

Narrative intelligence and pedagogical success in English

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Abstract: *The present study intends to investigate the relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' narrative intelligence and their pedagogical success. Eighty EFL teachers along with 673 EFL learners participated in this study. Narrative Intelligence Scale (NIS) and the Characteristics of the Successful Teachers Questionnaire (CSTQ) were utilized to gather data in this study. The results revealed that there exists a significant association between EFL teachers' pedagogical success and their narrative intelligence. Moreover, Genre-ation, among the subscales of narrative intelligence, was found to be the best predictor of teacher success. Finally, the results were discussed and pedagogical implications were provided in the context of language learning and teaching.*

Key words: *narrative intelligence; EFL teacher; pedagogical success; genre-ation.*

1 Introduction

There seems to be a tenuous link between effective learning and effective teaching. According to Galluzzo (2005), teacher quality is the most significant factor in students' learning. Therefore, teachers play an important role in students' success or failure. Following this, considerable importance has been attached to the concepts of teacher success in the field of foreign language teaching. Numerous studies have been carried out to delve into teacher effectiveness (e.g., Elizabeth, May, & Chee, 2008; Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009). There are also other studies that have tried to explore the variables that may be associated with teacher success, such as self-efficacy, multiple intelligences, or the use of NLP (Neuro-linguistic Programming) techniques (e.g., Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2011; Pishghadam, Moafian, 2008; Pishgadam, Shayesteh, & Shapoori, 2011).

Elizabeth et al. (2008) proposed a model and defined the factors that affect teacher success, including clear and in-depth delivery of the lesson and the ability to enhance students' understanding. These two factors are closely related to Randall's (1999) narrative intelligence, which is defined as the ability to produce and understand narratives. Due to its nature, which mostly deals with interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies, it seems that teachers with high amount of narrative intelligence can be more effective in teaching.

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Therefore, examining the probable relationship between narrative intelligence and teacher success can be fruitful, throwing more light on the factors affecting teacher success. To the authors' knowledge, the relationship between narrative intelligence and language teachers' success has not been investigated to date. With that in mind, the present study aims at investigating the relationship between narrative intelligence and EFL teachers' success. In addition, it explores the predictability of teacher success by the five components of narrative intelligence, namely emplotment, characterization, narration, genre-ation, and thematization.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Narrative intelligence

In the realm of developmental psychology, it is assumed that human beings make sense of the world around them through narratives (Bruner, 1987; Randall, 1999). Narrative intelligence, as an active ability, is the capacity to produce a story, whether a factual story such as history or the news or a fictional one such as a novel (Steele, 1986). As a passive ability, narrative intelligence is the capability of following a story (Kerby, 1991). Randall (1999) held that narrative intelligence, in association with biographical aging, is both to produce and understand (follow) the story of our own life.

Randall (1999) proposed that narrative intelligence consists of some interrelated sub-capacities that are automatic in our attempt to construct reality. The first sub-component of narrative intelligence is emplotment. It includes editing, summarizing what has happened in the past or what is currently happening, and dealing with conflicts or troubles. Another feature of emplotment is prioritizing, which is selecting some details as more important than others. Emplotment also involves considering events of life as temporal units with beginnings, middles, and ends.

Characterization, the second subcomponent of narrative intelligence, is the ability to form a picture of ourselves and others. By resorting to various cues and clues, we form a picture of how we and others are like. Randall (1995) highlighted the importance of a dynamic approach to characterization, which means continual reformulation of our perception of how others are like in light of new pieces of evidence as the narrative unfolds. Stories that concentrate on conflict are usually featured by giving responsibility for events and polarizing characters as protagonists and antagonists.

The third sub-capacity of narrative intelligence is narration. According to Randall (1999: 17), "it is to convey to others what is going on, has gone, or may go on, sensitive to what they understand in terms of 'logical connection' between events, causes, consequences, etc.". Bruner (1987) believed that narration requires imparting the element of interest to the task of storytelling by paying attention to such

factors as grammar, vocabulary, rhetoric, and intonation and making them appropriate to the linguistic context of the narrative. A good narrative is the one that summarizes the central action while capturing its core dynamic of development and denouement, matches the tastes of the audience, and incorporates neither too much detail nor too little (Randall, 1999).

