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# Role of L1 and L2 in the Organization of Iranian EFL Lived Narratives

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**Abstract**

People are constrained by their culture and social life when telling stories. A second language learner then cannot be expected to tell stories in the target language without cross-cultural effects that influence the way of narration. The present study examined the role of the first language (L1) and second language (L2) in the organization of narratives by focusing on Persian speakers' and EFL learners' lived narratives. For this purpose, 125 oral stories were voice recorded. Seventy-five EFL learners' narratives and 50 Persian narratives as told by Iranian native speakers were collected via classroom discussions and interviews. To examine the substantive effect of L2 knowledge, the EFL learners were selected from pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate proficiency levels. The Labovian analytical narrative model was employed for the analysis. The findings indicated that EFL learners' narratives were mostly affected by L1 rather than L2. Furthermore, English linguistic knowledge, rather than the English narrative structure itself, affected the organization of EFL narratives.

**Keywords:** Narratives, Stories, EFL learners, Narrative structure, Persian, Linguistic knowledge, Language proficiency

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## 1. Introduction

Everyday conversations abound with narratives in which people express their past lived experiences. Bruner (2008) claimed that telling stories is a natural endowment and is practiced by all human beings. Taking his terms, one is convinced that all people can tell stories, regardless of their different languages and cultures. People start to talk about the events that they have experienced when there is a situation for talk and there is an audience to whom the past events are interesting (Ochs & Capps, 2001). A narrative is defined as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred" (Labov, 1972, p. 360).

A well-formed narrative (oral narrative) is supposed to consist of six parts (Labov & Waletzky, 1967, Labov, 1972). The organization of a narrative, also known as the structure of a narrative, is shaped by expressing the six parts (abstract, orientation, main action, evaluation, resolution, and coda) in a streamlined mode in which each part is a successor of the previous one and a precedent for the next one (Rühlemann, 2013). Nevertheless, many researchers (e.g. Bruner, 2008; Currie, 2010; Labov, 1972; Rühlemann, 2013) maintain that the fourth part of the narratives, the evaluation, should not be considered a structural component of the story but a function of narrative. Many structural models have been proposed for narrative analysis such as Propp's (1968), Rumelhart's (1975), and Longacre's (1983), but the most influential account of the structure of narratives is the Labovian model (Bell, Sharma, & Britain, 2016).

This study aimed to explore the organization of the constructed English narratives by Iranian EFL learners and Persian narratives in order to determine how they were different from Persian and native English ones. In fact, the researchers focused on the concept of transfer in storytelling to see how L1 and L2 might affect the organization of the narratives.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The structure of a narrative is organized in six parts including the abstract, orientation, main action, evaluation, resolution, and coda (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972). Nevertheless, narratives do not necessarily need to contain these six parts as they all are present in a fully-developed one. The *abstract* is the first section of narratives that summarizes the whole story at the very beginning of it (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). It is optional in stories. Not all narratives contain it. The second part is an *orientation* which is also known as a *setting*, *scene* (Burk, 1969), or *context* (Bruner, 2008). It provides information about the time, place, participants, and behavioral situation of the events. Through expressing the orientation, the narrators set the floor for telling the main action of the story which comes next. The third part of narratives is the *main action* (also known as complication) in which the most reportable event of the story is told. It is a series of clauses that recount the events of the story (Labov, 1972). The fourth part of stories is the *evaluation* which shows the narrators' points of view in which the narrators attribute their opinions on the events to the audience (Rühlemann, 2013). Evaluation is mainly a part of the narrative function. The fifth part is the *resolution* which deals with the consequences of the story (Labov, 1972). It expresses the actions which occur after the most reportable one. The last part of narratives, which is optional, is the *coda* that ends the story and takes back the audience to the present time. For Cortazzi and Jin (2007), previous language knowledge might affect the organization of these parts when narrating stories.

