



## Narrative Intelligence and EFL Teachers' Self-regulation

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### ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the probable impact of narrative intelligence on self-regulation among Iranian EFL teachers. For this aim, a total of 125 English language teachers teaching in various language institutes in Mashhad took part in this study. They were collected based on convenience sampling. They were asked to complete one questionnaire: Teacher Self-regulation Scale (TSRS). For measuring EFL teachers' narrative intelligence, they were asked to perform on two narrative tasks. Task 1: they were required to talk about a strip story. Task 2: they were asked to talk about the topic "please tell the story of your first day at university". The narratives were recorded, transcribed, and rated based on Narrative Intelligence Scale (NIS). The result of the Correlational analysis indicated that narrative intelligence correlated positively with EFL teachers' self-regulation. Furthermore, from Stepwise Regression analysis, it was found that among narrative intelligence factors, emplotment was the best predictor of teachers' self-regulation. Finally, the results were discussed in details and implications were provided.

### Introduction

Individuals make sense of the world through narrative and they may have a biological potentiality for realizing the world via narrative (Bruner, 1991). In fact, people deal with narrative as a version of reality (Bruner, 1991). This version of reality is different across individuals; in other words, every person views reality differently and based on his conceptions he creates his own narrative (Bruner, 1991). The narrative pattern and the kind of words that we apply when we create and talk about our experiences indicate our social and cultural capital (Sikes & Gale, 2006). Bruner conceptualized it as a kind of intelligence (Randall, 1999). Randall (1999) defined narrative intelligence (NI) as "the capacity both to formulate (compose, narrate) and to follow (understand, read) the story of our own life" (p. 13). He indicated five interrelated components for NI, including: emplotment, characterization, narration, genre-tion, and thematization and defined them as followings:

1- Emplotment includes summing up both ongoing and past events, connecting events, perceiving our environment, conditions, interactions, and highlighting what is significant.

2- Characterization is the second component of NI. In Randall's definition of characterization we characterize ourselves and others and build a "working pictures" about our actions, emotions and others' behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. In characterization we ignore objectivity as Randall argued. Bruner pointed out this matter as "subjunctive" reality (Mattingly, Lutkehaus, & Throop, 2008).

3- Narration is the third sub-capability of narrative intelligence which is according to Randall is the most significant feature among other components. Our narration ability determines our communicating the ongoing and past events to others as they feel a sensible link between events. By narration we can also represent our identity. Narrators can change their parts (Riessman, 2002); sometimes as a victim of a condition and in another time as a powerful agent to begin an action and they can move among their positions (Riessman, 2002).

4- Genre-tion is defined as the ability to order events based on predictable kinds as tragic, comic etc.

5- Thematization, the last component of narrative intelligence refers to the ability to justify the recurring of some particular events by noticing to their repeated meaning and to apprehend the main idea of a story.

Randall (1999) suggested that during lifetime narrative intelligence is supposed to develop along with three intelligences of multiple intelligences proposed by Gardner: inter-personal, intra-personal, and linguistics. He explained that the development of narrative intelligence is related to our participation in interaction with others which requires the knowledge of words (linguistic intelligence). Our parents instruct and enrich this knowledge by telling stories of

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others (inter-personal intelligence) and also stories of our own life (intra-personal intelligence). Hazel (2007) assigned the feature of creativity to narrator's expressing meaning; since choose of events, the organization of events into a unity, and finally the reshape of occurrences are in fact, represented the narrator's creativity. He argued that individuals' narrative ability contributes to their metacognitive strategies such as problem-solving as well as planning. Also, Rosen (1985) signified the cognitive aspect of narrative (Orland-Baraka & Maskitb, 2011).

Story is served as a basic way of individual knowing and this issue is confirmed in teacher education program by means of two reasons (Doyli & Carter, 2003). First, teachers' performances in various contexts consist of a great number of their practical knowledge. It is essential to delve into pre-service teachers' stories in order to understand their development. Second, novice teachers due to their lack of familiarities with various teaching situations have rarely rich conceptions compared with experienced teachers receiving a lot from the repeated functioning of teaching episodes in classroom. It seems that pre-service teachers may not be much able to apply cognitive strategies as they have been using in their different life situations: their story constructions (Doyli & Carter, 2003). Some scholars in artificial intelligence draw the idea of narrative intelligence to design a narrative-centered learning environment which was supposed to contribute to enrich learners' self-regulated strategies (Shores, Robison, Rowe, Hoffman, & Lester, 2009).

