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Writing Narratives with the Aid of Picture Stories

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Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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WRITING NARRATIVES WITH THE AID OF PICTURE STORIES

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

David S. Rayo

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the effectiveness of picture stories in improving the use of various verb tenses in the writing of narratives of adult English language learners (ELL) over five treatment sessions. The participants in this classroom study consisted of two cohorts for a total of 36 participants between the ages of 18 and 22, eight from Angola and 28 from China; 18 males and 18 females. The results showed no significant improvement in the experimental picture condition compared to the control group across three tests; possible reasons are discussed. However, the study shows that ELL prefer to use the simple past form of verbs over all the other verb forms available. Furthermore, it was noticed that using picture stories along with a narrative model may help ELL to accurately integrate various verb forms in written output creating more compelling narratives. The results of this study have significant importance for the language classroom since they provide a framework on which to expand the contextualized practice of verb forms.

Keywords

Picture Stories, Verb tense, Second Language Acquisition, Narrative Analysis, Labov and Waletzky, Pictorial Method, Grammar, Writing, English as a Second Language

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Vanessa Silveira Rodgher. Thank you for your love, and support through this educational journey of self-discovery. Your encouragement and patience made this experience all the more precious. My heartfelt thanks for always being there for me. I love you.

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Thank you Jason Kindree for the countless hours of discussion and strategizing over how to help our students negotiate the picture stories we used in our TSE classes many years ago.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
List of Appendices.....	ix
Preface.....	x
Chapter 1.....	1
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background to the Problem.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Purpose of the Study.....	4
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	4
1.5 Delimitations.....	5
1.6 Limitations.....	5
1.7 Assumptions.....	5
1.8 Primary Research Questions.....	6
1.9 Hypothesis.....	6
1.10 Research Design.....	6
1.11 Summary.....	6
1.12 Organization of the Thesis.....	7
Chapter 2.....	8
2 Literature Review.....	8
2.1 Historical Overview of Pertinent Teaching Methods.....	8
2.2 Task-Based Instruction.....	11
2.3 Form-Focused Instruction.....	13
2.4 Constructivism and Instructional Conversation.....	15
2.5 Grammar in Context.....	17
2.6 The Pictorial Method.....	18
2.7 Teachers' Opinions on Using Picture Books.....	19
2.8 Pictures and Vocabulary Acquisition.....	19
2.9 Pictures and Writing.....	21
2.10 Verb Tense and Aspect.....	23
2.11 Narrative Models.....	25
2.12 Labov and Waletzky's Narrative Analysis.....	28
2.13 Summary.....	29
Chapter 3.....	30
3 Methodology.....	30
3.1 Participants.....	30
3.2 Study Design.....	30
3.3 Piloting of Picture Stories.....	31
3.4 Multiple Choice Test.....	31
3.5 Procedures.....	32

3.6 Treatment	32
3.7 Scoring	35
3.8 Summary	37
Chapter 4.....	38
4. Statistical Analysis and Results	38
4.1 Verb Tense Accuracy.....	38
4.2 Verb Tense Usage.....	40
4.3 Overall Verb Use	41
4.4 Summary	42
Chapter 5.....	44
5. Discussion	44
5.1 Results Interpretation.....	44
5.2 Implications for Teaching Practice	48
5.3 Use of Narrative Analysis.....	48
5.4 Combination of Methods	53
5.5 Advantages of Multi-Modal Learning	55
5.6 Limitations of the Study.....	55
5.7 Suggestions for Further Research	56
6. Bibliography.....	58
Appendices.....	64
Curriculum Vitae	70

List of Tables

Table 1: The Bull Framework.....	25
Table 2: Chafe's Tense Analysis	26
Table 3: Scoring Color Scheme	35
Table 4: Accuracy of verbs used per group during 3 tests.....	38
Table 5: Total verbs used for the EG and CG during 3 Tests.....	40
Table 6: Labov and Waletzky's Narrative Analysis.....	49
Table 7: Pros and Cons of Picture Story Use.....	53

List of Figures

Figure 1 Learning and Teaching through Inquiry	16
Figure 2: Accurate use of verbs in the EG and CG over 3 tests	39
Figure 3: EG and CG total use of verb over 3 tests	41
Figure 4: Frequency of Usage for 8 Verb Tenses	42
Figure 5: Sample Story Using Labov and Waletzky's Model.....	51

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Library Story	64
Appendix 2 English Class Story	65
Appendix 3 Driving Test Story	66
Appendix 4 Summer Routine Story	67
Appendix 5 Concert Ticket Story	68
Appendix 6 Ethics Approval	69

