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Approaches to Narrative Instruction for Second Language Learners

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Abstract

Narratives have reemerged as a dominant form of rhetoric over the last fifty years. This dominant use of narrative discourse has only increased with the rise of social media. Walther Fisher (1987) proposed the narrative paradigm as a unifying theory of human communication. His major claim is that people are inherently storytellers and that people use a narrative rationality and a logic of good reasons to inform their beliefs, values, and actions. This paper utilizes his theories, along with recent findings in neuroscience, to establish an argument for greater inclusion of narratives into second language teaching. Narratives can have a powerful language learning function as they engage learners' imagination and allow them to create a mental context for language use. Narratives serve a powerful attention-getting and attention-keeping function that more completely engages them when compared to traditional language learning teaching. In addition to this, narrative educational practices prepare learners to negotiate the narrative-rich environments of their lives. Finally, narrative skills provide learners with the means to represent themselves in society through the use of their personal narratives to attract the attention and gain the empathy of the people in their community.

Keywords: narrative, narrative pedagogy, narrative rationality, narrative coherence, fidelity, conflict, negative bias, narrativity, reason, rationality, tellibility, teacher narratives, learner narratives.

ERIC Descriptors:

Personal Narrative

Story Telling

Learning Strategies

Social Cognition

Empathy

Learning Processes

Self-efficacy

Communication Skill

Creative thinking

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Narrative Approaches to Narrative Instruction for Second Language Learners

*And so every one of us shares the supreme ordeal - carries the cross of the
redeemer - not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the
silence of his personal despair.*

Joseph Campbell: The Hero with a Thousand Faces

Background

Remember a story that you tell over and over to your friends and family. I have this one

that I tell of my best friend because it seemed to me to be the most hilarious thing that had ever

happened to us and because it was perhaps one of the turning points in his life. It was the actions

he took after that moment that has shaped his current reality, the conditions of his relationships,

and even his current financial and emotional fortunes. A powerful moment in his life and in our

friendship that has been told, shaped, retold, and reshaped in subsequent years that have

followed. Incidentally, it is a story that he wishes that I would not tell at all, so I will not repeat it

here.

There is a story about me that circulated among those who knew me in high school. I also

will not repeat that story here as the details are less relevant than the lessons that I can extract

from it. Like the story I tell about my friend, this story about me was one of those historic

moments in a life where I, in my very essence, was captured and immortalized in some manner.

The story itself cannot have captured all of the facts of those hours of my life, but they have

captured enough truth to represent what actually occurred, and more than enough truth to

characterize some aspect of my values, character, beliefs, hopes, and aspirations to encapsulate

core aspects of who I was, and to some extent am, as a human being. The "I" or the "Mat" of that

personal experience narrative represents both historic versions (a narrative that is supported by

evidence) of me (the living and breathing human of now) and symbolic versions of what

constituted my being at that moment but also stretched beyond that moment into the past and the future (the scope of the characteristics that made and make me the human being that I was and am) culminating into what would probably be considered gossip when told by others and reminiscence when told by me.

Do each of us have these stories? What power do these stories carry in establishing ourselves within our respective communities? How constructive and destructive can they be? What happens when we lose that ability to control our own narratives? What happens when we lose the ability to express our own stories to the community around us? These are some of the questions that have been raised by my various inquiries over the last few years. We know that storytelling is one of the things that defines us as human, or perhaps it is an innate characteristic of being human. Our lives are filled with narratives in some form or another. What is interesting is the massive disconnect between how much gravity storytelling is given in education in general and how important it is in our post formal education lives.

As a teacher of English as an additional language, in nearly two decades of language teaching, I have noticed that only a minimal amount of time is spent on narrative, and usually, it is only taught in the simplest iterations. This is also true for first languages. According to Walport-Gawron (2013), narrative writing occupies a decreasing presence in the common core criteria for writing, decreasing from 35% in grade 4 to 20% in grade 12. It is telling that narrative is extremely underrepresented in second language pedagogy because of the ways that it creates access to power, agency, and representation. I suspect the lack of narrative instruction is because of the disruptive power that powerful storytellers have. Language learners are situated between the power of their native culture and the power of the target language culture. Those in power in both native and target cultures wish not to empower them in the target language through

narrative because storytelling power is the power to redress injustice and stir people to action. As Fisher (1987) explained, narrative has the power to convey values in addition to reason, and as people construct their narratives, they are expressing these values not only for their narratee but also for themselves. This awareness of their own values juxtaposed through their struggles and experiences with both their native culture and the target language culture can have a powerful impact on their identity. Narratives, by their nature, require the storyteller to examine both moral and social conflicts, and this heightened awareness of the conflicts in their life means a heightened awareness of the injustices they are confronted with. As Fisher (1987) mentioned, the narrative paradigm is also a philosophy of action, and through narrative construction, the storyteller who is more fully in control of their storytelling can convey that injustices to others who will then take action either in support of overcoming the injustice or against it in order to perpetuate the systems of power that perpetuate the injustices. It is incumbent upon language learning teachers to make time to incorporate narrative into our curriculums.

While the absence of instruction on narratives may be conspicuous, it is not unexpected. Having the ability to construct powerful, impactful, and meaningful narratives is one form of power in society. Preference for teaching the means and ways to consume narratives via literature classes does not necessarily mean that the means and ways of constructing a narrative are learned, and that preference for consumption over construction is preferred by people who do wield power. While courses dealing with narratives have a myriad of legitimate goals and educational aims, they fail to provide equal access and clarity to the means of narrative construction, thereby preparing future members of society to merely consume and possibly regurgitate the political, historical, and cultural narratives that will so deeply impact their lives and society in adulthood.

It is also notable that creative endeavors, including narrative writing, are often framed as a talent that people either innately possess or do not. They are seen as increasingly unnecessary distractions from the more important matters of business, science, and technology. In particular narrative writing instruction is often filled with vague feedback for young storytellers. This is perhaps due a lack of training for teachers or for some other reason. However, this means that learners are left to grapple with their own writing without sufficient support via clear and concise feedback from their instructors. As a result, they experiment wildly. These experiments often fail due to the absence of important elements of narrative that have not been made salient to the learner, and this failure reinforces the myth that only innately talented people can create meaningful narratives. The young storyteller has been duly put in their place through these failures, and they learn that everyone can consume stories, everyone can regurgitate other people's stories, but not everyone can make a story, and this leads to the understanding that not everyone's voice is necessary. If there were greater understanding of some of the key features that make narratives engaging and more time was dedicated to teachers learning about narratives in a more complete way, curriculums would more effectively emphasis the construction of narratives both in writing and in speaking in education systems.

It is worth noting that perhaps there are overriding assumptions about a learner's ability to construct narratives. For instance, an assumption that narratives are such an ingrained part of our existence that it is unnecessary to dedicate time to teaching how to construct them. Do we make such assumptions about any other cognitive domain? We do not assume that because people use roads every day that they suddenly know how to build them. Given the agency that storytelling skills provide learners, it seems that education in general and second language

education specifically needs to dedicate more time to teaching learners how to effectively construct their own narratives.

Consider for a moment that the most competitive universities in the United States use a variety of objective metrics to evaluate which students to allow entry into their universities. Since the objective measurements can largely be mastered by a large portion of the applicant pools, those universities have turned to student writing to determine how to build a cohort of first year students. One of those essays is a personal statement, a narrative. According to the commercial website Admissions Sight (2017), the personal statement is exactly the factor that allows admissions officers to determine which students get into the school and gain access to all of the privileges, benefits, connections, and learning therein. What then becomes of the students who cannot pay for dedicated editors, counselors, or writing coaches? What happens when a qualified student's school fails to support them in writing their essays? They are passed over. This is only one example of the inequities created by an education system that fails to see narrative construction as an important skill for learners to develop.

Perhaps this evaluation of the current state of narrative education appears to be an unfair attack on education or teachers. That is part of the point of the exploration done in this paper. That the above is somehow making you, my reader, attend to something that perhaps disturbs or excites certain ideas, beliefs, or values that you hold engages your cognitive senses, and that process weighs those claims against not only the *logos* of technical knowledge that you may have about a subject but also the *rhetoric* knowledge and perhaps the *poetic*. Indeed, in order to authoritatively claim that this is the current condition of aspects of narrative education, I would need to do a study, collect data, and create numerical representations of lived experiences, crunch those numbers through an analysis to determine reliability and significance. That is, to

provide evidence as my classical Western education has trained me to do. However, the above is anecdotal, though not an uncommon one, and since the focus of this inquiry will eventually address the inequities of who holds power, who has a voice, and who is believed in society, the anecdotal narrative serves to draw the reader's attention to their emotional response not their logical argument. If the response was agreement or disagreement, the response was not merely the logical, statistical, and factual reaffirmation or rebuttal of those claims, but a combination of those three types of discourses. In that response, we find knowledge and truth. Though this gap in how to effectively create narratives may not be true everywhere, it is true for someone (some students) and therefore illuminates an inequity driven by a system of power (education) that is driven by other social systems of power (economics, politics, religion). If our goal is equality of opportunity, then this is something that we as instructors should attend to. Indeed, given the shifts in public discourse away from the Western tradition of using *logos* to determine our reasons, values, and actions, a way of communicating that Fisher (1987) termed the *rational-world paradigm*, it is necessary to have well trained storytellers who are aware of the truth and knowledge provided by other forms of discourse to speak that truth and disseminate that knowledge to their communities. This type of discourse Fisher (1987) referred to *narrative paradigm.*

Trends

Over the past 40 to 45 years, a schism in rhetoric, communication, and thought has been occurring in the public discourse in the world (for the purposes of this paper, I will focus mainly on illustrative examples from the United States, but this schism is occurring wherever social media is prevalent). There are major portions of the population who largely continue to act, think, and make decisions based on the traditional discourse that Americans have been expected

to act, think, and make decisions i.e., through Fisher's (1987) rational-world paradigm. This paradigm requires a citizen to base their thoughts, actions, and decisions on logical, rational arguments that use a variety of objective facts and statistics from which the authority of their argument could be assured. An assurance that provided them with the most correct and just way to act, think, and make decisions. Those citizens rely heavily on *logos* and less on the other discourse modes (*rhetoric* and *poetic*), but not completely divorced from them either. It should be noted that this position is largely held by people who have been highly trained in the use of *logos,* i.e., people with high degrees of education who work either in academia, the sciences, or other fields where quantitative analysis is a dominant force. There are also other people who engage in this discourse mode for their own reasons regardless of their training. Amongst this group of citizens, descriptions of objective reality provide the best information for belief, values, and action, and is therefore the ultimate authority and bearer of knowledge and truth.

Another significant portion of the American population has largely abandoned the rational-world paradigm and have embraced a discourse that is something else, a rationality that does not rely on facts, evidence, or objective means to decide what is the most just and correct way to act, think, and make decisions but rather relies on feelings, intuition, and a sense of the truth. They may cherry pick individual facts that support their actions, thoughts, and decisions, but they give much heavier weight to *rhetoric* and *poetic* modes of discourse than *logos.* That is to their own subjective experiences and to the voices of people who echo those experiences in a way that is consistent with their worldviews.