Self-regulation is defined as "self-generated thought, feelings, and actions that are planned and cyclically adopted to the attainment of personal goals" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 14). Following Zimmerman's model (2000), Yesim, Sunger, and Uzuntiryaki (2009) indicated that teachers' self-regulation could be considered as a dynamic process in which teachers could orient and keep their motivation, cognition, and strategies for effective teaching. The significance of applying self-regulated strategies in educational field is to the point that scholars consider it as a fundamental part of effective teaching (e.g., Randi, 2004). Pietarinen, Pyhältö, Soini, and Salmela-Aro (2013) showed that teachers' application of proactive strategies including self-regulated strategies could reduce teacher's burnout.

The researchers of the current study aimed to investigate the role of narrative intelligence in developing self-regulated strategies among Iranian EFL teachers based on logical assumptions derived from theoretical perspectives of these constructs. From theoretical point of view, conception is one of the prime components of self-regulation (Bandura, 1993) and a body of research demonstrated that self-regulated individuals in an academic field are more successful. For example, Monshi Toussi, Boori, and Ghanizadeh (2011) documented that there was a high linkage between EFL teachers' professional success and their use of self-regulated strategies in their instruction. In another study, Butler (2006) found that self-regulated learners gained more learning achievements. From a theoretical standpoint of narrative intelligence, in NI the process of meaning making is highlighted and individuals approach and interpret the events occurred around them through narrative (Bruner, 1991) and consistent with these interpretations they form their desired behavior (Bandura, 1993). NI reflects humans' attitudes towards their own life, their actions, reactions, and interactions with others (Randall, 1999). To broaden these notions into teacher education, it can be interpreted that teachers who are narratively intelligent can perceive their professional environment deeply, realize the problem sources, and as a consequence, apply the apt strategies to avoid undesirable conditions. In fact, it was hypothesized that they benefit from this potentiality to modify and improve the undesirable situations and develop their instruction by using self-regulated strategies.

## **Review of the related literature**

### *Research on Narrative Intelligence*

Narrative in the form of story offers an interesting, effective, and causal method via which people can organize their experiences, knowledge, and apply them in their interactions and learning (Rowe, Mcquiggan, Mott, & Lester, 2007). They argued that because of the dominance of motivational perspective of narrative, story-based learning can be regarded as an influential engaged learning, particularly, alternative learning such as discovery learning. A narrative-centered learning is expected to improve learners' meta-cognitive skills for understanding and constructing their own stories (Rowe et al. 2007). As a result, this kind of learning encourages educators to realize the significant contribution of narrative in contextualization all learning approaches (Rowe et al. 2007).

Some scholars such as Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) admitted that delving into pre-service teachers' experience is fruitful in understanding not only their conceptions towards their teaching profession but also to maintain journal to 'story' their development toward becoming an instructor (Doyli & Carter, 2003). Storytelling in narrative mode provides a site of struggle for novice teachers to bridge the gap between their personal beliefs and their professional requirement as expressed by policy makers and students' parents (Craig, 2007). Goffree and Dolk (1995, as cited in Dolk & Hertog, 2008) introduced reflection, narration, and construction as three central factors in teacher education policies. They considered narration as a means by which student teachers can construct the meaning which they perceive from their academic situations, their own practices, and experiences. Narratives are forms of accounting of a context with regard to its affective, practical, and theoretical descriptions (Dolk & Hertog, 2008). In educational field narrative is emerged beyond a typical story about an event; it is part of interaction between its professional students (Mason, 2002). Pishghadam and Motakef (2012) carried out a research in narrative intelligence and learning languages which showed that there was a significant relationship between EFL learners' NI scores and their English language achievements. In another study, Pishghadam, Golparvar, & Khajavi (2012) demonstrated that successful EFL teachers received more scores on NI scale than less successful language teachers.

### *Research on Self-regulation*

Self-regulation is regarded as an important skill in life situations as well as academic settings (Cazan, 2013). Self-regulated learning views individuals as a causal agent in their own environment (Barnard-Brak, Lan, & Paton, 2010). Teachers exert prominent influence in developing learners' self-regulated strategies via which they can be more successful in academic achievement (Cazan, 2013). Butler (2002) defined strategic content learning (SCL) as a valid framework to enhance self-regulated learning. Based on his definition there are some theoretic assumptions including, first, SCL was based on the evaluation of self-regulated, strategic performance. Second, in SCL teacher and student together find a "solutions" to satisfy task requirement. Shunck (1990) pointed to self-evaluation as a sub-process of self-regulation and mentioned that when learners set a goal and judge about their goal process, they find enrichment in their efficacy and as a consequence, they find more motivation to set new challenging goals. This self-efficacy is under the influence of learners' abilities, prior experience, beliefs about learning, instruction, and the social context (Schunk, 1990).

