Functions of Teachers' Narratives in EFL Classroom Contexts

Funciones de las narraciones de los profesores en contextos de clase de inglés como lengua extranjera

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Although narratives have been widely used and investigated in the second/foreign language literature, studying narratives in authentic classroom contexts and their functions has received comparatively little attention. To fill this gap, the present study examines the narratives produced naturally by teachers within English-as-a-foreign-language classroom contexts to find out what functions these narratives serve. The participants were five Iranian teachers teaching general English courses in a private language institute. Following the principles of qualitative research in data analysis, 30 hours of naturally occurring data were first transcribed, then their narratives were identified. After analyzing the 23 determined narratives in the dataset, three functions of narratives emerged, namely, moral, pedagogical, and intercultural.

Keywords: intercultural function, functions of narratives, moral function, pedagogical function, teachers' narratives

El estudio de las narraciones en contextos reales de aula y sus funciones han recibido comparativamente poca atención. En un esfuerzo por llenar este vacío, el presente estudio examina las narraciones producidas naturalmente por profesores en contextos de la clase de inglés para averiguar qué funciones cumplen aquellas. Los participantes fueron cinco profesores iraníes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Siguiendo los principios de la investigación cualitativa en el análisis de datos, primero se transcribieron 30 horas de datos que ocurrieron naturalmente y luego se identificaron las narraciones en ellos. Después de analizar las veintitrés narraciones identificadas en el conjunto de datos, surgieron tres funciones de las narrativas, a saber: moral, pedagógica e intercultural.

Palabras clave: funciones de las narraciones, función intercultural, función moral, función pedagógica, narraciones de los profesores

Introduction

Narratives have attracted the attention of many researchers in the field of education. This interest is because narratives have the power to access the voices of the main stakeholders involved in education (i.e., teachers and students) more directly. It has also been proposed that, compared to quantitative and qualitative research, narratives offer "deeper, sensitive and accurate portrayals of experience" (Swidler, 2000, p. 553). In other words, narratives are a way of expressing human beings' ideas and revealing their most profound beliefs about different issues.

This view of narratives is in line with the recent movement in second/foreign language (L2) teacher education which asks for outgrowing a simplistic behaviorist notion of instruction and instead studying teachers' cognitive and social views in L2 teaching contexts (Johnson, 2009). Concerning this new belief, L2 teachers are "active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). In line with assigning this new role to teachers, it is essential to gain insights into teachers' experiences to understand their views. A narrative is a reliable tool to this end; it can reveal teachers' personal experiences (Levinson, 2006) and help us understand how teachers' knowledge is structured (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Despite such importance, narrative studies have been criticized for their detachment from natural contexts in which narratives occur. For example, Schegloff (1997) argues that "storytelling abstracted from its interactional setting, occasioning, and uptake is an academically hybridized form" (p. 104) and criticizes the "artificial environment of the academic elicitation" (p. 105). It has been suggested that narratives should be studied in their naturally occurring context to avoid their decontextualization rather than interview-elicited forms, mainly focusing on their setting and the interaction between all participants in a narrative (Rühlemann, 2013).

Even though narratives are considered a valuable way to understand people and learn from each other (Son, 2008), one can only appreciate the value of narratives by investigating how people use stories to make sense of their experiences in particular contexts from their perspectives.

Although narratives have been widely used and investigated in the L2 literature (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2008, 2010, 2016; Golombek & Johnson, 2004, 2017, 2021; Johnson & Golombek, 2002, 2011; Kalaja et al., 2008; Liu & Xu, 2011; Nunan & Choi, 2010; Swain et al., 2011; Tsui, 2007), studying narratives in authentic classroom contexts and their functions has received comparatively little attention. In other words, studies on teachers' narratives in L2 teacher education have predominantly used interviews or prompts to make teachers produce narratives (Golombek & Johnson, 2004), and investigating teacher narratives within particular teaching and learning contexts has been overlooked in previous literature (Warren, 2020). So, instead of analyzing the linguistic or sociolinguistic features and functions of teachers' narratives in the natural context of their use, the term narrative often refers to teachers' autobiographies, written reflections, and journal writings (Vásquez, 2007). As Vásquez (2011) points out,

> the predominant mode of narrative research in TESOL— following the trend in educational research, as well as in other social sciences—has clearly been that of narrative inquiry, with its concomitant privileging of autobiographical big stories, or researcher-elicited narratives. In contrast, narrative analysis, with its focus on the specific details of small stories (i.e., stories told in everyday conversational contexts) remains much rarer in the field. (p. 536)

To fill this gap, the present study examines the narratives produced naturally by teachers within English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom contexts. Analyzing these spontaneously occurring narratives

in classrooms is hoped to show what functions they serve. The following research question was posited to achieve the present study's aim: What are the functions of narratives produced by EFL teachers in their classroom context?

