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**Research Paper**

**EFL Learner's Use of Evaluation in Oral and  
Written Narratives**

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**Abstract**

This study was an attempt to discover the variation in lived narratives of Iranian EFL learners in terms of narrative evaluation in oral and written experienced stories. To this end, 125 oral and written narratives as told by Iranian EFL learners were elicited. Fifty narratives were collected in the classroom, 25 were extracted on the interview, and the other 50 were elicited through a written task. Qualitative analysis was utilized to scrutinize the collected data. The study mostly relied on the Labovian model of evaluative categories to compare oral and written stories. The findings of the study indicated that the differences between the written and oral stories were due to the medium of narratives; both types of stories were similar in terms of evaluative pattern. It was reckoned that the differences between EFL stories and English native narratives were mostly affected by the participants' English language proficiency.

**Keywords:** EFL Narratives, Qualitative Analysis, Evaluation, Proficiency, Interview, Stories

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Narrative Function

The Labovian narrative model identifies referential and evaluative functions (Poignant, 2020); a referential narrative lacks evaluation while the evaluative narrative shows the narrator's point of view and evaluation of the events, especially their evaluation of the most reportable one (Ogamba, 2020). The evaluation commonly precedes the result. It "delays the forward movement of the narrative at a certain point by the use of many non-narrative clauses, which hold the listener suspended at that point in time" (Labov, 1972, p. 108). According to De Fina and Johnstone (2015), there are two types of evaluation in narratives known as external and internal. There are four types of external evaluation. Rühlemann (2013) explained the four types of evaluation as follows: the first type is *external (explicit) evaluation* in which the tellers might stop narration and directly express the point of it to the audience. The second type is *embedding of evaluation* in which the narrators quote a sentiment to themselves without directing it to the audience. It happens during telling rather than the time of experiencing the story. The third type is *evaluative action* in which the narrators tell about people's action rather than their words. The narrators express their points of view describing the participants' actions and reactions which are resemblances of their feelings. The fourth type is *evaluation by suspension of the action* in which the narrators simultaneously with reporting the actions evaluate them in separate sentences. Labov (1972) stated that the previously mentioned types of internal evaluations have the effect of suspending the action of the story.

Internal evaluation, which also consists of four types, is more hidden in the narratives. It is at the level of syntax and is mostly inside the clauses (Drijbooms, Groen, & Verhoeven, 2017). They are known as evaluative devices. The first type is *intensifiers* through which the narrators strengthen

one or more aspects of a clause. The narrators intensify some parts of clauses intentionally to show emotions. Expressive phonology is the next way to emphasize something by lengthening such as *a bi-i-ig pain*. Using quantifiers is also another intensifier that can emphasize events such as *all students laughed at me*. The other way is for the narrators to use repetition to show their opinion on something such as *I got hopeless, I got hopeless*. Ritual utterances are also assumed as a type of intensifiers. These types of intensifiers are culture-specific.

The second type is *comparators* through which the narrators compare events to show the differences. Auxiliaries are devices which can be used for the narrators to show emotions, opinions, and points of view. Imperatives are also a type of comparator if they are used to mention two or more probable results for an event. Questions are another type of comparator if they are posed directly to the audience.

The third type is correlatives through which the narrators indicate that several events are happening simultaneously or something continued. Progressive in *be* is a device which shows that a feeling or event is a continued action. The narrator expresses his continuous feeling by using this structure. The other way for the narrators is to use appended participles when they want to show that different events happened simultaneously.

The last type is explicatives through which the narrators recount the results of an action. Labov (1972) stated that explications happen in separate clauses. Explicatives are employed to emphasize, rationalize, or show the consequences of the events (Bruner, 2008). Conjunctions are examples of explication as they indicate qualifications. Nominalizations are the other type of explications as they reveal the narrators' points of view.

