

NARRATOLOGY USAGES EXPLORING THE STORY-TELLING NARRATIVE AS A LITERARY TOOL FOR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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<http://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photo-mother-father-kids-grandchildren-celebrating-xmas-happy-image49360539>

(PHOTO: Happy mother and father with kids and grandchild for Christmas)

ABSTRACT: Some of our waking moments may be seen as ordinary sequences of events or occurrences in the web of life, but the literary organization of how we can interpret our daily lives is often told in story form. Generally speaking, the human expressions in language depict our existence in commonly recognizable interactive patterns within structural forms identified in the literary theories founded in the study of “narratology.” The scope of narratology covers a wide range of story-telling genres that has greatly provided various platforms in reaching people globally due to the ease of access to the Internet, film, television and in partaking on social media exchanges. This is largely due to the wonders of 21st century technological innovations that allow us to connect with people we have never met, but seemingly, the physical borders that separate us are lessened through our story-telling sharing via online sites and/or through photos that captures the “moments” of life.

In light of these multiple versions of narratological forms and structures, this paper would be focusing only on the anecdotal and folk stories that may either be based on true evidence depicting the sequence of events and occurrences of a famous person either living or dead or the general analysis of metaphors that provide a teaching point in a given narrative. Such examples of these structures and form will be discussed in how oral and written language skills can be enhanced for second language learners within the context of a given story facilitated by an experienced second language instructor. As models utilized for this paper, there are profound distinctions between anecdotal or folk narratives from other structural forms, in that, these stories are generally passed down from one generation to the next from word-of-mouth” rather than the written text form.

By providing several models for thoughtful and critical discussion, this type of classroom interaction can support ways in which students can freely roam in their imaginings to express their own interpretations of the dialogues found in a story. Ideally, the goal for Second Lan-

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guage learners is to find how a story affects or moves them and binds them with the characters in a story. The sequence of events and occurrences in time and space can help students encode them from a personalized perspective. Moreover, the literary structure of narratology may help to bring second language learners to isolate the literary forms in bridging the gap from a story idea in developing oral language skills. From the context of stories, students learning a second language may realize language learning to be more personal, enjoyable and reachable from these lesson models in their own language when transitioning to a second language mode. The ultimate goal for second language learners is to better understand ourselves through narrative genres that provide us with a story. It is the story that can engage us as a reader or an audience in an authentic voice that speaks to us from the heart and echoes the realities of life in its truest form.

Key Words: anecdotes, creative linguistics, fiction, genre, imagined realities, metaphors, non-fiction, real life experiences, second language acquisition, second language learning models, sequencing, space and time, story-telling.

INTRODUCTION:

From a broad global reach for a reader or audience, the structure of story-telling can be found in old religious parables found in the Bible to hand-written manuscripts from Shakespeare's plays of the 15th century as a general sampling of how human beings are capable of relaying a story to a wide audience. There appears to be an ever-present human need to open the pages of a book to read a story or even listening to a country song where the lyrics capture our attention from our busy lives to hum or sing out words in a karaoke booth or within the comforts of our home. Moreover, film, plays, novels, short stories, computer games, Japanese anime, poetry, songs or even commonplace anecdotes provide us with the chance to reflect or to sing out the words in time with the musical beats that have meaning to us from our "real-time" experiences. These words created by song writers often speak to us of a past experience that jogs our memories from some distant past and allows us to identify with subjects that span across our wide-range of common experiences in love, war, family relationships as well as our connection with our natural world around us.

With the technological advancement toward television and radio programming in producing daily melodramas of fictional characters that walk us through their struggles of conflicting emotions to circumstances that defy the odds, the literary structures of narratology are the voices we seek to hear in verifying our existence. People from all walks of life can readily identify with real life or make-believe stories that re-tell similar occurrences, incidents and events from our past. Thus, such stories speak a common language in our own daily lives. The voice of a narrator that brings us the elements of time and space in realistic settings touches all of us on some emotional or psychological level. Like a mirror that portrays the faces of fictional or non-fictional characters in a given story, these mirrored images are, in fact, the reflection of our own faces upon which such stories imprint upon us from a universal point of reference.

