

## Evaluation of Telling Narrative in Children vs. Adults Based on Talmy's Motion Event

Elham Akhlaghi Baghoojari<sup>1</sup>  
Shahla Sharifi<sup>2</sup>  
Ali Izanloo<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

Language is more than a list of words. Language conveys a whole system of thought transmitted in a symbolic network of form and meaning. Dictionaries and grammars, indispensable as they are, capture only isolated words and phrases. But human beings speak to each other in conversations, especially in stories which have a broader narrative structure, a beginning setting actors, actions, climax, and resolution. Many argue that narratives are a fundamental and universal reflection of human thought (Bruner, 1986, Berman, Slobin & Aksu-Koc, 1994, Linde, 1994, van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). For reaching this thought, in this article, verbalizing of narrative is studied. The production, reception, and use of narratives is one of the hallmarks of human life. A minimal characterization may be proposed: a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events, i.e., of described states or conditions which undergo change (into some different states or conditions) (Toolan, 2000). Though less essential to a narrative than event and character, the establishment of an identifiable setting is a strong psychological preference in most persons.

So, we used Pear story film for gathering the data (narratives). In the mid-1970s, Professor Wallace Chafe, a specialist in Native American languages, decided to test how much a simple story will vary from language to language. With his research team, he made a very simple movie to elicit stories from speakers around the world. "The Pear Stories" movie was designed to tap into universal experiences, by showing a man harvesting pears, which are stolen by a boy on a bike. The boy has some other adventures with other children before the farmer discovers that his pears are missing. The movie is six minutes long, in color, with sound effects but no

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<sup>1</sup> PhD, Linguistics Department, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad  
(Corresponding Author), [Elham.akhlaghi@mail.um.ac.ir](mailto:Elham.akhlaghi@mail.um.ac.ir)

<sup>2</sup> PhD, Assistant Professor and Faculty Member, Linguistics Department,  
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, [shahla\\_sharifi@um.ac.ir](mailto:shahla_sharifi@um.ac.ir)

<sup>3</sup> PhD, Assistant Professor and Faculty Member, Linguistics Department,  
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, [aliizanloo@um.ac.ir](mailto:aliizanloo@um.ac.ir)

words. It was filmed in northern California, near the University of California, Berkeley. The story line is deliberately loose and bland, to avoid imposing a strong U.S. cultural bias. But the movie makers deliberately inserted a short scene of a man leading a goat to test descriptions of a background event with no later significance. The scene of falling off the bike and spilling the pears can measure language for cause and effect. And the unusual ping-pong toy tests how people describe an unfamiliar object. The final scene, when the farmer discovers his fruit is stolen, re-introduces a character who had been off-screen for most of the movie, and stimulates speakers to describe emotions and state a moral.

To analyze the verbalizing of narrative, 80 participants in two equal groups of girls and women saw the Pear Story, and retold it. Forty women between 18-22 years and forty 9-year-old girls who attended this research, watched the six-minute global movie, Pear Story, separately. Then, the participants told the story of the film. The data were gathered by a voice recorder and then, transcribed for extracting the necessary information. As a new survey on Pear Story, after gathering the data, they were analyzed based on Talmy's motion events (2000), which was not a repeated work on this story.

A Motion Event (= the former "Translatory Situation") is a pattern of four components: FIGURE, MOTION, PATH, and GROUND (MOTION= MOVE or BELOC). Talmy gives up derivations in the generative semantics style. As a matter of fact, Motion verbs are motions or static situations and there are two kinds of these verbs: translational motion verbs and self-contained motion verbs. In Talmy's (2000b, p. 35) words, "[i]n translational motion, an object's basic location shifts from one point to another in space. In self-contained Motion (i.e., the figure moves to an unspecified location by moving in a certain way), an object keeps its same, or 'average' location. Self-contained Motion (i.e., with no change of location of the Figure) generally consists of oscillation, rotation, dilation (expansion and contraction), wiggle, local wander, or rest".

After statistical analysis, it was revealed that there is no meaningful difference in using translational motion verbs (e.g., walk, run) between two groups, but they have meaningful difference in using self-contained motion verbs (e.g., shiver, tremble, spin, twirl). The basic reason for the resemblance is the high frequency of translational motion verbs in Persian language. Contrary to translational motion verbs, self-contained motion verbs are more in margin of language; so, in this case, there are differences between two groups. Also, the number of verbs was not the same in two groups.

Based on results, cognitive processes about motion verbs are completed before the age of nine and they are not different for adults in this regard. The small distinctions are because of difference in perception and cognition which result in different word selections.

**Keywords:** Narrative, Motion event, Pear Story, Translational Motion, Self-contained Motion