnesota State University, Mankato granted me for the fall semester of 2000. When I was trying to decide on a topic for my research, I had a telephone conversation with Elvira Swender, ACTFL's director of Professional Programs, and she recommended I analyze the distinctions between Advanced Low and Advanced Mid Speakers. ACTFL had just come up with new Guidelines in 1999, and certified testers needed some extra guidance in distinguishing these two sub-levels. The previous Guidelines (1986) differentiated three sub-levels (low, intermediate, and high) within the novice and intermediate levels, but only offered two at the advanced: Advanced and Advanced High. The new guidelines provided more consistency, now distinguishing the three sub-levels at the advanced level. The change resulted in testers being somewhat unclear about the differences between these new sub-levels. It is the main purpose of this paper to clarify the distinction between advanced low and advanced mid speakers. This article will focus on a major oral proficiency skill at this level: that of narrating and describing in the past.

The three main goals of this study are: 1) to elaborate and draw comparisons between the discourse features of speakers at each sub-level, and between heritage and non-heritage speakers; 2) to compare the resulting conclusions with the level descriptions of the Guidelines; 3) to contribute to the process of either validating or offering suggestions for the improvement of the descriptors included that pertain to the act of narrating and describing in the past, which is so fundamental to proficiency at these two levels; and 4) to provide some extra insight into the process of learning how to talk about the past.

II. Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The instruments employed for this research have been 21 audio-taped interviews of Advanced Low speakers (6 of them, heritage speakers; 15, non-heritage), and 26 of Advanced Mid speakers (9 heritage speakers and 17 non-heritage), all of them provided by Language Testing International (LTI) with the gracious funding of ACTFL, without whose financial aid this project would not have been possible. LTI staff, who tried to provide me with a variety of speakers, picked out these interviews.

The method used for collecting my working data has been transcribing all the oral tape-recorded paragraphs devoted to narrating and describing in the past. This included the testers' questions that elicited those answers. I underlined all the verbs that were supposed to be in the past, whether the speaker succeeded in choosing this tense or not. Once this was done, an analysis table was created in which, for each speaker, the number of target verbs was calculated. Formal accuracy, syntactic appropriateness, and absolute accuracy rates were also calculated, distinguishing, in all cases, between stories[1] and non-stories[2]. After this, we were able to compose three summary tables for each of the two sub-levels: one for heritage speakers, another for non-heritage speakers, and a third one, which was the average of the previous tables.

The present paper is both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of the tables I composed. It will not only analyze the numerical data, but will also be a comparative study of one significant speech sample of each of the groups here included. In this process, we will learn about the sequential process that takes place when a speaker is acquiring the skill of talking about the past. Finally, based on the conclusions reached, there will be a discussion of the validity of the

ACTFL descriptions of the two sub-levels, and recommendations will be made on how to better distinguish the discourse of advanced low speakers from that of those at the advanced mid level.

For the purpose of this study, the target tenses included the preterite, the imperfect, the preterite progressive, and the imperfect progressive. Each verb is analyzed in context, allowing not only a grammatical study, but also a syntactic one. For example, a sentence may be syntactically correct, but grammatically incorrect ("Él saló ayer", `he left yesterday'; "Yo fue al cine ayer", `I went [third person singular form]): we call this formal accuracy. On the other hand, a sentence may be grammatically correct, but syntactically incorrect, as in the sentence "Él salgo ayer", `he leave yesterday', or in "Fueron las 7 cuando me levanté", `it was (wrong aspect[3] choice) 7 when I got up': this is called syntactic appropriateness. Absolute accuracy is the lack of any error in the verb form.

Regarding formal accuracy, two kinds of grammatical mistakes are analyzed: incorrect verb forms, and subject-verb agreement errors. In the area of syntactic appropriateness, the errors may be classified as follow: wrong tense (present instead of past), wrong aspect choice (preterite versus imperfect), or wrong verb (like "ser/estar", `to be', etc.). Once the rate of formal accuracy, syntactic appropriateness, and absolute accuracy are determined for each of the groups of speakers in every discourse type, the percentages will be compared to analyze the nature of the interaction of proficiency level, discourse type, and accuracy/appropriateness rate.

