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ARTISTIC NARRATIVE STRATEGIES IN *THE JOY LUCK CLUB*

ABSTRACT

This article provides a detailed analysis of Amy Tan's novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, using the frameworks proposed by renowned narratology theorists Gerard Genette, Paul Ricoeur, and Zhao Yiheng. These scholars have contributed significant insights into narrative analysis, particularly regarding concepts such as narrative perspective, narrative layering, narrative time, temporal order and duration, frequency, mood, and order. By incorporating the theoretical perspectives offered by these scholars, this article aims to carefully examine the complex narrative dynamics within *The Joy Luck Club*.

This work aims to analyze the complex artistic narrative techniques used in *The Joy Luck Club*. The novel tells the story through the unique first-person perspectives of four mothers and their four daughters, interweaving a rich tapestry of interconnected stories that evoke the essence of a Chinese mahjong game. The book is divided into four distinct sections, each containing four compelling stories. Rather than following a single narrative layer, these stories are ingeniously structured in a multi-layered embedded format. Each section begins with an engaging parable, enhancing the narrative depth and symbolism. By carefully examining each story in isolation and their collective impact, it becomes clear that the story and narrative order intentionally diverge, resulting in a thought-provoking anachronistic

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“QUVONCH VA OMAD KLUBI” ASARIDA BADIY HIKOYA STRATEGIYALARI

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqola taniqli narrotologiya nazariyotchilari Jerar Jenett, Pol Rikyor va Chjao Yihen tomonidan ishlab chiqilgan metodologik asosdan foydalangan holda Emmi Tanning “Quvonch va omad klubi” romanini keng qamrovli tahlil qilishga qaratilgan. Mazkur adabiyotshunos olimlar hikoyanavislik istiqboliga, hikoyadagi voqeaning bosqichlari, hikoyadagi vaqt davomiyligi, tezlik, kayfiyat va tartib singari tushunchalarning fanga kiritilishida katta hissa qo'shgan olimlardir. Shuningdek, maqolada yuqoridagi olimlar taklif etgan nazariy yondashuvlar asosida “Quvonch va omad klubi” romanidagi murakkab hikoya dinamikasini tadqiq etish maqsad qilib olingan.

Maqolada “Quvonch va omad klubi” romanida qo'llanilgan badiiy strategiyalar yoritiladi. Roman o'zida ifodalangan hikoyalarning bir-biriga bog'liqligi bilan xitoycha mahjong o'yinini eslatib yuboradi; asar voqealari to'rt nafar qiz va to'rt nafar ona tomonidan birinchi shaxs tilidan hikoya qilinadi. Roman, shuningdek, to'rtta alohida bo'limdan iborat va ularning har biri to'rtta hikoyani o'z ichiga oladi. Ular yaxlit hikoya janriga mansub emas, aksincha, bir nechta voqea va bo'limlarda birlashgan. Har bir bo'limdan oldin hikoyaning teran mazmuni va ramziylikni kuchaytiruvchi masal keltiriladi. Har bir hikoyani alohida va umumiylikda chuqur

effect. Furthermore, the skillful use of scenes and ellipses, along with the deliberate repetition of certain stories, significantly contributes to the overall narrative tapestry. These carefully crafted narrative strategies effectively accentuate and underscore the thematic ideas that run throughout the novel.

Key words: narratology, narrative perspective, narrator, narrative layering, narrative structure, wedge, Chinese mahjong game, narrative time, order, duration, frequency, ellipsis, descriptive pause, narrative movement.

o'rganish natijasida undagi hikoya va voqealar bir-biriga mos kelmasligi ma'lum bo'ladi, bu esa o'quvchida anaxronistik ta'sirni kuchaytiradi. Bundan tashqari, ellipslardan oqilona foydalanish, shuningdek, ba'zi hikoyalarni ataylab yana takrorlash umumiy hikoyalarning yaxlit mazmuniga sezilarli darajada hissa qo'shadi. Bunday puxta ishlab chiqilgan hikoyanavislik strategiyalari roman mazmuniga singib ketgan asosiy g'oyani bo'rttirib ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: narratologiya, narrativ perspektiva, (istiqbol), rivoyatchi, hikoya qatamlari, hikoyaviy tuzilma, xitoycha mahjong o'yini, narrativ vaqt, hikoyadagi tartib, davomiylik, tezlik, ellipsis, tasviriy to'xtam, pauza, narrativ harakat.

INTRODUCTION

Amy Tan, one of the most outstanding female writers in contemporary America, is an influential author of Chinese heritage. Up to now, she has published six novels, including *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2001), *Saving Fish from Drowning* (2005), *The Valley of Amazement* (2013), two children's literature works, namely, *The Moon Lady* (1992) and *The Chinese Siamese Cat* (1994), and two collections of prose essays, *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings* (2003) and *Where The Past Begins: A Writer's Memoir* (2017). The narrative strategies in Amy Tan's novels are diverse. To a certain extent, these narrative strategies strengthen the literariness of her works and enrich their connotation. Most of Amy Tan's novels employ the first-person retrospective narration. This technique enables readers to indulge deeply in the text and feel the same as the protagonist.