Before we go any further, two caveats are in order. First, the terms *story* and *narrative* are used interchangeably throughout the paper, as they are "synonymous terms associated with lay and expert contexts respectively" (Thornborrow & Coates, 2005, p. 16). Second, this paper does not aim to look at narratives as a form of inquiry which scholars have emphasized in both educational (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2007; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; Rex & Juzwik, 2011) and L2 (Barkhuizen, 2016; Barkhuizen et al., 2014; Golombek & Johnson, 2004, 2017, 2021; Johnson & Golombek, 2002, 2011) research and practice to understand and document teachers' professional development. Nevertheless, when the term narrative is used in this article, it is meant a form of a story told by teachers in their natural classroom context. Narrative researchers use the terms *big stories* and *small stories* to highlight the differences between these two traditions in narrative studies. Big stories are defined as "the grander narratives we tell ourselves, the big retrospectives elicited from interviews" (Watson, 2007, p. 371), while small stories, in contrast, refer to the "ephemeral narratives emerging in everyday, mundane contexts" (Watson, 2007, p. 371). Although the narrative is defined in its classical form in both traditions as a text that connects events, actions, and experiences across time and that, moreover, evaluates these events and experiences (Labov, 1972), the methodological way in which it is approached is different. The former is more of an etic view, and the latter more of an emic one. While the first one tries to deal with a specific aspect of teachers' behavior or thought, the second one does not start with any hypothesis but with the aim to explore with a pure mind, that is, without imposing any presuppositions.

Literature Review

Why should a person tell a story in the first place? There are various reasons for telling personal experience narratives from a sociolinguistic perspective. For example, considering gender, it has been argued that men and women tell narratives to achieve different aims: Men portray some contest through their narratives, and women try to foster a sense of community by telling stories (Johnstone, 1993). It has also been proposed that people pursue morality in their stories (Walton & Brewer, 2001). In these narratives, a moral worldview is projected by emphasizing an incident in which a protagonist violated social expectations and norms. The narrator seems to try to clarify, reinforce, or revise their beliefs and values by recounting the violation and revealing their moral stance toward it (Ochs & Capps, 2001). However, another function of narratives, perhaps the most important, is attributed to identity construction (e.g., Bamberg, 2004a, 2004b; Georgakopoulou, 2006a, 2006b). In other words, the point of a story is, from a broader perspective, the sense that people can make of it; more specifically, what the events reported indicate concerning personal and cultural values and expectations. Hence, more importantly than just telling stories, a narrative operates as "a type of discourse through which we configure identity and self" (Bamberg, 2004a, p. 332). Summarizing the functions of narratives in the field of sociolinguistics, Thornborrow and Coates (2005) state that

> stories can be told to entertain (jokes, folktales, anecdotes), to justify and explain (accounts, and descriptions of events), to instruct (the 'cautionary' tale, fables), and to establish social norms (gossip). But even more importantly, stories tell us who we are: they are central to our social and cultural identity. (p. 7)

In line with sociolinguists, teacher educators have also identified various functions of narratives. For example, it has been shown that a critical function of narratives is gaining insight into teachers' complex

processes of learning to teach (e.g., Doyle & Carter, 2003; Richert, 2002). According to Schultz and Ravitch (2013), narratives "reveal how teachers engage in the construction of narratives about themselves in the context of their schools, classrooms, and communities, as well as the current political context of their teaching and learning to teach" (p. 37). Olson and Craig (2009) distinguish between small stories and mega-narratives to emphasize the critical function of local and particularized stories in the field of education in revealing the interactions between teachers and students. Previous literature has also shown that another important function of narrative is constructing teachers' understandings of their profession (Craig, 2007; Rex, 2011).