On January 6th, 2021, supporters of Donald Trump, the 45th President of the United States (POTUS), stormed into the capitol building to stop the certification of the newly elected President of the United States' electoral college victory and the legal transition of power to him,

demonstrating the apotheosis of this shift in rationality. The people who violently attacked the building did so largely motivated by what members of the media and opposition political party have labeled the *big lie* of the outgoing President, a reference to a propaganda technique and a term coined first by Adolf Hitler and then used as a description for the propaganda of the Nazi Party. The framing of this as people duped by a *big lie* is somewhat misleading; there is more at work with these *big lies* than simple deception and ignorance. For the attackers, they believed they were acting in the defense of their democracy. They believed the narratives they had heard over and over from their trusted sources, and those beliefs constituted their understanding of reality even though those narratives were found to be utterly false by members and institutions throughout the political spectrum in society. The *big lie* is one way that *rhetoric* has been deployed over the last four decades to motivate people to political and social action. For this portion of the population, facts are just one tool that people in power, who oppose their values and beliefs, attempt to manipulate them.

 Post-truth was Oxford dictionary's word of the year in 2016, and they defined it as: "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" ("Oxford Word of the Year 2016*"*, para. 2). It was selected because of the massive increase in its use from when it was first coined with this meaning sense by a Serbian-American writer in 1995, and then again in 2004 in a book by author and teacher Ralph Keyes that more concretely examining how deeply rooted deception, half-truths, and falsehoods had taken root in all aspect and at all socioeconomic levels (2004). However, post-truth as a description of the current political culture has only increased around the world since the election of the 45th POTUS in 2016.

Postmodernism is described as a "set of critical and rhetorical practices . . . to destabilize concepts such as . . . identity, historical progress, [and] epistemic certainty" (Aylesworth, 2005, para. 1 para. 1). The postmodern rejection of an objective shared reality is one of the underlying drivers of the current post-truth world. If everything is an interpretation of reality through an individual's own personal experiences and situations (economic, historic, ideologic) then reality is what they decide for themselves to be regardless of "so-called" experts, and sometimes in direct opposition to scientific consensus. Given that postmodernism emerged as a response to modernism in the 1950s and became the dominant discourse mode for a variety of academics in the late '60s, the '90s is when people whose formative years were dominated by postmodern discourse reached adulthood and started to impact society. It is significant that the concept of post-truth can be traced to 1995, a year before the founding of Fox News (perhaps the largest media and most powerful media organization that has embraced post-truth rhetoric), meaning that post-truth is a product of wide-spread postmodern thought. Postmodern rhetorical practices have only been strengthened by the explosion of social media in the middle 2000s (Facebook in 2004, YouTube in 2005, Twitter in 2006).

Fisher (1987) talks about the tension that has existed historically between *logos, rhetoric,* and *poetics.* Each asserting their own superiority in revealing truth and knowledge. Then with the Enlightenment, *logos* became the dominant form of discourse as the scientific method and quantitative science began authoritatively describing the nature of reality. It is worth noting that for people living during the Enlightenment, embracing science and empirical logic to make decisions was a necessary step in asserting secular authority over religious authority and thereby a discourse mode to redress a power imbalance in society. In part, the tension between these discourse modes and the resultant ascendance of *logos* above everything is part of the reason that

postmodern thought gained traction. The rational-world paradigm requires trained practitioners, and that training created a hierarchy that gave all power to the elite who could afford to be trained. Postmodernism's skepticism and deconstruction grew from the recognition of the undemocratic nature of truth and who got to construct truth at the expense of the voices and contributions of others in society, i.e., a way to upset power imbalance in society.

As postmodern thought and practices have unsettled the concept of truth and objective reality, it has also paved the way for its practices to be used in rhetoric to challenge all authority about every issue. (Again, as postmodernists would point out, the issue is power and who gets to wield and hold power in society.) Oprah Winfrey declared in her 2018 Golden Globes acceptance speech, "speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have" (Russonello, 2018, para. 4). Many commentators were critical of the terminology, which is straight out of the postmodernist's rhetorical practices. Why did she use 'your truth' instead of 'the truth'"? asked Connor Friedersdorf (2018) of *the Atlantic* among others. Friedersdorf (2018) goes on to note that other commentators wondered how "your truth" would be interpreted by white supremacists, or conspiracy theorists such as Alex Jones.

QAnon was not as prevalent in the public consciousness in 2018 as it has become in 2021, but their truth is just as problematic. The criticism being that if there is no "the truth" then all truths are valid and that cannot be so because the truths of some groups of people lead to the great suffering and possibly death of others. Let us not forget Hitler's big lie, which for many was an irrefutable truth of the dangers of Jewish people. Let us also not forget the empowerment that has come from people speaking their truth. Oprah Winfrey's story being a prime example of that power. The tension between the truth (*logos* and extremely diminished *rhetoric* and *poetic*) and your truth (*rhetoric* and *poetic* and possibly a diminished *logos*) is important to

understanding our obligation as teachers to our learners, particularly when our teaching involves language and our learner's basic ability to function and participate in society.

This brings us to the other trends in social changes. The increased representation of women in places of power dominated by men, the recognition of groups of people who have lived voiceless on the fringes of society or utterly invisible in the annals of histories such as the LGBTQ community. Their voice and "their truth" have paved the way for new dialogues about human rights, equality, equal opportunity, and the fairness of law. Though postmodernism would claim nothing is important because everything is a construct, the suffering and the deaths that all of these communities have experienced is an objective reality that can be supported by rational, quantifiable means. While labeling something as "my truth" instead of "the truth" raises issues, calling the discrimination, suffering, and injustices exactly what they are serves us better in understanding what the truly powerful "tool" Oprah mentioned is. "My truth" is really "my story", and it is the telling of that narrative that holds the power to sway people's beliefs, reasons, and actions.

In 2021, popular pushbacks against post-truth have sprung up in different places in society. Scientists and historians in particular work to reassert the respect for and the acceptance of objective facts and a shared reality. Timothy Snyder, a prominent and publicly outspoken Professor of History at Yale University, has published extensively in print and in media on social networks such as YouTube about the dangers of post-truth. In a New York Times Article, Snyder (2021) writes:

> Post-truth is pre-fascism . . . When we give up on truth, we concede power to those with the wealth and charisma to create spectacle in its place. Without agreement about some basic facts, citizens cannot form a civil society that would allow them to defend

themselves. . .   Post-truth wears away the rule of law and invites a regime of myth. (para.

8-9)

Other popular figures from science such as Bill and Neil deGrasse Tyson have taken to popular

televisions shows to assert the authority of objective facts and information as a basis for making

decisions and evaluating the correct actions individuals and societies should take. In addition to

these individuals, journalism as a profession is evolving in response to post-truth. Independent

journalists such as Lewis Raven Wallace work to reevaluate the journalistic norms of so-called

objectivity, which have acted as a gatekeeper to prevent the voices and stories of minority people

from entering the broader public discourse. Wallace along with other like-minded journalists are

working to spread truth through a reformation of journalism ethics. Others are working on how

to reestablish the belief and reliance of society on experts. Heidi Tworek (2017), a historian

writing for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), points out

that one way to gain trust is to express more uncertainty in things such as forecasting economic

and political futures. She remarked that these forecasts are likely to be inaccurate and that

constant failures in statistic-based forecasts can send a message to the general public that those

facts are hardly worth their attention. Expressions of uncertainty, she claims, are more generally

perceived as honest and therefore more forgivable than failed expressions of certainty.

Fisher (1987) remarked, "The moral I would draw is this: some discourse is more

veracious, reliable, and trustworthy in respect to knowledge, truth, and reality than some other

discourse, but no form or genre has final claim to these virtues" (p. 19). Many in the scientific

communities have been critical of the humanities for lacking rigor or quantitative value, for

failing to prove the knowledge that they generate, but some truths are well beyond the scope of

the types of quantitative analysis that would provide us with the same objective description of

the world that can be achieved in technical logic. How many millions of people would have to be incorporated into a language acquisition study and over how many years to concretely define the means and ways that people learn other languages? How many variables would have to be accounted for? Since funding does not exist for any of these large-scale studies, the answer is too many, and so it is necessary to use other means at getting at what can be called a truthful description of some realities as possible, or trusting that for some aspects of reality, particularly human experiences, there is no universal sharable quantitative measurement to be discovered that will encompass all of reality. As such, *rhetoric* and *poetic* still have an important place in society, and indeed regularly impact society much to the consternation of the proponents of the rational-world paradigm.

Fisher (1987) commented that before philosophers separated *logos* from *rhetoric, and poetic* they were part of a single concept of *logos*, which meant "story, reason, rationale, conception, discourse, [and] thought" (p. 5). Fisher countered the rational-world paradigm with *narrative paradigm*, which at its core seeks to explain interpersonal and public communication through the inherently human act of storytelling and the learning, meaning-making, and reality-forming that is inseparable from the text of story**.** This is where my work begins, in a moment in history where and a moment of understanding that narratives now dominate the reason, value, and action of people living in a society that has spent the previous half-century deconstructing expertise, facts, and objectivity through postmodern rhetoric and thought. It is a recognition that stories have a role in creating both social unity and social fragmentation. It is a recognition of the power of stories, the agency and voice that they give the storyteller in society, and the agency and voice they give the critical audience.

Introduction

It should be telling that after seventy or so years of applied linguistics, concrete methods and approaches to teaching second languages have largely failed to find a universally applicable means to guarantee learners' success. Perhaps that is just as true in other subjects taught at educational institutions as well, but language learning has confounded many students. Much of this has to do with the variables that are difficult to account for. Teacher beliefs about language teaching, institutional requirements, learner's motivation, learners' socio-economic well-being, learners' geographic proximity to the target language, and learners' attitudes towards the target language culture are just a few. In part, it is also the shifting definition of what we believe learning a language means. It used to be declarative, meta-linguistic knowledge. Beliefs in the field have evolved as students struggled to be able to use the target language effectively in real world situations. Though attempts to find an effective, universally successful method have failed since applied linguistics became independent from general linguistics in the 1950's, the evolution of methods have provided teachers with resources and ideas from which they can base their approaches to teaching.

A particular issue of importance for language learning are the struggles of learners who study a second language from a foreign language context (FLC). Those learners are denied the massive amounts of resources that are available to learners in a second language context (SLC), namely the whole world around them. Massive amounts of peripheral input are unavailable, cultural representations and knowledge are significantly more difficult to get for students who study a language in a FLC than when they study in a SLC. It is true that it is easier than ever to gain access to a wide variety of target language inputs, but the effort needed to acquire them is a considerable barrier to many students. Considering those barriers, studying a second language in a FLC with the goal of gaining speaking proficiency is a massive challenge that requires learners

to prioritize it above other important areas of study that are also important to their futures. The challenge only increases when the complexity of cultural and identity negotiation that is often inherent in second language acquisition is added.