## **1.2 Narratives in L2 Learning Context**

Language learners' lived narratives are rich sources of authentic material as they are purposeful, focus on real-life experiences, help to better interact in the classrooms, and involve language learners in communicative tasks (Guariento & Morley, 2001). Furthermore, storytelling is a powerful motivator for language learners to participate in class activities (Saeedi Talab & Salehabadi, 2017). Fan and de Jong (2019) asserted that sharing personal experiences might have a positive influence on language learning. Language learners like lived stories which are real and new to them. Zarei and Ramezankhani (2018) also found storytelling as an effective technique in teaching vocabulary.

As the definition of narrative indicated, stories have some reportable events in them that the narrator finds interesting to tell, and the recipient finds them interesting to know (Leigh, 2019). These events are different from the dull and dry texts in their textbooks that lack interest for language learners. Additionally, narratives are language learners' experiences that have happened in the context and culture in which the learners live (Mastey, 2018). Thus, the learners understand them easily and make a good relationship with them. However, they might be narrated differently in various cultures. Allami and Ramezani (2019) found that upper-intermediate language learners reported more organized, chronological, logical, and to the point stories than pre-intermediate ones. Ramezani and Allami (2019) also reported that Iranian EFL narratives consisted of four parts whereas English native narratives consisted of six parts (Rühlemann, 2013). The abstract and coda were absent in Iranian EFL learners' stories.

## **2. Literature Review**

Lieberman (1999) is the pioneer of the idea that more than one system exists for one language and termed language by ear (listening), language by mouth

(speaking), and language by eye (reading). Language by hand (writing), which interacts with other language systems, is another system that was explained by Berninger (2009). Given the idea of "multiple interacting functional language systems" (Berninger, Abbott, Cook, & Nagy, 2017, p. 435), it follows that language learners might evaluate past events (narratives) differently in oral and written stories. According to past research (e.g., Fey et al., 2004; Scott & Windsor, 2000), the development of written narration falls back to the development of oral narration although both narrations are highly associated. It suggests that language learners of the same language proficiency level might produce oral narratives different from written ones (Berninger et al., 2017). That is to say, language learners might have an oral narrative competence incompatible with a written narrative competence.

In a study by Lee (2003), the discourse structure and rhetoric of English narratives as written by Chinese EFL learners and English native speakers were examined. The participants of the study who were college students write a story in English on the given pictures. The results of this study showed that Chinese learners expressed more narrative clauses in coda than English speakers. Lee (2003) concluded that Chinese cultural traditions affected the organization of the stories.

In another study in Korea, Kang (2006) also investigated the role of cultural issues in narratives. In this study, Korean and American college students were asked to write a narrative on the given topics. The topics were similar for both groups. The results showed that those Korean students, who produced longer stories in their native language, produced longer stories in English as well.

Ozyıldırım (2009) conducted a study to find how written and oral narratives might be different. Sixty Turkish students participated in the study, of which 30 narrated their stories orally and 30 narrated in written mode. The

analysis of data and comparing them showed that there were not many differences between oral and written ones regarding their organization (structure), which means the way a narrative is organized and told. The organization of stories is equal to narrative structure.

Shokouhi and Shirali (2011) examined the distribution of rhetorical devices in Iranian EFL learners' written narratives. They did not use lived stories. They presented a picture story to the participants and asked them to express the story. They aimed to find out how rhetorical devices were used by EFL learners in a written task. The results showed that some rhetorical devices such *and*, *so*, and *then* were used more than other types. Additionally, they found that rhetorical devices were used in different parts of the written narratives. Moreover, they detected that orientation could be found in different parts of the narratives.

Drijbooms, Groen, and Verhoven (2017) studied the use of evaluative devices in oral and written stories. One hundred and two Dutch students took part in the study and they narrated stories in an interview and wrote stories during a classroom session. Two parallel forms of a picture story were used to elicit spoken and written narratives from the participants. The results of the study showed that modality had affected the diversity and frequency of evaluative devices used in the narratives. Evaluative devices were more frequent in oral narratives than in written stories while the diversity of evaluative devices was higher in the written stories. However, they found that the medium did not affect the organization of the stories.