At the universal level, the study of narratology reveals how much these range of stories establish the grounding for our social and cultural values that often define "who" we are as individuals within society. The characters that are either real or fictionalized in a given narrative form such as plays, television programs, books, comics, anime, video computer games, comedic performances, lyrics in songs or musical

performances all provide us with an insight that helps us understand, define, moralize, portray and/or depict our social values for critical analysis in academic settings and/or light-hearted discussions among friends and family members.

There are multiple ways to establish the foundations for story-telling forms and structures. For example, there is the high-end movie-making production in creating magical and mystical fictional characters in make-believe fantasies as well as traditional theatrical performances that have made us more connected and less differentiated by cultural differences due to our language and historical traditions. These sequence of happenings whether real or imagine draws us closer by listening to the details of how the characters or people in a given story come together in dealing with an event or incident that causes us to react in a gasp of delight out of surprise, frightened out of our wits, or laughing out loud due to the antics of something that is humorous, quirky and unconventional. As an audience or reader of fiction or non-fiction, we place ourselves in the shoes of that character, person or animal with humanlike behavior that goes beyond our realm of imaginings. Upon either reading or hearing a story as told by an author, performers or actors in a radio or television show, or in listening to the speech of a famous orator, this form of story-telling allows us to connect with our own existence in various reactive ways.

From stories, we can allow ourselves to become seriously contemplative about a given social situation or a difficult set of circumstances that seem fated or uncontrollable by our conscious actions. We can even become more compassionate about the plight of a young soldier struggling to survive in war or even critically evaluative in eliciting a judgment or an opinion on how we feel about a certain topic. We can be moved to tears in listening to a news story that provokes or challenges our thinking processes from human experiences that saddens us immensely or reminds us of our connections with our loved ones on some level through loss, grief or separation. The genre of story-telling and the narrator that delivers its message can touch us in unique ways based on our personal experiences that are shared with others. We often think and relate to stories at a conscious or unconscious level from early childhood, teenage years to adult life through our educational or cultural training from the people at home, church or at school. This is supported by most cognitive scientists, neurologists and psychologists who recognize that through our common portals of our human senses, the role of story-telling is part of our humanness as a species and speaks volumes of our social identities and the multiple roles we play in our daily lives. An individual can be viewed to be many things to the people around them. For one, a woman can be a daughter to her parents, a wife to her husband, or a mother to her children. These are the many hats we may wear in a given lifetime.

BACKGROUND OF NARRATIVE FORMS AND STRUCTURES:

The theory of narrative form ('narratology') has been an active branch of literary theory, and this theoretical lineage of study can be traced to Aristotle (Poetics), but modern narratology is said to have its beginnings with the scholarly group known as the Russian formalists. The main influence of literary critic was Vladimir Propp (Morphology of the Folktale, 1928). As part of a literary educational movement, the formalists was formed by literary scholars who wanted to create a formalized system of useful descriptive application to narrative content during the 1910's through the 1930's.

Even though the literary study relies on the ideas relating to how plot is structured within a story and on how narrators represent the voices of characters whether real or imagined, these scholarly attempts have flowed into the evaluation on how the components of narratives achieve certain psychological effects on the readers or a viewing audience. In this way, the narrative is not just an academic subject for academic inquiry, but relay how children at a very early age can develop what scholars and researchers in this field as to how we develop “narrative competence,” and this may contribute to how language learning is achieved throughout our lifetime.

Across all cultures, there is an implicit understanding of how the shape of a story enables us to distinguish between a story that ends ‘properly’ in comparison to one that doesn’t pan out the way we expect from our storybooks as a child. Whether this is an unconscious know-how in understanding the linguistic structures of a given language, the theory of narratology sets forth our cultural knowledge that has been provided for us from cozily sitting with our grandfathers and grandmothers who are eager to tell us a bedtime story as children. Thus, the elementary roots for the tenets of a narrative form according to Aristotle says that, “the plot is the most basic feature of a narrative, and that all good stories have a beginning, middle and ending.” In this regard, it is also the rhythmic voice that captures our interest in the ordering of these action-oriented sequence of events, interactive dialogues, or unexpected incidents or circumstances beyond our control. The story-teller is the one that creates the impression of a literary shape, and this shaping of a story is what defines narratology today.