The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan's first novel, was published in 1989 and achieved great success upon its debut, ranking on the New York Times Bestseller list for nine months. It depicts a small group of American-Chinese women who regularly keep getting together to play traditional Chinese mahjong game while sharing their stories for several decades. In this storytelling way, the novel demonstrates and interprets the typical generation gaps between mother and daughter in immigrant families. Though the stories and thematic ideas are very astonishing and fascinating, the writing crafts in the novel are also genuinely creative and attractive.

American literary critics and researchers have contributed significantly to the study of Amy Tan's works. Taking Mary Ellen Snodgrass (2004), Bella Adams (2005) and Wendy Ho (2000) as examples, they made groundbreaking and comprehensive studies on Amy Tan's life, her body of literature, and her characters. They discuss Amy Tan's work in the context of Asian American Literature, highlighting themes of identity, family, and inter-generational relationships, the complexities of cultural identity and representation in Tan's novels, and highly praising Tan's influence and impact on Asian American literature. They provide valuable resources for understanding the complex

intersections of race, gender, and class in Asian American mother-daughter writing. Chinese American writers, like Frank Chin (2001) and Jeffery Paul Chan (1991), also provide some controversial and inspiring insights into Amy Tan's works.

Searching studies on Amy Tan's works on several influential websites of academic research, including <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/>, <https://www.cnki.net/>, <http://go.warwick.ac.uk> and <https://theses.hal.science/>, we found that the majority of researchers, specifically a few like M.Manjula (2020), Nomita Loktongbam (2016), N.Durga (2016), focus on the cultural issues such as the cultural identity, intercultural interaction, multiculturalism, cultural differences and conflicts, cross-cultural crisis and communication, Bhattacharya Baisakhi (2015) focused on two kinds of female identity crisis: the mother-daughter relationship and the conflicts between the daughters' mainstream American culture and the traditional ethnic and cultural heritage of the mother. Sushil Mary Mathews (2009) made a study of the social, psychological and emotional conditions as portrayed in the novels of Amy Tan.

Vidhyavathi analyzed the characters in the works of Amy Tan, to show "how they resist power represented in family ties, racial discrimination, the economics of poverty, and the ideology of institutionalized religion. They envisage change, attempt to remedy their exploited condition and achieve the success of freedom from subordination through intercultural interaction" [Vidhyavathi, 2011; 7]. While others like Gowher Ahmad Naik (2017), Mohineet Kaur Boparai (2017) and Sukhman Kaur Dahiya (2014) made a comparative study on the diasporic characters portrayed by Amy Tan and by Indian writers. Himadri Lahiri also made a comparative study on Asian American women writers, hoping to build "a balanced world of equality, a world without margins" [Lahiri, 2002; 212].

Nancy Thambi put forward that "the estrangement and reconciliation not only between the mothers and daughters but also between the East and the West" [Thambi, 2016; 33]. Gurinder Kaur Singh (2015) attempted to examine how ethnicity is retained and perpetuated even after migration to another country. Jenefa Kiruba Mala studied the history of women in America (2015) Sweta Ravindran analyzed the diasporic experiences of the Chinese migrants in the United States of America and pointed out the influence of the past (history) in the present lives of the Chinese immigrants (2018).

Tao Du studied from a postcolonial perspective and concluded that 'this' and 'that' are never the two rigid and static antitheses but two fluid and interactive antitheses of many theses. Therefore, 'identity' is always under construction rather than a fixed attribute of a group" [Du, 2012; 1]. Jianjun Zou thought Tan keeps exploring the ethical idea of harmony in her novels. He argued that "the concept of harmony in Chinese and Western traditional culture is inherited and developed by her novels accompanied with abundant ethical descriptions...which is essential to the coexistence of the world as well as to the peace and development of human society" [Zou, 2008; 3]. Xiaohui Chen (2003) explored the interpretation of the texts by Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan and Yan Geling.

Quiping Liu explored Tan's thoughts about human cultures and "her questions

of the relation between humans and nature, between humans and the spiritual world beyond our ordinary senses or even her views on narrative and aesthetic expressions” [Liu, 2017; 7]. Hiu Wing Wong (2006) compared the “talk-stories” in the fictions of Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan.

Uzbek scholar Dilnoza Ruzmatova investigated diaspora literature in her research “Artistic Originality in Khaled Hosseini’s Works” [Ruzmatova, 2020] and proposed three main characteristics of diaspora literature: the clash between languages and cultures, biographical method application, proportionality of time and space.

Although a large amount of scientific research has been conducted on the various aspects of Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*, there is no comprehensive scientific research on the artistic strategies employed in the novel. Therefore, the objective of this research is to analyze the narrative strategies employed in *The Joy Luck Club* in several aspects of narratology: narrative perspective and narrator, structure and layering, format, time or the temporal arrangement of story narration in terms of order, duration (scenes, ellipsis, summary and descriptive pause) and frequency. These concepts are proposed and explained by different narratologists and researchers, namely, Shen Dan (Chinese), Zhao Yiheng (Chinese), Mieke Bal (Dutch), Gerard Genette (French) Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (Israel), Elizabeth Bowen (Irish-British), and Paul Ricoeur (French).

