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(principles derived from research), teaching is likely to be “enlightened”. By the same token, the students should be motivated and encouraged to fully understand and internalize connections between their knowledge and practice about relative clauses. If the teachers are to rectify students’ problems in these referential and narrative functions, they should motivate and develop the students’ cognitive abilities by doing more and more narrative tasks and making them conscious of their errors. Practically speaking, the present research leads us to state that Iranian EFL student generally have the following characteristics in this regard:

1. They tend to use communication strategies such as avoidance, which may be partially explained by sentence planning and risk-taking factors.
2. They tend to use some specific functions like “RCs more frequently in their written narratives.

Based on these observations, Iranian EFL students would benefit from the following recommendations:

1. Providing more practice over those RC functions that students have been doing poorly in order to reduce avoidance strategies.
2. Providing more practice in recognizing and producing RCs to familiarize students with the different general discourse and narrative functions.

A consideration of students’ grammatical errors and how these errors interfere with successful communication seems to be a good reason to assess why it is important to deal with relative clauses as syntactic constructions in classrooms. When a student,

for example, says:

*He called the man that I know him.
This is the book that I read it.*

She must be taught that relative clause formation in English involves a transformational movement. That is, the relative pronoun must be moved from its normal position to clause-initial position without leaving any overt trace. In Persian, however, the process known as *Pronoun Retention* is a major means of forming RCs:

Man doxtari-I ra [ke Ali be u hedye dad] misenasam.

I girl Accusative that Ali to her present gave I-know

I know the girl to whom Ali gave the present.

In this sentence, the omission of “be u” (to her) or “u” (her) on its own is impossible. Consequently, *pronoun retention* can pose problems for Iranian EFL learners and they are often expected to produce and accept ungrammatical sentences like:

I know the student that Reza gave the book to him.

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purpose. Native speakers in contrast made greater use of this function in the *frog story*. The divergence may result from differences in narrative style. It is clear that the highly rhetorical nature of a narrative may reflect a more elaborated narrative style. Thus, native speakers appeared to use more elaborated narrative styles in the use of this function due to their individual preferences in the elicitation setting. In general, those speakers who produced more embellished narratives also produced more examples of *setting up expectation* function.

The absence of *summing up* function in subjects' narratives can be partially explained by Labov's *abstract* and *coda*. A narrator may summarize narrative before recounting the details. This is called *abstract*. Consider the following example from the "frog story":

Animals that they met on the way, obstacles that they had behind him,...

In this example, the writer initially summarizes the story at the beginning of it in order to both *whet readers' appetite* (Allen, 1996: 31) and activate a frame of mind set to facilitate understanding. This encapsulation can also be realized after following a series of recounted events called *coda*. It seems that native speakers having much more knowledge of their own language in proportion to non-native ones could think of the entire narrative as expressing as *island of memory* (Chafe: 1987: 49). Consequently, they are able enough to utilize RCs functioning as *coda* in their narratives. Another reason for using no RCs for the purpose of "summing" function is that Farsi speakers are less likely to summarize the narrative in their own language. In other words, they merely tend to talk about a sequence of

events and do not need to use *capsule statements* (Prince, cited in Allen, 1996: 7) to encapsulate their narratives.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

Technically *grammar* refers to sentence-level rules and gives us the forms or the structures of language, but those forms are quite meaningless without *discourse* rules that govern the relationship among sentences. These two dimensions are significantly interconnected and no one dimension is sufficient. Brown (2001) holds that no one doubts the prominence of grammar as an organizational framework within which communication operates. Kelly (2000) states that a glance at the contents pages reveals that most course books have a *structurally* arranged syllabus. Therefore, it is quite natural to make grammar the primary reference when planning lessons.

It is claimed that the skillful use of RCs as *structural* constructions within narratives constitutes an important form of language and thought in a unified and comprehensible fashion. Learners, who are engaged in producing referential and narrative functions are often forced to create their own thoughts, negotiate their own meaning, and share their own language experience. While producing these functions, students should be consistently capable of creating an interactive language situation, which is pedagogically essential for communication to take place. This situation cannot be provided unless methodologists and syllabus designers are meticulously thinking of pedagogical tasks of the sort mentioned above.

Brown (2000) noted that by perceiving and internalizing connections between practice (choices you make in the classroom) and theory

readers' basic need to know who or what is being talked about. Accordingly, it is expected that this function like *situating new referents* function is strongly favored in an extended discourse.