Preface

The idea for this thesis paper was a result of the countless grammar class hours I participated in as an instructor, and my teaching experience preparing young professionals to take standardized speaking tests such as the Test for Spoken English (TSE). As an EFL/ESL instructor I have always been fond of teaching Grammar class because I enjoy bringing the grammatical rules to life through different tasks and activities in which the learners combine the knowledge from textbooks to more authentic experiences. One particular area highlighted in grammar books which has interested me is the teaching and learning of English verbs. Grammar book writers usually devote the first few chapters to explaining English verb tenses and providing exercises to help the learners master them. It is not uncommon for learners to spend a lot of time and energy struggling with verbs and their tenses, but their mastery is not easily attainable (Hinkel, 2002a, 2004). Part of the issue facing learners is that grammar is not often taught along with speaking and writing, and it can result in the decontextualized, sentence-level teaching of grammatical structures as in the case of verb tenses (Hinkel, 2002b). Nowhere was this more evident than in the lessons I imparted for students taking standardized speaking tests like the TSE. The test provided a context for story-telling in the way of comic-strip style picture cues without any text. The picture cues portrayed a real-life situation in sequential order and the test takers' task was to narrate the events. It was during the practice sessions with my students that I began to take note of the difficulty that the learners had in applying the knowledge learned about verb tenses found in the grammar books to more authentic contexts. Thus, the current study is concerned with the question of how to integrate the verb tenses found in grammar books into actual written narratives by using picture cues as context-creating artefacts.

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

There have been myriad methods and approaches for teaching grammar and they all have their pros and cons, depending on the circumstances. Teachers and researchers have created various techniques and strategies to teach grammar in general and verb forms in particular because learners seem to have difficulties learning how to use them in the correct context. The present classroom study explores how to use picture stories to facilitate the teaching/learning of the English verb forms.

1.1 Background to the Problem

Learning grammatical rules for the correct use of verb tenses and being able to use these rules in communication have been important concerns for language instructors and learners alike. The methods employed by language teachers over the years have reflected either one of these concepts at one time or another. The Grammar-Translation method has been identified by many as the first actual method used in formal language teaching, which consisted of rote learning of grammar rules and target language practice in the form of translating texts (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Other methods began to enter the field of second-language acquisition shortly after to offset the perceived drawbacks of the older methods. The Direct Method, the Audio-lingual Method, Functional Approaches, and various interpretations of the Cognitive Methods vied for supremacy in the first half of the 20th Century (Richards & Rodgers, 1987; Hinkel 2002a). The 1970's gave us methods based on communicative frameworks for social interaction such as Suggestopedia, Community Learning Method (CLM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Instruction (TBI) (Kumaravadivelus, 2006). After years of use, the CLT did not produce speakers with high grammatical accuracy and sociolinguistic competence (Doughty & Williams, 1998). Since these communicative approaches did not place high priority on grammatical instruction, this has given rise to methodologies like Long's Focus on Form which aims to the teaching of grammar points for "both form and meaning" (Long, 1996, p. 429). However, not everyone agrees with

this type of approach professing that a more traditional focus on forms approach is the more appropriate path to language-learning (Sheen, 2003). Whether instructors choose one of the two camps, it is not uncommon to hear English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instructors discussing how to integrate CLT methodology and some sort of grammatical focus in their classrooms. CLT, or other communicative approach, may provide effective backdrops for the use of grammatical structures learned during traditional teachable moments because for effective teaching and learning of grammar the aid of context is of paramount importance.

Smith, Truscott and Hawkins (2013) state that repeated exposure to the second language structures allows the operations and sequences of operations to emerge, which are required to form, as well as interpret sentences since people only seem to learn when computational routines have emerged. Thus, one can deduce that when one is learning a language, repetition of its forms in context is important for the emergence of the appropriate phrases. Since classroom environments can only provide limited contexts for students to engage in meaningful practice, it is necessary to explicitly create context-rich opportunities for students through the use of artefacts such as springboards to inter-language development, for example (Wells, 2009). With the proliferation of computers and other technology there are now many ways to provide context for second language learners.

One such type of context is provided by the use of picture cues. As far back as the 1950's, the use of cartoons in the classroom for English-learning tasks was encouraged (Brackman, 1956). Fowles (1970) supported the use of cartoons in the language classroom, especially those with amusing portrayals of socio-cultural situations. More recent research has found that picture cues have positive effects for the improvement of language learning (Cunillera, Camara, Laine, and Rodriguez-Fornellset, 2010; Cherry et al. 1996, and Alidoost, Tabatabaei, Bakhtiarvand, 2014). Alidoost et al. (2014) concluded that using picture cues helps writers transition smoothly and coherently from one idea to the next for university-age learners. Cherry, Park, Frieske and Smith (1996), meanwhile, stated that pictures are especially helpful to adult learners. In a study conducted with children's picture books, Al Khaiyali (2014) found that elementary

school learners improved their reading comprehension due to the presence of pictures along with text. However, not all research has exhibited favourable outcomes for the use of pictorial methods and language learning.