Boekaerts proposed two parallel procedures that derived from classroom self-regulation; top-down regulation and bottom-up regulation (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005). Motivational factors like personal interest, values, and expected satisfaction encourage mastery attempts in top-down self-regulation. When environmental factors stimulate self-regulation process, the bottom up self-regulation happens. In this type of self-regulation, the role of feedback is significant (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005). Boekaerts and Cascallar (2006) stated that learners should have many options some of these options represent personal priorities whereas others are originated in learner's interaction within social context.

Teachers' characters include three perspectives and they always make equality among these dimensions (Day, Kingston, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006, as cited in Lavigne, 2014):

1. Personal dimension refers to teachers' life out of academic environment.
2. Professional dimension refers to teachers' social professional requirements and their own attitudes as well as philosophy.
3. Situational dimension refers to their job place.

Also, teacher's belief can be considered as a kind of adaptation to assist teacher in regulating and planning his or her professional world (Lavigne, 2014). Hobfoll (2002, as cited in Mattern & Bauer, 2014) stated that highly self-regulated teachers experience low level of emotional exhaustion when confronting with heavy workload and as a result, they have more personal energy.

Ghanizadeh (2011) explored that high self-regulated EFL teachers benefited more from critical thinking ability compared with low self-regulated teachers. Also, Ghonsooly and Ghanizadeh (2011) demonstrated that there was a significant link between teachers' self-regulation and their sense of efficacy.

### **Research question and hypothesis**

Q1: Is there any significant relationship between narrative intelligence and the application of self-regulated strategies among Iranian EFL teachers?

Q2: Which component of narrative intelligence is the best predictor of Iranian EFL teachers' application of self-regulated strategies?

To find the answers to the above mentioned questions, the following hypotheses were suggested:

H01: There is significant relationship between narrative intelligence and the application of self-regulated strategies among Iranian EFL teachers.

H02: A component or some components of narrative intelligence is/are expected to be the best predictor of Iranian EFL teachers' use of self-regulated strategies.

### **Methodology**

#### *Participants*

The participants of the present study consists of 125 EFL teachers selected based on convenience sampling among EFL teachers teaching in foreign language institutes in Mashhad. Their age varied from 24 to 57 years old and their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 34 years. Out of 125 teachers, 21 teachers held Ph.D. in TEFL or were Ph.D. candidates of TEFL. 87 held a master of arts (MA) or were MA students, and the rest had a bachelor of arts (B.A.). Two participants did not identify their educational level. All the participants' mother language is Persian.

#### *Materials & Instrumentation*

Two questionnaires were used in the current study:

- Narrative Intelligence Scale (NIS)
- Teacher Self-Regulation Scale (TSRS)

#### *Narrative Intelligence Scale (NIS)*

To evaluate teachers' narrative intelligence, the researchers employed NIS designed and validated by Pishghadam, Baghaei, Shams, and Shamsaei (2011). This scale was designed based on the model proposed by Randall (1999). This scale yielded an item reliability of .99 and a person reliability of .98. A score of 1 to 5 was assigned to each item. The EFL teachers' narrative intelligences were measured by asking them to perform on two narrative tasks. Task 1: they were required to talk about a strip story. In the second phase, teachers were required to talk about the topic

"please tell the story of your first day at university". The narratives were recorded, transcribed, and rated based on NI. In this study, the total reliability of this questionnaire, estimated via Cronbach's alpha was 0.75.

Table 1. Five factors of NI along with corresponding descriptions

Factors	Descriptions
(1) Emplotment	to find an order for high or less frequent events
(2) Characterization	to create an image of participants thoughts as well as feelings
(3) Narration	to interact with others about what is happening in an event based on logical assumptions
(4) Generation	to arrange events into a predictable form
(5) Thematisation	to be cognizant of recurring structures in particular event

#### Teacher Self-Regulation Scale (TSRS)

To assess teacher self-regulation, the researchers applied the *Teacher Self-Regulation Scale (TSRS)* designed and validated by Yesim et al. (2009). It was developed based on Zimmerman's self-regulation model and semi-structured interviews with pre-service and in-service teachers and consists of 40 items on a six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Scores on the 40 items are an overall indicator of the teachers' self-regulation, defined by Yesim et al. (2009) as "teachers' own self-regulated strategies, which they use during lessons" (p. 354). In this study, the total reliability of the scale, estimated via Cronbach's alpha, was 0.86.