As reflected in table 3, presenting main characters through RCs has been used by 53.33% of the subjects, with a mean frequency of 1.26 more than twice that of native speakers, with a mean score of 0.5 in *frog story*. This remarkable divergence might be explained in light of the issue of *subject-hood* and *topicality*. Li & Thompson (1976: 459) proposed that languages could typologically be either *topic-dominant* or *subject-dominant*. English is a subject-dominant language, as the grammatical units of the subject and predicate are basic to the structure of the sentences. Italian, Chinese, Spanish, Hebrew, etc. are, on the other hand, topic-dominant, since the syntactic elements of the topic and comment are basic to the sentence structure in these languages. *Presenting* function is strongly favored in topic-dominant languages since it allows the writers to introduce main characters in non-subject positions. Accordingly, one would expect that Persian which is typologically akin to Italian would make more frequent use of *presentational* RCs. Furthermore, the all-purpose relativizer *ke* (that) in Farsi, like Italian *che*, could make it possible for new referents to be topicalized through an RC. In different words, such all-purpose relativizer could make a main clause argument become the topic of the relative clause.

As shown in Table (1), in our subjects' narratives, *motivating* RCs have the highest frequency of use, with a mean of 2.33 more than that of native speakers' narratives, with a mean frequency of 1.20 in the *frog story*. Recall that one of the uses of this narrative function

is that "the relative clause conveys a transient psychological state or an enduring character trait of the head referent, thereby providing the rationale for a character's actions" (Dasinger & Toupin, 1994: 470), as in the following example from "*dog story*":

The old man who became angry beat him to death.

The higher frequency of this function can only be interpreted in light of the nature of the story events and actions leading the subjects to treat the characters more emotionally and to show strong feeling of any kind such as *loneliness, happiness, sadness, ugliness, beingjealous, malicious, furious, parsimonious, exhausted, greedy, frightened, satisfied, kind-hearted*, and so on. Therefore, the ubiquitous use of motivating RCs in the subjects' narratives is apparently driven by a more general taste for expressing psychological states as a favored rhetorical device.

Another plausible reason accounting for such *motivating* clauses apparently comes from cultural attitudes that dominate Iranian society. Since in a normal Iranian community, people are soon affected by emotional and emotive conditions leading them into making decisions on the basis of such states, it is reckoned that Iranian subjects have tried to become emotionally involved in the *dog story*. Consequently this culminated in the production of clauses evincing these feelings providing the rationale for the actions of story characters.

As shown in Table-3, *setting up expectation* function was used by only 10% of EFL learners in their narratives. Closer inspection of this finding reveals that the bulk of this function is accounted for by only a few individuals. Only 3 of the 30 subject produced RCs for this

Where Are you? by Mercer Mayer as employed by Berman & Slobin (1987), and Dasinger & (1994).

Procedure

A proficiency test was administered to 131 English learners to pick out a homogenous group of 30 subject. The subjects were asked to write a story on the basis of a story booklet depicting the adventures of a missing dog in search of food and shelter. In taking such a test, the students were not required to recall the content of the pictures by heart, since they had the book in front of them all the time.

Results and Discussion

The uses of relative clauses, shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3 are measured (1) by the total number and the percentage of the functions indicated by A-I standing for RCs in order, (2) by the percentage of the narrators who have used an RC at least once for each type of function (%Ss), and (3) by the total mean number of RCs used.

Function	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Number	3	42	21	30	19	49	15	6	0
Percent	1.62	22.70	11.35	16.21	10.27	26.48	8.10	3.24	0

Table - 1. The total number and the percentage of General Discourse and Narrative Functions of RCs.

On the basis of RC frequency, the following hierarchy of using general discourse and narrative functions can be obtained: F> B> D> C> E> G> H>A>I. As shown in this order, *motivating* function (F) appears at the top of the hierarchy and *summing up* function at the bottom.

A		B		C		D	
%Ss	M	%Ss	M	%Ss	M	%Ss	M
10	1	76.66	2.00	40	1.75	60	1.66

Table - 2. EFL uses of General Discourse Functions.

E		F		G		H		I	
%Ss	M	%Ss	M	%Ss	M	%Ss	M	%Ss	M
53.33	1.26	70	2.33	33.33	1.6	10	2	0	0

Table - 3. EFL uses of Narrative Functions.