III.   **Comparative Study of Heritage and Non-Heritage Advanced Low Level Speakers**

In this section, we want to analyze the differences in accuracy between heritage and non-heritage speakers at the Advanced Low level, and draw some conclusions about it. In order to do that, we should first present the summary tables:

ADVANCED LOW NON-HERITAGE SPEAKERS

	# of Items	Formal Accuracy	%	Syntactic Appropriateness	%	Absolute Accuracy	%
All discourse	1105	1052	0.95	885	0.80	836	0.76
Stories	400	385	0.96	316	0.79	317	0.79
Non-Stories	705	667	0.95	569	0.81	519	0.74

ADVANCED LOW HERITAGE SPEAKERS

	# of Items	Formal Accuracy	%	Syntactic Appropriateness	%	Absolute Accuracy	%
All discourse	401	392	0.98	369	0.92	361	0.90
Stories	117	114	0.97	105	0.90	102	0.87
Non-Stories	282	278	0.99	264	0.94	259	0.92

The heritage speakers' table is based on six interviews, while the non-heritage speakers' table is based on fifteen. It is significant to notice that formal accuracy in both types of speakers is very similar: the non-heritage speakers have an accuracy rate of 95% in all-discourse, while heritage speakers' rating is just 97%, only 2% higher. This difference is much higher in the area of syntactic appropriateness: heritage speakers score 92%, while non-heritage speakers only rate at 80%, a 12% variance. This contrast increases even more as far as absolute accuracy is concerned, where heritage speakers perform 15% better. There is, however, no significant difference between performance with stories and non-stories. This means that neither heritage nor non-heritage speakers hardly make any mistakes forming the past tense forms, and that this skill is almost perfect at already the advanced low sub-level. It is in the choice of tense and aspect where a marked difference is observed between these two groups of speakers. It is interesting to see how these two sets of people differ in 15% regarding absolute accuracy, and still belong to the same sub-level. A qualitative analysis of a sample from each group should aid us in understanding the reason for this classification.

For a qualitative analysis of the discourse of these two groups of speakers, we are going to analyze the samples that are closest to the average discourse in their classification: Amanda (non-heritage speaker), and Angelica (heritage speaker). Let us compare their ratings:

AMANDA VERSUS ANGELICA

	AMANDA (non-heritage)		ANGELICA (heritage)	
# OF ITEMS				
All discourse	74		69	
Stories	23		23	
Non-stories	51		46	
FORMAL ACCURACY				
All discourse	71	96%	63	91%
Stories	23	100%	22	96%
Non-stories	48	94%	41	89%
SYNTACTIC ACCURACY				
All discourse	52	70%	61	88%
Stories	21	91%	22	96%
Non-stories	31	61%	39	85%
ABSOLUTE ACCURACY				
All discourse	38	51%	60	87%
Stories	21	91%	21	91%

Non-stories   17   33%   39   85%

It is interesting to notice that the non-heritage speaker, Amanda, actually had a higher formal accuracy than Angelica, a heritage speaker. However, the syntactic and absolute accuracy ratings of Angelica were much higher than Amanda's. As an average, however, heritage speakers' formal accuracy was 3% higher than non-heritage speakers, not a very significant difference. It is syntactic appropriateness where the distinction becomes very clear: 12% difference. How can both of these two speakers be rated Advanced Low? Fluency tends to compensate for the lack of accuracy. Non-heritage speakers elaborate more in their narratives and descriptions. This becomes obvious when we compare the speakers' stylistic statistics:

	AMANDA (Non-heritage)	**ANGELICA** (Heritage)
Number of paragraphs	8	21
Average number of sentences in paragraph	3.4	2.5
Average of words per sentence	29.6	11.1

One of the characteristics of speakers at the advanced level is the ability to speak in paragraphs. Actually, at this level, one of the main goals of the tester is to check whether the interviewee is able to sustain the discourse speaking in paragraphs, the longer the better. In Angelica's case, we can see that the tester had to put a great deal of effort into making her speak in paragraphs. Most of the paragraphs were, actually, only one sentence long (8 paragraphs).

