Evaluation, Emotions and the Narrative Structure of Positive and Negative Everyday-Life Narratives and of Dream Narratives

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INTRODUCTION
Narrations are the most common way to communicate our emotional experiences and doing so also to reflect and regulate especially intensive (negative) emotions. Everyday life-narratives have become of special interest for research in this area. Dream narratives are a special form of everyday-life narratives. Although they differ concerning the emotional experiences they seem to be structured in the same way as Labov & Waletzky (1967) postulated for everyday-life narratives: Abstract (AB), orientation (OR), complication (KOMP), evaluation (EVA), result (RES) and coda (CODA). This narrative structure reflects also an emotional process: The complication is the emotional climax of the narration and the solution or result usually is (emotionally) evaluated. Negative experiences have a stronger need for emotion regulation and for evaluation to cope with them.

METHOD
77 female psychology students wrote down online their most positive and most negative event of each day for one week and journalized their remembered dreams (two weeks). Besides the participants had to rate on a fivepoint likert-scale how intensive the day event respectively the dream was and how positive or negative they experienced the dream. For the present study the narratives of 61 students have been analysed: 854 everyday-life narratives and 486 dream narratives, which were pseudonymized and devided in propositions. The narrative structure and the emotions were coded by using manuals developed by the authors (see Messmann & Döll-Hentschker, Rüger et al. and Rode et al.)

HYPOTHESES
Evaluations are given continuously during narration. There are different forms of evaluations. We focussed an global evaluations (EVA): A proposition has the main function to evaluate, like „This was a really wonderful evening.” EVA can be coded in every part of the narration.

1. Hypothesis: EVA are mostly given in the complication section, followed by the coda and the result but do appear in every section of the narration.
2. Hypothesis: The more intensive dreams and the daily experiences are, the more EVA are given in every narrative structure and the more emotions are mentioned.

Dreams are visual and consist of a series of situations and actions. To dream a dream has already the aim to cope with an unsolved conflict or to find a solution for unsolved problems (Moser & Zeppelin, 1996; Döll-Hentschker, 2008). The better affects are integrated the less it is necessary to name them explicitly like „At this moment I really got afraid of him.” Narrating in this way means to step out of the dream action and create a distance to it. This is expected to occur when the emotional intensity becomes high and is used as a method to calm down. In contrast evaluations are an important part of everyday-life experiences and narrations.

3. Hypothesis: EVA can be found in everyday-life narratives in all structures in a higher percentage than in dream narratives.
4. Hypothesis: The more often anger or anxiety are named in a dream narrative, the more negative the dreams has been experienced.

RESULTS
1.Hypothesis: The variable AN_EVA (NARR STRUC) was created by the percentage of propositions with EVA+(NARR STRUC) divided through the percentage of propositions of the same part of the narrative structure. These index varies between 0 and 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AN_EVA_AB</th>
<th>AN_EVA_OR</th>
<th>AN_EVA_KOMP</th>
<th>AN_EVA_RES</th>
<th>AN_EVA_CODA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.139</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Dev</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.221</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>0.340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
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<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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The CODA has the highest percentage of EVA (16.6%), complications (KOMP) are second with 13.9%, than results (RES) with 7.8% (table 1).

2. Hypothesis: The postulated linear relationship between the percentage of EVA and intensity of the experience could not be found. T-Test and ANOVA had no significance., probably because the tendency is not unilinear, at least for some parts of the narrative structure. The two graphs show the relationship between intensity and percentage of EVA in KOMP and RES.

The increase of mentioned emotions with increase of intensity is only significant for KOMP and CODA. The following two graphs show the relationship between EMO and intensity in the narrative structures KOMP and CODA.

3. Hypothesis: T-Test between the percentage of EVA in everyday-life and dream narratives shows significant differences for all narrative structures. EVA are given highly significant more often in everyday-life narratives than in dream narratives.

4. Hypothesis: Anxiety (r = 0.2) and anger (r = 0.12) correlate significant with the intensity of the dream experience; the higher the intensity the more often anxiety and anger are mentioned in the dream narrative.

DISCUSSION
These (preliminary) results show that evaluations and explicit mentioning of emotions within the narrative structure are strategies of emotion regulation, although in most cases this may not be conscious. Obviously increases the need for emotion regulation with increasing intensity of the experience. To evaluate and to name the emotions that are involved in this experience are steps into a more cognitive point of view and relieve the confrontation with negative emotions like anxiety and anger. The interrelation between EVA and intensity seems to be – at least in part – curvilinear. Further investigations on this questions are necessary. The present study is still in progress and further results will forthcoming soon.

References

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See related posters by Carla Messmann et al. Margitta Rode et al. Carina Rüger et al.