As shown in tables 2 and 3, the subjects used some specific functions with a higher rate of frequency. Since the use of *naming referents* results from the fact that the subjects are communicatively forced to express themselves with limited linguistic resources available to them, they simply *paraphrase* or describe the characteristics of an object or action instead of using an appropriate lexical item, as in:

They have something, which looks like a wooden bowl. I don't know

What its name is. Anyway they put some rice into it.

In addition to paraphrasing, another strategy known as *avoidance* employed by subjects to avoid more complex linguistic forms and not to talk about concepts for which the appropriate structures are not known or readily accessible (Tarone, 1981: 286), as in:

He put something which in the mortal to grind.

Drawing on Chafe's (1976: 30) terminology regarding *activation* states of mind, Dasinger and Toupin (1994: 466) clarify that providing old information about an old referent is needed when the narrator feels that an entity has become *inactive* for his/her readers. Therefore, this particular discourse entity may be reactivated via an RC carrying previously given information in order to remind a known referent.

As reflected in Table-2, *reidentifying old referents* function has been used by 60% of the subjects virtually in accordance with 70% of native speakers producing these constructions in the "frog story. This fairly relative closeness could be explained by the fact that our subjects like native ones might be well aware of their

Motivating or enabling narrative actions

Relative clauses can provide information about providing the rationale for *a character's action* through conveying *a transient psychological state or an enduring character trait* of the head referent, as in:

The old man who was angry beat him to death.

The dog which was sad left there.

Continuing the narrative

This function has traditionally been called *continuative* or *narrative advancing*, since the information in the RC moves the action forward. At times, the head referent of a continuative relative clause like "the dog" in the following example has a dual semantic role, i.e., *affected patient* in the main clause and *active agent* in the relative clause:

The old man started forcing the dog which was going to die.

There came out some gold that made them rich.

Setting up expectation about narrative entities and events

In order to create *suspenseful effect* in a narrative in Prince's terms (1981:245), RCs may be used to conceal or delay revealing an entity known to the readers as in:

He dug until he hit something hard, which he thought must be gold.

They have something which look like a wooden bowl.

Summing up over past or upcoming events

Relative clauses may be used to summarize past or upcoming events in a narrative. In the following example from Dasinger & Toupin's *frog story*, the narrator employs RCs to meet this function:

Animals that they met on the way, obstacles that he had behind him....

Research Questions

The questions to be raised in this research are: 1) What type of RC functions are used by Iranian EFL learners? 2) Is there any significant difference between the subjects and English native speakers in the use of *general discourse* and *narrative* functions of RCs?

Subjects

131 students participated in this research project. These students were studying either Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) or English Literature, both groups at Islamic Azad University of Masjed Soleiman, Iran. Thirty of these students were finally screened out by a proficiency test for the main test on RCs. Such variables as sex and age were not controlled in the selection of these subjects.

Instrumentation

To show how Iranian EFL learners express different functions of RCs in written narratives, a picture story book called *The Strange Dog of the Hamlet* by Binayee (1998) was employed. It consists of 15 colored pictures in a middle sized 16-page booklet, with which the subjects were not familiar. A similar test normally used for this purpose has been *Frog*,

brother” between the speaker and the listener. Most recently, the scholars in the field of language methodology, however, have attempted to investigate these constructions in *narratives* the most common means of structuring a series of events in a unified and comprehensible fashion and demonstrating language as a whole (Chafe, 1990; Olson, 1990).

Dasinger & Toupin (1994:461) hold that in order to take part in an intelligible discourse, the listeners/readers need adequate information about the entities referred to – people, objects, concepts, etc. – so that they can identify and track both *new* and *old* referents over time. *Naming referents*, *Situating new referents*, *Situating old referents*, and *Re-identifying old referents* as General discourse and also more specialized narrative functions like *Presenting main characters*, *Motivating or enabling narrative actions*, *Continuing the narrative*, *Setting up expectations* and finally *Summing up over past or upcoming events* functions of RCs could be employed to satisfy such discourse requirement. These functions are briefly explained and exemplified below:

Naming referents

Relative clauses can be used to name an entity, where the narrator does not have the knowledge of the appropriate lexical item, or he is not able to access it when needed. In the following example form *Strange Dog of the Hamlet*, a story used in this study to elicit the required data, the relative clause is served to refer to a particular entity called *rice*:

He put something white in the mortar to grind.

The kind man put some rice in something made of wood.

Situating new referents

Relative clauses can also be used to provide *new* information about the existence or appearance of a new referent within main clauses in non-subject/non-topic position, as in:

They helped the people suffering from poverty and illness.

They planted a sapling, which was very small.