Angelica's average sentence is also much shorter than Amanda's. We thus see that, though Amanda's syntactic accuracy was much lower than Angelica's, she compensated it with fluency.

Although the discourse of these two speakers is quite different, they are still classified as Advanced Low because they fall into the description of this sub-level, which states:

> Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present and future) in paragraph-length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. They can handle appropriately the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar, though at times their discourse may be minimal for the level and strained... In their narrations and descriptions, they combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length. When pressed for a fuller account, they tend to grope and rely on minimal discourse. Their utterances are typically not longer than a single paragraph... (ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking).

This description allows for a wide variety of discourse patterns, ranging from short ("minimal discourse") to long paragraphs, and from low to medium syntactic appropriateness. Formal accuracy, however, must be high in all instances, though not perfect: speakers still make sporadic mistakes in this skill.

IV. Comparative Study of Heritage and Non-Heritage Advanced-Mid Speakers

In this section, we will analyze the differences in accuracy between non-heritage and heritage Advanced-Mid speakers. In order to do this, we should first show their summary tables:

ADVANCED MID NON-HERITAGE SPEAKERS

	# of items	Formal Accuracy	%	Syntactic Appropriateness	%	Absolute Accuracy	%
All discourse	1118	1076	0.96	965	0.86	924	0.83
Stories	294	276	0.94	245	0.83	228	0.78
Non-Stories	823	797	0.97	722	0.88	696	0.85

ADVANCED MID HERITAGE SPEAKERS

	# of items	Formal Accuracy	%	Syntactic Appropriateness	%	Absolute Accuracy	%
All discourse	552	539	0.98	507	0.92	499	0.90
Stories	179	179	1	159	0.89	155	0.87
Non-Stories	373	365	0.98	348	0.93	344	0.92

As it was the case with the comparison between heritage and non-heritage speakers at the Advanced-Low level, at the Advanced-Mid level, heritage speakers perform better than non-heritage. Interestingly enough, their formal accuracy is hardly any different from that of Advanced-Low speakers: non-heritage speakers only improve 1%, while heritage speakers stay at the same rating. Again, it is their syntactic appropriateness and their absolute accuracy that show a significant difference: while non-heritage speakers improve their syntactic appropriateness in 6%, heritage speakers' ratings remain the same. That shows that heritage speakers reach a plateau at the Advanced-Low level regarding their proficiency at the choice of past tense, while non-heritage speakers keep improving this skill at the advanced level. However, it is important to notice that the gap between these two groups of speakers in this area narrows from 12% to 6%. Their absolute accuracy difference also narrows, going from 15% to 7%.

The same question arises again: does their fluency make their discourse the same level? To answer this question, we will analyze the accuracy and fluency of an average speaker from each group: Gina (non-heritage) and Marisol (heritage):

	GINA (Non-heritage)		MARISOL (Heritage)	
# OF ITEMS				
All discourse	68		60	
Stories	19		14	
Non-Stories	49		46	
FORMAL ACCURACY				
All discourse	68	100%	58	97%
Stories	18	95%	14	100%
Non-Stories	49	100%	44	96%
SYNTACTIC APPROPRIATENESS				
All discourse	57	84%	55	92%
Stories	15	79%	14	100%
Non-Stories	44	90%	41	89%
ABSOLUTE ACCURACY				
All discourse	56	82%	55	92%
Stories	14	74%	14	100%
Non-Stories	42	86%	41	89%

As in the Advanced-Low scenario we saw earlier, the non-heritage speaker had a slightly higher formal accuracy rating than the heritage speaker, but her syntactic appropriateness and absolute accuracy were significantly lower: 8% and 10% on all discourse. Let us show a speech

sample of Gina, the non-heritage speaker. In the middle of the interview, Gina has told the interviewer about a trip she had taken recently to Mexico, and the interviewer asks her if she could recall a particular problematic incident:

Intwr.: Y, durante ese tiempo, ¿tuviste alguna anécdota digna de recordar? ¿Algo problemático?