Table 2. Nine factors of TSRS along with corresponding descriptions

Factors	Descriptions
(1) Goal setting	Process of establishing objectives to guide actions during instruction
(2) Intrinsic interest	Beliefs concerning personal interest in the profession
(3) Performance goal orientation	Goals to do better than others as a teacher and to have other believe in one's competence
(4) Mastery goal orientation	Goals to improve competence in teaching And master the teaching task against self-set standards
(5) Self-instruction	Process of monitoring one's own performance in teaching and making instructional changes when necessary
(6) Emotional control	Strategies for controlling and regulating affect, mood, and emotions
(7) Self-evaluation	Process of evaluating current teaching performance by comparing it with previously established goal and past performance
(8) Self-reaction	Affective responses following a teaching performance
(9) Help-seeking	Getting help from others to resolved problems encountered in teaching process

#### Procedure

The process of data collection started in September 2013 and finished in April 2014. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the current study all participants received one questionnaire: Teacher Self-regulation Scale (TSRS) and completed it. Then participants were invited for two interviews for measuring their narrative intelligence. To receive reliable data, the researchers explained the aim of completing the questionnaires and assured them that their responses would be kept confidential. Sixty four participants were interested to receive feedback about their performance on the instruments, particularly their scores on narrative intelligence and its interpretations because as they mentioned, the concept of narrative intelligence was new for them.

#### Data Analysis and Results

To answer the research questions, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula as well as Regression analysis were employed.

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics of the applied instruments in the current study: Narrative Intelligence Scale (NIS), and Teachers Self-regulation Scale (TSRS).

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis of Narrative Intelligence, Self-regulation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
NI	125	93.24	7.47
SR	125	194.00	18.51

As Table 3 reports, Teacher Self-regulation Scale has the higher mean and standard deviation than Narrative Intelligence Scale.

Table 4 shows the findings of the correlational analysis between narrative intelligence and self-regulation among Iranian EFL teachers.

Table 4. The correlation between NI and Self-regulation

	Emplotment	Characterization	Narration	Genreation	Themmatization	NI
SR	.73**	.57**	.47**	.47**	.14**	.71**

\*\* p<.01

According to Table 4, there is a significant relationship between NI total and SR total ( $r = .71, p < .05$ ). Out of the five subscales of NI; emplotment shows the most significant correlation with self-regulation ( $r = .73, p < .05$ ). Characterization indicates a significant correlation with total self-regulation ( $r = .57, p < .05$ ). Also, there is a relative high correlation between genreation and narration and total self-regulation ( $r = .47, p < .05$ ;  $r = .47, p < .05$ ) and a weak correlation between themmatization and total self-regulation ( $r = -.14, p < .05$ ).

Table 5 illustrates the findings of Stepwise Regression analysis that predict the best predictor of self-regulation.

Table 5. Stepwise Regression Analysis Predicting Self-regulation

	R	R Square	adjusted R Square	F	Beta	Sig.
Emplotment	.73	.53	.53	143.58	.73	.000

Regression is a technique used to predict the value of the dependent variable based on one or more independent variables. This study tried to predict the variability in teacher self-regulation based on the variability in narrative intelligence subscales. Regression was run to see whether these variables can be predictors of teachers' self-regulation. As Table 5. reveals, emplotment is the best predictor of teachers' self-regulated strategies. From Table 5 it is shown that R equals .73 and the R square is .53. It means that in this regression analysis, the scores of emplotment factor can account for 53% of the variance in SR.

## Discussion

The findings of the current study corroborate our hypothesis attesting to the unique contribution of narrative intelligence in predicting EFL teachers' self-regulation. Regarding the first research question, the findings of the current study via correlational analysis documented that high scores on NI exert influence on self-regulation. In other words, EFL teachers who received high scores in NI are more self-regulated and use more self-regulated strategies in their career. This corroborates prior empirical studies that investigated the relationship between intelligence and self-regulation. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pones (1990) showed that students with high intellectual ability employed more particular self-regulated strategies such as organizing and transferring strategies. The present study demonstrated statistically that their findings can be generalized to the link between NI and self-regulation in teacher education. Also, the findings are consistent with Zimmerman's (1998) statement that self-regulation models are unique in the sense that they permit individuals' differences such as their perception to intervene in self-regulating their cognition as well as motivation.