Learners who study in a SLC also face tremendous obstacles. The stakes tend to be much higher as many of them have been relocated through migration or refugee resettlement. They are confronted with much more acute negotiations with their identity, which can be a harrowing and painful experience. The second language is ever present beyond their familiar communities, and so their proficiency with the language also pertains to daily life complications such as economic rights. Without spoken language proficiency, second language learners lose access to jobs, the ability to negotiate wages, rents, contract, and fair treatment for services. Often their political rights, such as access to legal representation, comprehension of the laws governing their communities, and all other aspects of life where language is used and needed to create and build networks and communities are impaired. The power disadvantage and loss of voice in the broader community are enormous challenges that the learners must face concurrently with the very personal struggle of negotiating their identity within their new home.

The content presented in this paper provide teachers with practical solutions to address the challenges and issues learners face by using a narrative framework as pedagogy and as learning activities. Narrative is one way that people make sense of the world and learn; it is a fundamental characteristic of being human. Narratives are places of identity, belief, and knowledge exploration and construction. Narratives have a powerful impact on motivation and memory. Additionally, narratives have a powerful ability to help learners cope with trauma, conflict, and daily challenges. As such it should be a greater part of our teaching practices.

Much of our lives are affected by narratives in some way or another, but the lack of narrative informed education means that when students go into the world, they are unprepared to deal with unpacking the narratives they are bombarded with. By creating opportunities for learners to learn through narrative, educators also equip them with the ability to contribute their narratives to social wisdom. This also equips them with a greater ability to deconstruct the narratives they will encounter in society thereby leading them to a truth that is based in a reality of shared empathy and understanding.

Narrative practices should not simply be one off activities to practice some grammatical point in the language learning classroom, nor should they be isolated units within a curriculum. Narrative practices should be integrated as a core approach to teaching and an ever-present feature in the student's learning experience. Students equipped with narrative reflective skills are empowered to evaluate their own personal struggles and to lead healthier emotional lives.

This paper will be divided into two parts to establish the theoretical concepts, and to provide a guide to realizing those concepts in second language curriculums. In part one of this paper, a variety of narrative related theories that will inform part two will be examined. This section will define key terms and examine key concepts from Fisher's narrative paradigm and neurological research related to the impact that narrative has on the brain. Part one will conclude with an analysis of these factors in action through the Narrative Environment model that I have created. In the second part, narrative pedagogy will be examined. Narratives are powerful tools for building classroom communities. Narrative curriculum design has the potential to create a deeply meaningful learning experiences for learners by utilizing the imaginative capacity and the engagement narratives generate to foster both the desire to learn and the processes through which learning occurs. Narrative elements incorporated into individual lessons can also serve to

generate interest and motivate students as well as serve an attention getting function that helps learners focus on the learning targets of the lesson. In addition, narrative activities and practices are also an essential part of developing learners' language skills, self-awareness, voice, and abilities to participate fully in society. These activities utilize a great range of second language learners' cognitive resources such as their curiosity, imagination, creativity, and problem solving/critical thinking capacities. They also serve as a means for learners to negotiate their identity, manage their emotions, manage their relationships, and build relationships with their classroom community and by extension their real-world communities.

Finally, in addition to providing teachers with the rationale for utilizing narratives more broadly and strategically in their second language classrooms, this paper will illustrate the necessity of having all learners develop a strong narrative voice as a means to gain access to their basic human rights, to begin to dismantle racism, and to serve in creating a more equitable society and world.

> *The increasing popularity of the term 'narrative' also reflects the*
> *epistemological crisis of contemporary culture. 'Narrative' is what is left*
> *when belief in the possibility of knowledge is eroded.*
> Marie-Laure Ryan: The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory

Theoretical Concepts of Narratives

Narratives help create and recreate our identity, beliefs, values, interpersonal relationships, and communities. Narratives are also a place of learning. Narratees enter a state where they can come to new realizations about themselves and the world, internalize certain beliefs and values, modify their beliefs and values, become motivated to act, understand the happenings of society, and more. Narratives span academic disciplines but have become particularly important in the humanities as researchers have recognized the limits of *logos* and the complications that facts present when interpreted and situated within the networks of other facts. While narrative is a fundamental mode of communication and reasoning in many areas of people's lives, narrative modes of teaching and learning are not utilized in traditional classrooms. Narratives should be incorporated into second language curriculum design, teaching, and learning practices to improve language learners' success. However, knowing what aspects of narratives can best serve language teachers and learners is not always clear. Defining narrative is difficult. Understanding the various impacts of narrative is complicated, and integrating narratives into the language learning curriculum may not always be simple, feasible, or possible as many of the historic approaches to language learning still exist in various iterations in standardized curricula and course textbooks. This section will present core definitions and concepts that will provide language teachers with an understanding of relevant concepts, a philosophical and neurological view of narrative, and an analysis of the narrative environment people live in.

Core Narrative Concepts

The identification of narrative as a phenomenon to be studied and understood is a relatively new field that emerged with postmodernism and French structuralism. Roland Barthes (1975) is often credited for having extracted narrative from its sole association with fiction, with features that can be found universally in different modes of communication. The study of narrative has provided us with descriptions of the features of narratives that can be useful to language instructors. This section will define these features.

Narrative may be a commonly shared human trait, but there is still some difficulty in defining it. These difficulties including things such as separating definitions of narrative discourse from story, which has been done in other languages with the terms *fabula and sjuzet,* separating narrative from other forms of mental activity such as memory-making, belief, interpretation, attitude, observational and cognitive attention, judgements, separating narrative from other forms of communication which may include narrative elements, but not be considered narratives as a whole. Ryan (2005), in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* entry on narrative, provides useful descriptions of narrative from scholars across a variety of disciplines:

> [N]arrative is a fundamental way of organizing human experience and a tool for constructing models of reality (Herman, 2002); narrative is a particular mode of thinking, the mode that relates to the concrete and particular as opposed to the abstract and general (Bruner, 1986); narrative creates and transmits cultural traditions, and builds the values and beliefs that define cultural identities; narrative is a vehicle of dominant ideologies and an instrument of power (Foucault, 1978); narrative is a mold in which we shape and preserve memories; narrative in its fictional form, widens our mental universe beyond the actual and the familiar and provides a playfield for thought experiments (Schaeffer,

1999); narrative is an inexhaustible and varied source of education and entertainment;

narrative is a mirror in which we discover what it means to be human. (p. 345)

Though these descriptions are not exhaustive, they serve to highlight some of the most important

features of narrative for this this thesis.

Other useful definitions provided by Abbot (2002) in *The Cambridge Introduction to*

Narrative. He provides two levels of narrative definition. The first is the concise definition:

"[N]arrative is the representation of an event or a series of events" (p. 12). The second definition

is "loose and generally recognizable". He applies it to narratives that are traditionally recognized

as longer stories where narrative comprises the dominant "spine" or organizing feature of a text

(p. 12). The common feature of this second level of narrative is *narrative coherence*, which is a

concept that is of major importance in the rationale for using narrative forms and structures in the

language learning classroom.

Rhetorical narrative theorists Phelan and Rabinowitz (2012) define narrative as

"somebody telling somebody else, on some occasion, and for some purposes, that something

happened to someone or something" (p. 3). They see narrative as a multidimensional mode of

communication from a narrator to a narratee that has a purpose. This definition is important

because it highlights the intentional aspect of narrative and covers other important features such

as physical and temporal elements.

A final addition to these narrative definitions is the concept of *narrativity*. Narrativity is

the quality of a narrative that invites the narratee to engage cognitively with the narrative.

Though it also lacks a concise definition within the field of narratology. However, narrativity can

be summarized as the quality or condition of a narrated text that generates curiosity, suspense, or

surprise in the narratee thereby engaging them in the narrative (Abbott, 2002). Narrativity can be

seen in simple examples of narratives versus other types of expressions. Though one might argue that this sequence: *John hung up the phone, went to the kitchen, and made a sandwich.*, constitutes a narrative, it lacks narrativity because there is nothing in this sequence that engages the attention of the narratee. However, if we modify this sequence with a descriptions of John's internal state: *John, with tears filling his eyes, hung up the phone, went to the kitchen, and weeping, made a sandwich.* Now there is a quality of narrativity, a question that garners the attention of the narratee. This is also closely connected to another essential feature of narrative, *conflict*. Conflict is a disruption of equilibrium. Conflicts often generate the *stakes* of a narrative, and those stakes can be high or low. In the above, the conflict of the micro-narrative about John could be the news that the character of John received. Crying is not typically an equilibrium emotional state, and therefore his emotional equilibrium has been disrupted. Should the narrative continue from there, part of the narrative would be John returning to his non-crying emotional state. Narratees pay attention because the conflict arouses an awareness that something is wrong, the resolution of which may provide a few useful outcomes for the narratee such as entertainment, insight that informs them about how to interact with a friend who has suffered recently, and many other takeaways depending on the specifics of the narrative.

     Tellibility is a concept that is very close in meaning and sometimes shares meaning with narrativity. Tellibility is the quality of a narrative that generates interest in the narrative from the narratee (Ryan, 2005). If the narrative elicits indications of a lack of interest from the narratee, then the narrator has failed to accomplish the communication intended with the narrative, or they misunderstood the relevance of the narrative to the audience. A narrative could have narrativity, i.e., a cue that garners the attention of the narratee, but fail at tellibility if the narrative is irrelevant or fails at keeping the narratee's attention. Consider the narrative that is often given to

students: "*You'll need (X) to make it in the world*." The momentary threat of not having

something intrinsic to their future wellbeing may capture some attention at first, but very quickly

learners tend to understand that these types of narrative threats are hollow and meaningless as

life and a growing awareness of the world around them repeatedly and definitively shows that

people can make it in the world without whatever *(X)* is.

Finally, *narrative immersion* is a mental simulative process where the text and its

mimetic primers create a mentally projected world (Schaffer and Vultur, 2005). Narrative

immersion is a biproduct also of the emotional connection a narratee makes with the characters

in the narrative. Caring for the characters of a narrative, real or fictional, is one degree of

narrative immersion. Another degree is being mentally elsewhere from your body, the sensation

of being mentally "transported" (Zak, 2015). This is the ability to imagine the story world and

experience the story as the characters of the narrative. This point is so powerful that, as Zak

(2015) reported, people do not simply consume the narrative, they live it.

These are the core concepts that need to be present in a narrative for it to positively affect

language learning. These features engage attention and focus, the learner's imaginative capacity,

and the learner's mental contextualization capacity. They engage learner memory, self-directed

meaning making, and hypothesis testing, and promote learner engagement with meaning and

identity negotiation. This type of engagement is incredibly important for learners who study a

language in a FLC where the target language use context is not readily available in their native

environment. These concepts are also an informal check for teachers who wish to utilize

narrative more extensively in their classes.