Even though studying the functions of narratives forms an essential part of narrative research in general education, this strand of research has been overlooked in L2 education. A few of such studies have analyzed the functions of teachers' narratives in settings other than real classroom contexts. For example, Richards (1999) investigated English as a second language (ESL) teachers' narratives in a staffroom at a language school. The data consisted of teachers' casual chats during their work breaks, which can be considered small stories. It was found that as teachers had many joint experiences and concerns, their narratives served two essential functions: first, reinforcing personal and professional relationships, and second, constructing a collaborative culture. The theme that emerged most frequently in teachers' narratives was their interactional problems with individual or group students. Other themes implicit in narratives included "assumptions about the qualities associated with effective language learning, the bounds of acceptable classroom behavior, and the legitimate concerns of a committed language teacher" (p. 170). It was concluded that functions of day-to-day professional stories need to be taken more seriously and further investigated.

Vásquez (2007) also explored workplace narratives of a group of novice language teachers in post-observing meetings. The data were collected from a small university-intensive ESL program over two years. A total of 15 narratives were identified; their infrequency in the data was attributed to the goal orientation of such meetings, which discussed the class observed. The narratives were divided into two broad categories: four reflective narratives and 11 relational narratives. The former reveals a speaker's internal states or cognitive processes, while the latter highlights the interaction between two or more people. Furthermore, although it was revealed that moral stance interacts with narratives, it was concluded that "the moral stance in narratives told by novices tends to be considerably less stable, less certain or less consistent" (p. 671).

In a recent study, Warren (2020) investigated language teacher–learners' forum discussions in a graduate-level online course to understand the functions of their narratives. The course included topics about the theory and practice of writing instruction for language learners, and teachers had weekly forum discussions based on the topics of each week's readings. Discursive psychology was used to investigate narratives of professional experience shared in the course. It was found that narratives of professional experience had accountability functions for teachers as they were enabled "to warrant specific claims in response to questions posed about the readings, as well as to justify their stance-taking, even for potentially controversial claims" (p. 415).

As reviewing the L2 literature shows, functions of teachers' narratives have been studied in settings other than the real L2 classroom contexts (such as staffroom, post-observing meetings, and forum discussions). Though these studies are valuable in revealing teachers' feelings, beliefs, and experiences in their workplace, more studies need to be carried out on teachers' narratives inside L2 classroom contexts to gain a deeper insight into their functions. The present study is an attempt to accomplish this goal.

Method

Theoretical Foundation

Although the narrative is studied from various perspectives and approaches to narrative considerably vary (for a comprehensive review, see Tomaščíková, 2009), this study is based on the functionalist theory of examining narratives. In this regard, "narrative is used as a theory to explain what goes on in an existing institutional, workplace or everyday setting" (Threadgold, 2005, p. 262). More specifically, following this theory, the researcher observes and identifies narratives that involve either the individual or collaborative telling of stories within the real contexts to delve into the particular functions of these narratives. In essence, this narrative analysis theory attempts to identify the purposes behind telling narratives and tries to answer the question, "what does this story *do* as a result of its telling?" (Allen, 2017, p. 1069; emphasis in the original).

Participants

The participants were five Iranian EFL teachers (pseudonyms Sohrab, Bijan, Kaveh, Jamshid, and Fereydoun) teaching general English courses in a private language institute in Mashhad city, northeastern Iran. Convenience sampling (i.e., using participants who were convenient data sources) was used in the present study. The teachers were all men, and their ages ranged from 23 to 27. They all had less than three years of teaching experience, which means they are considered inexperienced teachers concerning previous literature (e.g., Rahmani Doqaruni, 2017a, 2017b; Tsui, 2003, 2005). The reason for choosing only inexperienced teachers rather than experienced teachers is that the former are more likely to use narratives in their classroom contexts than the latter (Rahmani Doqaruni & Najjari, 2017). All the teachers had completed their BA in English language teaching and gone through teacher training courses in the language institute they were teaching. The participants were aware of the voluntary nature of the study and consented to participate in the research project.