Although the literature is rich with studies concentrated on the English native narratives, EFL learners' narratives have not received due attention. Additionally, most studies on narratives have centered around the organization of oral narratives rather than the function of narratives (Johnstone, 2001, 2002). However, few cases have heeded the relationship

between written and oral narrative (Ozyildirim, 2009). There are a few studies which have focused upon written stories such as Söter (1988), Norrick (2000), Ho (2001), and Kang (2006). More investigation is needed to see how they might be different from oral ones. The most prominent and pervasive models for narrative analysis (e.g., Currie, 2010; Goffman, 1975; Labov, 1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Lieblich, Truva-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 2005; Sack, 1972, 1974) have been proposed based on English native stories. Within linguistics, a big gap is felt in EFL and ESL learners' narration; the way language learners generate stories and evaluate experienced events in another language. Consequently, this study used Labovian model to find out the differences between EFL learners and English native narratives, and between written and oral ones regarding narratives functions.

### **3. Method**

Narratives are not the exact copies of past experiences, but what the narrator has understood about them (Riessman, 2005); different stories can be narrated from the same experience by the same teller regarding the context of telling, the audience, and the purpose of telling. As such the consistency of the data collected for the examination of narratives as the cornerstone of reliability does not seem logical in the study of narratives. Many researchers (Ferber, 2000; Geelan, 2003; Kvale, 1989, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988); however, agreed that using appropriate methods of recording, transcribing, and analyzing the stories confirms the reliability and validity in narrative inquiry. To increase the reliability of qualitative research, data are gathered through multiple methods, which decreases the effect of the method on the results. Because consistency is, to a large extent, unacceptable in narratives, the reliability of narrative inquiry cannot be improved by various methods of data collection.

### **3.1. Corpus**

This study analyzed 125 oral and written narratives which were elicited from Iranian male and female EFL learners who were studying English at private institutes in Esfarrayen, North Khorasan, Iran. The mean age of the participants was 17.5 and they were at pre-intermediate (N = 60) and upper-intermediate (N = 65) language proficiency levels. They were selected from different proficiency levels to reduce the effect of L2 knowledge on the results of the study. They were selected through administering a self-report proficiency test which was based on International Testing System or the IELTS score band (IELTS, 2011). They narrated the stories in English. Among narratives, 50 were extracted through classroom discussions in which the participants generated their narratives in the classrooms before other classmates were allowed to participate in storytelling. Twenty-five recited stories were collected using interviews in which the teller and the interviewer were present. The rest of the narratives were written which were formulated at home.

### **3.2 Instruments**

This study used three instruments to collect data and an instrument to select the participants.

#### **3.2.1 Classroom Discussion**

The researchers used classroom discussion to record 50 stories. The participants were asked to narrate a story before the other students and their teachers. The whole class was allowed to take part in the storytelling.

#### **3.2.2 Interviews**

The interviews were done by the researchers in which one participant was present and told a narrative. The interviewer (one of the researchers) asked some general questions such as *can you talk about an interesting event you have experienced*, or specific questions such as *have you ever had a car crash?*



### **3.2.3 Writing task**

The researchers asked the students to write a story about their past experiences and bring them to the class for the next session.

### **3.2.4 Self-report proficiency test**

The participants were asked to assess their proficiency level based on International Testing System or the IELTS score band (IELTS, 2011). (See Appendix B)

Based on Common European Reference Framework (CERF), the participants were classified into three levels of English language proficiency. The students who evaluated themselves with scores from 1 to 4 were considered as elementary levels. The learners who assessed their scores to be 5 to 6 and 7 to 9 were at intermediate and advanced levels, respectively. The description was given to the language learners and they scored themselves according to the description.