The fourth subcomponent of narrative intelligence is genre-ation. Bruner (1998) considered narration as an important characteristic of storytelling holding that it provides a framework for apprehending human experience. According to Randall (1999: 18), to genre-ate is “to organize events into more or less predictable patterns or types in both telling and experiencing them”. Bruner (1996) considered a genre as a chain of particular events that are basically ironic, tragic, comic, etc. Genre-ation includes making the difference between a good mood and a bad mood, recognizing narrative tone, and understanding human experience in a dramatic shape.

Finally, thematization, according to Randall (1999), refers to the ability to identify the theme of a narrative, i.e., its main idea, from the recurrent patterns of meaning observed in that narrative. An intelligent narrator can also realize how these recurrent patterns are developed and resolved. Thematization is being aware of recurrent patterns in the events or situations of a narrative (Birren & Dutchman, 1991). Thematizaion also includes identifying motifs or symbols and theorizing about their relevance, and understanding the theme, the main idea, of a narrative (Randall, 1999).

2.2 Teacher Success

There are several definitions proposed for a successful teacher. Brown and Marks (1994) proposed that successful teachers investigate their own teaching experience and that of others and thereby become more cognizant of the strong and weak points in their teaching experience; in other words, they conduct critical investigation of their teaching performance in the classroom (cited in Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2011). Brookfield (1995) mentioned several features of a successful teacher, namely resorting to a wide range of instructional strategies, teaching at an appropriate pace, checking students’ comprehension and involvement, concentrating on the topic and its educational objectives, and making use of humor. Anderson (2004) defined effective teacher as one who achieves the intended goals, either set by themselves or by others. An implication of this definition is that effective teachers should possess the required knowledge and skills to attain the intended goals.

Elizabeth et al. (2008) set out a model for defining teacher success. They proposed that in order to define teacher success, not only should we pay attention to personal and professional qualities, but also we should take contextual factors -such as teachers’ personal context, school context, and context beyond school- into account. As far as personal qualities are concerned, Elizabeth et al. (2008) also presented a

number of personal characteristics like patience, sense of responsibility, caring for students, and enthusiasm. In terms of professional qualities, they pointed to factors such as clear presentation of the instructional material, the ability to enhance students' understanding, arousing motivation in students, and effective classroom management.

Following Borg's (2003) call for more research on teacher cognition, several studies have been conducted to find the relationship between teacher success and different factors. For example, in a study, Pishghadam and Moafian (2008) explored the relationship between multiple intelligences and teacher success, reporting that interpersonal, interpersonal, and kinesthetic intelligences can influence teacher success. In another study, Pishghadam, Shayesteh, and Shapoori (2011) found a linkage between using NLP techniques and teacher success. Moreover, Ghanizadeh and Moafian (2011) showed that there is significant association between EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their success. However, to our knowledge, no research has been conducted to date to explore the association with narrative intelligence and teacher success. Therefore, the present research examines the relationship between EFL teachers' narrative intelligence and their instructional effectiveness. Furthermore, it explores the most powerful predictor of teacher success among the subscales of narrative intelligence. Hence, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between EFL teachers' narrative intelligence and their pedagogical success?
2. Among the subcomponents of narrative intelligence, which is the best predictor of narrative intelligence?

3 Method

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 80 English teachers (42 males and 38 females) along with 673 of their students (419 males and 254 females) from different English language institutes in Mashhad, Iran. Teachers' age ranged from 21 to 52 (mean=26.46, SD= 4.21) and learners' age ranged from 14 to 36 (mean=21.34, SD= 2.18). It should be noted that all the teachers who participated in this study had different fields of study; nevertheless, the majority of them had majored in the various branches of English, such as English Teaching as a Foreign Language, English Literature, or English Translation. It is worth mentioning that EFL teachers in Iran are authorized to teach English from different disciplines. The EFL students taking part in this study spoke Persian as their mother tongue and their language proficiency varied from elementary to advanced levels.