Sohrab, the youngest participant (23 years old), had one year of teaching experience and taught 12 hours a week in the institute. He focused on speaking, listening, and writing exercises during the observations. Ten male students in his class were mostly 12 years old. Bijan was 25 years old with around a year and a half of teaching practice and a weekly workload of 10 hours. His class mainly concentrated on speaking and reading activities in the sessions observed for this study. Eight learners, who were mostly 13 years old, attended his class. Kaveh was also 25 years old, with two years of teaching experience and 16 hours of weekly workload at the time of data collection. Reading and listening comprehension were the main classroom activities in the observed sessions. His students were 12 learners and were mostly 14 years old. Jamshid was 26 years old, with three years of experience and a weekly workload of 20 hours. Pronunciation practice, listening comprehension, and grammar activities occupied most of his class time during the observed sessions. His class consisted of 11 students who were 12 years old. Fereydoun, the oldest of the participants, was 27 years old with three years of teaching experience. He had a weekly schedule of 16 hours of instruction. The observed classes focused on teaching collocations, listening comprehension, and reading texts. There were ten students in his class, and they were mostly 13 years old.

One class at the intermediate level was selected from each teacher. Each class consisted of eight to 12 male language learners aged between 12 and 14. The classes met two times a week with two-hour sessions each time. All classes were homogenized in terms of several variables to control their possible effect on teachers' narratives. For example, the same course book series, *Touchstone*, was used in all the classes observed. In addition, the five teachers followed the communicative approach to teaching, as required by the institute. The classes were further parallel in

terms of their content focus, and all concentrated on the learners' development of the four language skills.

Teaching Context

Generally, two rival groups compete to teach EFL in Iran, namely the private and public sectors (Iranmehr & Davari, 2018). Due to the lack of efficiency of public schools in meeting the EFL learners' needs, an increasing number of learners have been attracted by private institutes in Iran (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017). The main reason is the methodology used in private language institutes, which follow a communicative approach and apply the latest standards of teaching English communicatively. Learners' needs and interests are taken care of by paying attention to the four language skills simultaneously in these institutes compared to public schools, which mainly focus on grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, compared to public schools, which use local textbooks published by the Ministry of Education to meet their purposes, nearly all private language institutes use commercial textbooks developed and published by international publishers. Students are more interested in these textbooks as they contain various tasks, learner-centered activities, and exciting topics. These international textbooks make students capable of achieving their communicative goals as they are designed based on real-life situations (Baleghizadeh & Motahed, 2010), providing students with more opportunities to practice communication in authentic contexts and become familiar with the target culture. In addition, teachers in private institutes are more proficient and communicatively competent than their colleagues in public schools (Baniasad-Azad et al., 2016; Ganji et al., 2018). While public school teachers are mainly interested in teaching grammar (Baleghizadeh & Farshchi, 2009), teachers in private institutes would instead develop EFL students' communicative skills by encouraging communication in real-life settings.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure

The data of the present study were collected from 15 classroom sessions (three sessions for each teacher), considered a reasonable sample size (Seedhouse, 2004). The researcher observed the classrooms as a non-participant to collect the data and made audio recordings from three lessons of each teacher. Two MP3 recorders were used in the present study, one for making the audio recordings of the whole class interaction and the other for recording the teacher's voice more clearly. Thirty hours of naturally occurring data were obtained from the five participating teachers using the abovementioned method.

This qualitative study aims to record, analyze, and interpret naturally occurring data in authentic classroom contexts. Since research in the qualitative paradigm tries to gain insight into a phenomenon (teachers' narratives in this study) as it emerges dynamically and socially in the natural context by the actual participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), variables are not manipulated, and performance is not predicted. Hence, following the principles of qualitative research in data analysis, the audio recordings were first transcribed, then their narratives were identified. The entire corpus was read and re-read several times so that narratives told by the teachers were identified. In order to identify and extract narrative units of discourse from more extensive stretches of teacher talk, Labov's (1972) well-known structural narrative model was used in the present study. According to this model, a narrative includes at least two temporally and sequentially linked parts, namely *complication* (i.e., relating sequence of events) and *resolution* (i.e., how the events sort themselves out). Moreover, a narrative must include some *evaluation* (i.e., indicating why the story is told).