Intwee.: No. Como ya le dije, me divertí muchísimo. El único problema **era**... cuando tenía... que llamar a alguien por teléfono. **Fue** muy difícil porque no **pude** ver la cara de la persona. Con el accento... muy diferente también, pero me acostumbré al acento y, ¿qué más pasó? **Me quedé menos** a mi familia, pero tuve que... todos los días, cuando estaba... tenía que montar en camión, porque no había coche en mi casa. Entonces, montaba cada día el camión y una vez me perdí. Pero está bien, porque **pude comunicar** con la gente y no **pasa** nada.

Intwr.: And, during that time, did you have any anecdote worth recalling? Any problems?

Intwee.: No. As I told you, I had a lot of fun. The only problem was... when I had... had to call someone on the phone. It was very difficult because I could not see the person's face. With the accent... very different too, but I got used to the accent and, what else happened? I missed* my family, but I had to... every day, when I was... I had to take the bus, because there was no car in my home. So, every day I took the bus and, one day, I got lost. However, it is O.K., because I was able to communicate* with people and nothing happens*.

This discourse sample shows a very common mistake made by foreign language speakers of Spanish: confusion in the use of aspect choice when talking about an experience. Gina is talking about recurrent problems she had speaking Spanish while she was in Mexico. This is a type of description, which, in Spanish, has to go in the imperfect tense. Gina seems to know she is dealing with description, because she starts her discourse in the imperfect: "El único problema era cuando tenía, tuve que llamar a alguien por teléfono." However, the first verb, in this case, is supposed to be in the preterite, because is presenting the whole problematic experience as completed, which should go in the preterite, instead of in the imperfect: "era" should be "fue". Gina is overgeneralizing the rule, which, as Liskin points out, is a common error. Gina follows her description employing the imperfect (" ... era cuando tenía, tuve que llamar a alguien por teléfono"), as it should be, but changes her mind and switches to preterite. Once she has done that, automatically keeps using the preterite: "Fue muy difícil porque no pude ver la cara de la persona." Later, she must realize her mistake, and goes back into employing the imperfect: "... todos los días, cuando estaba... tenía que montar en camión, porque no había coche en mi casa." This shows the pressure the speaker is going through when she realizes that she is being tested on whether she can discern between preterite and imperfect. This is very common among Spanish students, who are very aware of the difficulties that the two past tenses present. It is probably this pressure which triggered a very uncommon mistake at the Advanced-Mid level: sliding into the present tense when talking about the past. This is what happens at the end of Gina's paragraph: "Pero está bien, porque pude comunicar con la gente y no pasa nada." Instead of using "pasó" (`it happened'), Gina uses the present: "pasa".

We should now consider the two speakers' fluency. These are the statistics:

	GINA	MARISOL
	(non-heritage)	(heritage)
Number of paragraphs	12	18
Average number of sentences in paragraph	4.7	2.8
Average of words per sentence	12.4	12.8

Again, we see that the heritage speaker's paragraphs are shorter than those of the non-heritage speaker, though, in this case, their sentences are equally long. This poses an interesting question: why do non-heritage speakers tend to elaborate less than heritage speakers? Is it because of their different education? That would be something worth of further research.

V. Comparative Study of Advanced-Low and Advanced-Mid Speakers

It is now time to analyze the differences between Advanced-Low and Advanced-Mid speakers, regardless of their heritage. For this purpose, let us show their summary tables:

ADVANCED LOW SPEAKERS

	# of Items	Formal Accuracy	%	Syntactic Appropriateness	%	Absolute Accuracy	%
All discourse	1506	1444	0.96	1254	0.83	1197	0.79
Stories	517	499	0.97	421	0.81	419	0.81
Non-Stories	987	945	0.96	833	0.84	778	0.79

ADVANCED MID SPEAKERS

	# of Items	Formal Accuracy	%	Syntactic Appropriateness	%	Absolute Accuracy	%
All discourse	1670	1615	0.97	1472	0.88	1423	0.85
Stories	473	455	0.96	404	0.85	383	0.81