3.2 Instrumentation

To measure the narrative intelligence of the teachers along with their success, we employed two instruments:

3.2.1 Narrative Intelligence Scale (NIS)

In order to measure the narrative intelligence of the participants, the *NIS* (Pishghadm, Baghaei, Shams, & Shamsaee, 2011) was used. This scale includes 35 items. Each item receives a score of 1 to 5 producing a score range of 35 to 175. In terms of content validity, Pishghadam et al. (2011) devised this scale based on the guideline proposed by Randall (1999). To substantiate the construct validity of this inventory, Rasch model was utilized. The results of the Rasch model revealed that except for six items, all items satisfy the unidimensionality criterion, which shows the test measures one major construct. This scale yielded an item reliability of .99 and a person reliability of .98. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .83.

The EFL teachers' narrative intelligence was measured by dint of eliciting and measuring their narrative performance in two separate narrative tasks. Task 1, the narrative reconstruction task, required the participants to take a look at a six-step picture story. It was about a man who got sick but was not inclined to visiting a doctor because it was expensive. Finally, he became terribly ill and was sent to hospital, and he had to spend much more money than the amount of money he had to spend initially. It took participants nearly five minutes to fulfill this task. Task 2, the personal narrative task, was organized based on the prompt "*please tell the story of your first day at university*". Fulfilling this task also took five minutes.

3.2.2 Characteristics of Successful Teachers Questionnaire (CSTQ)

The present study is built on the model for a successful EFL teacher proposed by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009), who designed and validated the *CSTQ*. The analysis of their data yielded 12 factors for teacher success as a construct, which are: (1) teaching accountability, (2) interpersonal relationships, (3) attention to all, (4) examination, (5) commitment, (6) learning boosters (7) creating a sense of competence, (8) teaching boosters, (9) physical and emotional acceptance, (10) empathy, (11) class attendance, and (12) dynamism.

CSTQ includes 47 five-point Likert-type items ranging from 'strongly agree' (5) to 'strongly disagree' (1), producing a score between 47 and 235. It takes 30 minutes to answer all items. Exploratory

factor analysis has ensured the construct validity of the questionnaire, and the total reliability of the questionnaire has been .94. Running Cronbach's alpha, the reliability of this scale for the present study was .89.

3.3 Procedure

First, English teachers were asked to take a look at the story and then recount the story (Task1). After that, the researchers wanted the teachers to tell the story of their first day at university (Task2). In both tasks, participants were required to tell the story in their mother-tongue (Farsi). The participant's narrative performance was recorded by the researchers. Following this, the CSTQ was administered to the language learners to assess their English teachers' success.

The data collected were given to the SPSS 16 program for further processing. In order to measure the relationship between teacher success and narrative intelligence and its components, multiple regressions were run. To do a deeper analysis of this relationship, One-way ANOVA was calculated. To do this, the participants of the study were divided into three groups with regard to their total score in narrative intelligence (Total NI). The first group, whose members have the least amount of narrative intelligence (43-85), is called Low-Group. The second group, whose members have moderate narrative intelligence scores (85-95), is referred to as Mid-Group, and the third group, the members of which got high scores in narrative intelligence (95-117), is named High-Group.

4 Results

The first research question was whether there was a relationship between narrative intelligence and teacher success. Table 1 depicts the results of the correlational analysis.

Table 1: The Results of the Correlation Analysis between Narrative Intelligence and Teacher Success

	Emplotment	Characterization	Narration	Genre-ation	Thematization	Total NI
Teacher Success	.29**	.19	.35**	.49**	.24*	.41*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

As Table 1 shows, there exists a moderate correlation between Total Narrative Intelligence (Total NI) and teacher success ($r = .41, p < .05$). Among the subscales of narrative intelligence, there are moderate

correlations between teacher success and emplotment ($r=.29$, $p<.05$), narration ($r=.35$, $p<.05$), genre-ation ($r=.49$, $p<.05$), and thematization ($r=.24$, $p<.05$). It is interesting to note that genre-ation has the highest correlation coefficient with teacher success ($r=.49$, $p<.05$), and characterization has the lowest correlation coefficient with teacher success ($r=.19$, $p>.05$).

In order to perform further analysis of the data, One-way ANOVA was run. Table 2 displays the results of ANOVA for the three groups.