In addition to these necessary parts, a narrative may also include other optional sections, such as an *abstract*

(i.e., presenting the plot in a nutshell), an *orientation* (i.e., setting the scene for the listener), and a *coda* (i.e., bridging the gap between narrated and narrating time). The present study focused on the functions of teachers' narratives within their classroom context. The following guiding question was used during the data analysis procedure: What do the teachers aim to accomplish with their narratives?

Findings and Discussion

Following Labov's (1972) structural narrative model, several readings of the transcripts yielded a total of 23 narratives. It is worth noting that Fereydoun used only one narrative in his classrooms; Bijan and Jamshid happened to tell narratives in some of their teaching sessions, while Sohrab and Kaveh told two or more narratives in every single session. In this regard, different factors, such as teachers' characteristics, their relationships with students, and their level of L2 proficiency, might have affected the number of narratives each teacher produced. Although most of the narratives identified in the data were relatively short and compressed, they should not be viewed as mere reports (Marra & Holmes, 2004) or recounts of events in the past (Vásquez, 2007). Instead, these narratives serve as a rich and previously unexplored source of data that can be used to reveal and examine their specific functions in EFL classroom contexts.

After analyzing the 23 narratives in this dataset, three functions of narratives emerged, namely, moral, pedagogical, and intercultural. Moral narratives—the most frequent, with 11 instances—reflect teachers' concerns with the principles of right and wrong behavior and share with students the lesson derived from their story. The aim of pedagogical narratives—the second most frequent, with eight instances—is to teach students strategies and skills needed to learn English more effectively and encourage them to do their best to overcome the barriers of learning a foreign language. Finally, the purpose of intercultural narratives

(four instances) in the data set is to raise the students' awareness of the differences between their culture and the target culture. Although one single narrative can have multiple functions simultaneously (Marra & Holmes, 2004), the labels assigned to the narratives in the present study are not supposed to be definite, as any given narrative may have some aspect of all three functions.

The following extracts from the data set, which delineate the three functions of narratives, were selected based on the following criteria: Their contextualization is minimal, which is of particular importance, as most narratives identified in the data were so embedded in surrounding discourse that it would be less likely to understand them easily out of context. In addition, the chosen narratives exemplify the three functions clearly and, in many respects, are typical of the function of the narrative they represent. Moreover, the length and readability of narratives were also considered.

Moral Function

Extract 1 clearly shows the moral function of narratives. This narrative begins by answering a question in the textbook as a pre-reading task to prepare the students for a text about the unhealthy effects of smoking. The sequence begins with a self-narrative expression (i.e., "let me tell you something"); thus, the teacher makes the learners aware of the relevance of the coming story by making explicit the connection between the question and his personal experience. Then, the teacher's story continues, functioning as a revelation of his moral stance toward the topic (i.e., "smoking is harmful") and closing with his assessment of the issue (i.e., "be brave and say no to such offers in your life").

Extract 1
1. Teacher: [asks the student to read the exercise from the book] all right, so, and the last one
2. number eight.
3. Learner: Do you smoke?
4. Teacher: Aha, please be honest.

5.   Learner: Yes, *hubble-bubble* once a week.

6.   Teacher: I've heard that, eh…it will damage more
     than cigarettes.

7.   Learner: I don't smoke; it's bad.

8.   Teacher: Of course, it's bad, but why do people
     smoke? Is it fine?

9.   Learner: No.

10. Teacher: I've heard different reasons

11. that some of them are interesting.

12. Let me tell you something

13. I had a classmate who smoked

14. he said, "when I use cigarette in my hand

15. even when I don't light it

16. —light here means turn it on—

17. when I keep it in my hand

18. and I do this action [the teacher shakes his hand]

19. OK? when eh…it is finished

20. you will clean it more

21. this makes me comfortable or relax

22. it makes me calm down."

23. Some people think like this.

24. Learner: Younger people because they want to say
     I'm uh…

25. Teacher: I'm an adult.

26. Learner: I'm an adult.

27. Teacher: Yes, I agree,

28. and even teenagers nowadays

29. they smoke, and I don't know why.

30. Smoking is harmful

31. you should be so careful,

32. especially in choosing your friends.