THE AUTHENTICATION OF TRUST IN STORIES AS TOLD BY STORY-TELLERS:

If the narrative theory is an account of narrative competence, then there must be focus on the reader’s ability to identify plots, and in this way, there is structure that lays the foundation for a story. (Culler 2000). Even if there are disagreements on how a story begins or ends, independent of any particular language or the medium in which, for example, a short story as shown in a film version, there is general agreement that reveals a common understanding that is shared by the reader or audience. Another example can be found in public poetry readings in America. This genre is a well-respected form of narratology. The poetic structural form provides readers to rein their interpretations from a personal perspective in response to the voice of the reciter of poetry. In contrast, there are other structural forms of narratives that may tend to bring a greater range of possibilities for interpretations in a given story. To illustrate this point, the plot of a given story has structure that is universally accepted by most cultural groups.

How can two ways of thinking about a plot reach an agreement? From one perspective, the plot is a way of shaping events to make them into a genuine story form, and it is the relationship between the writer and readers that shape the events into a plot. If one is looking at a given story from another angle, the plot is a sequence of structured and patterned sequence of actions as presented by a narrator or by the voices of characters, and the same one story can be presented to an audience through a performance. In other words, a story has “flow” and moves from one scene to the next, and there are consequences or by-products of the actions made by the characters whether real or imagined that produces either a good beginning or bad ending that makes us be in touch with our emotional or psychological responses to a final karmic cause and effect.

One example would be between a young man and woman who are in love with each other, but unfortunately, their desires for each other cannot be realized, and the idea of marriage between them are disallowed by their feuding parents. The famous 15th century “Romeo and Juliet” by Shakespeare depicts this very scenario, and with the twists of events that ends in a tragic manner, the young couple die at different times in their pledge for “love.” For most of us, the concept or the metaphors that represent “love” is one of the greatest human emotion that is found in all cultures around the world.

In this way, this story touches us in ways that is beyond words, and brings forth our feelings on how we would react to this very situation if this hypothetical love was denied to us in this way by our parents. In this modern world of ours, perhaps, these very circumstances may appear in the news or within novels, but the reaction to such pathos is a shared experience. In this way, the power of narratives have a place for those learning a second language. The discussion about the topics of denied love can be fuel for the exchange of opinions and thoughts that may range from light-hearted comments to a stronger assertion of the ideals of what it means for a young man and woman to be “in love.” Indeed, there are some who may say that the idiomatic expression “love is forever” is what sustains us as a modern culture and stems from the ideals represented in fostering love for those we care about. Moreover, family values are something that is a shared foundation within any society, and the cultural value that is most cherished in our waking moments of our lives. Thus, the learning goals of second language learners are reliant on instructors to provide a sequence of steps or models that can bring realism to the classroom through the voices of storytellers that may come either from our news sources or even from traditional folktales of long ago that provide us with the mirror on how we view ourselves in society.

DISCUSSION OF NARRATIVE MODELS FOR CLASSROOM USAGE:

In the words of Richard L. Hopkins (1994), “Narratives has to do with the fundamental preoccupations of education---with words, representations, ideas, forms, structures, quantities, qualities and judgments. It is, among other things, an exercise in critical thinking. Our narratives are means through which we imagine ourselves into the persons we become.” For several centuries now, there are more claims that have been made for the importance and effectiveness of storytelling in learning, and the most recent developments have been explored in terms of the study of mind or the psychological aspects of emotional intelligence, theories of cognition, neurology, and liminality. Based on Hopkins’ views, both formal and informal learning can enhance our understanding of ourselves from other diverse cultural groups, and in making our world more comfortable to learn that all of us have shared social values.