### **3.3. Procedure**

Each participant recounted one story either orally or in written form. Narratives were elicited without providing instruction for the tellers. Very general questions such as *can you tell us a story* or *could you recapitulate an interesting event you have experienced* were asked to collect the target data. In case the participants did not start telling, the questions would be narrowed down such as *have you ever been hospitalized?* Written narratives were, then, elicited using a general question as the participants had sufficient time to think and write. Pre- and upper-intermediate language learners were selected because (1) experts confirmed that they could narrate stories and (2) advanced language learners could not be found easily.

At first, the stories told by the participants were recorded by the researchers and then, with the help of the second researcher (who was a senior lecturer in Discourse Analysis), they transcribed the data twice. To make sure that the transcriptions were accurate, 10 narratives were selected

randomly and transcribed for the third time. It is worth mentioning that transcribing the data was conducted following some conventions developed by the researchers (Appendix A), which could add to the consistency of the transcription. At last, utilizing Labov's (1972) analytical models, the transcribed data were analyzed. These Labovian models are the most widely-used and best-known models in the related literature (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Riessman, 2005). In this study, eight types of evaluations were taken into account in analyzing the collected stories.

#### **4. Results**

##### **4.1. External narratives**

As it was mentioned earlier, there were four types of external evaluation.

###### **4.1.1. External (Explicit)**

This type of evaluation was frequently used in written and oral narratives as told by narrators of different genders and language proficiency levels.

###### **Narrative 1 (written by a male learner)**

1) Nearly 3 years ago, some of my friends and I joined a group of mountaineers who were going to have a 3-day camping in the deserts of Tabas, South Khorasan. 2) The program included off-road driving in the desert, open-air concerts, learning some rudimentary aspects of astronomy, and some other recreational activities which were very interesting. 3) Because we were living in a cold area with no desert in it, the program was so attractive and full of fun for us. 4) One interesting happening there was occurred in the concert. 5) It was held in a Caravanserai late at night and a multitude of almost 500 people had participated in it. 6) We were standing behind the audience smoking cigarettes when suddenly the whole audience turned back to tribute to the flag of the country. 7) Many of them knew us and due to the nature of the group which was an athletic one, it

was embarrassing for us to smoke. 8) All the audiences were looking at us and the cigarettes' smoke was going up into the air and we just could hide ourselves behind us. 9) I assumed the paradox of smoking and doing exercise came into the mind of everyone who saw that occasion.

Explicit evaluation was used in written narratives and oral narratives. However, it was more obvious in oral ones. In Narrative 1, the narrator interrupted the storytelling in part 3 and explicitly expressed his evaluation of the event which was participating in a climbing tour. In that case, the narrator stopped the flow of the clauses, which were related to the events and orientation, and then expressed his opinion on the trip. The other time, he interrupted telling when he said *Many of them knew us and due to the nature of the group which was an athletic one, it was embarrassing for us to smoke*. This part of the story included the narrator's point of view as he mentioned it was embarrassing. Although Labov (1972) maintained that evaluations happen in the fourth part of stories, the narrator used it before and after the main action. It was true for other written stories, which meant that evaluation could not be restricted to the main action or fourth part of the stories.

### **Narrative 2 (oral by a female learner)**

1. The first day of schools was always
2. And I have a memory about an old friend
3. ((...)) was good
4. My mom was a teacher herself
5. That true
6. Then on the first day
7. S1: She mentioned the name of a school (maybe they have been in the same school for a time)
8. No no no, in another school
9. Then I went to school for the first time
10. She (her mother) just put me in the front of the door
11. She didn't come inside even

12. She said OK
13. It is your school
14. And you are going to have new friends
15. And new teachers
16. I said Ok I will go to school
17. And then I went in
18. And everyone was with her mom and dad
19. And everyone was happy, shinny
20. I was sleepy
21. And I thought I don't have anything that moment
22. Where are my parents?
23. My mom goes (.) Went to her school
24. And then I was at school alone
25. Happy //their teacher entered the class]
  - a. // umm, I am recorder]
26. T: I am listening
27. And then I came home happy
28. And I found lots of friends
29. I didn't like to quiet (quit)
30. It's a good memory or bad memories?
31. I didn't think it is a good memory
32. But now it is good
33. And that day it was just good
34. Because I felt happy
35. S2: did you found friends?
36. Yes I found friends
37. It was the first day
38. And it was interesting that everyone was with his parents
39. And they cry
40. ((...)) @@@@
41. All the time until now
42. I tell my mom
43. Am I your child?
44. Because for my sister my mom came
45. My dad came everyone came
46. And sent her to school
47. And for me no