Communication as Narration

The theoretical concepts of narrative provide teachers with identifiable and concrete ways for not only teaching narratives to their students but also evaluating their own narratives. Knowing the features of a narrative can assist teachers in know how to revise the narratives and narrative examples they use in their classes. It can help them understand the ways they tell their own teacher stories. *Conflict* for example is central to a teacher's life and the narratives about teaching that teachers share with other teachers and other professionals. However, in order to have a complete view of the importance of narrative, it is important to look more closely at how narrative works in communication. This involves revisiting philosophy and rhetoric.

Fisher's (1987) narrative paradigm was his attempt to reunite the three forms of discourse *logos, rhetoric, and poetic* that could provide a more complete view of the ways in which people reason, act, and express their values. He argued that humans are storytelling creatures, and that scientific, empirical arguments were not the sole ways of reasoning, valuing, or acting. He pointed out that ontological and epistemic knowledge could be generated or transmitted through rhetoric and aesthetics as well as *logos*. The logic of his narrative paradigm is *narrative rationality*. Narrative rationality consists of two elements: *coherence* and *fidelity*.

Narrative Coherence

For Fisher (1987), narrative coherence in communication reflects the likelihood that a given narrative is true. Narrative coherence can be assessed in several ways. Narratees evaluate a story's structural coherence, and by testing it against other stories in other discourses (*material coherence*). Structural coherence is the typical argumentative structure used to organize the discourse. A narratee will evaluate structural coherence based on whether the narrative is free from confusing asides, if it follows a generally agreed upon logic of events, and the other structural elements of a narrative such as a beginning, middle, and end. Material coherence

relates to evaluations of whether important facts or details have been excluded or if relevant issues were omitted.

In addition to structural and material coherence, narratees evaluate the reliability of the characters, both narrators and actors. involved in the narrative (characterological coherence). Narratees assess whether the storyteller or actors in the story can be believed based on their knowledge of the characters. Characterological coherence is perhaps the most important aspect of assessing narratives for the purpose of this paper. When characters behave through words or actions in contradictory ways, the incoherence of their behavior diminishes trust, community, and the ability of the narratee to accept the narrative. This aspect of coherence greatly impacts how people interact with members of their discourse communities. It plays a part in who people trust to provide them reliable information about the world, and how they construct their view of the facts revolving around the narrative event. Characterological coherence can be examined by asking citizens of a society why they trust certain news sources over other news sources. It can also be examined in informal ways when checking on a story that was heard about someone in the neighborhood. These types of coherence evaluations occur both in large and small scales throughout the day.

Narrative fidelity

Narrative fidelity is assessed by Fisher's (1987) "logic of good reasons" (p. 47). Fidelity deals with whether individual elements of a story represent social reality accurately and thereby provide the narratee good reasons for belief or action. Fisher (1987) defines logic as the means in which messages are analyzed and assessed through a systematic set of procedures. He defines good reasons as elements of a message that provide justifications for:

"accepting or adhering to the advice fostered by any form of communication that can be

considered rhetorical . . . that whatever is taken as a basis for adopting a rhetorical

message is inextricably bound to value" (p. 107).

Fisher (1987) made a distinction between the logic of reasons and the logic of good reasons.

Logic of reasons refers to traditional, scientific reasoning. Using a logic of reasons, a narratee

would evaluate the validity of the facts being conveyed by a narrator's message by determining

whether the facts present are indeed facts, then they would ascertain whether there have been a

key omissions or distortions of relevant information, then determine whether the proposition is

sound and takes into consideration all other possible propositions related to the message, and

finally make a judgement about the message. Fisher makes a distinction that a logic of good

reasons pertains not only to factuality of the message but also to the values embedded in the

message and raises a series of questions to assess the message:

"What are the implicit or explicit values embedded in a message? . . . Are the values

appropriate to the nature of the decision that the message bears upon? . . . What would be

the effects of adhering to the values? . . . Are the values confirmed or validated in one's

personal experience? . . . Are the values the message offers those that, in the estimation of

the narratee, constitute the ideal basis for human conduct?" (p. 109)

Assessment of narrative fidelity are evaluations of facts-values alignment, relevance-values

omissions, distortions, or misrepresentations, consequence - values alignment, and transcendent

issues - values alignment. That is, no action can be done without testing the message (narrative)

and values expressed by the narrator in their message against the held values of the narratee.

Applying these concepts to the real-world, these evaluations may happen instantaneously

in reaction to monologic narrative sources such as the news, or they may occur more deliberately

when a person is faced with making a life altering decision. This occurs because narratives engage people both emotionally and intellectually. Examples of evaluations of narrative fidelity can be found numerous times each day, such is the narrative rich existence people live. One illustrative example can be seen in this heated exchange at a parents' meeting about racism at a school in Saline, Michigan (Hester, 2020). In this narrative event, a father of Latin American origins is describing the race-based abuses his son was experiencing in the school. A white parent from the audience interrupts his story by asking, "Why didn't you stay in Mexico?" (00:13). Most of the audience immediately reacts in opposition and disdain to the sentiment the white man expressed through gasps and other verbal recriminations such as "No!" (00:14), an angry, "What!" (00:15), and "You need to leave!" (00:18). The meeting continues as people address what the white man who asked the question.

The white man's reaction to the Latino storyteller expresses an argument based on values and beliefs that have been constructed through the various versions of the narrative that his interjection represents, a narrative that has been widely understood in 2020 to be rooted in racist ideologies. "Why didn't you stay in Mexico?" is one representation of the rhetorical arguments made by a variety of ideological organizations, politicians, and other public and private personas who are associated with white supremacy. This narrative is understood to characterize the immigrants who raise their voice in protest to the injustices they experience as unappreciative, un-American, disrespectful as well as other values-negative characterizations. It also characterizes the man as "other" by placing him outside of the "native" community. The implication is that he is an outsider who can choose to go back to his "real" home. It demands of that the Latino father reevaluate his complaints from the perspective of gratitude for being allowed to exist in the country whose society he is criticizing and invalidates his claims that there

is some injustice being perpetuated by asserting that these are the expected cultural norms of the society the Latino man "ungratefully" decided to join.

The white man's interjection also serves as another important lesson about narrative representation. The white man was motivated and compelled to interrupt the Latino man's story because that narrative has the power to alter the beliefs, reasoning, values, and actions of the members of his community, and therefore could represent a derivation of the values that he believes serve as the ideal basis for society. This is *narrative rationality* in action.

The rest of the parents' reactions represent another moment of narrative rationality. With knowledge of the narrative that is communicated by expressions such as "Why didn't you stay in Mexico" and the racist and bigoted ideology and values being expressed therein, they reacted immediately based on their values and their values in opposition to the values embedded in the white man's question. They vehemently and emotionally decried the man's interjection. Various people demanded that he leave the gathering. Some people angrily demanded that he respect the turn-taking norms that were established prior to the meeting. The reality of the sentiments expressed by the white man incited the various emotional reactions of the parents, and by extension the members of Saline, Michigan's society. Those emotions were informed by the historic, cultural, and ideological narratives communicated by the white man's questions, and their rejection of the values communicated in those narratives.

This story, picked up by various news media, was then communicated to the nation as a continuing chapter in America's ongoing narrative about race and race relations. This action also demonstrated narrative rationality in action. Many of the headlines signaled both the core conflict, white man against Latino minority, and indicated to varying degrees of emotional values the nature of the man's interjections. The Washington Post (Armus, 2020) headline

characterized the exchange as an interruption whereas NBC (Kesslen, 2020) characterized the exchange as heckling while deemphasizing the heckler's race characterizing him not as a white man, but just as "man". Other news organizations categorized the interjectors interjection as "remarks", "racist remarks", or simply a question being "asked" from one father to another. Examining the variety of ways that mass media organizations framed this story, the delicate nature of editorial choices for a story can be seen. The tightrope of accurately representing an event without appearing to be biased, while also signaling a conflict that is capable of garnering the audience's attention, as well as the difficulty in accurately characterizing an event is one of the core challenges journalists and news organizations face knowing that this story will be added to the public discourse around race.

This story, in turn, gets added to and the modifies the outside observers' narrative rationality, where their assessment is not only being made about the events but also about who is delivering the events and why (*narrative coherence*) and whether or not the representations of the event are true (*narrative fidelity*). The narratee's conclusions on the story's narrative coherence and fidelity, which reinforce or contradict the narratives they have already heard on race, reconstructs or reinforces their sense of reality, their values, beliefs, and ultimately their actions in regard to what constitutes the most just way to behave in society.

An example of narrative rationality for much bigger decisions that requires more careful logical work can be seen in the various discussions and narratives that are constructed around natural disasters. One example comes from my own personal experience with the Tohoku Earthquake and the Fukushima reactor's radiation leakage. The way the news narratives and my personal experience impacted the discussions between me and my interlocutors had about what the best choices and actions to take in the event that radioactive contamination reached our

homes. The discussions and narratives were expressions of our rationality, which included our values, not simply cold reasoning. The values of home, of community, of connections weighed heavily on those discussions and formed the logic of good reasons as we made our emergency preparations.

While these two examples give a brief introduction to narrative rationality and narrative paradigm, these types of narrative exchanges happen numerous times throughout the day for most individuals in society. People often use the narratives around them to guide their life largely because so much information is conveyed with values in the stories that are being told. Fisher (1987) points out that an insistence in examining communication through the rational world paradigm fails to provide a complete view of the actual ways that people communicate.

Narrative paradigm differs from the rational world paradigm because people naturally acquire narrative rationality through social interaction rather than requiring the education and formal training that are required with the rational-world paradigm (Fisher, 1987). Narrative paradigm allows researchers to more completely understand the way people reason and act. It also helps researchers to understand how people's beliefs and values are established and how those can change in the light of new narratives rather than empirical arguments. The key features of narrative rationality, coherence and fidelity, help us to understand how people assess and evaluate the various narratives they encounter, and whether those narratives reinforce their beliefs, challenge those beliefs in a way that may reshape their reality, or whether they outright reject the narrative. One could argue that the more stories a person is exposed to and the more those narratives are incorporated into a person's narrative rationality, the more complete their understanding of factual reality is. Providing people with greater resources to utilize the logic of

good reasons allows them to reject stories that superficially reinforce their values but create discourses that are the antithesis of their values.

Though all people naturally develop narrative rationality, education can be used to enhance our learners' ability to tell their stories. Educators can emphasize the creation and deconstruction of narratives that will allow people in a society to express their stories with greater narrativity; however, the emphasis in classes must be on creation rather than consumption. Utilizing and studying features of conflict, suspense, surprise, and curiosity generation are all things that can and should be enhanced in language arts classes, but simply experiencing them and deconstructing them does not mean learners will be able to utilize them. No baseball player learns how to play baseball without actually playing the game. No musician has ever completely learned how to play an instrument without actually playing the instrument. This also goes with language whether that is for first language speakers or second language speakers. Through learning these skills, the narrativity of learners' narratives will increase, allowing them to engage their narratees more effectively, and this facilitates the receptiveness to the stories they tell. Thereby, story by story, the narrator uses the power of their story to inform their narratees' narrative rationality and thus their expressions of their values.