Situating old referents

RCs may also be served to provide new information about an *old* referent in the ongoing discourse, as in:

The man told the story to his wife who was working at home.

The dog who was treated kindly decided to stay there and help them.

Re-identifying old referents

The last general discourse function of RCs is *re-identifying old referents*, i.e. providing old information about an old referent, as in:

The cruel man who had hit the dog wasn't satisfied.

But he received the thing that he had received before.

Presenting main characters

Lambrecht (1988) refers to the *archetypal fairy-tale starting construction* to introduce a major character like a puppy in the following example from *dog story*:

Once upon a time, there lived a puppy that led a miserable life.

There was a wandering dog which was very hungry.

The present study is concerned with how Iranian EFL learners produce Dasinger & Toupin's (1994) Taxonomy of *general discourse* and *narrative* functions of Relative Clauses (RCs) in written narratives. The database was a set of stories by a group of EFL subjects working on a picture book-let depicting a missing dog in search of food and shelter. The results reveal that the subjects had no difficulty in using general discourse functions of RCs, i.e., *Naming referent*, *Situating new referent*, *Situating old referents*, and *Re-identifying old referents*. The findings also indicated that there is a big difference between Iranian subjects and English speakers in the use of narrative functions, i.e., *Presenting new characters*, *Motivating narrative actions*, *Continuing narrative*, *Setting up expectations*, and *Summing up past events*. The most striking finding is the absence of *Summing up* function and more frequent use of *motivating* RCs in EFL narratives.

There have been an enormous number of studies concerning RCs within and across languages in Restrictivity/Non-restrictivity (Halliday, 1994), Directionality-maximality (Dougty, 1988, 1991; Eckman, Bell, & Nelson, 1988; Hamilton, 1994), Language Typology (Comrie, 1989; Keenan, 1985), and Branching Direction (Saunders, 1989; Rutherford, 1987). The focus of these studies has been on the production of RCs at the *sentence level*. A relative clause is, typically, considered to be a type of subordinate clause modifying a noun. It starts, though not necessarily, with a relative pronoun such as *who*, *which*, *whom*, *whose*, *that*, *when*, *where*, and *why*. Under certain conditions, the relative pronoun can be left out when it is clause initial, the object of the verb,

or in a stranded position:

This is the subject I am interested in.

RCs having *who*, *which*, or *that* as the subject of the clause can often be reduced to phrases modifying a noun without changing the meaning of the sentence as in:

Dr. Shokouhi is the professor teaching discourse this semester.

In traditional terms, normally, two types of *restrictive* and *non-restrictive* RCs are identified. A restrictive RC makes use of *old information* to identify the referent of a noun phrase. A non-restrictive one, in contrast, is used to present *new information* about an already identified referent. Take the following examples:

- a. *My brother who lives in Texas is a civil engineer.*
- b. *My brother, who lives in Texas, is a civil engineer.*

Despite their syntactic similarities, these two structures are quite different in semantic and pragmatic functions. It is assumed that the sentence "My brother is a civil engineer" does not provide the listener with sufficient information in sentence "a", so an additional information "who lives in Texas" is needed to indicate specifically which brother is being referred to. In sentence "b", however, the listener can readily identify which brother is being referred to, for the speaker, by implication, has only brother. As a result, the interpretation depends upon the *newness* or *given-ness* of a particular noun phrase like "my

The findings also indicated that there is a big difference between the two groups in the use of *narrative functions* of relative clauses, i.e., *presenting new characters*, *Motivating narrative actions and events*, *Continuing narrative*, *Setting up expectations*, and *Summing over past or upcoming events*. Comparatively, the less frequent use of *setting up expectation* function by the subjects could be explained in light of preferences in narrative style. The most striking finding of the study is the absence of *summing up* function in the subjects' narratives, probably due to an advanced cognitive ability required to encapsulate the events of the story in a given time. Additionally, Farsi speakers of English are less likely to summarize the story in their own native tongue. In other words, they tend to apply a serial procedure to talk about a sequence of events. Besides, comparatively speaking, the *motivating* function more frequently used in subjects' narratives might be closely related to the subjects' attitude, as a cultural factor towards the main characters of the story. Furthermore, the absence of using prepositions in combination with an RC in non-subject positions could be probably connected with the subjects' communication strategies such as *avoidance* and *paraphrasing*.

Key Words: Restrictive and Non-restrictive Relative Clauses, General Discourse and Narrative Functions of Relative Clauses, Discourse Analysis.