48. And my mom says. No come on  
 49. You were a very good girl, very extroverted  
 50. And you could stand on your knees  
 51. @@@@ ((...)) @@@  
 52. And it finished happily.

Explicit evaluation in Narrative 2 as the storyteller mentioned *And it was interesting that everyone was with his parents* (line 38) was seen. Lines 3, 19, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, and 52 were external evaluations as well. It was seen that the narrators of oral stories used more explicit evaluations than the narrators of written stories. However, the place of explicit evaluation could be in different parts of the stories for both cases.

#### 4.1.2 Embedding of evaluation

This type of external evaluation was only exploited by one EFL learner in written narratives in which she recounted her son's evaluation of the situation in the story.

#### Narrative 3 (Written by a female learner)

My son said: mom I think the weather is rainy,  
 people became more kind than the other time.  
 This word was very effective and he said I wish all  
 of the time the weather to be rainy.

The narrator mentioned that his son said "I think the weather is rainy, people became more kind than the other time." In this case, the storyteller expressed a third person's evaluation in the story. This type of evaluation was used in oral stories more than written narratives. Narrative 2 consisted of three clauses which contained embedding evaluation. In line 3, the narrator said *That true (That's true)* which was not related to the story and its events, but the feeling she had when telling it. It was embedded in the story. She also used a third person's opinion about herself as she expressed her mother's sentiment in line 49 and 50 where she recounted *You were a very good girl, very extroverted, And you could stand on your knees*. They were someone else's point of view that the narrator embedded in the story.

### **4.1.3 Evaluative action**

This type of evaluation was used in Narrative 1 where the narrator recounted it in part 7 as he said ... *just could hide ourselves behind us*. This made known that the situation had been so embarrassing and they were so shy and tried not to be seen by their group's members. The writer could recapitulate it as *we were so shy*. However, he employed actions instead of words to describe the event. Three types of external evaluation were only expressed in written narratives although EFL learners used evaluation by suspension of the action besides them. Narrative 2 did not consist of this type of evaluation. Nevertheless, it was seen in some oral ones such as Narrative 4.

#### **Narrative 4 (Oral by a female learner)**

1. she screamed
2. I was shaking

The narrator used word *shake* to express her fear. The narrator was scared because of her scream. She could say *it panicked me*, but said *I was shaking* which is a resemblance for fear. This type of evaluation was used approximately similar in both oral and written stories.

### **4.1.4 Evaluation by suspension of the action**

This type of evaluation was not found in written narratives. However, Labov (1972) maintained that other types of external evaluations are a kind of suspension of the action. On the other hand, oral narratives had this type of evaluation a lot. In Narrative 2, the narrator expressed events and evaluation simultaneously in different places of it. She talked about the events and explained her feeling and idea about them at the moment.

## **4.2 Internal evaluation**

Internal evaluation was utilized in written narratives as well as oral ones. It consists of four sub-categories which are mostly known as evaluative devices.

#### 4.2.1 Intensifiers

Intensifiers were common in written narratives but not as much in oral narratives. Some types of intensifiers such as *gesture*, *word stressing*, *vowel lengthening*, and *sounds* were absent in written narratives because of the nature of written language. Gesture was also absent in oral narratives. Quantifiers were more common in written stories than oral narratives. In Narrative 1, the narrator mentioned *full of fun* in part 3, and *all of audiences* in part 8 which were quantifiers that focused the narrator's point of view. There were other types of intensifiers in written stories such as *very interesting* and *so attractive* in parts 2 and 3 in Narrative 1. Repetition and ritual utterances as other types of intensifiers were not used in written ones, while they were expressed in oral narratives several times.