For Hopp et al., (2019), *transfer* means using previous linguistic knowledge when learning a new language in situations that a new language is used. However, a broader definition comes from Hopman and MacDonald (2018) who defined transfer as using previous linguistic information either from the first language or impaired knowledge of the second language that intervenes in learning a new language. For many years, the L1 was assumed as the main source of transfer when learning an additional language (Morkus, 2018). However,

when using a second language, it is predicted that language users employ structures that might belong to the target language. Hopp, et al. (2019) maintained that the first language is the source of transfer when learning a foreign language and it functions as a tool that is used to discover new structures in the target language. However, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) claimed that language learners did not transfer language-specific structures during foreign language acquisition. According to Searle (1979), there is a possibility that language learners transfer some particular categories of L1 when using the target language. Thus, the language which learners produce might be a new one that is similar to both L1 and L2 or neither of them. Narratives that are formulated by language learners can be studied to see how linguistic and cultural knowledge are transferred when learning a foreign language.

## 3. Literature Review

Stein (2004) maintained that most narratives of different cultures follow the Labovian model of narratives; however, they are different in the amount of detail included in them. This issue is because of the cultural and social norms that people live in. In some societies, people ignore details and go straight to the main events. In some other cultures, details are as important as the main action for the recipients. Given that there are cross-cultural differences in the way people tell stories, one may wonder how L2 learners produce narratives in a second language. Research on L2 narratives has found that second/foreign language learners carry their L1 narrative styles into L2 narration (Kang, 2006; Su & Chou, 2016).

Although the existing literature is rich with studies which have concentrated on transfer in language learning (e.g. Jenkins, 2020; Papadimitriou & Jurafsky, 2020; Raffel et. al., 2020; Ruder, 2019), transfer in narratives has not received due attention. Many studies have compared learners' native and English narratives (e.g. Hwang, 2019; Ramezanian & Allami, 2019), written and oral narratives (Bulow, 2020; Campbell, King,

& Zelkowski, 2020), and the effect of the L2 language proficiency on the storytelling (e.g. Allami & Ramezanian, 2019; Fichman & Altman, 2019); nevertheless, research on the role of L1 and L2 transfer in the organization of the narratives seems scarce. Su and Chou (2016) found that cultural transfer in narrative structures looked bi-directional. They studied EFL Chinese learners' narratives which were written in English and Chinese. They claimed that language learners' linguistic knowledge formed an interconnected system when telling stories. This study was more related to the coherence of the narratives rather than the organization of them.

Kang (2006) also investigated the role of cultural norms in narration in Korea. Forty-two Korean and 28 American college students took part in her study. All participants were given similar topics for writing a text. The findings of the study showed that those Korean students, who produced longer stories in their native language, produced longer stories in English as well.

In another investigation that triggered the role of L1 and L2 knowledge in constructing narratives, Kang (2012) analyzed narratives told by 60 Korean language learners. The results showed that "there are cross-language contributions for only the linguistic quality of narratives" (p. 307). However, Kang (2012) maintained that the study mostly focused on the role of language proficiency.

The discourse structure and rhetoric of English stories of Chinese and English native speakers were studied by Lee (2003). The participants of both groups were asked to write a narrative in English based on a series of pictures. Lee found that Chinese students produced longer codas than American students when telling stories in English. It should be pointed out that telling lived-experienced stories is way different from telling stories based on clues such as a picture. In fact, it violates the nature of narratives as they are according to some interesting events that the teller has experienced.

Soter (1988) investigated English written narratives constructed by Vietnamese ESL, Arabic ESL, and English-speaking students in Australia. The participants were asked to narrate a written story to a younger audience. The results of the study showed that the three language groups had different foci in their English narratives. English-speaking students expressed clear sequences of actions and events, and directly went to the plot of the story. Vietnamese participants mostly centered on the time and location of the story and put a greater emphasis on the relationships among the characters in the story. Arabic participants provided more information about the attributes of the characters. This study made a comparison among three cultures without referring to the role of L1 or L2 in the narrative structures.

For Indrasuta (1988), the cultural transfer occurs from L1 to English narratives. She found that the Thai EFL students followed their Thai conventional norms of narrative in writing Thai and English essays by providing more moral lessons and figurative language than American students did to describe things.

As it can be noticed, little work has been done to investigate the role of language transfer in organizing EFL narratives. The majority of published papers relied on one aspect of narratives such as evaluation of narratives or the use of rhetoric devices in narratives, while narratives are a streamline of clauses that are told together. In Hymes' (1974) terms, narratives are different across languages and cultures as they are a culture-sensitive discourse genre. Storytellers need to have a good command of the socio-cultural norms of the target language to generate acceptable narratives. Therefore, narratives are rich sources for researchers to find out how language learners accommodate two different socio-cultural norms in one mind. The present study attempted to find out how cultural transfer could affect the organization of the EFL narratives by looking at personal experience narratives, which may better reflect the culture-specific narrative organization. We compared Iranian EFL learners' oral English lived narratives and those told by Iranian speakers in Persian.