Table 2: Results of One-way ANOVA for Teacher Success

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8211.286	2	4105.643	81.444	.000
Within Groups	3881.602	77	50.410		
Total	12092.888	79			

Based on Table 3, there exist significant differences between the three groups in terms of teacher success score ($F=81.444$, $p<.05$). The analysis of variance showed just the difference among the three groups, but in order to locate the differences Scheffe Post HOC test was run. Table 3 shows the results of Post Hoc comparison.

Table 3: The results of Scheffe Post Hoc Test for Teacher Success

Groups	N	1	2	3
Low-Group	27	77.51		
Mid-Group	27		90.42	
High-Group	26			102.40
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

Subset for alpha=.05

Scheffe Post Hoc test revealed that the high group, the members of which had the highest amount of level of narrative intelligence, received the highest ranking in teacher success (mean= 102.40). The Mid-Group ranked second in teacher success (mean= 90.42), and the Low-Group had the lowest ranking in teacher success (mean= 77.51).

High-Group > Mid-Group > Low-Group

To answer the second research question, multiple regression analysis was run using narrative intelligence and its subscales as the predictors of variance in teacher success. Table 2 presents the results of teachers' success being regressed on the variables of interest in this study (the subscales of narrative

intelligence). The results revealed which variables are important in predicting higher success on the part of teachers. Based on Table 2, among the subscales of the narrative intelligence, genre-ation is the best predictor of teacher success. It accounts for 24% of the total variance in teacher success ($R^2=.24$, $p<.05$).

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Teacher Success by NI

Predictors	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	P	B
Genre-ation	.495	.244	.234	25.108	.000	.495

5 Discussion

This study aimed at answering two research questions. The first question dealt with the association between EFL teachers' narrative intelligence and their pedagogical effectiveness. The second question concerned the most powerful predictor of narrative intelligence sub-constructs for teacher success.

As regards the first research question, we came up with the conclusion that there exists a significant relationship between teacher success and total narrative intelligence score. As it was mentioned, one of the salient features of a successful teacher is mastery of the subject matter –mastery of the English language in the case of an EFL teacher (Elizabeth et al., 2008; Celik, 2011). Therefore, conveying this knowledge effectively to students is of prime importance. Human knowledge is closely related to narrative (Randall, 1999; Bruner, 1987; Bruner, 1996). To put it differently, narrative is used to express human knowledge, which makes it more intelligible (Baur, 1994, cited in Randall, 1999). Hence, successful expression of the subject matter on the part of teachers requires narrative intelligence.

Another characteristic of effective teachers is that they are cognizant of the characteristics of the context in which they are teaching (the EFL class context and the context beyond it). In addition, successful teachers are conversant about the intellectual and affective characteristics of their language learners. They use this knowledge to tailor their instruction to their students' needs and the contextual requirements (Celik, 2011). According to Randall (1999: 15), "narrative intelligence enables individuals to make sense of an event, a situation, an emotion, [or] a person". Randall also pointed out that narrative intelligence helps us understand other people's actions. Consequently, successful teachers resort to their narrative intelligence to obtain a wealth of information concerning the language teaching context and their students' needs.