Oral narratives abounded with intensifiers. Narrative 2 consisted of too many quantifiers in lines 1, 10, 18, 19, 21, 24, 37, 38, 41, and 45. As an example, she said *And everyone was with her mom and dad*. Having used everyone, she wanted to emphasize that she has been alone. Stress was also used to strengthen an event in this narrative as she said *And then I was at school alone*. She stressed word alone to focus on it. Intensifiers were also employed to emphasize some events such as *You were a very good girl, very extroverted* (line 49). The word *very* intensifies the following adjectives. These types of intensifiers were used in lines 10, 11, and 33 as well. Ritual utterances were rarely used in the oral narratives.

#### 4.2.2 Comparators

Comparative evaluative devices were exploited in written stories as well as oral ones. Negative verbs were used in them frequently as the narrator in Narrative 1, part 2 expressed *Because we were living in a cold area with no desert in it*. He made a comparison between his homeland and the destination. This was a way to express his opinion about the place they

headed for. Narrative 2 consisted of negatives as the narrator recounted one of them where she said *And everyone was happy, shinny, I was sleepy, And I thought I don't have anything that moment*. Using negative form in the last sentence is a kind of comparison that the narrator made in order to express her feeling when she was alone at school. She compared other students who had come with their parents to herself who was without them as she said *I don't have anything*. Auxiliaries were also used in the written narratives such Narrative 1 where the narrator expressed *we just could hide ourselves behind us* (part 8). Using the auxiliary *could* indicated that the narrator implied his inability in doing something and his embarrassment at that moment. Narrative 2 abounded with auxiliaries too. Questions were rarely used in written ones, but a lot in oral ones. Narrative 2 included some examples of this type of evaluation in lines 22 and 30 as the narrator said *It's a good memory or bad memories?* (line, 30). Posing this question during telling meant that she could not make a judgment about the event. It might be good or bad depends on one's ideology. Imperatives as another type of comparators were not used in written ones as evaluation, while they could be seen in oral narratives. Comparisons were used in written narratives as much as oral narratives. Comparative and superlatives were common in narratives to compare two or more things or events together.

#### **4.2.3 Correlatives**

Although this type of evaluative device consists of two sub-categories, namely progressive in be and appended participles, the former one was only used in both written and oral narratives. In Narrative 1, the storyteller said *All the audiences were looking at us and the cigarettes' smoke was going up into the air and we just could hide ourselves behind us*. Using progressive in be indicates that the action has been continuous which made the teller and his friends embarrassed. These types of evaluative devices are used to show that



something which affects emotions is extended or continuous. Combining two sentences with conjuncture *and* as the first was progressive in be (was looking) and the second one (*the cigarettes' smoke was going up*) is something embarrassing, shows the narrator's point of view. He used this structure to say how bad they felt at that moment. Appended participles as another type of correlatives were not utilized in written and oral stories. However, progressive in be as a type of evaluation was used frequently in them.

#### **4.2.4 Explication**

Explication evaluative devices were used in written and oral narratives frequently. However, they were used in oral narratives more than in written ones. An example of explication was used in Narrative 1 where the narrator expressed *Because we were living in a cold area with no desert in it, the program was so attractive and full of fun for us*. The narrator mentioned his opinion and the reason he liked the tour stating *because*. It was the way that the narrator of the story looked at desserts. This type of evaluation was also used in Narrative 2 where the teller said, *Because I felt happy* (line 34). Nominalization was another type of evaluation which was not used in written narratives and rarely in oral ones where the narrator said *Cockroaches, what I hate the most in the world*. The word cockroach was put as the head of sentence to show the strength of emotions. Passive voice is the other way of evaluation which was used in written and oral stories. Although passive voices abounded in the narratives, all of them could not be assumed as an evaluative device. Narrative 1 consisted of some passive voices where the narrator said *One interesting happening there was occurred in the concert or It was held in a Caravanserai late at night*. These statements were not evaluative as they were not told to express emotions, effects, or points of view.