چکیده

اخیراً دانشمندان زیادی از جمله دیزینگر و توپن (۱۹۹۴)، نقش عناصر زبانی را در داستان مورد تجزیه و تحلیل کلامی قرار داده‌اند و در نتیجه به نقش‌های نه‌گانه‌ی زیر دست یافته‌اند:

۱. نامگذاری مرجع (مأخذ)، ۲. معرفی مرجع جدید، ۳. معرفی مرجع قدیمی، ۴. بازیابی و شناسایی مجدد مرجع قدیمی، ۵. معرفی شخصیت‌های اصلی داستان، ۶. بیان احساسات و ایجاد انگیزه در باره‌ی وقایع، ۷. حفظ پیوستگی رویدادها، ۸. ایجاد گره در داستان که گشودن آن نیاز به اندیشه‌ی خواننده دارد، ۹. خلاصه کردن رویدادها در اوایل و اواخر داستان.
- تحقیق حاضر بر آن است که نشان دهد، تا چه اندازه زبان‌آموزان ایرانی می‌توانند نقش‌های فوق را در نوشتن داستان به کار گیرند. برای این منظور یک گروه ۳۰ نفری از بین ۱۳۱ دانشجوی رشته‌ی زبان انگلیسی در مقطع کارشناسی که بالاترین نمرات را کسب کرده بودند، توسط یک آزمون بسندگی انتخاب شدند. سپس کتابی مصور و بدون نوشته، تحت عنوان «سگ عجیب دهکده» به آن‌ها داده شد تا براساس آن داستانی بنویسند.

اطلاعات گردآوری شده معلوم کرد که این گروه از نظر نحوی هیچ مشکلی در ساختن قضایای موصولی ندارند، ولی از نظر نقش‌های کلامی و داستانی تفاوت‌هایی با افراد آزمونه و دیزینگر و توپن دارند. به عنوان مثال، نقش شماره‌ی ۹ را در نوشته‌هایشان به کار نبرده‌اند. علت عمده‌ی به کار نبردن نقش مذکور این است که کاربرد این نقش مستلزم اشراف همه‌جانبه بر رویدادهای داستان است. چنین اشرافی توانایی ادراکی زیادی می‌طلبد. ضمناً زبان‌آموزان نمی‌توانند مانند خود انگلیسی‌زبانان کل داستان را یکجا در ذهن خود متصور شوند. به علاوه، در داستان‌نویسی فارسی معاصر، چکیده کردن داستان در آغاز و پایان آن مرسوم نیست.

نکته‌ی قابل توجه دیگر این است که گروه آزمونه، حتی بیش از خود انگلیسی‌زبانان نقش شماره‌ی ۶ را به کار برده‌اند. توجیه چنین پدیده‌ای این است که افراد مورد آزمون عواطف و احساسات درونی شدیدتری نسبت به شخصیت‌های داستان از خود نشان داده‌اند. ضمناً رویدادهای داستان ماهیتاً به گونه‌ای بوده‌اند که افراد گروه را مجبور به استفاده‌ی بیش‌تر از قضایای موصولی شماره‌ی ۶ برای ابراز چنین احساسات شدیدی کرده‌اند.

کلیدواژه‌ها: جمله‌واره‌های وصفی محدودکننده، جمله‌واره‌های وصفی غیرضروری، نقش‌های گفتاری، نقش روایتی، تجزیه و تکمیل گفتار.



A Functional Analysis of Relative Clauses in Written Narratives by Iranian EFL University Students

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ABSTRACT

There are a large number of studies concerning how Relative Clauses (RCs) of different types are syntactically and pragmatically realized in SLA oral and written discourse. Most of these studies show the existence of differences between native and non-native speakers of English in the functional use of these syntactic constructions. The aim of this study was to investigate the production of *general discourse* and *narrative* functions of RCs on the basis of Dasinger & Toupin's Taxonomy (1994). To this end, a group of 30 Iranian advanced university students, already screened out from a population of 131, with no regard to their sexes, were given a picture description task. The subjects were required to perform the task showing a sequence of events depicting the adventures of a missing dog in search of food and shelter. The results showed that the subjects had no difficulty in using *general discourse* functions of RCs, i.e., *Naming referents*, *Situating new referents*, *Situating old referents*, and *Reidentifying old referents*. However, a differential rate of frequency existed in the use of these functions between the subjects and a group of native speakers of English in a similar task investigated by Dasinger & Toupin (1994).