METHODS

Narrative perspective refers to the point of view from which a story is observed and narrated, which has always been the focus of narratology. Scholars believe that perspective is a crucial tool for conveying thematic meaning. Shen Dan argued that with the rise of formalist literary theory in the 20th century, narrative method or perspective has sparked growing interest and become a heated issue [Shen, 1994]. Zhao Yiheng also expressed that in the first half of the 20th century, perspective was considered the most important issue in understanding novels and unlocking the mysteries of novels. Novel techniques are essentially a matter of perspective [Zhao, 1998]. Accordingly, if the same story is narrated from different perspectives, vastly different effects will be produced.

Narrator and narrative form also account for a lot. Mieke Bal believed that the narrator is the central concept in analyzing narrative texts. The identity of the narrator, the degree and how this identity is expressed in the text, as well as the narrator’s choice of implicit content, characterize the text [Bal, 1997]. Zhao Yiheng argued that not only the narrative text is narrated by the narrator, but the narrator himself or herself is also narrated. It is not common sense that the author creates the narrator, but the narrator tells it himself. In narration, the speaker must be spoken before speaking. The choice of narrative content by the narrator encompasses both form and content [Zhao, 1998]. Therefore, how to narrate is equally important to the narration itself. The meaning of a work not only is borne by the content but also depends on the narrative form. With the development of society, it has become greatly meaningful to understand the social and cultural context within works and analyze it from the narrative form.

In terms of narrative layering, Gerard Genette defined “layer differentiation” as follows: “Any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed” [Genette, 1972]. Since this definition is inherently difficult to understand, Genette provided further descriptions and proposed three terms for narrative layering, extradiegetic (the first level); diegetic, or intradiegetic (inside the first level); metadiegetic (a narrative in the second degree) [Genette, 1972].

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan believed that a story may also contain narration. The actions of a character can be narrated in another story, but this character can also tell another story in reverse. In the story, there also can be another character telling yet another story. The story layer is narrated by the narrator in super-story layer, and the sub-story layer is narrated by the narrator of story layer [Kenan, 1989].

Zhao Yiheng expressed the idea more lucidly. According to him, the task of a high-level narrative is to provide a narrator for a lower level. Layered narration can make the narrator realistic and perceptible at higher levels of narration. The standard for narrative layering is that the characters at the higher level become the narrators at the lower level. Zhao Yiheng also proposed a helpful method for distinguishing narrative levels: since narrative behavior always occurs after the narrated event, the higher the narrative layer, the later the time, as the higher layer provides the specific background for narrative behavior of the lower layer [Zhao, 1998]. Based on the comparative study of narrative layering theory proposed by the three narratologists, we illustrate it in the following table (See Table 1):

Table 1.

The concepts about narrative layering proposed by several theorists

The writer’s explanation	Gerard Genette (French)	Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (Israelite)	Zhao Yiheng (Chinese)	
The first layer (high)	External narrative (extradiegetic) (low)	Extra story (high)	← character/narrator ↓	Early (time) late ---- ---- —→
The second layer	Internal narrative (intradiegetic)	story	← character/narrator ↓	Early (time) late ---- — ---- →
The third layer (low)	Meta narrative (metadiegetic)	Sub-story (low)	← character ↓	Early (time) late — ---- ---- →

Undoubtedly, time plays a very important role in our lives. Similarly, the narrative of novels cannot be separated from time, and the handling of time factors is an important way for novelists to successfully regulate the textual mechanism of novels and reflect their superb narrative art. Elizabeth Bowen said that time is an important component of a novel, which holds equally important value as stories and characters. Few writers who truly understand or instinctively understand novel techniques do not make dramatic use of the factor of time [Bowen, 1995; 301].

According to Gerard Genette, the phenomenon of inequality between story time and narrative time can help us observe the narrative. In *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Genette proposed the concepts “order, duration, frequency, mood and voice” primarily used to observe the syntax of narratives. The following mainly

discuss the first three concepts, which deal with time.

Order: Story can be narrated and described chronologically or not chronologically, such as through flashback or flash-forward. These various types of discordance between the two orderings of the story and the narrative are termed “anachronies” [Genette, 1972; 36].

Duration: The separation between a story and its narration means that there is discourse time or narrative time. There are four basic forms of narrative movement, “that we will hereafter call the four narrative movements, are the two extremes (ellipsis and descriptive pause) and two intermediaries: scene, most often in dialogue, which realizes conventionally the equality of time between narrative and story; and what English language critics call summary – a form with variable tempo (whereas the tempo of the other three is fixed, at least in principle), which with great flexibility of pace covers the entire range included between scene and ellipsis. We could schematize the temporal values of these four movements fairly well with the following formulas, with ST designating story time and NT time of narrative” [Genette, 1972; 94]:

pause: $NT = n, ST = 0$. Thus: $NT_{\infty} > ST'^4$

scene: $NT = ST$

summary: $NT < ST$

ellipsis: $NT = 0, ST = n$. Thus: $NT < \infty ST$

Frequency: The separation between an event and its narration allows several possibilities. The times an event occurs and is narrated can be equal or unequal, from once to many times [Genette, 1972]. Paul Ricoeur pointed out that we experience time in two different ways. Firstly, we experience time as linear succession, which refers to the passing hours and days and the progression of our lives from birth to death. This is cosmological time-time expressed in the metaphor of the “river” of time. It is the time of the world, cosmic time, ordinary time or objective time. Secondly, there is phenomenological time, which is the experienced time that involves the past, present and future. As self-aware embodied beings, we not only experience time as linear succession, but also orient ourselves to the succession of time in terms of what has been, what is, and what will be. Separated from these two kinds of time, there is a third time that Ricoeur named as “historical time” or “human time”, which mediates between lived time and cosmic time. Ricoeur describes this as the time of narration, stating that “What we call human time, which is nothing other than narrated time” [Ricoeur, 1990; 102]. It represents a complex experience in which phenomenological time and cosmological time are integrated. For example, we understand the full meaning of “yesterday” or “today” by reference to their order in a succession of dated time. Saying “Today is my birthday” immediately invokes both orders of time: a chronological date that anchors the phenomenological concept of “birthday”. Ricoeur describes this anchoring as the “reinscription” of lived time (phenomenological time) on cosmic time (cosmological time) [Ricoeur, 1990; 99].

Based on the theoretical guidance above, the study aims to explore the text analysis of narrative strategies in *The Joy Luck Club* from the following aspects

and explain how the strategies contribute to the themes including the conflicts between mothers and daughters, the hope and love of mothers, and the final mutual understanding and reconciliation between mother and daughter:

1. Narrative perspective and narrators.
2. Narrative layering: multiple-layer embedded storytelling.
3. The narrative structure: wedges and the format of the Chinese mahjong game.
4. Narrative time in terms of order, duration and frequency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According Fang Xiaoli's Narrative Layering, there are mainly two reasons that account for the transfer of discourse power from a narrator to a character in different contexts. One case is due to the presence of special feelings such as preference, sympathy, and other emotions that the narrator has towards the character. This is because when readers understand the experiences and psychology of this character narrator, they can sympathize with and resonate with the character more easily. However, in another case, the transfer of discourse power might occur because the narrator and the character are incompatible. In such instances, the narrator may be unwilling or unable to retell the character's story due to differences in their identities, languages, emotions, morality, intelligence, etc. [Fang, 2011; 35].

The main narrative style in Amy Tan's works is the first-person retrospective narrative. There is no exception in *The Joy Luck Club*. The 16 stories are mainly told by "I". In the sixteen stories, there are mainly eight narrators, basically divided into two groups, daughters and mothers. Since we are informed at the beginning of the novel that the mother, Woo Suyuan, passed away two months ago, her story narrated both by herself and by her husband is embedded in the narration of Jing-mei Woo, her daughter. Therefore, this kind of arrangement highlights the theme that it is difficult for mothers and daughters to communicate. So, in the daughter's narration, the mother narrated her stories in the perspective of the first person.

This first-person retrospective narrative usually has two perspectives: one is the narrator's "I" or the "narrative self" which recalls past events in the first-person from an external perspective. The other perspective is that of the recalled "I" or the "experience self" representing the first-person narrative from an internal perspective while experiencing events.

The so-called first-person external perspective narrative refers to the perspective of the protagonist. This perspective is more commonly used in first-person retrospective narrative novels, and it is also prevalent in most of Amy Tan's works.

The so-called first-person inner perspective refers to the experiential perspective in first-person narration. The characteristics of this perspective are reflected as follows. Firstly, it can directly immerse the reader into the narrator's inner world, allowing them to experience what the narrator is experiencing and easily understand the narrator's thoughts. Secondly, it creates a sense of suspense in the work because the perspective of the "experiential self", unlike an omniscient perspective, is limited.

Take the following two paragraphs from the story "The Red Candle" as an

example:

The two ladies were looking at my face without talking. The lady with the watery voice had a painted face that was melting. The other lady had the dry face of an old tree trunk. She looked first at me, then at the painted lady. (The first person's internal perspective or experience self).

Of course, now I know the tree-trunk lady was the old village matchmaker, and the other was Huang Taitai, the mother of the boy I would be forced to marry [Tan, 2019; 47]. (The first-person external perspective or narrative self).

Amy Tan is highly skilled in utilizing both internal and external perspectives alternately. This technique not only captivates readers with vivid stories but also allows them to comprehend how these experiences influence the characters' lives, shape their thoughts, and contribute to their wisdom. Furthermore, it enables a better depiction of the characters' emotions and mental processes during and after the events. Now let's exemplify this technique with another example from the story "The Moon Lady": And I want to tell her this: We are lost, she and I, unseen and not seeing, unheard and not hearing, unknown by others. (Here is Ying-Ying's internal perspective) ... I did not lose myself all at once. I rubbed out my face over the years washing away my pain, the same way carvings on stone are worn down by water (Here is Ying-Ying's external perspective) [Tan, 2019; 69].

The time lapse in the calendar from the first chapter to the last one is just about two months while the period in the stories covers about seventies years of three generations, the whole life of the mothers.

