

# Male and Female Students' Narrative Similarities and Differences in the Advance Levels in Line with Advance Organizers

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**Abstract:** Conspicuously, this research aimed to survey the oral narrative styles of advanced learners in line with advanced organizers among boys and girls in order to find out that is there any specific matter among their oral narrates. Twenty male and female from advance level were attended in this research. Subjects narrated a memory by employing advanced organizers from the past orally. The study disclosed that being male or female is an important factor in the speaking part of each student. Girls were speaking without any stress and pause, because of their fluency in English and the high magnitude level of words they could illustrate their ideas and opinions but the boys could not explain well, maybe one factor was their shyness and the second was their lax in speaking during the classes. Female learners were speaking without any interruption with so many verbs, adjectives, coordinators, but the boys had so many interruptions during their speech and sometimes their pronunciation and grammar was wrong with more discourse markers.

**Keywords:** Gender, Narrative, Oral, Advance Organizers

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## 1. Introduction

Obviously, a relatively new research study was conducted by Hruska (2004), who investigated second language development among minority students while practicing as an ESL kindergarten teacher. The base for the study was a theoretical framework that views language as the site for constructing social meaning and negotiating power. According to Fairclough (1989), such theory provides the foundation for asking questions about the interaction which moves beyond a strictly linguistic focus.

Given that narratives in this study are the EFL learners' oral and written discourse and that their production is based on a given topic, L2 learners' narratives are broadly defined, on the basis of Bruner's encapsulated conception, as anything recounted or recorded in the form of a series of interrelated events and/or states associated with participants of these events. In line with the definition, the minimum requirements

of a narrative consist of (1) sequenced or interrelated events; (2) the participants of actions; (3) retrospective interpretations of sequential events. There are some advantages of defining L2 learners' narrative as such. Firstly, both spoken form and written form have been taken into consideration. Secondly, the defining feature of narrative—"temporal sequence" in a series of events is recognized but not over-emphasized to meet the need of L2 narrative production on a given topic. Finally, "interrelated" would be understood as generally connected, which is a more general, oblique and indefinite logical relation underlying the events or states in L2 learners' narratives.

### *Research Question*

Is it possible to find similarities and differences between boys and girls' oral narrative in line with the advance organizers?

## 2. Review of the Related Literature

### 2.1. Psychological Research Definitions

Frankly speaking, the concept of gender has been dealt with a significantly different approach in social-psychological research. However, most of the studies have traditionally over generalized the notions and the results found in the studies. Nevertheless, it is in research which is more socio-linguistically oriented (and as a result, at the fringes of mainstream SLA), where gender has been dealt with more robustly, as an aspect of identity inextricably interwoven with other aspects of identity such as nationality and ethnicity, and as an important factor in the process of SLA" (Block, 2002, p.60).

### 2.2. The Concept of Narrative

Linguistic studies present a more diversified picture than literary studies. Some researchers (Labov, 1972) define narrative from a socio-linguistic perspective. According to Labov, a narrative is defined as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred" (1972: 360). In this sense, narrative serves as a means to organize human experience, or as a process to construct meaning by recapitulating past experience. Some studies (e.g. Rumelhart 1980) analyze the notion of narrative from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, which views narrative as a cognitive schema. Narrativity is therefore the product of a tropological operation by which the metaphor of narration is applied to a series of words on a page. This definition considers narrative as a product, or to be more precise, one of reflections of an individual's discourse ability. Other researches make investigation into narrative from a pedagogical perspective and probe into functions of narratives in language acquisition (Baynham, 2000). Toolan (2001) defines narrative as a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events, typically involving, as the experiencing agonist, humans or quasi-humans, or other sentient beings, from whose experience we humans can 'learn'. His definition is innovative in that it, on the one hand, introduces three defining features of narrative: sequenced and interrelated events; foregrounded individuals and crisis to resolution progression; on the other hand, proposes the idea that addressees can learn from narratives.