## 4. Method

### *4.1. Participants*

The present study analyzed 125 narratives that came from Iranian male and female EFL learners and Iranian Persian speakers. They were selected according to nonrandom sample selection principles in which convenience sampling (Ary et al., 2018) was employed. The tellers were of two different language proficiency levels, namely pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate ones so that they would be able to narrate stories. Additionally, real advanced learners are rarely found and lower levels than pre-intermediate ones cannot express stories fluently and accurately. The participants were studying English according to the regular curriculums which are mostly designed by the institutes' authorities. Along with public schools, private language institutes hold English classes for volunteer learners. Their language proficiency levels were determined by utilizing a self-report test which was based on the International Testing System or IELTS score band (IELTS, 2011). Apart from language proficiency which was of concern for EFL learners, it was tried to have participants with different characteristics in order to have a representative sample. The sample's age range was 15 to 40 years old.

### *4.2. Instrument*

The studies, whose focus is on detecting concepts, revolve around subtleties, and how the content of the narratives is affected by distinctive components such as identity and relations. In contrast, studies which aim at detecting structures focus on the impacts of constituents such as first language and identity attributes on the form of the stories. To discover the way language knowledge influences the structure of EFL students' narratives, the present study utilized unstructured interviews.

As for reliability and validity in the narrative inquiry, Bruner (2008) mentioned that the two factors are to be defined differently. In Riessman's (2005) terms, stories are merely the narrators' perception of the past occurrences instead of the precise duplicate of them. That is to say, the same incident is likely to be described unexpectedly based on the setting of telling, the audience, and the purpose of telling. This makes consistency, which is the foundation of reliability, meaningless in narrative inquiry.

The researchers ought to record, transcribe, and analyze the stories, utilizing the method they see fit in order to verify and fulfill the reliability and validity in narrative inquiry (Ferber, 2000; Geelan, 2003; Kvale, 1989, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988). The reliability of qualitative research is strengthened by utilizing multiple-method data collection. In other words, to obtain consistent data and diminish the impact of the method through which the data is collected, employing several strategies of data collection should be taken into consideration. However, multiple-method data collection cannot offer assistance to the analysts in fostering the reliability of narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2005) since consistency is not expected to be observed in stories.

### *4.3. Procedure*

The participants were not informed about the purpose of the study prior to the data collection procedure. They had not been instructed to learn how to tell a story. Fifty EFL narratives were collected in the classrooms where the language learners produced them before other students. The students present were all allowed to participate in telling stories. They were allowed to ask questions, add something, or help the tellers when they could not deal with linguistic problems. Twenty-five narratives were collected conducting interviews in which the interviewer and the teller were present. The interviewers asked questions, provided feedback, and helped the interviewees when there was a linguistic problem. It sometimes happened that the participants could not find the correct words to express. The participants who took part in the interview had similar characteristics to the

other 50 participants. The other 50 narratives were told in Persian by Iranian people who were of different ages, genders, and academic degrees. Most of the Persian narratives were collected in the interview as they were not willing to rehearse stories in public, before some other individuals.

The narrated stories were voice-recorded by the researchers. Subsequently, they were transcribed twice by the researchers. Ten stories were chosen randomly and interpreted for the third time to guarantee the precision of transcription. To pursue a steady principle during the process of transcription, a transcription standard was formulated (see appendix). Ultimately, the deciphered information was broken down utilizing Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov's (1972) analytical models. Labovian model is the most popular one in the literature (Riessman, 2005; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The present examination focused on five segments of the narratives: the abstract, orientation, main action, result, and coda, to be specific.

## 5. Results

This study aimed to find out what aspects of EFL classroom narrative structures were affected by the story-tellers' mother tongue or the target (English) language. The focus was on the organization of the narratives which is known as a narrative structure in the literature.

The analysis of the collected Persian narratives showed that almost no Iranian tellers included the abstract in their stories. This issue happened in English narratives as recounted by EFL learners. The analysis of English narratives showed that EFL learners did not narrate the abstract in their stories either.