Where do our cultural values formulate from within ourselves in a given society? Generally speaking, our most cherished values are socialized from early childhood, and stems from the cultural ideals found in abstract concepts based on love, kindness, compassion, caring, or goodness. These culturally accepted values within society are where we generate our moral and ethical codes for living, and most notably, the laws that govern our very lives provide us with a sense of order, justice and peace. Once we recognize these similar patterns of story plots, we find that our reaction to the ideals of such notions of “love”, for example, does not differ as much as we had initially thought before. In our broadest level of exchanges through stories, this type of knowledge sharing is realized (Bergold 1976).

There are multiple models represented in anecdotal or folk stories that provide second language instructors with a vast array of topics and subject matters. The general focus of this paper was to merely provide a small glimpse into the scholarly pursuit of narratology for second language teaching. As part of the appendix, I have provided a sample of the folktale, “Johnny Appleseed” that is linked to an online video used for dictation purposes. The use of visuals in the effort of teaching language can be helpful for instructors, and the musical background with the narrators voice can provide students with a real-time learning experience through their sense of sight and sound. Specifically, the hearing of the spoken words from a narrator provides several opportunities for second language learners to do repetitive trials in isolating vocabulary words, pronunciation of phrases, and to get an immediate sense of the story line and plot from the guidance of experienced language instructors. Although, there are many ways to approach the study of narratology from oral story-telling traditions such as folklores to the written pages of a novel, the structure and form of a given story provides a steady platform to explore our value system. In short, a well-structured story is built from a well-established foundation in language learning through context, and in discourse as well as from our own interpretations of life’s struggles that comes from our own grips of personal realities. In this way, the “joy” of learning something new is reachable, and the exchange between the language teachers for second language learners can be a shared classroom experience, thus promoting the tenets of an active learning scenario.

CONCLUSION:

As told by countless American history teachers in classrooms across the vast region of the United States, there is one famous anecdote that most elementary school children remember fondly, and this is the anecdotal reference to America’s first president, George Washington who bravely told his angry father the truth with the following genuine response, “Father, I cannot tell a lie, I cut down your cherry tree.” The re-telling of this 260-year old anecdote of a young George Washington who later became American’s first leader of a young nation that claimed their independence from Great Britain in 1776 is what instills and engages the student to learn words, phrases and sentences within the context of a genuine story plot. This particular anecdotal story depicts the moral code for all Americans to tell the truth even in trying and difficult circumstances. This kind of authentic learning becomes our shining example of morality that keeps our children’s behavior in check, and fosters an essential connection with our core human values within society.

In sum, the utilization of literary tools embedded in the theories founded within the scope of narratology can aid the instructor teaching a second language to their students. Narratives found in poetry, anecdotes or folk tales bring them the topics and subjects as platforms to enhance critical thinking skills in a contemplative and reflective manner. Oftentimes, we need to see and/or imagine what it would feel like to be soaring the skies like a bird. Otherwise, we cannot begin to understand the concept of flight at all. By reading or writing about these experiences, this will take wing to other ways to express ourselves either orally or in writing through creative outlets to capture the stirring “moments” within a haiku poetry to the complex plot and characterization structures of a novel. In this way, life comes full circle to us and as our circles of interaction become smaller and more “real” in time and space, thus the communication

levels between the peoples of the world makes this type of sharing a global phenomenon. This is a hopeful segway into developing better lifestyles through shared knowledge via the human web of everyday experiences. Our universal stories are the key to our connectivity as one of many on this great blue planet called “Earth”, a home for all of us.

JOHNNY APPLESEED NARRATION (SCHOOLTUBE)

<http://www.schooltube.com/video/9e0ef9147f483c0f55da/>

Note: When we speak and how we write can be quite different in the English language. In the following, the words in parenthesis provide the natural grammatical flow of this written text. Such words in the text as “that” and contracted words such as “sup” for (supper) do not coincide exactly with what is narrated on the Schooltube video. The important point of this narrative is to keep the rhythmic flow of the spoken words in keeping with the storyline. Moreover, the visual and auditory cues from the video would enhance a deeper comprehension level of the spoken words in understanding the heartfelt message found in this well-loved American folktale.