The narration is primarily focuses on Jing-mei Woo, occupying the first or outer layer. At the beginning, Jing-mei narrates: "My father has asked me to be the fourth corner at the Joy Luck Club. I am to replace my mother, whose seat at the mahjong table has been empty since she died two months ago" [Tan, 2019; 1]. Then she recalls memories of her mother, who repeatedly narrated her story again and again with different endings. As time progresses, "When I arrive at the Hsus' house, where the Joy Luck Club is meeting tonight..." [Tan, 2019; 17]. It is not known until the last chapter that "tonight" is "more than three months later after Woo Suyuan's death". In the last chapter, we are informed that three months later after Woo Suyuan's sudden passing, a letter came from Shanghai, addressed to her. It proved that the twin daughters are still alive and expecting to see their mother. Of course they could not know that my mother had died three months before [Tan, 2019; 327]. Her father was the first person to open the letter. He was so shocked that he gave the letter to her mother's old friend Lindo. Lindo discussed it with Ying Ying and An-mei, and they wrote back in the name of Woo Suyuan. After that, they decided to tell Jing-mei Woo about the letter and ask her to visit her twin sisters. It wasn't until all this had been done that, they first told me about my sisters, the letter they received, the one they wrote back [Tan, 2019; 328].

Back to the first chapter, after the game of mahjong, Jing-mei was asked to stay for a while, the aunties brought out a letter from China and urged her to meet her twin sisters and share her mother's life story. After a short time of confusion and hesitation, Jing-mei agreed: "I will tell them everything," I say simply, and the aunties look at me

with doubtful faces [Tan, 2019; 35].

In the last chapter, Jing-mei Woo went to China with her father by air. During the journey, her father shared the latter half of her mother’s story with her. Through this story, Jing-mei gained a deeper understanding of her mother. The novel ends with Jing-mei meeting her sisters at the airport in Shanghai.

By connecting the first chapter with the last chapter, Woo Suyuan’s kueilin story is completed, bringing together the outer layer of narration. Inside the outer layer, or the first layer, the other three mothers and the four daughters began their narration in the first-person perspective of internal experience “I” and external narrator “I”.

At the end of the first chapter, Jing-mei narrates: They go back to eating their soft-boiled peanuts, telling stories among themselves. They are young girls again, dreaming of good times in the past and good times yet to come [Tan, 2019; 36]. Such sentences suggest that the following stories are about to be narrated both in a horizontal level by different narrators and in a vertical layer across three generations.

Even though the stories are quite independent, they are not scattered and unrelated, but related and linked craftily with some techniques, which are illustrated here with some examples.

Firstly, the same scene is narrated respectively from both the daughter’s perspective and the mother’s point of view. Take the scene in Lena’s new flat as an example (See Table 2):

Table 2.

Lena’s perspective (<i>Rice Husband</i>)	Ying Ying’s perspective (<i>Waiting between the Trees</i>)
I leave my mother in her room and go back downstairs (p. 192).	My daughter has put me in the of rooms in her new house (p. 293).
I leave my mother in her room and go back downstairs. (then she has a talk with her husband Harold) (pp. 192-193).	I hear my daughter speaking to her husband downstairs. They say words that mean nothing (p. 306).
Then I hear the sound of glass shattering, upstairs, and a chair scrapes across a wood floor (p. 194).	She will hear the vase and table crashing to the floor. She will come up the stairs and into my room (p. 306).
And then I see my mother sitting by the open window, her dark silhouette against the night sky. She turns around in her chair, but I can’t see her face (p. 194).	Her eyes will see nothing the darkness where I am waiting between the trees (p. 306).

Secondly, intertextuality. For example, in “Rice Husband”, Lena mentions something related to Rose in this way “Recently, a friend of mine, Rose, who’s in therapy now because her marriage has already fallen apart... (p. 306). Then in the chapter “Without Wood”, Rose narrates: “to my friend Lena, I said was better off without Ted” (p. 225).

Another example, in the first chapter, father is looking at the Jong’s pictures from their recent China trip. In the story “Double Face”, Lindo Jong mentions that they went back to China last year. “In Four Directions”, Waverly says her mother and father have just returned from a trip to Beijing and Taiyuan. Therefore, with such

clues, the three stories seem to be linked together with this clue.

Thirdly, the thread left in a story is picked up in another story or what is omitted in one previous chapter is supplemented in another subsequent chapter. For example, in "Without Wood", Rose is faced with her falling apart marriage. Her mother phoned her to come up and Ted phoned her to urge the paper. At that moment, she felt everything was gone and "there was no choices" (p. 232). She was not sure whether to continue the psychiatrist therapy or not, but at the following part she became so strong and brave, "Now I felt nothing, no fear, no anger" (p. 234) that shocked Ted. What happened to her? The answer lies in the mother's narration in "Magpies": "Yesterday my daughter said to me, 'My marriage is falling apart' (p. 257) ...I know how it is to live your life like a dream. To listen and watch, to wake up and try to understand what has already happened. You do not need a psychiatrist to do this..." (p. 290).

In "Rules of Game", Waverly recalled her experience of playing chess from about six years old to 10 years old, ending up with a quarrel between her and her mother. Then, in "Four Directions", she picked it up by making a summary of the quarrel and then continued with what happened later till she was fourteen years old.