**Narrative 1 (English)**

1. Two years ago I went to the street
2. And this street uh very big
3. And I then going to go to the super market
4. After that I went to the super market

**Narrative 2 (English)**

1. I think I was in high school
2. That my cousin decided to marriage to someone
3. She don't didn't know him so good
4. And all the family (…) was not agree

**Narrative 3 (Persian)**

1. I was born in this city
2. But after the first year of elementary school, I went to Tehran
3. Interviewer: why?

**Narrative 4 (Persian)**

1. In Ordibehesht, my friends and I went to one of the villages of Esfarayen for picnic

2. Coming back home, my friend was not able to drive
3. Interviewer: why he couldn't drive?

These examples show that Persian speakers did not state the abstract in Persian nor in English narratives. According to Labov (1972), the abstract was the first part of English narratives. Because the abstract part was absent in Persian speakers' and EFL learners' narratives, it can be concluded that L1 influences EFL learners' narration. However, the abstract is a part of the narrative structure which Labov and Waletzky (1967) introduced as an optional part of stories.

The most significant elements of the orientation part were time, place, setting, and behavior which were expressed to set the ground for telling the main action. The analysis of EFL learners' narratives indicated that time was the most frequent aspect of the orientation. Space was in second place. Setting and behavior were not expressed in many stories, but the utilization of these two aspects of orientation was more common by the upper-intermediate participants.

**Narrative 5 (Persian)**

1. → About 10 years ago I got familiar with a women in the street
2. → After passing several weeks, I understood that she was married
3. → And she had a child
4. I tried to reduce the relationship
5. And I did it

6. Morality constraints and contentious were bothering me
7. The relationship was cold but
8. But it existed
9. But equal to nothing
10. → But she divorced 8 months later
11. → In fact, she had problems with his husband
12. And they divorced finally
13. This event made us much closer
14. → A year later we made a temporary marriage
15. → And left our own city, Esfarayen
16. → We went to Mashhad
17. → We were together for one year
18. My family didn’t accept her
19. I was under pressure mentally
20. → It was a bad age

21. → I was 23
22. → As time passing by, I understood that she is not my type,
23. I can't explain
24. But we were not in the same boat I think
25. But to prove myself
26. Or any kind of emotional decision let's call it
27. I married her permanently
28. → I think it was one year after our temporary marriage
29. We married
30. → And were living in Mashhad
31. I had no relationship with my family
32. → They lived in Esfarayen
33. And we would live in Mashhad
34. → There was no relationship between us
35. And we continued our life

36. But problems were too much

37. Lack of relationship with my family and some mental issue were bothering me

38. And finally we divorced

39. → After three years of living together

As Narrative 5 was analyzed, time as an aspect of orientation was found to be used more than other aspects. In Lines 1, 2, 10, 14, 17, 21, 22, and 39, the narrator rehearsed clauses in which time was used. Place, another element of orientation, was exploited in Lines 1, 15, 16, 30, and 32. By explaining the situation and context, the narrator made use of the setting. Lines 2, 3, 11, 20, and 34 are examples of the setting in this story. No trace of behavior aspect could be observed in this story. As EFL learners' narratives were analyzed, it was found that time and place were the most prevalent aspects of orientation in the stories and this may be due to the influence of the narrator's mother tongue. Additionally, upper-intermediates' stories included more occurrences of setting and behavior in comparison to pre-intermediate stories. The issue was more complicated when the absence of behavior in pre-intermediate learners' narratives was due to the inadequate knowledge of L2 or the influence of L2. Nevertheless, the genre of the stories should be taken into account. The topic or the purposes for which the story is narrated can affect the narratives' orientation.