33. Most of the times, bad friends offer cigarettes to you.

34. You should learn to say no in such situations

35. don't feel ashamed to say no to smoking.

36. It's a life-or-death situation;

37. be brave and say no to such offers in your life

Following Labov's model, Lines 10 and 11 act as the abstract as they indicate that the teacher will talk about why people smoke and is trying to spark the learners'

interest. The teacher narrates the main event in Lines 12 to 22, which aligns with Labov's third phase: complication. Line 23 is consistent with the fourth phase of Labov's model (evaluation), in which the narrator mentions why the narrative was told. The teacher concludes the whole story in Lines 28 to 30, the same as Labov's resolution. Finally, Lines 31 to 37 act as Labov's coda, where the teacher points out the story's relevance by connecting it with the students' everyday life.

As the extract shows, the teacher is trying to establish morality in his narrative by warning his students about the harmful effects of smoking. It should be noted that teaching is a moral act. As Sanger (2008) points out, "there is a consensus among educational scholars that teaching is by its very nature a moral endeavor, which suggests that all classroom teachers are, in some sense, engaged in moral work" (p. 169). Narrative can be regarded as an effective tool teachers can use to teach morality to their students because "the way stories are told and interpreted are always positioning tellers and audiences within a moral framework: Characters are 'good' or 'bad.' How we tell stories and react to them positions us as 'good' or 'bad' people" (Rymes & Wortham, 2011, p. 37). This moral framework establishes a shared sense of good and bad between teachers and learners. It can be argued that education flourishes as students' lives are improved by helping them become better human beings, considering this narrative aspect. It seems that teachers in the present study are fully aware of the power of narratives in teaching morality to their students, as they have used narratives for such a purpose more frequently than other reasons.

Pedagogical Function

Extract 2 demonstrates the pedagogical dimension of the narratives. The teacher explains the final exam and asks the students to study harder and be prepared, especially for the listening part. He tells the students to transcribe the audios in their textbook and not to worry if they do not understand some parts of the

listening exercises. Meanwhile, he tells a narrative about his problem with a translation project when he was a university student.

Extract 2

1.   Teacher: I don't know I told you or not, eh…
2.   I had a project at university
3.   I had a project, eh…
4.   it was something
5.   we had to translate
6.   a news, OK?
7.   It was from BBC or CNN
8.   or something like that
9.   I got the news,
10. but there was one sentence
11. a complete sentence that I couldn't understand that
12. seven words, OK?
13. I showed this to my teacher
14. he said that…so this is this
15. he said the sentence to me, OK?
16. This is why he knows
17. because he practices, yes?
18. because he listens to different things again and again
19. a lot of times
20. so your ears should get used to English
21. you should listen to it a lot
22. don't worry if you don't understand one word
23. listen again and again
24. finally, you'll get it

Line 1 acts as the abstract as the teacher tries to attract the students' attention. In Labov's terms, Lines 2 to 8 serve as orientation as the teacher gives the learners information about the story's setting. The teacher narrates the events in Lines 9 to 15 (complication). Lines 16 to 19 (evaluation) refer to the reason the narrative is being told. The teacher indicates that the story has come to a close in Lines 20 and 21 (resolution). Finally, the teacher tries to relate his narrative to his students' current problem in Lines 22 to 24 (coda).

Concerning this extract, the teacher is trying to encourage his students to practice English by narrating a personal story of the same problem his students might have. It has been argued that employing narrative as a pedagogical tool helps enhance student learning and engagement (Diekelmann, 2001; Smith, 2012). Narrative pedagogy is an approach to teaching and learning that stems from teachers' personal experiences concerning their understanding of events and incidents and how they make sense of phenomena (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The power of narrative for teaching can be attributed to two factors. On the one hand, a narrative employs the same strategies and procedures used by the brain to learn. As the brain grasps information by simultaneously perceiving both the detail and the big picture (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2010), a narrative embeds pedagogical details within the large-scale story. Thus, when students need to recall later, they can work through the narrative to remember the entire picture and the pieces that made it.