Non-Stories   1196   1162   0.97   1070   0.89   1040   0.87

It is interesting to notice that formal accuracy hardly changes from one level to the next: only 1%! However, syntactic appropriateness improved 5% from advanced-low to advanced-mid, and, absolute accuracy, 6%. These ratings corroborate Judith Liskin-Gasparro's findings regarding formal accuracy, whose statistics are very similar to ours:

ADVANCED SPEAKERS (According to 1986 ACTFL Guidelines)

	# of Items	Formal Accuracy	%	Syntactic Appropriateness		Absolute Accuracy	
All discourse	1334	1294	0.97	1036	0.78	1002	0.75
Stories	540	521	0.96	428	0.79	428	0.76
Non-stories	794	773	0.97	608	0.77	591	0.74
Reports	275	268	0.97	236	0.86	229	0.83
Other talk	519	505	0.97	372	0.72	362	0.7

(p. 104)

It is important to point out that the number of items in our data is more than half of Liskin-Gasparro's, so the findings should be more reliable. According to our data, Liskin-Gasparro's research conclusions are partially corroborated. The formal accuracy rating that she reached (0.97) at the old advanced level is equal to our Advanced-Mid score, and only 1% higher than our Advanced-Low speakers are! However, the data regarding syntactic appropriateness are quite different. Liskin-Gasparro's rating for the old Advanced level (0.78) is lower than even our Advanced-Low speakers' (0.83), and much lower than our Advanced-Mid speakers' (0.88). Absolute accuracy ratings, since they highly depend on syntactic appropriateness, are very similar to the ones for syntactic appropriateness: Liskin-Gasparro's add up to 0.75, while ours go up to 0.79 at the Advanced Low level, and to 0.85 at the Advanced Mid. Our study also shows

no correlation with Liskin-Gasparro's regarding a pattern in reference to the distinction between stories and non-stories for syntactic appropriateness: in her table, speakers performed 2% lower with non-stories than with stories, while, in our data, at the Advanced Low level, speakers rated 4% higher with non-stories than with stories, and, at the Advanced Mid level, speakers scored also 4% higher with non-stories. There is no consistency with absolute accuracy either.

This remarkable difference between our data and Liskin-Gasparro's raises one question: is the difference due to the change in the ACTFL Guidelines or to a change in the way testers currently rate interviewees? This is going to be one of the subjects of our conclusions.

VI. Conclusions

IV. Discussion of the ACTFL Guidelines

As it was stated in the beginning, the main purpose of this paper is to validate and or offer suggestions to improve the 1999 ACTFL Guidelines. Given the limitation of our study, which did not go into all the details that Liskin-Gasparro was able to touch in her dissertation (like an analysis of the speaker's aspect choice, or a more thorough textual analysis of the discourses employed), we are not able to discuss here how speakers confuse preterite with imperfect, or to offer suggestions for instruction in this regard. However, we want to discuss the reliability of the ACTFL Guidelines. In this regard, we agree with Liskin-Gasparro that the ACTFL Guidelines are not "explicit about just how formally accurate or syntactically appropriate an OPI speech sample must be to qualify for a particular rating." (p. 231) This is a major difficulty encountered by testers, and it is incumbent that this is discussed at this moment.

According to the current ACTFL Guidelines, "Advanced-Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames ((past, present and future) in paragraph

length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times." This description fits the one given to advanced speakers in the 1986 Guidelines: "Can narrate and describe with some details". The current Guidelines are a little more specific, but still require further explanation.

As Liskin-Gasparro states, it is not formal accuracy what helps us distinguish between Intermediate High, Advanced-Low, and Advanced-Mid levels (232). Already at the Intermediate-High level, speakers have a high command of the past verb forms. As she also declares, it is syntactic appropriateness what gives us a better clue. A speaker needs only to have the ability to maintain discourse in the past in order to qualify for an Advanced-Low rating: he/she does not need to be able to distinguish between verb aspects, as Liskin-Gasparro states regarding the advanced level. However, we need to go even further: a speaker does not need to correctly choose the right aspect every time to qualify for the Advanced-Mid level. This is crucial, and it is something that tends to confuse testers.