### 2.3. Gender and First Language Acquisition

Absolutely, it's easy for children to learn their mother tongue and acquire language ability unconsciously (Li & Bu, 2006). However, there are also several studies of first language acquisition (Morris, 1966) that have shown girls to be better learners than boys. Trudgill (1974) showed that women used the prestige variants more frequently than men and related this phenomenon to female social insecurity. Differences between male and female L1 learners appear more in studies conducted in bilingual settings; and such studies favor female learners in acquiring the languages they

are exposed to. In a study of Punjabi migrant children in England, Agnihotri (1979) showed that girls assimilated the prestige variants faster than the boys; they were also better at resisting the stigmatised variants. Satyanath (1982) too found that Kannadiga women in Delhi showed a higher percentage of assimilation of linguistic features associated with Hindi and also a higher degree of usage than men. He found that younger women assimilated the host society's language and culture maximally. Unlike Trudgill (1974), who holds social insecurity to be responsible for greater use of prestige variants, Satyanath attributes it to the sociocultural aspects of the Kannadiga community which provides women a greater opportunity of interaction with the host society and this seems to be the underlying reason in female learners outscoring their counterparts.

### 2.4. Gender and Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Generally, SLA, which is a subarea of applied linguistics, has become a genuine field of research for the last three decades. Previously, the research of gender and SLA basically focused on the topics valued in the area of SLA; nevertheless, with the change of perspectives it started to investigate the teachers and the learners more. In the previous period, only such studies that were based on positivist or post-positivist assumptions were respected by many scholars. As (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004) states, real science meant only experimental or quasi-experimental design, surveys, and post-positivist qualitative studies to such scholars; and assuming only this hierarchy as the real track to follow neglects the wide range of contributions made through other paradigms (including gender) and excludes research participants' diverse experiences, "thereby creating conditions for inaccurate, inequitable and discriminatory outcomes" (p.388).

Furthermore, even though some significant SLA theorists (i.e. Gass, 2000) believe that SLA researchers began to ask the right question, investigating these questions in a scientific way and accumulating results that allow them to further refine and make adjustments to existing theories, if we look closer how questions are related to gender have been explored, we cannot say that it is definitely the case (Block, 2002). As Jiménez-Catalán (2000) utters, individual differences such as age, aptitude, learning style and motivation are very-well focused on in most SLA research studies, but gender is often ignored. Besides, as Ehrlich (1997) and Sunderland (2000) points out, even in studies where gender was included into research, it was perceived in an oversimplified way.

### 2.5. Advance Organizers

#### *Types of Advance Organizers*

Today, advance organizers are widely used in classroom teaching. They are technically a pre-reading guide that clarifies concepts, sets up expectations, or builds background in any format of text, graphics, or hypermedia (Leu & Kinzer, 2003). The major types of text advance organizers are

either expository or comparative. According to Ausubel (2000), an expository organizer needs to be used on relatively unfamiliar materials to provide relevant proximate subsumers, while a comparative organizer is used for relatively familiar learning materials to integrate as well as discriminate between new ideas and existing ideas. In addition to the verbal nature of advance organizers described above, visual materials may also serve effectively as advance organizers. Graphic organizers refer to "a visual and verbal organizational structure that assists the reader in organizing what may seem to be unrelated details and concepts" (Horton & Lovitt, 1989, p.627). The function of a graphic organizer serves as a nonverbal, visual-spatial referent that reflects or generates underlying principles and important ideas of the material-to-be-learned and the inter-relationships of ideas and their logical connections to higher, equal, or lower order pieces of information (Horton & Lovitt, 1989; Kang, 2002). Unlike text-based advance organizers, there are published procedures for constructing graphic organizers. In the current study, the graphic organizer was constructed based on the procedures for constructing textual organizers, which might affect the result of the study. Specifically, the effectiveness of graphic organizers might vary due to the experimenters' design and construction. In the future, an operational definition and procedures for constructing graphic organizers need to be established.

There are many graphic organizer possibilities. Examples of popular graphic organizers include K-W-L organizers, Semantic Maps, Mind Maps, Step-By-Step Charts, Series of Events Chains, Sequence Organizers, Cause and Effect Chains, and Timelines (Minchin Jr., 2004). With the advancement of technologies, teachers and designers started to use hypermedia programs, including digital video, PowerPoint presentation, and Flash animations to construct advance organizers (Tseng et al., 2002). As construction of such hypermedia organizers demands high technical skills and considerable time involvement, the applications of this technique and relevant studies are still limited in number.

#### Studies on Advance Organizers before the 1990s

Since the 1970s, extensive research has been conducted in various disciplines on the effectiveness of both textual and graphic advance organizers on learning within the classroom setting or computer-assisted lab environment. However, the results of the research have not been conclusive, since both positive effects and negative effects have been found.