On the other hand, a narrative activates affective motivation, which is considered essential for learning (Boekaerts, 2007; Pekrun et al., 2007). As a narrative is told, affectively charged structures and patterns are activated, which make students instinctively respond to and interact with that narrative (Smith, 2012). Thus, a narrative is a powerful learning activation tool from mental and emotional perspectives. In addition, it should be noted that non-native teachers are considered excellent role models for their students as they have completed a challenging job (i.e., learning a foreign language) that their students wish to achieve. So, the students find their teachers' pedagogical narratives of particular importance as they can see how their teachers have dealt with the difficulties of learning a foreign language. The findings of the present study point to the fact that teachers have realized the importance of narratives of their personal experiences in encouraging and motivating their students for pedagogical purposes.

Intercultural Function

Extract 3 deals with the intercultural dimension of narratives. Before the teacher told the narrative, the students read a text about the benefits of sports. As the students discussed the contents of the text in a post-reading exercise, the teacher drew their attention to the following narrative by a self-narrative expression (i.e., let me say you something [*sic*]). The intercultural function of the narrative is highlighted by telling a story about a famous swimmer from the target culture (i.e., Michael Phelps).

Extract 3

1. Teacher: Let me say you something
2. as you know
3. you know Michael Phelps?
4. Learners: Yes.
5. Teacher: The winner
6. the champion
7. American swimmer
8. eh…one night
9. he was smoking in a bar
10. it was marijuana,
11. and they fined
12. they found him
13. and fined him
14. it means
15. they said OK
16. you smoke?
17. all right
18. because you're a famous athlete
19. you cannot smoke illegal drug.
20. Learner: Three months banned.
21. Teacher: Yes
22. for three months
23. he was forbidden
24. you are a good athlete,
25. but you shouldn't smoke marijuana
26. everyone is equal in front of law,
27. but I don't think the same is true in our country
28. I mean, sometimes famous people
29. like politicians or athletes get round law.

In this extract, the abstract is clear in Line 1, where the teacher tries to draw the students' attention to the story he will tell. Lines 3 to 7 are orientation, as the teacher introduces the story's main character. The complication phase is evident in Lines 8 to 23, where the sequence of events is narrated. Lines 24 and 25 (evaluation) illustrate the story's point that indicates why the story is told. The teacher makes a general conclusion in Line 26, which, in Labov's terms, can be called the resolution of the narrative. In the end, Lines 27 to 29 act as coda and bridge the gap between the narrated and narrating time.

This narrative aims to make students aware of the differences between L1 and L2 cultures. To use an L2 efficiently, it is not enough to have only linguistic competence, as the primary goal of L2 learning is to communicate with other people from different cultures (Tural & Cubukcu, 2021). Hence, intercultural competence is an essential part of L2 education. According to Byram et al. (2002), L2 teaching and learning should include "intercultural competence, i.e., ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality" (p. 10). So, increasing L2 learners' intercultural competence to understand the worldviews of the people of another culture and be understood by native speakers of the target language is particularly important, especially in this globalized world. In this regard, teacher narratives can play an essential role in making L2 learners aware of intercultural differences and drawing their attention to discrepancies between their culture and the target culture due to the teacher acting as the authentic primary source of L2 knowledge and the entertaining power of narrative, making references to intercultural differences more appealing.

Conclusion

Narratives are in the nature of every human being. People most often tell stories in their daily lives. However, telling stories to achieve a specific purpose

in an educational context is a skill that needs to be investigated in more depth. The importance arises from the fact that teachers tell stories to "make sense of the worlds they inhabit, the tasks they are encountering, and the problems they face" (Swidler, 2000, p. 553). Good teachers are already engaged in this kind of practice, and reflections on narratives in the present study are hoped to contribute to their efforts.

Through an analysis of teachers' narratives of personal experience in an EFL context, this study has started understanding the contribution such narratives make in an educational context. More specifically, the findings revealed that narrative approaches to teaching are pretty effective in achieving moral, pedagogical, and intercultural functions. However, it should be noted that "without training, teacher stories are infrequent and lack key components associated with narrative effectiveness" (Miller-Day et al., 2015, p. 618). Although the teachers in the present study used narratives from time to time, they were never aware of their importance in achieving particular functions. It is then suggested that theory and research on narratives in L2 education should be expanded and include natural classroom contexts as an uncharted territory in narrative studies so that researchers and teachers can gain a deeper insight into the relationship between narratives and their educational functions.

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