To summarize, in *The Joy Luck Club*, a series of narratives are patterned recursively in the fashion of Chinese boxes or Russian babushka dolls. Taking the first chapter as an example, Jing-mei Woo's narration is the first layer; her mother's narration is within Jing-mei's narration, so it is the second sub-layer; in her mother's narration, there is a story about the experience of the family of An-mei Hsu going to China three years before, which is the third sub-layer.

Wedge, originally, referred to the segments added at the beginning or between the two sections in Chinese Yuan Dynasty dramas to introduce the plot. Later, it was used as an introduction before a novel to introduce the main text. In *The Joy Luck Club*, Amy Tan borrowed the "wedge" technique from traditional Chinese storybooks and novels, taking traditional Chinese culture as a carrier, highlighting the theme of each part by telling such parable stories, so in this way, she created a kind of hypertext and inter-text. There are four wedges. The first one, "Feathers Form a Thousand Li Away" implies that after going through a lot of suffering in old China, the mothers long for a new life in America and hope to integrate into American society. The swan feather stands for all their best wishes and intentions for their future daughters. The second one, "The Twenty six Malignant Gates," shows that mothers always want to protect their daughters with warnings of future dangers, but their daughters always turn a deaf ear to their mother's suggestions with a rebellious spirit. The story implies the deep gap between mother and daughter due to their different cultural backgrounds. The third one, "American Translation", suggests that mothers with Chinese geomancy knowledge predict that their daughters will face difficulties in marriage, family, and career, but their daughters take their mother's words as nonsense. The fourth story, "Queen Mother of The Western Skies," implies that mothers want to teach their daughters how to cope with difficulties without losing hope.

The book is loosely structured to imitate the format of the Chinese mahjong Game, just as Mahjong is played over four rounds with at least four hands each,

the book is divided into four parts each with four chapters. Each chapter narrates a story from one of the four matriarchs of the Joy Luck Club or of their American-born daughters. Roughly and generally, the four parts are arranged in a temporal linear order. The first part is mainly about the mothers' earlier experiences as a small girl; the second part is mainly about the daughters' growing up experiences; the third part is about the difficulties and dilemmas faced by the daughters in their marriage and job at present; the fourth part shows the determination that mothers want to help their daughter by telling stories of their mothers and themselves. However, in each part, several stories are quite independent without much connection with each other. As to the narrating sequence, that is, who comes first to tell the story in each part, we can see, looks random, just like in a mahjong game, who takes the first to play in each round depends on chances.

However, in the novel, the writer makes such an arrangement of sixteen stories with crafty design. The stories in the first part might be arranged according to their seats, from east, south, to west and north. Jing-mei took her mother's seat, east. "Without having anyone tell me, I know her corner on the table was the East, Auntie An-mei, who is sitting on my left, Auntie Lin across from me" (p. 25). Hereby We also can see their subtle relationship according to their seating position. (Auntie Lin and my mother were both best friends and arch enemies who spent a lifetime comparing their children (p. 31)).

The following words can explain the order in the second part. "I'm told that Auntie Lin has become the East wind. I've become the North wind, the last hand to play. Auntie Ying is the South and Auntie An-mei is the West" (p. 26). As known, in the Chinese mahjong game, the one who takes the east wind is empowered to play first.

The following sentence is the hint for the order of the third part. "Now it is Auntie Ying who wins this hand of mahjong, so we count points and begin again" (p. 31). The order of the third part is exactly opposite to that of the first part, resulting in a dialogue effect between mother and daughter to some extent.

This kind of modular structure holds many advantages. Firstly, this structural arrangement exerts a certain positive effect on shaping character images by providing an individual room and chance for each narrator, in which the narrator presents their emotional experiences or memories. In the mainstream of American literature, Chinese mothers are often in a state of "aphasia". Therefore, this opportunity for them to speak out gives them be deeper understanding of their characters and wisdom.

Secondly, the modular structural arrangement also makes it possible for mother and daughter to have more smooth and effective dialogues and communication. For a long time, it has been difficult for Chinese mothers and American daughters to understand each other deeply due to language barriers. Communication is a necessary way to achieve mutual understanding. Mothers hope their daughters can recognize themselves and become stronger by listening to their previous experiences in China. Therefore, storytelling is an effective way for the mother to inspire and educate her daughter by sharing her life experiences and ancient Chinese culture so that the

daughter can know herself better by understanding their homeland China and their family's old stories.

The time arrangement in traditional novels is mostly linear, and writers often organize events in a linear order according to their development in real life. Therefore, the chronological order of traditional novels is generally logically clear and easy to understand. But from the 20th century, many modern novelists began to break the linear structure and intertwine the past, present, and future to construct plots and reveal the main idea. In this way, the uncertainty of narrative time gradually becomes prominent.

For Amy Tan, narrative time also means a lot. Taking Amy Tan's several novels into consideration, it is not difficult to find her ingenious gift for temporal arrangements in narration. Overall, in *The Joy Luck Club*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and *The Hundred Secret Senses*, there are two-time dimensions: one is in the 1930s and 1940s in China, and the other is in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States. The author contrasts the "past" of backward China with the "present" of developed America. Therefore, some scholars argue that this is a "temporal distance pulling" narrative method, which is widely adopted as a way to construct the "other" and lays the foundation for the "otherization" of the orientalist narrative on China.