Studies related to vocabulary acquisition have produced negative results in relation to the use of picture cues by language learners. A study comparing pictures versus translations concluded that translations are better at conveying meanings of sentences than pictures (Lim, 1968). Boers, Piriz, Stengers, & Eyckmans (2009) conducted a study on vocabulary retention and found that pictures could actually hinder learners' ability to remember new idioms. Also, picture recognition strategies were found to be less productive than text and picture recognition groups (Yoshii & Flaitz, 2002). In another study conducted with children's picture books, Al Khaiyali (2014) similarly found that elementary school learners improved their reading comprehension due to the presence of pictures along with text. The bulk of the research regarding picture cues seems to deal with vocabulary retention and reading comprehension, both of which are input related issues. There seems to be few studies on the effect of picture cues on output specifically related to writing.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The teaching of verb tense and usage has been a constant discussion topic in teacher circles and a popular research field among academics because it has proven difficult for English as a Second Language students to learn. The simple past tense, for example, has not been easy for students to acquire, and the other tenses have inspired researchers to seek out effective teaching alternatives (Hinkel, 2002b, 2004). The current methods common in English grammar books for the teaching of verb tenses are only adequate at sentence-level. For this reason a more innovative method is necessary to teach learners how to combine verb tenses at the paragraph level.

Bull (1971) devised a framework known as the Bull Framework which was meant to teach Spanish verb tense usage. This framework was adapted to the English-teaching context by Larsen-Freeman, Kuehn and Haccius (1999) in order to teach how to combine tense and aspect combinations in English. Haccius (2002) took it one step further by

adding a single picture cue to the Bull framework in order to enable students to connect the events portrayed in the picture to verb tense/aspect combinations. There is, however, a gap in the literature in regards to the use of picture cues and verb output. There has yet to be a study that looks at the effect of a series of sequential picture cues on learner written output, which is what this study set out to do.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The current quantitative study was designed as a classroom research project in which the written output of an experimental group (EG) was compared to a control group (CG). The EG wrote stories guided by a story depicted in a sequential series of pictures while the CG wrote stories of their own making. The participants were students in an advanced level English for Academic Purposes program and they were already divided into two classes. One of the classes was randomly chosen as the CG and the other as the EG. The participants were completing the last level of the language program, and the material covered in this research project was part of the initial stages of the level's curriculum. The purpose of the study was to see the effect of picture cues on the participants' use of verb tenses.

1.4 Significance of the Study

When one thinks of the use of picture cues in the ESL classroom, vocabulary acquisition is what most likely comes to mind. However, little has been researched about the effect of picture cues on learners' output specifically related to verb usage. This study aims to fill the gap in the knowledge in this regard since verb teaching and learning is an important part of any language course. The data and discussion in the following pages may benefit language instructors interested in continuing the discussion of how to support learners in the language classroom. By the same token, the findings in the present study may be useful to the language learners looking to expand the scope of their learning. Researchers may also benefit from the data herein discussed by noticing what works and does not work in language classroom in relation to the study's theme.

1.5 Delimitations

The delimitations of this study were:

1. This study analyzed the impact of sequential picture cues on usage and accuracy of English verb tenses in written narratives.
2. The study included samples of 32 participants enrolled in the high-advanced level of a university English language program.
3. No individual feedback was provided to the participants on their written output to avoid giving extra attention to any particular participant.
4. Participation in the study was non-coercive.
5. Learners had the opportunity to opt out of the study if desired.
6. Identifiable data were not used in the study. Pseudonyms were used to organize and interpret the data collected.
7. Data collection, handling, and interpretation were conducted in an ethical manner.

1.6 Limitations

The limitations to this study included:

1. Possible unaccounted biases as a teacher-researcher.
2. The study was limited to three treatments due to timing curriculum pacing guidelines.
3. There were only two groups: Control and Experimental. This was due to the lack of a third cohort for a second experimental group.

1.7 Assumptions

It was assumed that:

1. All participants put forth their best effort during the tasks.
2. Learners were working exclusively on EAP exercises and drills while they were in the lab. It was assumed that they would not access the Internet for personal or entertainment purposes.
3. The results were consistent and reliable since all participants had the same teacher, were in the same age group and had similar English language skills.
4. The teacher-researcher's instruction was consistent for both sample groups.

1.8 Primary Research Questions

1. How do sequential picture stories affect a learner's combination of various English verb tenses in written output?
2. Do sequential picture stories influence the amount of verbs used in written output?
3. Do sequential picture stories influence the accuracy of verb usage in written output?

1.9 Hypothesis

1. English language learners' usage and accuracy in verb tense use is positively affected by sequential picture cues.
2. Null hypothesis: The use of sequential picture cues does not have a positive effect on English language learners' verb tense usage and accuracy in their written output.

1.10 Research Design

The participants for this study were students in two high-advanced classes in an English for Academic Purposes university program. The instrumentation used to collect the data for the purposes of this study was in the form of sequential picture cues and the participants' written output. Over the course of five weeks the participants spent one hour in a computer lab where they received mini-lessons on the use of verb tenses for ten minutes and the other forty minutes were spent typing up their narratives. Once the participants finished the course, the narratives were analyzed and coded. An ANOVA test was performed to validate the findings.