**Narrative 6 (Persian Narrative)**

1. → I think it was two or three years ago in summer

2. → We were invited somewhere

3. → And it was a very luxuries restaurant

4. → And there were some socially high class people as guests
5. → there were different types of food
6. And then I wanted to pretend to be of high prestige
7. I wanted to cut meat
8. When I wanted to cut it
9. It slipped out of the dish
10. Right in the middle of the table
11. → Where all guests sat around
12. I was embarrassed a lot
13. It was really bad
14. After that I decided not to participate in places such as that
15. Or to be myself
16. S1: then what happened? What did you do?
17. → We laughed, all of us laughed @@@
18. But I was so embarrassed

19. Even though I pretended that I'm relaxed

20. And other guests said that the dishes are slippery

21. In fact they wanted to help me

22. To put me out of that embarrassing situation

Different elements of orientation have been specified in Narrative 6. As can be seen, time was recounted from the very beginning of the story (Line 1). Another use of the orientation was in Line 2 where the narrator talked about the place in which the event happened. The setting, as another aspect of orientation, was used in Lines 3, 4, 5, and 11. Behavior was also used in Line 17 where the narrator talked about what other people did at that moment. In this example, setting and time were mentioned more than the two other aspects of the orientation. The context in which the events had been experienced by the narrator demanded talking about space and setting. However, most EFL narratives' orientation parts included time and space in the first and second places the same as Persian narratives. The distribution and order of the orientation clauses in EFL narratives were similar to English native narratives, from abstract to coda (Cortazzi & Jin, 2007). The orientation elements, however, could be found in different places, from the beginning to the end of the stories.

The main action was the next section in narratives which includes the most reportable part of a story, and is expected to be present in every narrative. There were some stories that seemed to have two or more tellable events. Considering Narrative 5, one might assume their marriage as the most reportable event due to the orientation which was expressed prior to it. However, the narrator stated that they divorced finally which could be the most reportable one. Both of them, taking the story context into account, are highly interesting for the audience. When the Persian and EFL narratives were analyzed, it was found that Persian native speakers, to

a great extent, stated the main action of the stories directly without providing any prerequisites. When narrating a story in their mother tongue, they were used to tell the event first, and then they explained the causality of the most reportable event. This was also the case when Persian speakers narrated a story in English which means that they told the most reportable part without setting a floor or providing enough background.

**Narrative 7 (Persian)**

1. To make my life more exciting, I didn't select an appropriate way
2. → And it was betting
3. I remember, it was about 5 five years ago, my first bets were being done through some forms

Considering the above lines which are the beginning of a full story told by a Persian speaker, it can be found out that the storyteller, with no explanation about his life, started talking about the way he chose to make his life more exciting (betting). Narrative 4 is another example of telling the most reportable event with no preconditions. In Line 2 of the narrative, the storyteller talked about the driver's inability to drive but he did not give any reason for it. This made the interviewer ask about the reason for the incident. In the following lines of that narrative, he explained that due to drinking too much alcohol in their picnic, his friend did not feel well and was unable to drive. Narrative 2 was told in English by a language learner in which the storyteller expressed the most reportable event in Line 2. Then, the narrator provided reasons and causes for that event. At first glance, Persian and English narratives by Iranian people looked as if they had resolution after the most tellable event, which is common in English Native narratives, but when scrutinizing them, it was revealed that causality of the events followed their main action. Narrative 5 indicated that different parts of the story had a response to the question of *what happened finally*. Lines 4 and 5 were a resolution for the sentence *After passing several weeks, I understood that she was married* (Line 2) which was an interesting event that the audience like to know its consequences. The narrator said *I tried to reduce the relationship* (line 4) and *I did* (line 5). Although this line

was not the tellable event of the story, it had a resolution. Lines 12, 13, 25, 26, 29 were resolutions as well. It was revealed that an event might be the resolution of another event and has its own resolutions simultaneously. Whereas preconstruction comes before the most tellable event in English native narratives, Iranian people did not often observe this arrangement and recapitulated their stories bringing the most reportable event at the beginning of the story and then supporting it with causalities. The analysis of the narratives of both Persian and EFL storytellers show that there was no difference between the ways that the narrators told the results or resolution of their stories in both languages. It means that they provided resolution for almost all events of the story. It was not restricted to the most reportable events of the stories.

The coda which comes at the end of the story was absent in both Persian and English narratives. The results of the narrative analysis show that EFL language learners heavily relied on their L1. The Persian examples which were presented in this part did not contain the coda part. The following examples were the final parts of some full narratives which did not contain the coda.