This study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between teacher success and emplotment, one of the subscales of narrative intelligence. As it was mentioned in the literature review, one of the manifestations of emplotment is the ability to select those items that are more significant or more relevant to our purpose (Randall, 1999). Effective EFL teachers are capable of selecting and attaching importance to those instructional points that bear relevance to the main ideas of the lesson being taught (Porter & Brophy, 1988; Elizabeth et al., 2008; Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009). Therefore, the ability to emplot enables qualified EFL teachers to choose the most significant and relevant language items. Another manifestation of emplotment is to connect events, i.e. arranging what is stated in a chronological order and also making it inter-related (Randall, 1999). Anderson (2004) held that talking is the most preferred medium of instruction and great deals of instructional activities used in the classroom are in the form of verbal interaction between the teacher and students. He added that the prevalence of teacher-students verbal communication has not even been overshadowed by manifold technological advances brought into education. Successful teachers are characterized by lucid and understandable presentation of the language teaching material (Elizabeth et al., 2008; Porter & Brophy, 1988; Celik, 2011). Teachers' narrative intelligence generally, and emplotment particularly, can help them make themselves understood by their students, which is another feature of a successful EFL teacher based on Moafian and Pishghadam (2009). Thus, it is fair to say that emplotment plays a significant role in the effectiveness of the communication between EFL teachers and their students. Emplotment can also be manifested in the ability to produce different versions of a particular concept or event (Randall, 1999). Since language learners are of different cognitive styles (Ehmann, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003), effective teachers make use of various instructional techniques and provide instructional techniques in different formats so that learners with various learning styles have the opportunity to understand and learn the lesson (Elizabeth et al., 2008; Moafian & Pishghadam, 2009). Similarly, in order to increase teacher effectiveness Anderson (2004) recommended multiple modes of presentation which can enhance student learning. Emplotment can probably equip EFL teachers to present particular instructional points in different versions so that language learners with different cognitive styles can master them.

Thematization was also found to be moderately correlated with teacher success. Thematization deals with finding the major points of a narrative (Randall, 1999). It goes without saying that effective instructors can pinpoint and highlight the salient points of a lesson, concentrating more on them. For example, language teachers are required to indicate the major grammatical and lexical points for learners, making them more cognizant and conscious of them. Moreover, it was found that there is a significant relationship between teacher success and narration. Narration means putting the events and characters in the right order from the beginning to the end (Randall, 1999). Of course, effective instructors try to deliver the materials in order. They know how to connect different sections of a lesson by employing

appropriate vocabularies and structures. However, characterization was found not to be correlated with teacher success. Characterization refers to the ability to form a picture of ourselves and others (Randall, 1999). One possible line of explanation can be that the characters in the class-teacher and learners- are known to each other and are taken for granted in the process of teaching. This implies that teachers are expected to teach, modify, and model the lessons and that the learners are required to learn and digest the materials. Since these roles have been routinized and clear to both parties, characterization is expected not to be highly correlated with success.

With regard to the second research question, the results of the present study showed that among the subcomponents of narrative intelligence, genre-ation is the best predictor of teacher success. According to Randall (1999: 18), “genre-ation is organizing events into more or less predictable patterns or types in both telling and experiencing them”. It is logical to say that genre-ation, the ability to arrange an organized chain of events or concepts, can assist EFL teachers in preparing and performing a well-organized, coherent lesson plan. In a similar vein, Porter and Borphy (1988) have? considered planning as a feature of successful EFL teachers. In other words, planning and managing a well-organized EFL class is to a great extent a product of EFL teachers’ genre-ation. Therefore, teachers are expected to know how to commence, maintain, and terminate a lesson. Since the classes are held in English, which is not the mother tongue of the learners, any deviation from the lesson plan may make learners get confused and befuddled.

All in all, this study indicated that narrative intelligence can contribute to EFL teachers’ pedagogical success as well as to their recruitment and employment. This finding carries some considerable implications. First, teacher educators should be helped to realize the importance of narrative literacy and the role it may have in teacher effectiveness so that they can convey this importance to student-teachers and in-service EFL teachers. Teachers are expected to be acquainted with the components of narrative intelligence, striving hard to increase this intelligence within themselves. Second, the theoretical section in the curricula of Teacher Training Courses should incorporate discussions on narrative intelligence and how it is possible to implement it in the class. Third, according to the results of this study, genre-ation was found to be the best predictor accounting for approximately 24 percent of total variance. To recruit qualified instructors, language schools can incorporate the narrative performance as one of the criteria of selecting effective instructors.

As it is clear from any scientific research, nothing can be self-evident unless verified by observation or experimentation. To conduct any kind of scientific research, one may confront with problems and limitations. The present study could have obtained rather different findings if it had not faced the following limitations. First, since this study was carried out in language institutes in Mashhad, a city in Iran, its results cannot be safely generalized to other EFL contexts. Second, in this study EFL

teachers' experience and gender were not taken into account as variables, which can be the subject of further inquiries. In addition, future research can analyze the types of feedback EFL teachers give to their learners in light of their narrative intelligence.

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