1.11 Summary

Learning the rules of verb tense usage as presented in grammar textbooks is a difficult challenge for English language learners. Even more difficult is gaining the skill to accurately combine the English verb tenses in a written narrative. Different methods and approaches have attempted to help learners overcome these challenges which have stubbornly persisted. A step in the right direction would likely involve the incorporation

of contextualization of the verb tenses, as well as a shift towards paragraph writing instead of sentence-level tasks. For learners who engage with the language in the comfortable confines of a classroom, contextualizing verb tenses by using sequential picture cues might provide classrooms tasks with certain degree of authenticity currently missing from textbook exercises.

1.12 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the methods and strategies used for teaching verb tenses in grammar classes, the importance of context and the use of picture cues in language classrooms. Chapter 3 explains the methodology, the procedures and the instrumentation used during the study. Chapter 4 examines the results, analyzes and discusses the statistical significance, as well as the data from the participants' written output. Chapter 5 concludes the study and discusses ideas for future related research.

Chapter 2

2 Literature Review

This chapter discusses the literature related to the methods used in the field of English as a Second/Foreign language for the teaching of grammar. It also examines the benefits of using picture stories in the acquisition of language, especially for in-class tasks. Finally, it looks at some narrative models that can be utilized with picture stories to teach learners how to effectively integrate verb tenses in a narrative.

2.1 Historical Overview of Pertinent Teaching Methods

The Grammar-Translation Method is possibly the oldest method employed in language learning because it was used for teaching Latin in Europe up until the Renaissance, as Latin was slowly being replaced as the international language of choice by Romance languages and English (Abdulah, 2013). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), back in the 1800's this method was known as the Prussian Method in the United States due to a book by B. Sears titled *The Ciceronian or the Prussian Method of Teaching the Elements of the Latin Language*. Richards and Rodgers (2001) outline the seven main characteristics of the Grammar-Translation Method as the following:

1. Language learning through grammar rules and translation of texts to and from the target language.
2. Heavy focus on reading and writing; not on listening and speaking.
3. Focus on vocabulary through word lists, dictionary study and memorization.
4. The sentence is the central point of emphasis.
5. Focus on accuracy.
6. Deductive teaching of grammar in “an organized and systematic way” (Richards & Rodgers, pg. 6).
7. L1 is the language of instruction

The authors conclude that even though the method is still used in current practice, it does not have a theory, nor does it have a rational justification in the literature. Abdullah (2013) has a drastically different outlook on the Grammar-Translation method, however.

“It is widely recognized that the Grammar Translation Method is one of the most popular and favorite models of language teaching, which has been rather stalwart and impervious to educational reforms, remaining standard and sine qua non-methodology.” (Abudllah, 2013, p. 127). Currently, the Grammar-Translation Method might have more acceptance and adherents in places where English is not the language of instruction such as Taiwan (Chang, 2011). There are research studies that are investigating its effectiveness, with encouraging results (Dagiliene, 2012; Al Refaai, 2013; Mondal, 2012; Chang 2001; Aqel, 2013). Furthermore, a quick glance at the majority of grammar books for English language learners (ELL) will suffice to ascertain that the writers of such books retain many of the principles summarized in the list above. For example, the learning of grammar is illustrated in a deductive way, there is still a concerted effort to learn grammar accurately and the teaching of grammatical forms is mostly worked on at the sentence-level. Haccius (2007) succinctly explains most teachers’ experience with teaching grammatical forms deductively when he says:

Whereas it may be useful for teachers to have listed over three pages all the instances in which we can hope to use the present perfect, even if our students understand them, it seems highly unlikely that they will internalize them independently and of their own accord.

Regardless of its shortcomings, people somehow have learned languages using the Grammar-Translation method, becoming quite fluent and accurate users of their learned language(s). Nevertheless, there was a reaction against it as the needs of language learners and teachers expanded.

After many attempts at reform in the field of language teaching during the last half of the 19th Century, the Natural Method by L. Sauveur rose to prominence to rival the Grammar-Translation Method. Sauveur began teaching in Boston in the 1860’s by shunning translation and the use of the L1 and by emphasizing “demonstration and action (Richards & Rodgers, 2001 pg. 11). Abudullah (2013), however, attributes to Charles Berlitz the credit for being the innovator who reacted against the Grammar Translation method with the innovative Direct Method. Nevertheless, the literature states that both

these methods stressed pronunciation, speaking and listening for everyday situations, and inductive learning of grammar through in-class interaction with the L2 (Richard & Rodgers, 2001; Abdulah, 2013). One important consideration for the present study in regards to the Direct Method is that it was the first time that pictures were used to teach vocabulary items.

The next major method for learning a language was the Audio-lingual Method. Richards and Rodgers (2001) report that this method originated in the United States in the 1950's as it was initially developed by the armed forces. The Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) operated for only two years, but the methodology influenced higher learning institutions and academics, which resulted in the Audio-lingual Method. The language training was intensive, based on speaking drills and memorization in small groups and individual study time. According to Cook (2001), Robert Lado's "Language Teaching: A Scientific Approach" can be considered as the best example of the method. One of its central tenets was that the performance and memorization of dialogues and pattern drills would minimize the learners' mistakes in L2.