Cognitive Narratology

Narratives are not simply intellectually compelling. Narrativity and tellibility are features that engage a narratee's attention, and transport them into the *story world*. If narrative paradigm is the philosophy of the logic of good reasons, then cognitive narratology is the science that explains why narrative rationality is so powerful in people's lives. There are two fundamental features of the brain that are important for language educators to understand in relation to what happens when a narratee receives a story.

The first is a physiological response. Hormones are released which impact a narratee's attention and their empathetic response to the narrative. The second is a cognitive response known as neural coupling, a phenomenon where nearly identical brain activity can be seen between a storyteller and a narratee. It is important to note that these phenomena also require narrative immersion, and therefore require that the narrative being told be a "good story". A "good story" is a story that creates the sensation a narratee experiences of being transported imaginatively into the story world. However, understanding these two cognitive phenomena can help educators to create powerful and optimal learning conditions by using narrative techniques in their classes as well as address non-content issues such as group dynamics, emotion regulation, motivation, and learner (and teacher) self-efficacy.

Hormones

Paul Zak's (2015) work on the effects that narrative have on the brain showed that there are two important hormones released in the brains of transported narratees. The first hormone that is released by the narrative is cortisol. Cortisol is a stress response and attention directing hormone. It is a person's brain telling them that something of danger or note for their survival is occurring. This is triggered by instances of conflict in a narrative. In the "John's Phone Call" example provided in the concepts section, conflict is the indication of some negative emotional stimuli occurring that made him cry. In the Michigan parent's meeting in the narrative communication section, conflict was the implicit threat of opposed values in the form of racism embedded in the ideology conveyed by the interjector's comment. It can be noted that this conflict presented a greater threat than was embedded in the narrative of the Latino father because it took the whole room's attention away from the distant conflict of unidentified racial aggressors and placed their attention on the physically present antagonist.

The cortisol reaction, though only recently examined scientifically in conjunction with narratives, has been intuitively known by the storytellers throughout history. It has been particularly embraced by news media and other forms of social-political commentators and opinion editorialists. The media's ability to maintain their audience is often based on stoking fears and gaining attention through negative or conflict-orienting headlines that trigger a cortisol response in potential customers. It is also based on people's natural negativity bias, a tendency to focus on negative information, to use and learn from that information far more than the positive information that they receive (Viash et al., 2008). Cortisol and negativity bias are two important factors in gaining and controlling people's attention. Utilizing these in positive ways in the classroom to garner learner's attention will be explored later.

The second hormone created by a good narrative that transports the narratee is oxytocin, also known as the care hormone. Zak (2015) found that the release of oxytocin to be a predictor of prosocial behaviors such as giving donations or being empathetic. Oxytocin is generated by the emotional engagement of the narrative, particularly by the emotional bonding that the protagonist of the narrative generates. Narratees who are immersed in a narrative typically experience the story world and events exactly as the protagonist does through mirror neurons and neural coupling. As many narratives are organized around overcoming some conflict and the subsequent suffering that a protagonist endures to overcome that conflict, the narratee experiences the same emotions (suffering, frustrations, loss, sadness) as the protagonist. These are the features that trigger cortisol. Then, the narratee also experience the same emotions of the narrative denouement, the final resolution of the narrative (triumph, tragedy, catharsis). These are the events that trigger oxytocin. Of note, the oxytocin release in response to a narrative should be seen as an essential aspect of experiencing transport to the story world rather than

passively consuming a narrative or hearing a narrative that is rejected. Oxytocin release requires story tellers to engage their narratee's emotions.

These two hormones working in conjunction can have a powerful effect on people's lives. This power can be understood when people refer to the stories that changed their lives or provided them some guide for living their lives. Of importance for educators, the release of oxytocin during a narrative experience has implications for the classroom community and the relationship between teachers and students, which will be explored in detail later.

Neural Coupling

Neural coupling is a phenomenon where a narrative activates the same areas of the brain in the narratee as in the narrator (Patel, 2011). Stories allow people to physically share a mental experience. One of the interesting features of the ongoing research into this phenomenon is how it explains understanding and miscommunication. According to Gregg Stephens, a researcher working on interpreting the data produced by neural coupling, "When you really understand each other, your brains become more similar in responses [to a message] over time" (Patel, 2011). It can be anticipated that narrative immersion enhances neural coupling due to the attention getting hormone release of cortisol and the language features of a narrative that signal narrativity.

Additionally, the timing of brain activity has also revealed interesting aspects of neural coupling. Stephens et al. (2010) found that narratees demonstrate in some cases a slight delay in mirroring brain activity, but in some cases a slight advance in neural activity that indicated the listener was predicting the message. This prediction of a message could be informed by narrative rationality and the assessments of narrative coherence and narrative fidelity.

Another aspect of neural coupling is mirroring neurons. Mirror neurons are brain cells that will activate both when a person acts or when a person observes an action (Keynes, 2009).
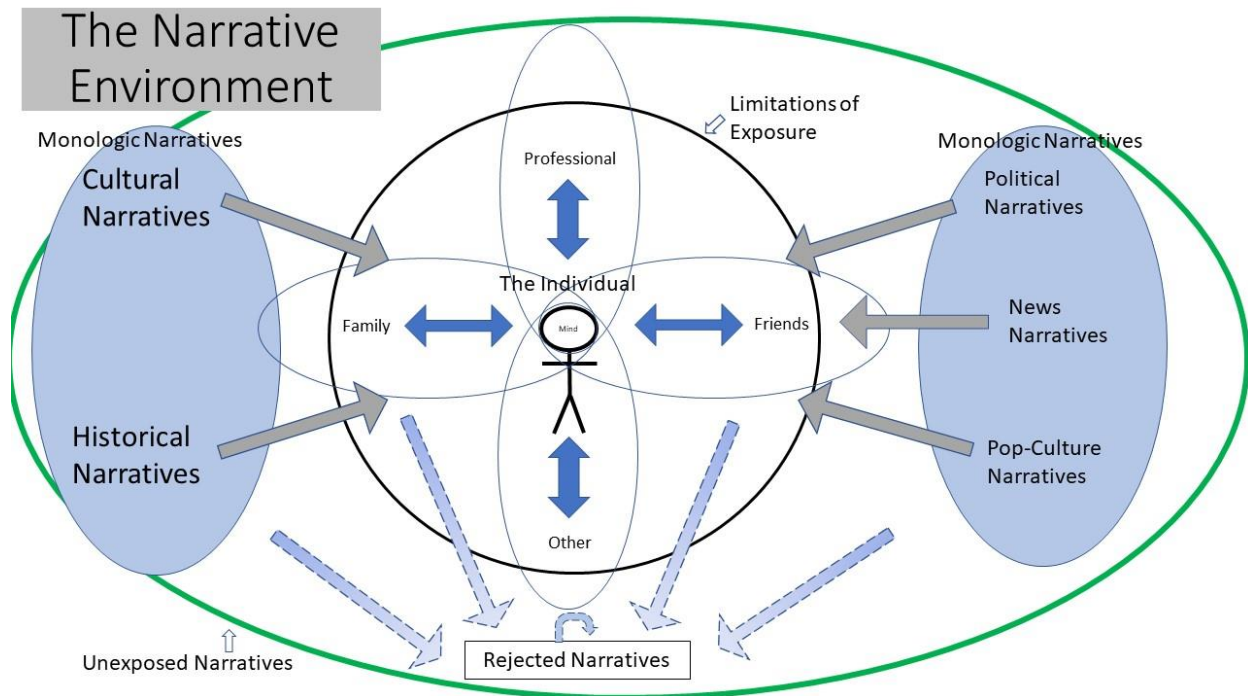
For example, the same neurons that activate while I type this sentence will activate when I watch another person typing. Mirror neurons have massive implications for theories of the mind and embodied cognition as well as language learning. If the same area of the brain is activated when a person imagines playing baseball as when they physically play baseball, then we can understand the thrill of watching baseball as well as all spectator sports. Mirror neurons are also active when narratees are transported by the narratives they are interacting with. In other words, the narratee is experiencing the narrative in all sense of that meaning instead of simply being an objective consumer of the narrative. Perhaps the best example of this phenomenon is the reaction the reader will have imagining long fingernails scraping across a blackboard. For people who are bothered by that, the sensation of simply thinking it will be very similar to being physically present to the actual action.

Understanding the cognitive elements of narrative helps teachers to understand why narratives are essential to learning. Good stories capture the attention of learners, can create a classroom community, generate empathy, mobilize the imagination to generate a simulated world of language use, stimulate creativity, and bridge communicative divides. This also helps learners understand the world around them. Most importantly, empowering them with storytelling skills that will generate narratee transport, they will be able to engage the attention and empathy of their audience and their communities.

The Narrative Environment

People live in narrative rich environments. Narratives are being exchanged to consumed several times a day. To grasp how prevalent narratives are in people's lives, and to understand on another level why they are an essential part of our language teaching practices, it is necessary to examine the how narratives move in people's lives.

Figure 1

The Narrative Environment

The Narrative Environment

Monologic Narratives

Cultural Narratives

Historical Narratives

Unexposed Narratives

Limitations of Exposure

Professional

The Individual

Family — Mind — Friends

Other

Rejected Narratives

Monologic Narratives

Political Narratives

News Narratives

Pop-Culture Narratives

Note: This shows the movement of narratives in a typical person's life.

To understand the impact of narratives on our lives, I have created a model of typical narrative discourse and discourse communities. I define discourse community as a group of people who share discourse on topics that are germane to the act of living their lives. Discourse topics may cross discourse communities, but within each discourse community there are topics that are exclusive both in nature and interest to the members of that discourse community. Narrative paradigm encompasses all modes of discourse (*logos*, *rhetoric*, and *poetic*), and by examining the narrative environment, features and genres of narratives emerge. Examining typical narrative forms from each of the dialogic narratives discourse communities illuminates unique features of each and how they impact a person's rationality.

Family narratives pertain to the ways that families exchange stories with each other as a way of defining, identifying, and unifying characteristics of the family unit, expressing the culture of the family, and reinforcing the values of the family. These types of narratives are implicitly referenced by expressions such as: "He sure is a (family name)". Uncles, aunts, or other members of extended family may make comments to their nephews or nieces that indicate their behaviors align with the well-known narratives that characterize their parents. Expressions such as "You sure are (First Name)'s daughter", indicate that the action or narrative of action that the daughter took is characteristic of behavior in which their parent is known to have engaged. It can often be followed by the narrative that explains the connection represented with some transition to a narrative mode and then a signal that a story is going to be told. This mode of discourse can follow set phrasing such as, "You know. I remember this one time when…": "You know" acts as a segue, "I remember when…" acts as narrative signal.