#### Ausubel's Model

Ausubel's early experiments provided the most-cited research supporting the effectiveness of advance organizers. Ausubel and his associates conducted five studies on expository and comparative advance organizers in a Midwestern state university and a high school in Campaign, Illinois, from 1960 to 1963. All of the five studies reported statistically significant main effects for the organizer treatment group in the posttests, especially in the long-term retention posttest which was conducted 10 days after the treatment (Ausubel, 1960;

Ausubel & Fitzgerald, 1961, 1962; Ausubel & Youssef,

1963; Fitzgerald & Ausubel, 1963). Based on the experiments, Ausubel prescribed a model for predicting the effectiveness of advance organizers (Ausubel, 1968, 2000; Stone, 1983):

1. Students given advance organizers should perform better on tests on the material-to-be-learned than students in control groups.
2. The advance organizer effect should be at least as great in longer studies as in shorter ones.
3. Abstract advance organizers should be more effective than those including concrete materials or analogies.
4. Subsuming advance organizers should be more effective than others.
5. The learning of students at the formal-operational level should be enhanced more than that of concrete-operational students.
6. Advance organizers bridging the gap from previous knowledge should be more effective than overviews or summaries of the material-to-be-learned.
7. Students having either low verbal or analytic ability or low prior knowledge of the material should be helped more by advance organizers than other students.

A detailed analysis of Ausubel's studies, however, revealed a number of problems. It is claimed (McEneaney, 1990) that no consistent evidence was found across the studies in support of advance organizers or for predicted interactions with verbal ability. In addition, Ausubel's definition of an advance organizer was called into question, and a sound operational definition was negotiated. Later studies in the 70s and 80s failed to show a consistent positive facilitative effect on advance organizers. A number of findings conflicted with Ausubel's model. In some cases, students given advance organizers before instruction did no better, or even worse, than students in control groups.

#### Barnes & Clawson's Review

Barnes and Clawson (1975) reviewed 32 advance organizer studies using vote counting. Studies reporting statistically non-significant results prevailed 20 to 12, leading the investigators to conclude that advance organizers, as described by Ausubel, did not facilitate learning. They also differentiated among the studies according to length of study, ability, subject type, grade level, type of organizer, and learning task classification. In each comparison, the count favored non-significance. The authors recommended that further studies should be conducted using a wide variety of non-written advance organizers, provided that the organizers are operationally defined and constructed and that the studies last for more than 10 days. However, Barnes and Clawson's review has been strongly criticized as biased against favorable findings on its unscientific voting technique and inadequate analysis and control (Luiten et al., 1980; Mayer, 1979a).

#### Mayer's Theory

Mayer (1979a) pointed out the major inadequacies with Barnes and Clawson's review, and reinterpreted Ausubel's subsumption theory in terms of his own assimilation

encoding theory. Mayer reported a series of nine experiments supporting his contention.

Based on his assimilation theory, he stipulated characteristics for constructing advance organizers as stated in the first part of this review. According to Assimilation Encoding Theory, Mayer reasoned that the failure of advance organizers was due to the unavailability of an assimilative context in students' long-term memory or failure to use of that anchoring knowledge during learning.

Mayer (1979b) also reviewed advance organizer literature using 27 published studies containing an advance organizer group and a control group. He divided the studies into three categories based on three criteria: (a) Is the material unfamiliar, technical or lacking a basic assimilative context? (b) Is the advance organizer likely to serve as an assimilative context? (c) Does the advance organizer group perform better than the control group on a test? Only three out of the 27 studies claimed statistical significance. However, considering the overall positive but insignificant treatment effects, Mayer concluded that there was a small but consistent advantage for the advance organizer group on tests of learning and retention. He found that advance organizers had a stronger positive effect if learners lacked prerequisite skills or knowledge, if the learning material was poorly organized, or if generalized outcomes were measured.

#### *Studies after the 1990s*

Researchers continue to test advance organizers in traditional classroom settings in different subjects at all grade levels. Most of the studies are conducted by in-service teachers, and their research control is sometimes limited by the convenience of classroom teaching and administration. It is noted that problems of previous research still exist, such as unclear definition of advance organizers, limited experiment duration, and lack of control of students' prior knowledge. Recently, more studies have been conducted on a variety of organizers, including textual, graphic and multimedia in technology facilitated classrooms/labs.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Subjects

The students which were determined for this study were twenty advance learners aged sixteen to twenty. Ten were boys and the other ten were girls. They were all in the advance level and were homogenized through a placement

proficiency test and a speaking proficiency test; besides, learners during the presentation of their narrative they forced to use advance organizers.