According to the present Guidelines, "Advanced-Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with good control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of the conversation." What is a good control? If we keep reading the descriptions, the last paragraph seems to illuminate us somewhat: "Advanced-Mid speakers contribute to conversations on a variety of familiar topics, dealt with concretely, with much accuracy, clarity and precision, and they convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion." This sentence makes us think that, for a speaker to qualify for the Advanced-Mid level, he/she should hardly make any errors when selecting a verb aspect. That seems to be the correlation, but it does not match our research findings. These show that speakers at this level only choose the right aspect 88% of the time. That means that, in an average OPI, at this level, a speaker who makes **about eight incorrect**

aspect choices would qualify for an Advanced-Mid rating. This conclusion is derived from our analysis, where the average Advanced-Mid discourse was supposed to use a past tense 63 times. Our statistics confirm this statement:

ADVANCED MID SYNTACTIC APPROPRIATENESS STATISTICS

	# of items	# of speakers	Average # of Items per OPI	Syntactic Appropriateness	Average # of errors in Aspect Choice
All discourse	1670	26	64	0.88	7.71

As a certified tester, I must admit that the statement about accuracy at the Advanced Mid level would make me think that somebody with eight mistakes regarding aspect choice would not reach qualify for that rating. When testers go through their OPI training, they are taught about testing for a "floor" and a "ceiling" of performance. The "floor" is defined as "the linguistics operations the interviewee can perform with consistent confidence and accuracy", and the "ceiling", as "the operations which lie beyond the interviewee's ability to perform well, consistently, or at all." (*The ACTFL Oral proficiency Interview Tester Training Manual*, p. 4-2) Testers are also asked to distinguish between sporadic errors and patterns. Would eight mistakes in aspect selection constitute a pattern? I would tend, and tended, to think so. My statistics, however, prove otherwise: Advanced Mid speakers' averages eight mistakes in the aspect choice per interview. I would think, therefore, that further explanation should be in place in the Guidelines, so that testers get a clear idea of what "consistency" and "accuracy" mean. May be even a further discussion should take place among certified testers to verify that we are all in agreement about the meaning of this aspect of the Guidelines.

▪ Implications of Our Findings on Language Instruction

Spanish language instructors tend to put a great deal of emphasis on teaching the distinction between preterite and imperfect. After all, that seems to be an important skill needed to be able to narrate and describe in the past. As it was stated in the beginning, many states are now requiring prospective second language teachers to have an Advanced-Low level of oral proficiency; some require Advanced Mid. College professors nowadays feel, therefore, more of an urgency in ensuring that their students reach that level, and, in trying to do so, organize many exercises and activities around the skill of narrating and describing. It would be very encouraging for them to find out that their students do not need to reach perfection in this area. Rather, they should emphasize that students be able to narrate and describe in paragraphs, reducing the emphasis on the aspect choice, and devote more time to activities promoting fluency, making sure students know their verb forms in the past, and that they "stick" to this tense, instead of falling back to the present, which is what, in the end, keeps them from reaching the Advanced level.

Another grammar topic that instructors spend much time on is the subjunctive. Being able to speak at the abstract realm is one of the characteristics of a superior level speaker. Practically speaking, if one reads the ACTFL descriptions of the advanced-mid level, one can reach that level without knowing how to use this mood. Therefore, instructors and language programs should rethink how much time to spend on this skill, and make the appropriate changes.

It is our hope that this research article will help instructors in the task of making sure that their prospective teachers will reach their required level (if they have one in their state), as well as that their instruction will be more focused on global functions than on grammar. If this paper

just makes instructors and programs rethink the way they teach, our main goal will have been met.

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NOTES

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[1] Stories are defined as "narratives of personal experience as understood by Labov (1972), Polanyi (1979, 1985) and later researchers" (Liskin-Gasparro, p. 1). Here they are considered descriptions of personal experiences lived by the speaker in the past.

[2] Non-stories include all other past-time discourse. In this study, we do not distinguish, as Liskin-Gasparro did, between reports and "other talk".

[2] For a discussion of aspect, see Comrie's book.

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