Another characteristic of the Audio-lingual method was that learners had to be exposed to the target language at all times since listening training was essential for the learning of speaking. Listening provided the gateway for habit formation along the lines of Behaviorist Theory (Cook, 2001). Furthermore, grammar was deductively taught through the use of analogies. Finally, language had to be taught within the cultural and linguistic context and not in isolated tasks. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). There were expansion activities which served to gauge how much the learners had incorporated the language for their personal use (Cook, 2001). This last point is another key aspect to be discussed later in relation to the present study because learning how to integrate verb tenses into a narrative through the use of picture stories allows ELL to practice in the cultural context provided by the pictures; a valuable opportunity for in-class experience. However, these types of contextual experiences are not easy to come by in an Audio-lingual classroom. Even though there are expansion activities for the students to learn, I know from personal and anecdotal experience that class times are often not long enough to engage in authentic language practice. This lack of time results in having to choose

between drills and authentic speaking practice, and more often than not the instructor and the students opt for the rigidity of drills instead of the unpredictability of authentic oral tasks. Because of this and other considerations, the advent of a new SLA method reacting against to the rigidity of language drills and repetition was like a breath of fresh air.

The Communicative Language Teaching of the 1980's was a reaction to the strict rules of language learning of the Audio-lingual method. Howatt (1984) outlines the two versions of this method. The weak version is concerned with providing learners opportunities to communicate in English. This version could be deemed a strategy of learning how to actually speak English. In contrast, the strong version of CLT can be seen as "using English to learn it" by acquiring it via communication "stimulating the development of the language system itself" (p. 279). Regardless of the version used, Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) in their description of the main characteristics of CLT, stressed that this approach makes use of contextualization because it values communicative attempts by the learners. Thus, the struggle to communicate is the most important part of the learning process with the goal of reaching communicative competence. In this struggle, the role of the teacher is that of a facilitator while the student is the one actively interacting with others in all the tasks assigned. The present study adapts these concepts to the task involving picture stories since the participants must figure out for themselves, and with the help of others, how to communicate in their writing by interacting with the stories as they attempt to use the language, in this case verb tenses.

2.2 Task-Based Instruction

In the present study, the participants interact with picture stories to support their written output. Originally, the idea of giving the participants a task in the form of a picture story comes from the concept of Task-Based Learning, which originated in the Bangalore Project led by Prabhu in 1987. According to Cook (2001), Prabhu identified three types of tasks: information-gap, reasoning-gap and opinion-gap activities. The picture-story task applied in this study falls under the information-gap umbrella and is appropriate as an in-class task or activity because it pairs "real" content with language. An excellent example of a task-based activity is the Storyline approach, developed in

Scotland and introduced in the primary school curriculum. Even though it is used around the world, it is not widely employed in second language teaching or in the literature (Alquist, 2013). This type of instruction would be very useful in second language classrooms because “tasks may be devised to consolidate learners’ existing knowledge of grammar and lexis, or to introduce new material.” (Alquist, 2013, p. 41)

The study conducted by Alquist (2013) with Swedish students aged 11-13 involved working with Storyline for two hours per day and four days a week. The participants worked in groups of four and pretended to be families living on a fictitious street. The participants were tasked with writing short descriptions in weekly journals, talking about themselves, following instructions and working with others while learning about life in an English-speaking country. The aim of these tasks was to “consolidate the lexis and the grammatical structures which they had already met” (p. 43). One of the tasks related to the grammatical structures focused on the present tense. It was an oral presentation in which the participants introduced themselves and the information on their characters would later be used for a newsletter’s section titled “Spotlight on us.” The results showed that in speaking, the participants preferred to use L1, but there was enough L2 being used, especially by the most proficient. In writing, all but one of the participants met the curriculum and personal goals. Some learners had stated that they wanted to improve their use of verb tenses, for example, and they did so by the end of the study.

This study demonstrates to some degree the usefulness of task-based lessons, but even though Alquist’s study is favorable to the Task-Based Approach, not all academics favour it as the best approach for teaching languages. Although Swan (2005) agrees that TBI is a useful pedagogic resource, he argues that it does not work as a teaching approach for language acquisition, especially in the EFL context since learners lack exposure to the target language outside of class time. This lack of target language exposure in the daily life of the learners inhibits TBI in the classroom. This might be a valid view since the least proficient participants in Alquist’s study preferred to use their L1. It is the opinion of Harley and Swain (1984) and Long (1991) that for learners to

acquire a second language, interventions are required in the form of focus on form instruction.