Characterization also, correlates positively with teachers' self-regulation. In other words, teachers who got high scores in characterization received high scores in self-regulation. As Randall, (1999) stated, with the aid of characterization we build "working picture" of others beliefs and emotions and can predict their probable behaviors as well as reactions in definite conditions. Interpreted in teacher education, teachers who have great awareness of individual differences can interact with their learners more effectively (Brown, 2007). This accomplishment, in effect, tends to foster teachers' professional functioning (Brennkmeijer, Vanypere, & Bunnk, 2001).

Furthermore, the results show that there is a positive significant relationship between genreation and self-regulation. In other words, teachers received high score in genreation were better self-regulated. Genreation by definition refers to classifying occurrences in order to find a pattern and model for events that are expected to occur high frequently or less frequently (Randall, 1999). To broaden this notion into teacher education, teachers with high scores in genreation can find a particular form of a particular event or in other words, what causes high frequent event. From self-regulation theories standpoint, self-regulation deals with problem-solving issues and self-regulated individuals can manage problematic situations (Buttler, 2006). McCormick and Barnett (2010) found that teachers attribute stress to four various kinds of aspects. These include: 1-individual dimension refers to teachers' own perception towards their adequate professional performance. 2-Students' dimension refers to learners' misbehavior. 3-Stress may be caused by school dimension in which teachers do not enjoy a warm support from their work place. 4-Finally, external entities that are distant entities such as educational office can be regarded as a stress sources. The significant relationship between EFL teachers' genreation and self-regulation can document that teachers' understanding of various stress-related domains can be increased as well as strenghted if they can find the adequate genre and classification of their professional environment out of which stress is emerged. McCormick and Barnett (2010, p. 290) argued that "Teachers develop and elaborate relatively stable attribution schemas for their occupational stress in specific domains".

Teachers who got high scores in narration are expected to surpass their colleagues in that they are better communicator. Their high performance, as Randall (1999) mentioned is due to their enriched repertory of vocabulary as well as discourse awareness. Also, those with good narrative skill would be able to transfer what they perceive

exactly; in other words, they regard a logical link between causes and results (Randall, 1999). Interpreted in the perspective of teacher education, teachers who got high scores in narration ability could be effective in their interpersonal relationship with both learners and colleagues. Having a good relationship in occupational setting may contribute to professional development (Brenninkmeijer et al.2001). These teachers seem to avoid the detrimental factors in their interactions by applying adequate narrative techniques.

With regard to the second research questions, the findings of the present study show that emplotment is the best predictor of self-regulation. Emplotment, the first component of NI, deals with arranging events based on their importance and identifying "important" occurrences from not important (Randall, 1999). It seems that teachers with high score in emplotment can identify what situations develop the quality of their teaching, what makes them lose their motivation, what makes them teach ineffectively, and brings them unpleasant feeling. In fact, this capacity offers them more options to remove bad feelings and have a control on their emotion. If they have positive feelings to an event they are expected to reinforce that event since emplotment refers to investigating events causally and giving meaning to each event (Randall, 1999). Moreover, this renders teachers' gaining benefit from this intellectual ability to comprehend their professional ups and downs conditions.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Taken together, this study demonstrated that our findings seem influential not only for teachers' professional improvement but also for the quality of optimal teaching process, teacher-student interaction, and teacher-teacher interaction in light of two constructs; narrative intelligence and self-regulated strategies. Bandura (1986, as cited in Yesim et al. 2009) argued that self-regulation theory is derived from the social cognitive theories and consists of three reciprocal constructs: behavioral domain, environmental domain, and personal domain. Interpreted in our study, EFL teachers' conceptions (personal domain) affect their performance and professional practice (behavioral domain) which as a result, improve teacher-learner interactions (environmental domain). It seems developing teachers' narrative intelligence enriches their self-regulated strategies.

In the light of the findings of the present study, it can be said that highly self-regulated and highly narrative intelligent teachers learn how to modify their interactional style toward their learners, colleagues, and supervisors.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

While the findings of the current study provide better understanding of the relationship between teachers' narrative intelligence and application of self-regulated strategies, additional research is needed to better understand the dynamic nature of this relationship.

Due to the constrained nature of the current study, the researchers examined only aforementioned constructs and did not take some related individual factors such as age and gender into account. So future research could be carried out regarding these factors in order to confirm or reject the findings of the present study.

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