**Narrative 8 (Persian)**

1. They divorced
2. And my cousins (she didn't know the meaning of adopt and asked the other students)adopted the boy
3. And just (…)
4. $S_2$: She lives alone

**Narrative 9 (Persian)**

1. But I think the boy in the office is  but my brother is 5
2. Maybe it is that my brother is so much tall

3. Because ((…)) he sounds more than 5
4. And finally we went and get my brother

## 6. Discussion

The results of data analysis revealed that EFL learners did not include the abstract and coda parts in the narratives. Persian speakers did not state the abstract and coda in the Persian stories as well. The results also showed that proficiency did not influence this type of storytelling. The conclusion was that Iranian EFL learners' narration was affected by their mother tongue because other probable factors made no change in stories regarding their first and last parts. The Persian speakers, who participated in the present study, were of different social classes, genders, ages, and academic studies in the same way as the EFL learners were. The similarity of their narrative structure, considering the abstract and coda parts, showed that transfer had happened when telling stories in English. Although Labov and Waletzky (1967), the first model for (oral) narratives, maintained five parts for narratives structure in which the abstract was absent, Cortazzi and Jin (2007), Currie (2010), and Rühlemann (2013) mentioned six parts for narrative structure when referring to the first model. Labov and Waletzky (1967) worked on the narratives elicited through interviews rather than on naturally told ones. They used questions which could be assumed as the abstract of the stories. In case the interviewers asked a participant to explain an accident, the questions would be the summary of that narrative. The abstract is a summary of the story at the very beginning of it. Additionally, Labov (1972) mentioned the abstract as the first part of the narrative structure as he worked on naturally told data. Thus, the abstract was a part of English narratives although it was maintained to be optional.

Analysis of Persian and English narratives showed that time and place were centered on more than other elements of orientation. However, setting and behavior elements were used in Persian narratives more than EFL learners' stories. Upper-intermediate EFL learners used setting and behavior in their narratives more than the pre-intermediate ones which indicated that knowledge in English affected their storytelling. The conclusion was that both L1 and L2 might affect the way that language learners rehearsed the stories in a foreign language. Baynham (2003) and Herman (2001) mentioned that place is the most important element of orientation which is expected to be focused more than other aspects of it. This is not in line with the findings of the present study which indicates that time is more focused than space. Söter (1988) claimed that concentration on different aspects of orientation is greatly affected by the tellers' first language. The results of the present study concurred with Söter's (1988) conclusion as time was focused more than other elements of orientation.

Furthermore, as it was pointed out, the participants of higher proficiency levels used setting and behavior more than low-level language learners in English narratives. The reason might be the effect of L2 knowledge rather than L2 itself. Using time and place is much easier than explaining the setting and behavioral situations. Mentioning the date and the name of the place where the events happened suffices to make these two aspects clear. Describing people who were the participants of the story, the physical world, the relationship between the participants, and behaviors were more demanding on the behalf of language learners. Thus, low-level language learners did not explain to them if they could not deal with it. The consequence was that high-level participants talked about people, setting, and behavior more than the other group. Furthermore, the results indicated that Persian narratives consisted of setting, people, and behavior more than the English ones. The reason is that the participants could easily explain different ideas in their mother tongue. These findings showed that L2 knowledge played a role in telling stories in another language.

Rearrangement and redistribution of orientation clauses in narratives were also the same in both Persian and EFL learners' stories. The orientation clauses could not be limited to one part of stories although it is

mentioned to be prior to the main action by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972). However, these scholars did not limit the place of orientation to a specific part of stories. They maintained that orientation mostly appears before the main action. These findings pointed out that Iranian EFL learners' narratives were affected by their L1 since Persian stories involved the same structure. In fact, the analysis of Persian and EFL narratives showed that orientation could be divided into two parts as macro- and micro-orientation. Macro-orientation dealt with the whole situation of the story which focused on the most reportable events, whereas micro-orientation dealt with the situation of different events in the stories. It should be pointed out that expressing macro- and micro-orientation was not specific to Iranian EFL learners. English narratives (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972), and EFL narratives (Lee, 2001; Kang, 2003, 2006) consisted of these two types of orientation, but they were assumed as one orientation. The rationale behind is that all events need some prerequisites to happen. As they cannot occur in isolation, they cannot be neutral. As the focus is on the most reportable events in storytelling, other events are not paid due attention, whereas the reality is that all events have precedence. In the story in which an accident was referred to, the driver was hospitalized, and he was buried three days later, the narrator explains how and why the accident happened, who was a part of it, and who was guilty.