2.3 Form-Focused Instruction

Form Focused Instruction is a term referring to any teaching technique that employs proactive or reactive methods to attract the learners to language via implicit or explicit activities (Long, 1997). Research has shown that FFI has benefits for second language learners (Spada, 2011). However, other studies oppose this view (White 1998; Day & Shapson, 1991). According to Long (1997), FFI encompasses Focus on Form, which draws students' attention to linguistic elements in context, and Focus on Forms, which is concerned with the teaching of explicit grammar rules. A further distinction between FonF and FonFs is that teaching moments in FonF happen spontaneously while episodes on FonFs are planned ahead of time. In regards to the effectiveness of these methods, Norris and Ortega's (2000) meta-analysis of the literature concluded that explicit instruction of the type utilized in FonFs tended to be more effective than implicit instruction, similar to that used for FonF (Spada, 2011). However, Spada (2011) argues that the success of explicit over implicit teaching in Norris and Ortega's (2000) meta-analysis could be due to the fact that most of the studies analyzed were of grammar-style tests, and only a handful took into account communicative use of the target language.

It is possible to choose between the FonF and FonFs, but this may result in unbalanced language skills. Research has shown that FonFs methods result in learners with high scores on grammar tests, but lower levels of communicative competence. By the same token, learners who only study with FonF methods end up with high levels of fluency, but low levels of grammatical accuracy (Hu, 2003). A possible solution would be to integrate FonF and FonFs (Azar 2007; Day & Shapson, 2001). This is the position taken in the current study as well because combining FonFs with FonF allows for a fuller picture of what the learner should learn and aspire to. If teaching with an integrated FFI approach, it will be useful to take into consideration Spada and Lightbown's (2008) research which stipulated that one more division in regards to the timing of instruction was necessary in the form of isolated vs. integrated FFI. When engaged in integrated FFI, the learner engages with form in communicative activities. Meanwhile, in isolated

FFI the learner learns form separately from communicative practices. Their hypothesis is related to Transfer Appropriate Processing (TAP), a cognitive theory which states that “we retrieve knowledge best in contexts that are similar to those in which we originally acquired them” (Spada, 2011 p. 229).

Valeo’s (2013) study on adult learners in a content-based classroom setting supports the TAP hypothesis. The participants of this classroom-based study were newcomers to Canada from various countries studying a childcare content-driven syllabus. One group received content-only instruction while the other received content plus focus on form instruction. The treatments lasted 10 weeks and the participants were required to complete a pre-test, an immediate post-test and a delayed post-test in order to investigate the effects of FFI on their language and content learning experience. During the treatment, the FFI group received metalinguistic explanations, form-focused tasks and corrective feedback in the form of recasts. The content-based group did not receive any focus on form instruction, and only learned about behaviour management, child abuse and safety. The FF group focused on the simple past and the present conditional because these forms were the most salient in the content being studied.

The results of this study led to the conclusion that both groups “made language gains on both measures, and that there were no discernible advantages for either group” (Valeo, 2013, p. 39). This result supports claims that content-rich instruction leads to language learning (Krashen, 1982; Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Grabe & Stoller, 1997). An interesting result was that the FF group scored higher than the content-only group in the professional knowledge tests, leading the researcher to conclude that Focus on form instruction actually enhanced content learning in this particular study. According to Valeo, this may have been due to the enhancement of entire clauses/sentences for focus on form. The learners in the FF group may have gained deeper understanding of the content which led to better performance on their tests. This result also led Valeo to question the idea that output is the best measure of language acquisition. Thus, one of her recommendations is to measure content comprehension through reading and listening tests, as well.

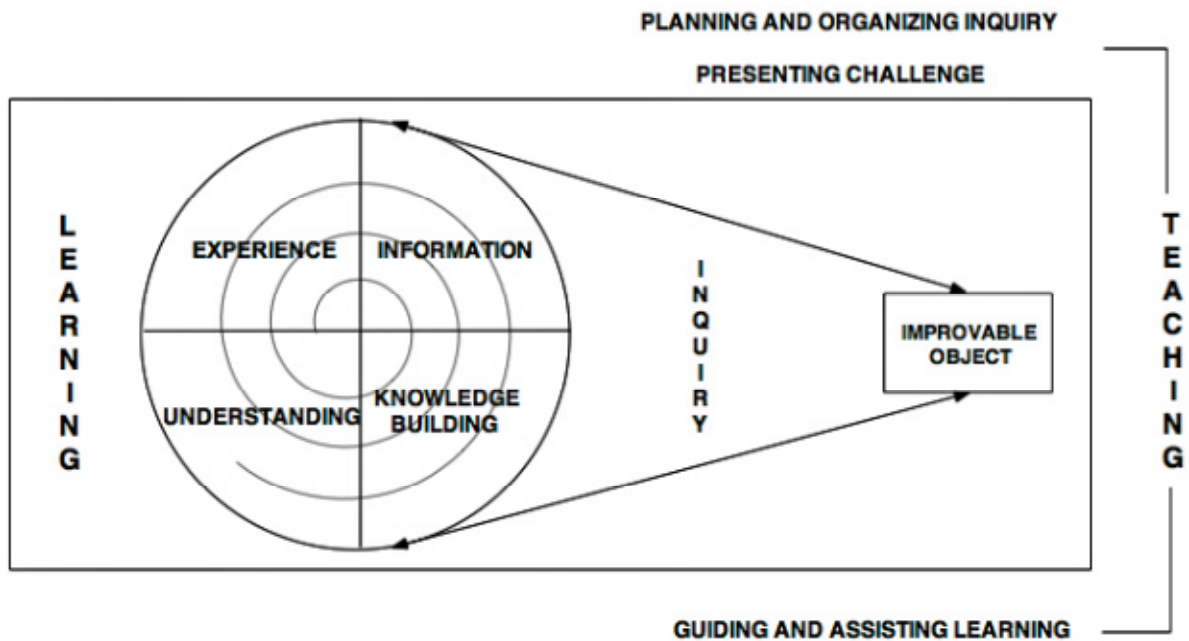
2.4 Constructivism and Instructional Conversation