The author takes the current American perspective to imagine the old mysterious China, reflecting the opposite relationship between mother and daughter in the binary opposition between the past and the present. The narrator continuously shifts between the two-time dimensions to create a dialogue effect between mothers and daughters. For example, in *The Joy Luck Club*, the daughters tell about the daily life of their childhood and their contemporary American families, while the mothers tell about their experiences in old China. The changes of time and scenes constitute the dialogue relationship in the novel. Therefore, the time relationship in Amy Tan's novels becomes an important clue to clarify the textual thinking.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, there are many time prompt words, which indicate the time of the event taking place, and also show the great importance that Amy Tan attaches to time. In the theory of narratology, time in novels is always analysed. As a kind of narrative literature, novels mainly involve two types of time: story time and narrative time. Storytime is the calendar time for the story to occur; narrative time refers to the actual order of unfolding the story in the text. The storytime corresponds to the linear development sequence of events from beginning to end, which is generally fixed and unchanging. The narrative time is the time sequence and the way the narrator tells the story, and the narrator can create different aesthetic meanings by the techniques of temporal order, duration and frequency.

First, we will discuss "order". It refers to the chronological order. As mentioned above, there are two orders in the novels, namely story order and narrative order. The story order and narrative order in Amy Tan's novels are inconsistent, showing an anachrony. This feature is particularly manifested in the first story in the novel *The Joy Luck Club*. To show it more simply and vividly, the narrative order and the event

order of the first chapter are listed separately as follows (See Table 3 & Table 4):

Table 3.

The narrative order of the first story in the novel *The Joy Luck Club*

1.	(A) Recently, the daughter Jing Mei Woo has been asked by her father to replace her deceased mother Suyuan Woo in the Joy Luck Club (p. 7).
2.	(B) Two months ago, mother Suyuan died quickly (p. 7).
3.	(C) A week before Woo Suyuan's death, she showed off her skill in cooking red bean soup to his daughter (p. 7).
4.	(D) In 1949, Suyuan and her husband left China and arrived in San Francisco (p. 8).
5.	(E) When Suyuan arrived in Kweilin, she founded the Joy Luck Club (pp. 9–14).
6.	(F) During the war, Suyuan was separated from his daughters on her way to Chungking (pp. 15–17).
7.	(G) Tonight, Jing-mei comes to the Hsus' house to play Chinese mahjong game (pp. 17-18).
8.	(H) Jing Mei's memory about Joy Luck Club when she was a child before her mother told her the Kweilin story (p. 19).
9.	(I) Jing Mei's memory about her mother telling her about Hsu Anmei's family's trip to China three years ago (pp. 28-29).
10.	(J) Now, at the mahjong table, the aunties of Joy Luck Club and Jing-mei are talking with among them about the daily life and about Jing-mei's twin sisters in China (pp. 30–36).

Table 4.

The event order of the first story in the novel *The Joy Luck Club*

1.	(E) When Suyuan arrived in Kweilin, she founded the Joy Luck Club (pp. 9–14).
2.	(F) During the war, Suyuan was separated from his daughters on her way to Chungking (pp. 15–17).
3.	(D) In 1949, Suyuan and her husband left China and arrived in San Francisco (p. 8).
4.	(H) Jing Mei's memory about Joy Luck Club when she was a child before her mother told her the Kweilin story (p. 19).
5.	(I) Jing Mei's memory about her mother telling her about Hsu Anmei's family's trip to China three years ago (pp. 28-29).
6.	(C) A week before Woo Suyuan's death, she showed off her skill in cooking red bean soup to his daughter (p. 7).
7.	(B) Two months ago, mother Suyuan died quickly (p. 7).
8.	(A) Recently, the daughter Jing Mei Woo has been asked by her father to replace her deceased mother Suyuan Woo in the Joy Luck Club (p. 7).
9.	(G) Tonight, Jing-mei comes to the Hsus' house to play Chinese mahjong game (pp. 17-18).
10.	(J) Now, at the mahjong table, the aunties of Joy Luck Club and Jing-mei are talking with among them about the daily life and about Jing-mei's twin sisters in China (pp. 30–36).

From the tables of event order and narrative order illustrated above, we can see Amy Tan's techniques in handling temporal order. The entire narrative sequence of this section is disrupted, resulting in a more interesting narrative structure rather than a simple linear structure. At the same time, this method can better affect the reader's thoughts, because the narrator Jing-mei's consciousness has always been flowing, constantly shuttling from the past to the present, then from the present to the past. This allows the reader to imagine the changes in her thoughts, arousing the reader's greater initiative.

Secondly, the duration or temporal distance in *The Joy Luck Club* is also worth studying. As mentioned earlier, there are four aspects in terms of duration, namely, scene, dialogue, summary and descriptive pause. We will discuss them one by one in the following.

Scene is that the narrative time is equal to the story time, which is mainly reflected by dialogues. This kind of time art is very helpful for Amy Tan to express her repeated theme: the cultural conflict between mothers with Chinese culture and daughters with American culture. In most cases, it is difficult for mothers and daughters to make effective communication. Therefore, it is necessary to set up a large number of mother-daughter dialogue scenes in the text. The scenes of the dialogue between mother and daughter are mainly narrated by the daughter.