## 5. Discussion

The results of data analysis showed that explicit evaluation, embedding of evaluation, and evaluative action were used in written narratives, whereas evaluation by suspending of the action was absent. Although the last one needs more difficult syntax than other external types, it was expressed in oral narratives. On the other hand, the story writers had enough time and a chance of editing and thinking about the stories' structure. Thus, talking about complexity does not seem so acceptable in this case since complicated structures were expected to be recounted in written stories rather than oral ones. Comparing written and oral narratives, it was revealed that explicit evaluation was used in oral ones more than in written ones. The reason is the nature of these two mediums of telling. Interrupting and stopping telling means lack of coherence, which is highly important in written language (Cariou, 2020). It does not mean that oral language is not coherent, but that it is more open to interruption, leaving the telling, and changing the topic (Fabry, 2018). Embedding of evaluations was used in oral stories more than in written ones. The reason is that some types of it are rarely used in written language because of their nature. As an example, addressing themselves is a way of embedding evaluation, which is not related to the events and story, but related to telling. It is a way of expressing emotions, or the excitement the narrators have during telling (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). If it is used in written language, it is assumed as redundant. Hearing some unrelated language in an oral conversation is somehow common, whereas it cannot be borne in a written text. Thus, the nature of the narrative's medium was a determining factor. The use of evaluative action was not different in written and spoken language. It can be used in both types of talk.

Evaluation by suspending of the action is expressed when a narrator stops recounting the events and states the emotions that simultaneously occurred

with the events. Concurrency of the events and emotions is more important in oral narration than written ones since they may lose their meaning and sense when the event is told and disappears while in written narration, the events are there to be read several times. Thus, embedding of evaluation can be expressed instead of evaluation by suspending of the action which happened in the written stories as the results revealed that it was expressed in written narratives more than what was stated in oral ones. Bulow (2020) reported similar findings when comparing oral and written narratives.

Considering the internal evaluation types which are known as evaluative devices, written narratives did not contain intensifiers as much as oral ones. The participants mentioned fewer intensifiers in their written stories. As the name of intensifiers implies, they strengthen one aspect of a talk. Strengthening might be shown by stating expressive phonology, gestures, sounds, repetitions, and quantifiers. Except for the last one, other types of intensifiers cannot be used in written texts. Repetition is not acceptable in writing and formal language use as well. This reason is acceptable and reasonable to rationalize that written narratives consisted of fewer intensifiers than oral ones (Lee, 2020). Taking the comparative evaluation into account, there was no difference between written and oral narratives. Comparative evaluative devices can be used in written and oral stories. Some evaluative devices such as negatives and auxiliaries are expressed formally and informally which allow language users to employ them in written and spoken language (Bulow, 2020).

Correlatives were used in written and oral narratives. Correlatives are syntactically more difficult than other types of internal narratives (Labov, 1972) which are expected to be used in written stories more than in oral ones. Nevertheless, written narratives did not consist of correlatives more than oral ones. It seems reasonable to consider Bruner's (2008) claim in which he

maintained that narratives are innate. No one is instructed to learn how to construct stories. However, EFL learners might be an exception as language complexity is more determining for them. High-level language learners are expected to produce more complex language. Both high and low level language learners participated in the study, but appended participles as one of the most complex structures within narrative evaluation were absent in the collected narratives. The reason might be that they were not able to produce this structure. Thus, the mode of telling was ineffective when they did know how to use the target structure. Many studies have been conducted which revealed that language learners use more simple structures when they use a foreign language. The findings of many studies such as what had been done by Anderson and Mack (2019), Walker (2018), Lundine et al., (2018), and Meyrowitz (2019) revealed that foreign language learners avoid using complex structures when they speak or write. Explications were used in written narratives as in oral ones. Considering the results of the mentioned studies, it might be reasonable to find out that the collected narratives included many intensifiers and explications while comparators and correlatives were few.