In recent years there has been a push towards de-centralizing teaching in the college or university classroom by providing a student-centred approach to learning (Barret, Bower & Donovan, 2007; Laverie, 2006; Barber, 2007). Approaching university subjects in a student-centred manner may be difficult due to larger number of students in a classroom and the nature of the content. However, the ESL/EFL classroom provides the right fit for student-centred activities like working individually, in pairs or groups, and in class discussions or role-plays (Jones, 2007). These types of classroom activities originated from Constructivism, and they encourage learners to “construct their understanding of the world as a product of their actions on the world” (Mascolo, 2009 p. 4). Mascolo (2009) explains that for Piaget, the original constructivist, knowledge had to be learned in context in order to assimilate it; an active, rather than a passive process. Furthermore, learners must use their prior knowledge to construct new knowledge when they “engage in the types of actions that will allow them to construct for themselves...” (p. 6). However, learners may feel a bit lost when left to their own devices, even if the instructor has left clear instructions on what to do. For that reason, at least in the ESL/EFL context, it is important to engage the learners in conversation often in order to check their comprehension and their progress.

Wells (2009) proposes a model called Instructional Conversation (IC), as a classroom tool to work with children. The premise is that by using an artefact which the students want to create or improve, the teachers can engage in conversation and create the instruction along with the students. The students experience learning as a “continuing spiral, where, in each cycle, the learner approaches a new problem armed with some relevant experience and gains new information from feedback from his or her own actions and from other sources...” (para. 22) The author recommends that students work in groups because that is the way in which they can get the most knowledge-building out of their sharing of different perspectives through conversation. The teacher’s role in this type of instruction is to provide the learners with the appropriate resources, help with the challenges they may face, and track their progress by discussing through Instructional Conversation their ideas on the creation or improvement of the artefact. Each experience

gained by the learner adds new information that leads to knowledge building and understanding (internalization). The internalized knowledge can aid students in the performance of the new experience or task, and if it does not aid them with the content, it may at least aid them by increasing their confidence level. This new experience will inevitably lead to new information, thus repeating the cycle. The constant repetition of the cycle is likely to empower the learner during the process and may lead to increased gains in knowledge acquisition. Wells' model (see Figure 1, below) is important to the current study because it employs this type of cycle to introduce the learners to an experience via their own memories or picture stories.

Figure 1 Learning and Teaching through Inquiry



From Wells (2009)

Wells' approach supports the idea that Second Language classroom tasks must engage the learners in authentic communication. These types of communicative activities must be valuable and meaningful, as well as challenging (Canale & Swain 1980). With these types of activities, the instructor cannot be the immovable object at the front of the class, but rather be a facilitator that empowers the learners to participate with their own authentic attempts at communication. Surely, the instructor is still expected to teach, but

more so at the lower levels. Once the learners are able to fend for themselves, the instructor can facilitate the activities that lead the students toward the path of communication (Canale & Swain, 1980). In this way, Well's concept of learning and teaching through inquiry is able to fit in the language classroom as a tool to encourage learning through the process of making oneself understood to others via authentic communicative tasks. However, in order to communicate effectively in L2 it is important to have a sound grasp of the grammatical structure of the L2.

2.5 Grammar in Context

The concepts of knowledge building through discovery and conversation play a central role in the teaching of grammatical structures in context. When one thinks of teaching grammar, the idea of contextualizing the grammatical content is not often obvious to instructors depending on their background and their teaching philosophy. Millard (2000) examined 13 grammar books used specifically for grammar class in three ESL institutions in the area of Edmonton AB. The books' publication dates ranged from 1989-2000. Millard scored them according to Context, Activities, Explanations, and Practicality. The findings show that the book writers appropriately addressed issues regarding explanations and implementations of the key grammatical concepts. However, "those issues that concern the theoretical aspects of contextualization and activity variation are often superficially addressed" in textbooks at the lower end of the ratings (Millard, 2000 pg. 52). The two textbooks that managed to get higher ratings according to the established categories provided activities that were communication-based, as well as context-rich. They achieve this by embedding highlighted examples of grammatical form in readings or dialogues. It is worth noting that the older books in the study received the lowest scores. The books that received scores in the middle showed signs of contextualization, but did not go far enough. Meanwhile, the newest books received the highest scores because the writers implemented an appropriate mix of explicit and implicit instruction. This means that the field of grammar book writing is in the process of accepting the contextualization of grammatical form as the new norm.