NARRATIVE TEXT:

In the early days of the American frontier when most of this nation was still wild, unsettled land, there lived a man of great courage and gentleness who travelled through the wilderness planting apples trees. His name was John Chapman though he came to be known through generations of Americans as Johnny Appleseed. This is one story about his gift to our country.

These apple trees were planted here a century ago, a hundred years of springtime bloom, a hundred years of snow, a hundred apple autumns with the wild geese flying by, a hundred years of apple sauce and steaming apple pie. The man who planted apples trees once stood here on this land, a sack of seeds upon his back, a Bible in his hand.

Young Henna Goodwin saw him first, a stranger lean and long, his face was thin, his feet were bare, his clothing old and worn.

The Goodwin family asked him in to dine and talk awhile. America was lonely then. He traveled many a mile. He said he'd gladly stay to sup (supper), but he could not linger here. He had to go plant apple trees across the great frontier.

He said that it was a wide, wild land, a lonesome land, and long. He said (that) his apples sharp and sweet would make the country strong.

The family listened while he spoke of forests, green and grand, of prairies vast with waving grass, of riv-

ers ribbed in sand.

He spoke of family like their own, all moving bravely west with guns, and cots and cooking pots---to claim the wilderness. He said (that) he'd bring them apple trees, our Lord's gift to the earth.

He said (that) the sun would warm his seeds. The rain would give them birth. He said that each good orchard grown would bear fruit as God planned, and give the yearning pioneers a taste of promise land.

The Goodwin family wished him well and watched him leave alone. He carried neither gun nor knife. No weapon did he own...although he walked alone, and long through dangerous land and wild. He said he'd harm no creature born. Each one was God's own child.

Young Henna heard the tales of him all through her growing years as he brought apples sharp and sweet to other pioneers. She heard (that) he walked through day and night, and through the winds that moved. She heard (that) he'd walked in snow, and rained that chilled him to the bone, and where he walked, she heard (that) he gave his blessings softly thrown, the scattered seeds among the weeds, the sweet fruit wisely grown. She heard (that) he loved the forest land, and all its creatures too---Wild deer and hare, wild wolf, and the bear and every bird that flew.

She heard the Indians trusted him. He knew the things (that) they knew...which plants would heal or make a meal, which streams ran clear and true. He walked all trails and heard all tales.

His orchards spread and grew, and where he went, the deep rich scent of apple blossoms bloomed.

Old Henna Goodwin saw him last when many years have gone. He came in by the orchard gate, a quiet hour, past dawn. Old Henna knew that gentle smile, that face so long and thin. There was a Bible in his hand, (and) he spoke of where he'd been. He walked all through America, and all his seeds he sown. He planted apples sharp and sweet, and swiftly they had grown.

There was spicy apple cider now out on the western plain.

There was apple sauce in Iowa, and apple pie in Maine.

Apples across the wide Missouri, and down the Ohio, sharp and sweet, across the land. They made our country grow.

Old Henna Goodwin offer thanks for her own trees grown so tall. He said that no thanks were owed to him. The Lord had made them all. To grow a country or a tree, takes just a planter who will seed and tend 'till the end the Earth's best dreams come true. He said farewell, and traveled on and did not come

again, but in this orchard, sharp and sweet, his apples still remained.

Old Henna Goodwin talked of him in apple time each year. When the orchard came to harvest, and the air was crisp and clear. She'll ask children to remember and to thank the Lord, indeed, for apples sharp, and apples sweet, and Johnny Appleseed.