In general, the results of data analysis indicated that there were not many differences between EFL learners and English native narratives. All aspects of evaluation approximately were present in the collected narratives. Although this study did not go into details because of the purposes it was looking for, the elements of evaluation which were mentioned by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) were generally present in oral and written stories as told by Iranian EFL learners. There are some studies which focused on EFL narrative evaluation such as Kang (2003, 2006), and Indrasuta (1988) which found EFL narratives are different from English native ones. The point is that they concentrated on the nature of evaluation. This issue is not related

to type of evaluation, but related to its quality and genre. Thus, the final conclusion was that Iranian EFL learners' narratives were similar to English native ones regarding evaluations. In case there were some differences, it could be due to lack of knowledge in English rather than the effect of L1. The differences in written and oral narratives were due to narratives medium. The nature of spoken and written language is different in some cases. O'zyıldırım (2009) and Drijbooms, Groen, and Verhoven (2017) found that there were no organizational differences between written and oral narratives; they found some differences which were because of the mode of telling.

## **6. Conclusion**

The present study made a comparison between written and oral narratives. In fact, it aimed to discover the role of narrative medium in the way people evaluate the events. Additionally, it examined the probable differences between EFL learners' narratives and English native ones. Labovian model was assumed as the representative for English native stories. The findings of the study showed that written and oral narratives were similar organizationally. The variations were mostly related to the differences in the nature of written and spoken language. Some differences were also found between EFL learners' narratives and English native ones, which were due to lack of knowledge in the target language, but otherwise, they were similar. The EFL learners were not able to produce some complicated structures which were present in English native narratives considering the Labov's (1972) findings.

The outcomes of this study broadened our understating of narratives, narrative analysis, different version of stories, and EFL learners' narratives. Language teachers can benefit from the findings of the present study since they need to know the difference between native English and EFL/ESL English. Additionally, teachers focus on both productive skills, namely

speaking and writing. The findings of this study can help them understand the fundamental differences between them. As it was mentioned previously, most of the analytical narrative models rely on English native stories which might be different from nonnative English ones. Therefore, the findings of the present study might help scholars pay more attention to the English which is at work for nonnative speakers. Finally, it is suggested that prospective researchers delve into the details of EFL/ESL narratives to find out how factors such as identity, personality traits, age, social status, and gender might affect the ways people evaluate past experiences.

### **7. Limitation of the Study**

The main limitation of this study was the data collection method. Narratives are co-constructed which means that both the narrator and recipient cooperate to fulfill a mutual aim (Rühlemann, 2013). The audience might have an active or passive role in constructing a narrative. Non-verbal language such as gestures is an inseparable part of narratives that is used by the narrator and audience. The study enjoyed voice-recording for data collection which could not show non-verbal language. The female participants did not allow being video-recorded. The reason was because of cultural and religious restrictions. Thus, a complete picture of EFL learners during storytelling was not obtained.

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#### Appendix A: Transcription System

LineIndependent 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

### Appendix B: IELTS score band

9 = Expert English user: The test taker has a fully operational command of the language. Their use of English is appropriate, accurate, and fluent, and shows complete understanding.

8 = Very good English user: The test taker has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. They may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. They handle complex and detailed argumentation well.

7 = Good English user: The test taker has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. They generally handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning.

6 = Competent English user: The test taker has an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage, and misunderstandings. They can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

5 = Modest English user: The test taker has a partial command of the language and copes with overall meaning in most situations, although they are likely to make many mistakes. They should be able to handle basic communication in their own field.

4 = Limited English user: The test taker's basic competence is limited to familiar situations. They frequently show problems in understanding and expression. They are not able to use complex language.

3 = Extremely limited English user: The test taker conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication.

2 = Intermittent English user: The test taker has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.

1 = Not an English user: The test taker has no ability to use the language except a few isolated words.



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