### 3.2. Procedure

Accordingly, the researcher tried to find out whether there was any similarities and differences between female and male learners' oral narratives in some institutes in Tabriz, Iran. At first the subjects were homogenized by the use of a proficiency test. Next, the participants received a subject in line with some advance organizers and were asked to retell and make a summary about that. Subsequently, two weeks later, they were asked to think about the topic and discuss about that along with those advance organizers. Their performances were recorded one by one. A T-unit was a main clause including all subordinate clauses and other constructions that go with it. Data were analysed among the similarities and differences in both female and male learners' oral narrative in line with advance organizers.

### 3.3. Design

In this research students were informed about the possible advantages and disadvantages of employing advance organizers and their impact on oral narratives of advanced learners, so every things which were important for them in order to give a fluent speech were provided by giving some advance organizers and retention in order to see their effect in the oral skill improvement of students, were compared based on some variables which was related their narrative styles. As for the oral narrative test, after a two week interval the participants were asked to talk about the same subject by referring to the advance organizers. According to performativity analysis done by Peterson (2001) female narrators' narrations are emotional and full of socio-affective items and factors whereas male narrations were more senseless, time consuming and full of grammatical mistakes and errors.

## 4. Data Analysis

The number of words in a story narrated by a female participants by using advance organizers were twice more than the number of words which boys used in their speaking and retelling the story.

**Table 1.** The frequency of male and female word use in oral narratives in line with advance organizers.

sex	Males	females
	Approximate word used in speaking 40 %	Approximate word used in speaking 80%

**Table 2.** Parts of speech use in oral narratives of learners.

	Verbs	objects	subjects	adjectives	adverbs	Approximate Lexical Use
male	20	15	33	10	12	36.2
female	44	30	45	48	29	77.6

The male participants used an average of 20 verbs, 15 object, 33 subjects, 10 adjectives and 12 adverbs whereas

female participants used an average of 44 verbs, 30 objects, 45 subjects, 48 adjectives and 29 adverbs. These numbers indicate that female oral narratives having more verbs than male oral narratives. Combining with this fact that the number of adjectives and adverbs among girls were again more than boys and it can be said that female participants still produced longer and more complicated sentences than male participants and the significant and positive role of advance organizers among girls were undeniable .

## 5. Conclusion

### Discussion

The analysis suggests that female students employed more words in their speaking and retelling in line with advance organizers especially in the narration they were completely direct, to the point and fluent, almost the number of words in a narration of story by referring to the advance organizers were twice more than a male student. Also the higher number of discourse markers such as frankly speaking and as a matter of fact along with advance organizers and retention of some main discourse markers were remarkably high in both genders narratives, particularly females were the excellent users appliers of discourse markers and advance organizers in their narratives. As for the quality of the produced narratives by the participants by employing all remarkable discourse markers and advance organizers in narratives, it can be seen that the higher number of the verbs, adjectives and adverbs use in female narratives showed that the story summaries by female learners were more elaborative than the narratives which were produced by male learners. Female learners produced longer and more complicated sentences with more verbs, adjectives and adverbs and they connected all their speech and lectures by applying significant advance organizer techniques and occasionally they used discourse markers in the service of their speech and narration.

As Peterson (2001) asserted that some words are involved in girls' and boys' speaking and writing, as girls used advanced organizers and retention techniques in their narratives they were really aware and fluent because their narratives were full of emotion and socio-affective strategies such as friendly speaking, affection, cooperation and lowering the level of anxiety at the time of speech and narration, whereas the boys' narrative showed more pauses and stress because of high level of anxiety and low storage of new vocabulary. Oral narrative comparison can reach a conclusion for both boys and girls and that discloses the fact of excellent level of giving lectures among girls with high self-confidence rate and also the researcher reached to this conclusion that so many psychological factors are present at the time of narratives such as stress, anxiety, motivation, self-confidence, attitude, aptitude, stutters and stammers and lisping speech. In conclusion, there is no doubt that in oral narratives especially employing advance organizers and retention and discourse markers in order to give a good lecture, making speech and narrating a story among girls and boys not only learners should be careful about their grammar and speaking but also they

should overcome to the mentioned psychological barriers in order to have an excellent narratives and speech, which in this research girls were more successful compared to the boys.

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