Professional narratives involve the construction narratives around behavior that an individual engages in when interacting in their professional community. These can be narratives about their general competence in fulfilling the duties of their profession, narratives about behaviors that are considered outside the professional norm, and gossip about personal lives of someone within a professional community, as well as others that concern people who work within the same profession. In teaching, members of this group would include students, teachers, institute administration, and other employees who may interact with people in their professional capacity.

Friend narratives are typified by sharing stories about topics of shared interest and the various pertinent elements. For instance, people who enjoy watching movies together may share stories about recent films they have seen, retelling scenes from a shared movie experience, or

gossip around the actors in whom the friends share an interest. Friend narratives are also characterized by reminiscence, nostalgia, news, and advice.

The final narrative discourse group involves all communities that do not fall into the above three categories, and can include religious, volunteer, online, and temporary discourse communities. The stories shared are often highly contextualized to the purpose of the discourse community's existence. For example, narratives shared by a discourse community could be typified in dealing with stories that represent adherence to or flaunting of the beliefs that bind that group.

These narrative discourse groups share a key feature, which is the individuals' ability to directly interact with the narrator as well as be a narrator. The narratives in these circles are dialogic. They can share their own story, hear the stories of others from members of that discourse group or be the subject of a story to other members of the discourse group whether they are present or not. This collection of narratives creates one sense of an individual's identity. It is through those stories' values, reasons, and beliefs are shared. Lessons are taught and learned.

Outside of the exposed narratives circle are the monologic narratives. I chose to exclude these from the core narrative circle because the narratives that are transmitted to the individual and to a discourse group are highly and professionally edited or modified by some unseen intermediary. That intermediary has its own motivations for the editorial and content choices that are made.

Governments, for example, exercises editorial control of which historical narratives get disseminated to the citizenry through social studies and history classes, and it typically has its own reasons for promoting the historical narratives that will be taught. Another example are

news organizations and their editors who have both an ideological perspective and a business perspective to consider when deciding how to frame a narrative. Book publishing companies and their editors have their own mission statements and interests.

Monologic narratives were also placed outside of the core narrative group because typically, the narratee cannot directly interact with the telling of the narratives those groups produce, nor can the narratee contribute to them in the same way that they can contribute to the narratives that happen inside of their social discourse communities. The monologic discourse communities impose a great deal of narrative pressure onto their narratees, they also serve to communicate values, and as mechanisms for wielding power in society.

The narrative environment model also illustrates how within each narrative discourse community, an individual has an opportunity to construct an idiosyncratic identity that they will be known by within that discourse group. This construction is made by the stories they tell about themselves and by the stories that their actions among the members of that discourse community create when told by other members of that discourse group. People moving to into new discourse communities have are always presented with the opportunity to construct their identity with the members of that community. For language learners', anonymity is only intensified when a new discourse community is a language learners' target language community. So few of the narratives that have informed their beliefs, reasons, and actions carry over at first, thereby robbing them of shared experiences and stories from which they can create bonds. Being aware of having a blank slate upon which a person can actively decide who they are can be a powerfully liberating and empowering realization. It can also be a terribly traumatizing and difficult journey. Students who have the power to control their own narratives, have the power to move beyond superficial differences and get to the core or their humanity thereby building new

communities in any new discourse community they may find themselves. However, most people

perhaps do not think about how they control their narrative or how their actions will create

narratives about them within a given community. By teaching narrative techniques to language

learners, teachers raise their students awareness and help their learners gain a voice in their new

discourse community.

Understanding the narrative environment that people occupy also allows us to see

theoretical narrative concepts in action. The case of familial narratives and typical family events

can serve to examine these concepts. It can be argued that emotions run so high and so deeply in

families because of the tight bonds and values that are they share, bonds that are informed and

reinforced through all the stories told about the family. When misunderstandings happen, the

emotions run hotter because an important neural coupling that should not be uncoupled has

uncoupled. That loss of connection is not merely the loss of a message but also the disconnection

of an important mental bond with people who are supposed to always understand.

Consider a son or daughter who gets in trouble at school, and the parents hear the story if

the incident from someone such as an administrator or teacher. The son or daughter, having been

raised on family narratives, tries to explain their side of the story but finds their parents

unreceptive. A great deal of angst is felt by the child who cannot quite understand why they are

not being understood. For the parents, their child's story is not a new. They may have lived it

themselves or heard it from others, but regardless see that story from a perspective their child

cannot understand, and so they perhaps cannot empathize with their son or daughter in the way

that the son or daughter hopes. In this narrative, there is also tension in the overlapping discourse

groups of society, values, expectations, culture, and obligations. They share some of the same

goals and rules but not all, and within that tension is the individual choice and the engagement of

their narrative rationality to assess their options about what is right for them based on the logic of good reasons, i.e., all of the coherence and fidelity assessments that must be made to determine their values, beliefs, and actions. Also consider typical assertions to such emotional behavior: "You're being irrational." That is not entirely true. The child is simply using narrative rationality and not empirical rationality for which they have yet to be trained. Also, their emotional response is because one understanding of their reality, the family bond, has been quite disturbed.

The narrative environment accounts for the state of late postmodern society, (some consider postmodernism has fully run its course and that intellectuals have moved on to something else, but like other intellectual "isms", the ideas and discourses still circulate, intermingle, and integrate with other philosophies of the past) where power is held by competing narratives. People are being asked to make a choice of which narratives to subscribe to the conservative or liberal narrative, the science or political narrative, the rural or urban narrative. These false dichotomies establish villains and creates highly motivating narratives through the engagement of cortisol and oxytocin. It also pushes people to the extremes and into tribalism, in groups and outgroups. However, if narratives can be used to turn people into villains, highly skilled story tellers can also undo the false dichotomies. Stories can shine, and often do shine, light on the commonalities people share across cultures, countries, and languages, thereby bringing people together rather than driving them apart. For this to happen, the world needs more storytellers who are well versed in the means of telling good stories.

For teachers, understanding the narratives, competing narratives, rejected narratives, and monologic narratives that students are exposed to, that they themselves are exposed to, and the narratives they are exposing their students to is something that should be given considerable care. Educators are an important source of identity narrative. The inherent power structures that

teachers are representatives of and the power the stories that are generated about students by

teachers have lifelong implications for students. Consider the narratives that a student can derive

from their grades: "I gave it my best shot, but (teacher) still failed me. I guess (family member)

was right. In this country people like me (read ethnic or socioeconomic group) can't get ahead no

matter what we do." This example shows narrative rationality in action. The contribution of an

academic narrative has contributed to a learners' self-efficacy when added to the narratives from

other discourse communities. In this example, the narrative of the learner's grade, being

integrated with the monologic narratives from society and the family narrative about their role in

society, form the structures of their beliefs about themselves and what they can do.

Consider the narrative dialogue that student engages in explaining this outcome to their

parents, and how subsequent years of such academic evaluations affect the student's ability to

believe anything else, particularly when there are people in their discourse communities who are

reinforcing that narrative. Understanding narrative paradigm helps teachers to understand the

damaging narratives that can dominate a young person's life, and hopefully provide them with

the means to disrupt those narratives.

One way that teachers can achieve a disruption of these types of negative narratives is

this through a transition away from outcome oriented, outcome emphasized education. By

placing greater emphasis on learning as demonstrated through the evidence of a student's

engagement in learning and their acts of learning throughout the duration of a course, teachers

can encourage an orientation towards learning rather than an orientation towards grades and

outcomes. Also, narratives reflection activities give learners opportunities to decide for themself

if they are learning or growing, and this can be both a place of self-realization where the external

discourse communities narratives around them become rejected narratives, as well as a place

where questions are raised and learners can find answers to the problems they are having by asking their teacher or engaging with a new discourse community where other new narratives may come to influence the learner.

Thus I rediscovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.
— *Umberto Eco, Postscript to the Name of the Rose*
and
Because learning does not consist only of knowing what we must or we can do, but also of knowing what we could do and perhaps should not do.
— *Umberto Eco, The Name of the Rose*
and
To survive, you must tell stories.
— *Umberto Eco, The Island of the Day Before*

Narrative Pedagogy

Hopefully, the exploration of some of the important concepts, features, and findings related to narratives have made the case for a more extensive inclusion of narratives as part of teaching practices. Throughout this paper, I have been arguing for greater usage of narrative techniques in teaching of all kinds, but specifically in second and foreign language classes. This section will cover relevant theories of learning as they relate to second language teaching and then some approaches to integrating narrative into teaching practices from a curriculum design perspective to learning and reflective activities recommendations.

Theory of Learning

Learning is an emergent phenomenon. It occurs at the nexus of wanting and needing to know something, or how to do something, and having access to the appropriate resources to deconstruct and reconstruct the thing about which the learner wants and needs to know (how to do). The teacher's role in a classroom is to direct learners' attention, inspire their desire to know, and provide them with resources that will allow them to successfully navigate the thing that the learner should learn about.

Theory of Teacher and Student Learning

Learners learn from people they trust, respect, and feel safe with. Learning requires the learner to confront frontiers of the unknown, to negotiate not only new information, concepts, and ways of thinking, but also ways of being. This requires them to expose themselves to failure and loss of face in front of their peers as well as other members of their discourse communities. A teaching-learning relationship built on mutual respect is imperative. This can be a challenge because learning can sometimes be emotionally charged. However, regardless of the conditions, giving and earning respect are necessary as learners cannot learn from people they do not respect, and learners suffer significant obstacles trying to learn from people who do not respect them.

Additionally, the teacher needs to be expert in their field. Expertise is about being able to deconstruct concepts, answer learner questions, and provide suitable explanations that make concepts salient or confusion clear. This expertise includes understanding content, understanding classroom management skills, and understanding how much to give and how much to require the students to chase on their own.

Theory of Language Learning

Language learning occurs when learners can meaningfully connect elements of a language (form) with its meaning and usage. Language learning may occur when learners notice previously unknown features of the language i.e., new forms, meanings, or usages, and can test hypotheses about how that previously unknown feature of the language fits within the whole language. Some language learning may occur through repetitive practice and exposure to the features of the language that the learner is trying to acquire. Some language learning may occur when a learner attempts to use the language by creating a message (any attempt to communicate in the target language). This learning by using can be enhanced through informal and formal

feedback. Language learning may occur when learners can infer new features of the target language from a context of language where most of the message is known or understood. This is not an exhaustive accounting of the ways a learner may learn an unknown language.

Optimal Learning

Optimal learning is a state of cognitive engagement where the learner's affective needs are met, the resources/affordances (including the teacher/facilitator) for learning are readily available, the learner's attention is totally engaged in their exploration of the learning materials during which they can extract meaningful modifications to past knowledge and understandings in order to incorporate the object of learning into their understanding of the thing that is to be learned, or they can simply add the new knowledge to their existing knowledge/understanding.