The place and date are described as well. The setting of the hospital and people are described. The ceremony is described since it is the nature of narratives. There are three events that have contexts, time, place, and people who are involved in the actions, orientation in particular. But, the most reportable event is the death of the driver. Thus, the whole information which is provided in the story is for the narrators to set the floor for expressing the tellable events, while they are the combination of some smaller parts which are told to contextualize other events. Labov (2008) maintained that before embarking on a narrative, the storyteller has to create a streamline of events each of which is the grounds of the next event. This process makes a matrix that

sets the floor for the most reportable part of the narrative. The causal relations between the narrative's acts and one single subject make a chronological relationship between different parts of the story.

The main action in the recorded narratives was somehow different from the main action which was found in English narratives (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972). The main action followed orientation and it was stated when its prerequisites were fulfilled. Orientation paves the way for expressing the main action. However, this ordering was not the same for all narratives as in some examples; the orientation was distributed all over the narrative. Persian and EFL narratives consisted of many examples in which the main action came first and its prerequisites followed it. This type of storytelling was affected by the participants' L1. The analysis of the collected stories showed that the resolution could not be limited to a specific part of a narrative. The findings indicated that each event in the stories could be followed by a resolution. Although there were many events which were not followed by resolution, they could be followed if the audience asked *then what happened.* The corresponding question for the resolution in the stories is *finally what happened* which refers to the most reportable event. Thus, the resolution of the whole story could be different from the resolution of different events of the same story. It seemed that *next what happened* can serve better than *finally what happened* as all events have some consequences.

The works done previously on the issue of transfer in storytelling showed different results. Kang (2003, 2006), Indrasuta (1988), Pearson (2001), Maeno (1996), and Stavans (2003) found that EFL learners' narratives were significantly affected by their L1 and culture strategies. Narratives as an inseparable part of human language might be expressed differently across cultures (Riessman, 2005). The way people use narratives to persuade the audience, negotiate meaning, give information, and entertain people can be a reflection of cultural, historical, and social influences. In the Iranian context, although L1 and L2 were both influential in constructing English stories, L1 was more influential than L2. It was L2 linguistic knowledge that affected

Iranian EFL learners' storytelling rather than L2 itself. L1 affected the organization of the stories, but L2 was not a determining factor in the structure of the narratives.

## 7. Conclusion

The present study aimed to discover the probable effect of L1 and L2 on the organization of EFL learners' lived narratives. However, it is far from an exhaustive one that can cover different areas of narratives. Indeed, much work is still needed to come to a broad conclusion about how EFL learners construct their experienced stories, what factors are influential, and how they are different from stories of other languages. As much as languages and cultures are different, narratives might be different. It was concluded that L1 played a role in constructing stories in another language. Additionally, the differences between EFL narratives of pre-intermediate and upper-intermediate language learners and their similarity with Persian ones indicated that L2 linguistic knowledge mostly affected the syntax and semantics parts of narratives rather than their structures. It was revealed that both Iranian and EFL narrators did not express the abstract and coda parts of their stories. Different parts of the stories could not be restricted to a specific section of them. Moreover, not only did the main action included resolution, but each event of the stories was also be followed by a resolution which was the consequence of that coincidence. The findings of the present study can broaden our understanding of narratives and the way they are rehearsed in different cultures. The findings might help language teachers understand the role of L1 in language learning. They could also pop this issue into our minds that a more exhaustive analytical model which can meet the needs of all languages should be proposed. Finally, it is suggested that the role of L1 and L2 in narratives' function be studied to find out how people of different languages evaluate past experiences.

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**Appendix: Transcription Standard**

| | |
|---|---|
| Line | Independent clause or utterance marked as separate by intonation |
| ((…)) | Incomprehensible |
| (.) | Short pause |
| (…) | Noticeable pause |

| | |
|---|---|
| ( ) | more explanations by the researcher |
| [ ] | Uncertain transcription |
| // | The beginning of an overlap where the other speaker(s) talks |
| ] | The end of an overlap where the other speaker(s) talks |
| → | Clause in focus |
| Line | Stressed elements |
| @ | Laughter (@@@ means long laughter) |
| Numbered line | Narrative clause |

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