**APPENDIX: FOLKTALE DICTATION MODEL
FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

**JOHNNY APPLESEED
NARRATED BY: MARY McDONNELL (2000)
STORY POEM BY: REEVE LINDBERGH**

YOUR FULL NAME:	STUDENT NUMBER
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In the _____ days of the _____ frontier when most of this nation was still wild and _____ land, there lived a man of great _____ and gentleness who travelled through the wilderness planting apples trees. His _____ was John chapman though he came to be known through generations of Americans as Johnny Appleseed. This is one story about his gift to our _____.

These _____ trees were planted here a century ago, a hundred years of springtime bloom, a hundred years of snow, a hundred apple autumns with the wild geese flying by, a _____ years of apple sauce and steaming apple pie. The man who planted apples trees once stood here on this land, a sack of seeds upon his back, a _____ in his _____.

Young Henna Goodwin saw him _____, a stranger lean and long, his face was thin, his feet were bare, his clothing old and _____.

The Goodwin family _____ him in to dine and talk awhile. America was lonely then. He traveled many a _____. He said he would gladly stay to sup (Supper), but he could not linger here. He had to go plant apple trees across the _____ frontier.

He said that it was a _____, _____ land, A lonesome land, and long. He said that his apples _____ and _____ would make the country strong.

The family listened while he _____ of forests, _____ and grand, prairies vast with waving grass, of rivers ribbed in sand.

He spoke of family like their _____, All moving bravely west with guns, cots and cooking pots — to _____ the wilderness. He said that he'd bring them apple trees, our lord's _____ to the _____.

He said that the sun would _____ his seeds. The _____ would give them birth. He said that each good orchard grown would bear fruit as god planned, and give the yearning pioneers a _____ of _____ land.

The Goodwin family _____ him well and watched him leave _____. He carried neither _____ nor _____, No weapon did he own, although he walked alone and long through dangerous land and wild, He said he'd harm no creature born. Each one was God's own child.

Young Henna heard the tales of him all through her growing years as he brought apples sharp and sweet to other pioneers. She _____ that he walked through, day and night, and through the winds that moved. She heard that he'd _____ in snow, and rained that chilled him to the bone, and where he walked, she heard that he gave his _____ softly thrown the scattered seeds among the weeds, The sweet fruit wisely grown. She heard that he loved the forest land, and all its creatures too — Wild deer and _____, wild wolf, and the bear and every bird that flew.

She heard the Indians _____ him. He knew the things that they knew...which plants would heal or make a meal, which streams ran clear and true. He walked all trails and heard all tales.

His orchards spread and grew, and where he went. The deep rich scent of apple blossoms bloomed.

Old Henna goodwin saw him _____ when many years have gone. He came in by the orchard _____, a quiet hour, past dawn, and old Henna knew that gentle smile, that face so long and thin, there was a Bible in his hand, and he spoke of _____ he'd _____. He walked all through America, and all his seeds he sown, He planted apples sharp and sweet, and swiftly they had grown.

There was spicy apple cider now out on the western plain.

There was apple sauce in _____, And apple pie in _____.

Apples across the wide Missouri, and down the ohio, sharp and sweet across the land. They made our country grow.

Old Henna Goodwin often thinks of her own trees have grown so tall. He said that no thanks were owed to him. The Lord had made them all. To grow a country or a tree, takes just a planter who will seed and _____ till the end until the best _____ come _____. He said _____, and traveled on and did not come again, but in this orchard, sharp and sweet, his apples still_____.

Old Henna Goodwin talked about him during apple time each year. When the orchard came to harvest, and when the air was crisp and clear, and she'll ask children to remember and to _____ the Lord, _____, for apples sharp and apples sweet and Johnny Appleseed.

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WEBSITES AND YOUTUBE VIDEOS

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpZ5qI53kSk> (Mini-lesson on Anecdotes)
- <http://www.dreamstime.com/stock-photo-mother-father-kids-grandchildren-celebrating-xmas-happy-image49360539>
(PHOTO: Happy mother and father with kids and grandchild for Christmas)
- <http://www.schooltube.com/video/9e0ef9147f483c0f55da/> (SCHOOL TUBE JOHNNYY APPLESEED VIDEO)
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narratology> (Narratology)
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_formalism (Russian Formalists)