Essential Narrative Elements

The theoretical concepts of narrative help teachers know what elements need to be present in the narratives they use in their classes. However, applying these techniques present unique challenges for teachers, many of whom have never had advanced training in narrative construction. Narratives are values ladened and therefore, regardless of the amount of theoretical knowledge one has of the elements of narrative, constructing them requires the synthesis of those narrative elements into messages that adhere to the narrative rationality of the narratee. This can be cultural, but as narratives are also universal and the effects that narratives have on the brain are biological, there are some narrative structures and character introduction techniques that can help teachers integrate narratives into their classes.

Teachers interested in utilizing narratives in their classes should approach narratives from the perspective of structure, technique, and language learning resources. Narrative structure refers to the order in which narrative events are delivered to narratees. Narrative techniques are

the means used to deliver the narrative to the narratees. Language learning resources are objects that make the linguistic forms of the narrative more salient to students who may or may not have learned or acquired the language of the narrative text they are receiving. Narrative structure and technique are interlocking pieces that allow teachers to utilize narrative effectively. Language learning resources offer teachers enhancements to the narrative to facilitate the learners' understanding. Teachers who follow these guidelines will be able to create a narrative that will get and keep learners' attention.

Structure

Structure is the order in which narrative events are delivered to the audience, herein referred to as students. This typically refers to the beginning, middle, and end of the story. The beginning of the story typically establishes setting, primary characters, and establishes the central conflict of the story. The beginning of the story needs to serve two cognitive functions. The first is narrative transport. By opening a story with an immersive, sensory rich description of the setting and possibly the characters, students will feel like they are walking along with the character. This can be accomplished in as little as one sentence and possibly less. Additionally, the beginning will introduce the main character(s), which if done with the appropriate techniques, builds an emotional bond between character and students. Finally, the beginning must grab the students' attention, if sensory language creates transport into the story world, then introducing the central conflict of the story generates attention through the release of cortisol. The middle of the story introduces more conflict and obstacles, which deepens the students' attention and interest. The end of the story provides the final resolution to the central conflict and releases students from the grip of the story or leaves them in its grip if the pedagogical purpose is served by that decision.

Narrative structures can conform to almost any shape the teacher wishes to give it, so long as the narrative accomplishes the function of transport and capturing students' attention. Teachers who plan their narratives carefully can find opportunities to integrate key grammatical elements into the narrative and repeat them throughout the story. This type of repetition makes for powerful, long lasting memories. Consider the repetition in the story such as *The Three Pigs* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. Carefully planned story structure creates other opportunities as well, but exploration of those fall beyond the scope of this work.

Techniques

There are many narrative techniques but for busy teachers, the most effective techniques are those that get and keep student's attention. Karl Iglesias' (2005) provides storytellers with three techniques to generate instant appeal and emotional engagement with a character in a story. Teachers can use these techniques in the beginning of their stories to strengthen the attention getting power of the story. These techniques also help generate empathy, and as such they are worthy of teaching in addition to using. Iglesias (2005) describes three ways to characterize the main actor of the story: show the character act selflessly, demonstrate their admirable desires and qualities, and have them suffer some unfair treatment. Using a short space to establish the character of the story in this way quickly generates student interest.

Unfair treatment of a main character generates a strong attention getting response from students, and this in addition to subsequent setbacks for the main character will trigger a cortisol response. Creating characters in this manner will also trigger an oxytocin response from the learner once the story reaches its conclusion. Also, scenes or moments that show the character cares for something or someone else demonstrates compassion for others and generates a trustworthy assessment of the narrative from the audience. Expression of emotions throughout

the narrative lend to the narrativity of the story. The desire established in the beginning gives the story a point and tellibility. Finally, the entire narrative establishes neural coupling and engages mirror neurons.

Language learning resources

Language learning resources are any resources that a teacher can add to the presentation of the narrative, or the creation of narratives by students, to provide support to the learners either in comprehending the narrative or communicating their narrative. These language learning resources should provide for multimodal presentations of the narrative. they should help to communicate subtle nuances of the narrative, and they should improve the reception of the narrative. These resources include but are not limited to pictures, videos, realia, music or background music, scripts, gestures, and facial expressions. The table below provides teachers with a quick reference overview of these concepts.

Table 1

Essential Narrative Elements

Narrative Structure	Narrative Techniques	Language learning resources
Beginning - Introduce the central conflict	Expressions of a desire/goal (Iglesias, 2005)	Pictures
	Expressions of a moment of unfair treatment (Iglesias, 2005)	Realia
	Scene showing care for something or someone other than yourself (Iglesias, 2005)	Script/ Keywords
Middle - Encounter setbacks	Express interactions with obstacles and setbacks.	Gestures
	Express emotions.	Facial Expressions
Conclusion and denouement	Express success or failure.	Stressing and repetition
	Express lessons learned from that experience.	Changes in tone of voice

Other narrative elements that teachers can consider when utilizing narratives in their

classrooms are the emotions they aim to elicit from the learners. These emotions should focus on

gaining and maintaining learner attention and engagement in not only the task but also in any

subsequent learning activities. The table below provides some of the emotions that can be

elicited through the narrative to maintain student attention.

Table 2

Key Emotions to Elicit.

surprise	curiosity	awe
relief	suspense	anticipation
worry	humor	frustration

Note: These emotions are and should be elicited through setups and payoffs within the narrative.

Narrative and Building Learning Relationships

Relationships are the most important things in life, and they are the most important things

in teaching. If a teacher has a good relationship with the learners, the learners will most likely

learn something. If there is no relationship, there is little or no learning. Most courses allow time

for the introduction at the beginning of the year, and this is a crucial moment for teachers to start

building a relationship with learners by introducing themselves to the class. One dimension of

this introduction is an aspect of mutual respect, the students have a right to know who they will

be learning with. Another dimension is that is a chance to set the tone of the class, an open and

sincere tone. Teachers sharing things about their life with students is only fair since the teacher

will undoubtedly require the students to share things about their lives in the class. Another way

this sets the tone is that it is an opportunity to share your values and concerns with the students.

Sharing a narrative about your own struggles with studying a second language or struggles with

communication norms in another culture is advisable because those stories can reduce learners' anxieties about the class and the teacher by humanizing themselves, letting them know that they can empathize with their struggles and that the teacher will be reasonable, and signaling that failure and struggles were and are key features of learning any language. Additionally, these stories are often humorous, and humor is a useful narrative technique to use in a language learning classroom where humorous mistakes will happen.

From a cognitive perspective, the modeling of an introduction that the teacher might hope to elicit from the students when done as a narrative will activate the same areas of the brain that they will need to use to create their own. This neural coupling tied with the "good story" the teacher tells will be one way in which the learners can draw from their classroom experience to express themselves in the language. The other is the linguistic modelling. Ideally students should encounter some new and useful feature of the language (in form, meaning, or use) and the subsequent engagement with the narrative that the teacher creates can draw their attention to that.

An important note about self-introductions. In my experience there seem to be teachers who are comfortable sharing personal stories and teachers who are not. If a teacher is not comfortable sharing personal stories, it is useful to think about their teacher persona. The narrative techniques above will still be effective, but rather than simply a bonding activity to share with students, the teacher can focus more on the language that they are going to be teaching or introducing in subsequent lessons and use this as a way of priming the students for that study. The story will humanize the teacher still, and the teacher will not need to reveal personal details about their life.

Guidelines for Crafting a Narrative Self - Introduction

Using the components from the chart above, the first step in creating a narrative is determining what kind of narrative is going to be meaningful to your learners. If the learners are in an ESL context, perhaps narratives about being lost in a new culture or homesick, or not being understood would be most useful. Within that narrative, the students will see themselves represented. In an EFL context, narratives about traveling to a foreign country, struggles with learning a new language, frustrating teachers, the first time you did (x) in the target language and failed all can be useful ways of generating interest and creating a bond with learners.

Once the teacher has their topic, they should think about what they wanted in that moment and what stopped them from getting it. Then they should consider how to add the other elements from the above guidelines to their narrative. They may or may not have been present in the teacher's real-life story but by adding them to the story will likely enhance the learners' attention to it.

Next, the teacher should consider the structure of their delivery. Consider the best starting point. It should be somewhere close to when the conflict arises but give just enough space to establish an initial equilibrium state and establish the teacher's character. The beginning is a place to establish both the character of the teacher in the story and the teacher of the class. In some ways, this story is a declaration who the teacher is (like every other story people tell about themselves). The techniques of establishing a desire (goal), suffering some injustice, and showing your humanity (Iglesias, 2005) should be established rather quickly in a self-introduction. This can easily be done in a few sentences. Once you establish the main conflict (problem to be solved) then the way the teacher tells the rest of the narrative until they arrive at the end and the denouement requires the teacher to consider how they will generate the emotions

they wish to elicit from the students to maintain their attention. Compressing and elongating story time and the pacing of the story events can accomplish these things.

Finally, the teacher should present the students with the end. Point out how they felt and the lessons they learned. Once the story is completed, the teacher can transition to student introduction activities where students share some story about themselves, perhaps their goals for the class, or other things that were touched upon in the teacher's story. The activity for the students should mirror the narrative the teacher delivered in some way.

Perhaps these techniques will not come naturally at first, but with practice, and people have so many opportunities to practice telling stories in their lives, things will get easier and more intuitive.

Structuring a self-introduction activity

Typically, the goals of an introduction activity are for the teacher to learn something about their students, and for the class to learn something about their classmates. However, these activities can be perfunctory and seldom meaningful uses of time or language when students are already familiar with each other as in contexts such as schools where they have been studying together for extended periods of time. Teachers should use this self-introduction time to encourage students to learn something new about each other and to make the communication meaningful.

In any case, a narrative activity will help raise their awareness about themselves and their classmates and engage or re-engage them with the target language. Consider activities where students can work in groups to share a story about something they have struggled with in language learning. You can give them framing questions such as: What was your big hope or goal when you started studying English? What do you find difficult? Was there a time when you

said something embarrassing? What is one language learning lesson you could share with your group? This type of speaking activity can also help you establish speaker - listener norms. Pay particular attention to establishing the roles for listeners so that they will engage in active listening and provide the speaker with prompting questions for deeper reflections or exploration of their experiences. This type of activity segues well into a declaration of learning goals for the year which can then segue into an explanation of the teachers' goals for the period of study.

Consider a more existential narrative approach. From junior high school on, students are constantly grappling with the big questions in life, and learners can explore these questions through their own narratives. For whatever reason, these types of topics rarely enter the second language curriculum, but they are deeply engaging for all learners. Eliciting ideas about what constitutes a person's identity, and guiding them to some important concepts like actions, defining events, things that they think are beautiful, things that frustrate them, their passions, their employment, and their hopes and dreams. Any of these topics can be situated in a narrative. Consider an introduction activity where students share a story about what they realized what beauty is. Expressions of values through narratives can be powerful ways to engage learners and build classroom communities.

Finally, a simple but effective self-introduction story is for the students to tell a personal story about an object of significance. Symbols have powerful stories behind them that will help the learner express the values and beliefs they hold in a way that allows them to connect to their classmates and for you as their teacher to see them in a unique light.