Ellipsis means that the narrative time is zero while the story time is infinite. As an important technique, ellipsis is also employed in the novel. For example, how mothers came to the United States, how they cope with their early American life and how they began their second marriage life are little mentioned. Some experts think these parts were intentionally omitted by Amy Tan while others believe that maybe Amy Tan just did it unconsciously as an implied omission. However, in any case, the author left a lot of gaps to readers in the text in this way, which makes readers more interested in her books, and willingly participate in trying to interpret the implied content.

Summary refers to narrative time being shorter than storytime. Taking Waverly's narration as an example, "And my mother loved to show me off" (p. 200) is a kind of summary. This summary links to the detailed description in another chapter: "I had to accompany my mother on Saturday market days when I had no tournament to play. My mother would proudly walk with me, visiting many shops, and buying very little. 'This my daughter Wave-ly Jong,' she said to whoever looked her way" (p. 108). In this way, the two chapters are connected.

Descriptive pause refers to a narrative technique in which the narrative time exceeds the story time, creating a sense that time comes to a pause or slows down. In these moments, the author provides detailed descriptions, often focusing on the characters' thoughts, emotions, or surroundings. "Somebody shouts, 'She's arrived!' And then I see her. Her short hair. Her small body. And that same look on her face. She has the back of her hand pressed hard against her mouth. She is crying as though she had gone through a terrible ordeal and was happy it was over. And I know it's not my mother, yet it is the same look she had when I was five and had disappeared all afternoon, for such a long time, that she was convinced I was dead. And when I miraculously appeared, sleepy-eyed, crawling from underneath my bed, she wept and laughed, biting the back of her hand to make sure it was true... And now I see her again, two of her, waving, and in one hand there is a photo, the Polaroid I sent them" (pp. 351-352). This is the moment when Jing-mei saw her sisters at the airport. During the descriptive pause, time seemed to stop for the character. She was overwhelmed with memories and an influx of emotions related to her mother. This narrative technique of a descriptive pause proves to be highly effective in expressing the character's deep-

seated feelings and introspective thoughts.

Thirdly, turning to frequency in the novel, we can observe that certain stories are narrated repeatedly. These are the stories that mothers share among themselves and pass down to their daughters, and sometimes even to their granddaughters. The mothers often recall these stories repeatedly to themselves as well. These personal experiences and stories, both of their own lives and their mothers' lives, hold great value for the mothers as they serve as a means of sharing wisdom with the next generation. As Jing-mei Woo reflects "Over the years, she told me the same story, except for the ending" (p. 9). Frequency inherently involves repetition, and repetition is a psychological construct that involves focusing on the common features shared by similar events while excluding the unique aspects of each event.

In the context of the novel, the repetition of certain stories highlights their significance and emphasizes the importance of passing down cultural heritage, family history, and life lessons from one generation to another. In the novel, four mothers bear the trauma of their past lives and expect a new life in America. They hope that their children can have a bright and happy future. On the contrary, their daughters are still encountered with the fate of "traumatic event". The experiences of the mothers had a great impact on their daughters' education and marriages. Therefore, to some extent, the daughters inherited certain personality traits from their mothers and often find themselves caught in the same tragic patterns. The stories narrated by the eight protagonists consistently explore similar themes, including marriage, love, self-discovery, the impact of their mothers' influence, and the weight of expectations placed on their daughters. These shared themes serve to emphasize the intergenerational connections and the enduring impact of the mothers' experiences on their daughters' lives. The novel highlights how the past shapes the present, and how the daughters navigate their journeys in the shadow of their mothers' histories.

Another recurring theme in *The Joy Luck Club* is the expression of a mother's deep love for her daughter through the act of separation. Suyuan Woo, for instance, leaves her twin daughters on the road, believing it to be their only hope for survival through adoption by someone else. Lindo's mother similarly leaves her at her future husband's home, hoping that Lindo will have a better and more prosperous life. An-mei Hsu's mother takes her own life, leaving An-mei alone in the world, as a sacrifice to ensure her daughter's better opportunities for life and education.

CONCLUSION

With the methodological guidance in narratology, the artistic narrative strategies employed in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* are examined, yielding insights into narrative perspectives, narrative layering to narrative format and the narrative time. The novel consists of sixteen main stories, and the meticulous arrangement of these stories in a systematic, artistic, and engaging manner warrants investigation. Such a study would serve to showcase the novel's narrative features and craftsmanship.

Undoubtedly, the stories themselves, along with the complex and intricate relationships between mothers and daughters, are inherently captivating in *The Joy*

Luck Club. However, how these stories are narrated is equally crucial to the overall narrative. The aforementioned narrative strategies shed light on the thematic ideas present in the novel, revealing the author's talent for employing compressed and interpolated narratives.

By delving into the narrative techniques employed by Amy Tan, we gain a deeper understanding of the novel's structure and the author's skillful storytelling abilities. The narrative strategies enhance the thematic resonance of the work, underscoring the interplay between past and present, cultural conflicts, and the enduring bond between mothers and daughters.

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