Whatever is decided, consider what emotions the students will generate in their classmates through their story and use that to generate a powerful bond between them and help establish a community of learners. Consider what language they should use so that as they talk

with each other they provide the teacher with a sense of their language abilities and needs. Consider preparing peripherals and supports for them so that they can more easily and fluently tell their story. Finally, consider the narrative structure, techniques, and resources in the table above. How can elements of that be used, and how can those elements be presented to students to enhance their ability to express themselves.

Narrative in Curriculum Design

Like other methods and approaches to teaching, a teacher does not need to completely reorganize their teaching to embrace the use of narratives in their classes at all times. Narrative components can be adapted for presentations or for illustrative anecdotes. It can serve to gain attention or to make abstract concepts concrete. When examining your curriculum, a good goal is to find the best and most logical ways to incorporate narratives where they can be utilized to enhance learning and memory. Also, consider times where narratives will enhance relationships and the classroom community. For curriculum design, narrative can have a strong or weak presence.

Strong Narrative Curriculum Design

In a previous work, I proposed a narrative framework for designing a task based English class (Peters, 2015). The units are organized around narrative events, the class used a "town" as a framework, the town was populated by "citizen" characters who could be used to create situational role plays. The students were "visitors" to the town visiting on some business of their own choice.

In this curriculum, students are asked to assume an identity when they come into class by creating a simple character profile. Within a typical school, students in a class may be very familiar with each other thereby rendering some target language communication meaningless. By

assuming an identity, students who already have a lot of knowledge about each other can create an unknown persona for the purposes of roleplaying and therefore render communication on day-to-day topics meaningful again. In addition to this, students are asked in their profile to determine their profession, and are provided with prompts like detective, poet, engineer, explorer. These "career" choices ignite the learners' imagination, but also serve as a basis for them to explore the target language in their own way based on their own unique interest and differentiated instruction. For example, a student who chooses to be a detective might be assigned homework to watch or read detective movies, stories, or clips. Then that student will bring a unique genre-based lexis to the class. During class, they will be responsible for bridging communication gaps in speaking activities thereby making them both student and teacher as well as giving them their own unique contributions to the classroom community. The units also make use of conflict situations, making the whole class an exploration of language through a type of participatory drama.

This type of curriculum fully embraces the narrative while still providing other types of typical language teaching forms and assessments that will likely be required from the institution that a teacher works in. There are other features that play prominently in this approach: the identity creation process raises the learners' self-awareness, engaging physical and multimodal materials, keeps their interests and creates massive opportunities for language learning, and imaginative immersion into the target language which cognitively simulates being in the target language community.

Weak Narrative Curriculum Design

I would make the case that the weakest narrative curriculum design should still include narrative elements in every unit and possibly narrative elements in every class. A weak narrative

curriculum design might use some narrative texts for analysis and then have students do some narrative activity. Teachers might have students do narrative activities as warmups before transitioning to more typical forms of language instruction. All these elements are great and useful if students are also being prompted to choose carefully how they construct their story and intentionally choosing details which raises the narrativity of their expressions. However, in this paper I want to focus on one aspect of curriculum design that probably gets overlooked too frequently which is narrative reflection on students' learning experiences.

The stories we tell about ourselves reflect our own self-efficacy, but also reflect our proclivity to focus on negative experiences due to our inherent negativity bias. Identifying and exploring those negative experiences is an important site of learning. This narrative reflection can be administered in many ways including but not limited to free writing activities where the student narrates either a short-term narrative about what happened in the class on that day or a long-term narrative about what happened in the class that week or during that unit. A structured writing narrative activity that directs the learners' narrative attention to the class community (What happened in the class? Narrating the interactions of the microsociety), their individual actions (What did you do during this (class, week, unit)?), their individual struggles (What did you struggle with this (time period)? How did you tackle those obstacles? What did it make you think about/ How did they make you feel?).

This type of structured narrative reflection will draw the learners' attention to their own roles and behaviors in their learning. It could also be a place for the instructor to intervene, creating a dialogue about the positive things the student is doing as well as perhaps aspects of their behavior that the students may have overlooked. Alternatively, the students may naturally notice that the way they were feeling about a particular experience, when placed before them in

their narrative, was not quite as accurate as they had believed. They may discover positives they had not noticed in the moment. This discovery is powerful in shaping the learners' understanding both of themselves and the world around them.

A third type of narrative reflection is to share the story of their learning verbally. Using the describe, interpret, and evaluate analysis approach, students will narrate the events of the class or unit by strictly describing actions as observed without values ladened descriptions. Then they will interpret the events of the narration, and finally evaluate those events regarding how they think their learning progressed through the class or unit. This analysis creates greater self-awareness, sensitivity to the needs and ideas of others in the group, and perhaps awareness of important learning opportunities that were missed or that need to be addressed. This type of narrative activity also may include the teacher, and this is yet another reason it is important to have a good relationship with students based on mutual respect rather than on an authoritarian teacher-students paradigm. Teachers can also follow this activity up with recommendations on how improve their learning experience based on their narrative reflections.

Narrative lessons and activities

There are innumerable narrative based or narrative oriented activities that have been used well. Taking scenes from movies or books and having students predict the outcomes, having students use pictures to tell a story, having students write and perform a skit, and doing analysis of texts are just a few that can be used at any time. There are two for narrative activities. The first, students should be given a chance to understand the narrative elements that the table above provides so they can utilize the lessons learned from the narrative activities. The second is that any input or analysis activity should be followed up with an output narrative activity and that essential elements of narrativity and tellibility should be followed during these output activities.

Without output activities, learners may miss important elements of crafting a good story. These elements will help ensure that their narratives are effective and promote their ability to effectively share their personal stories in society once they graduate or leave the class.

Teachers should also work to ensure that narrative activities are multi-modal. Due to the nature of narration, a lot of unfamiliar and possibly uncommon vocabulary will arise in the composition of the narrative, regardless of the technique. By utilizing multi-modal ways of composing their stories, the students will be able to effectively communicate their story to their classmates regardless of their classmates' understanding of a particular lexical unit. In addition, multimodal storytelling helps shift some of the cognitive weight from purely imaginative story creation. The cognitive load of imagining, composing, and searching for the necessary language is high, but when there are pictures, sounds, scripts, gestures, etc., those modes will carry some of the cognitive weight for the learners. More importantly, these additional modes will also inspire certain language expressions, giving the learner a rich creative experience and enrich the language being used by learner and thereby the whole class.

A note on feedback for learner narratives. It is useful to guide learners into digging more deeply into some of the elements of the story they are telling. It is a truism that there are no new stories, but it is also true that narrative voices come from the specific things narrators notice about the world around them and the experiences they observe and feel during any typical narrative event. Teachers can foster the development of narrative voice by asking questions such as: Can you explain this in more detail? How did that taste? What exactly did this thing look like? Can you describe that in more detail? It should be noted, one of the dangers of feedback is stealing a student's voice by interjecting our own opinions and views about what the learner is trying to express, and this should be carefully avoided.

Future Considerations

More research needs to be done to learn the effects of utilizing narratives in the second language classroom. This project represents the theoretical work that will inform further practical exploration of narratives, hopefully leading to the development of concrete curriculum recommendations, materials development, and activities. It should also be noted this project omitted key aspects of narratives, such as the powerful role narratives have on managing and overcoming trauma. The omitted features will also be integrated into future explorations and research. Once teaching procedures are tested, the quantitative results of using narrative in second language learning should be examined. Many questions already exist which need to be answered: Do narrative activities help to build students' ability to remember new vocabulary? Does a narrative curriculum lead to engagement with the target language outside of the classroom? Does narrative in the classroom lead to greater speaking fluency? Does narrative lead to more creative uses of the target language from learners and a greater sense of ownership over their second language voice? Narratives are gaining attention across disciplines as researchers and practitioners of a variety of sciences and social science realize the power that narratives have to inform. Language teachers can do more to explore the power of narratives in language learning.

<div align="center">

Conclusion

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The goal of this paper was to make the case for making greater use of narratives in the second language classroom. I presented a very brief overview of the philosophical and historical underpinnings of narrative paradigm and the intellectual movements that have shaped social discourse in this time. The view promoted in this paper is that people primarily communicate through narratives, and they use narrative rationality to make their decisions, express their

values, and act in their lives. I then presented an overview of core theoretical concepts related to narrative, examined the assessment features of narrative rationality, and presented some of the cognitive effects that narrative has on the minds of narratees.

My key argument is that training learners to be good storytellers who can communicate powerful narratives in their communities empowers them to represent themselves. The power of their narrative will gain the attention of the members of their community building trust, understanding, and greater equity. This is one reason why getting minority representation in mass media and popular culture is such a challenging task. Stories allow narrators and narratees to look past race, ethnicity, and religion to see the core humanity shared by all.

By introducing the model of our narrative environment, educators can analyze our social interactions to see the nexus of discourse groups, society, identity creation, and belief construction. It is more important now than ever to have representation of all people in the public sphere and particularly in good stories. Consider the impact that the movie *Black Panther* had on the black community in the United States and the sense of empowerment they derived from the various representations of characters in that movie. Consider the impact that Princess Leia from the movie *Star Wars* had on a generation of young women? Also consider the stereotypic portrayals of people from various countries and cultures around the world, and the damage that can have on those groups of people who emigrate to a new country. Consider the way refugees are portrayed as pure victims in need of humanitarian assistance, dehumanized, and devalued, and consider the way this harms their access to rights guaranteed by law. Consider the way groups of people are characterized and villainized as monoliths without nuance. These are all narratives that individuals in society can dismantle story by story shared experience and shared struggle from community to community, community to region, and region to nation.

However, this is also the core problem with framing everything as a narrative. Opposing narratives can compete endlessly merely villainizing the "other" group in perpetuity until that group is utterly dehumanized, and their opponents come to view that compromising with them is tantamount to treason or an act of evil. By teaching our students how to be good storytellers, we also need to teach them how to deconstruct the stories they hear, to critically step back from the emotions that are being incited and the arguments being levied to evaluate the rhetorical territory. By being good storytellers, we should also be story collectors and seek to hear stories of lives that we do not often encounter. To literally walk a mile in the coal miners' shoes, to wake up with the sun to go to work as a relocated refugee in a community that does not quite know what to do with them, to live a moment in the checkout line of a retail employee who has almost no money left and who will overdraft their checking account to get enough groceries to feed their children. The more stories we hear, the more people might say, "I don't know what to believe," and the more they do not know what to believe, the more they might turn to experts for answers reestablishing and re-recognizing the role of experts in society. We need that too. Whatever happens, there will be another shift once power becomes consolidated around a form of discourse and society is faced with the inequities that are inherent in that power structure. Perhaps the next turn will be to poetics and aesthetics again? Regardless, stories are always with us and they are an important part of our lives. Students who gain authorial power over their own stories are also empowered in their lives. It is our job as educators to make that happen.

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