There are many advantages to teaching grammar through context, though. For Hinkel (2002a) "the contextualized teaching of grammar can expose learners to ways in

which language is used in real life and heighten their awareness of its conventions and complexities” (p. 195). She goes on to explain that using context may be superior to explicit rule instruction because “...presentations of models and explanations may not be sufficient to improve the quality of writing production. For this reason, it is important to supplement the explanations with ample practice to allow learners to produce writing” (p. 195-96). This brings us back to the usefulness of integrating teaching methods such as FFI and not think about them as separate entities, but parts of the whole.

The ideas discussed above on the importance of contextualizing the classroom content and the way in which it can be achieved informed the present study. As mentioned in Chapter I, the instruction of grammar in general, and verb tenses, in particular, has generally been done with out of context exercises and sentence-level emphasis. This study’s use of picture stories as artefacts enable the classroom to become student-centered and oriented towards knowledge building in continuous and collaborative cycles.

2.6 The Pictorial Method

The use of pictures in the classroom is not a new phenomenon. Already in the Renaissance, Commenius had proposed the learning of Latin via pictures (Allford, 2000). However, the pictorial method has not always been well accepted, as noted above in the exclusion of pictures in the Grammar-Translation method. By the 1950’s pictures were being widely used in the ESL classrooms to stimulate the learners’ interest and to reinforce the material in textual form (Brackman, 1952). Spaleny and Peprnik (1967) provide some guidelines for the use of pictures in the classroom concluding that pictures should require little to no explanation, otherwise their usefulness is compromised. To achieve that, pictures must clearly show cause and effect by relating all the elements present. Pictures should also contain enough examples of the actions that the author wants to emphasize to avoid wrong interpretations. The relationships between the elements in the picture should also be clear for the sequence of actions or items to make sense. Finally, pictures must also contain a break in the action to introduce an element of surprise. If a picture, or a picture sequence has these elements, it can be considered a successful conveyor of meaning for classroom tasks, especially for language learners.

2.7 Teachers' Opinions on Using Picture Books

Sheu (2008) conducted a study which asked Taiwanese teachers to share their opinions on the use of picture books in EFL classes. This study was based on researchers' suggestions that stories are rich in contextualized and memorable vocabulary and sentence structure examples having the ability to engage with the learners at a personal level (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2002; Collie & Slater, 1987). Sheu (2008) highlighted the idea that teachers find picture story books to have linguistic value due to the manner in which they are able to contextualize meaning thus aiding in the understanding of grammatical forms and functions. Remembering stories may serve as triggers of vocabulary items or phrases when students forget them, enabling a link to bits of prior knowledge. Another important finding from the interviews was the motivational value that picture books have for learners. The pictures are attractive to students, but so are the stories themselves. The stories allow the learners to engage with the texts in ways that grammar exercises are not equipped to do. Finally, Sheu (2008) argues that the pictures in the books allow for increased comprehension and access to the imagination of the learners. If the pictures are clear, the reader can immediately grasp the meaning of a scene without having to read a full description. This allows a preview of what the text will later disclose. In regards to students' imagination, pictures allow students to guess about the content of the text through them, which may lead them to acquire new vocabulary more efficiently.

2.8 Pictures and Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition is one of the most important aspects of learning language, and there are many ways in which instructors teach it, along with myriad books and methods on the subject. In classroom activities, the use of gestures or pictures along with the vocabulary item is a popular way of teaching new words as attested by the popularity of picture dictionaries such as Oxford's. Some recent studies have shed some light on the subject by concluding that multi-sensory learning using gestures and pictures is more beneficial than traditional hearing and reading methods when learning a new language (Mayer, Yildiz, Macedonia, von Kriegstein, 2015; Bisson, van Heuven, Conklin & Tunney, 2013). Furthermore, the use of pictures can also allow language learners to

learn about cultural aspects in the target language while “learning and practicing lexical phrases” (Allford, 2000 pg. 51)

The current push for the use of technology in the ESL classroom has encouraged researchers to experiment with multimedia techniques, especially for vocabulary and reading. Yoshi and Flaitz (2002) studied the effect of text and picture annotations in vocabulary retention of L2 learners. They divided their participants into a text-only group, a picture-only group and a picture and text group. The 151 participants were either in the beginner or intermediate level of proficiency. The study examined how the participants learned vocabulary incidentally as they engaged in reading comprehension and listening activities. They worked under the assumption that incidental learning was a by-product of a cognitive task, not its target outcome (Yoshi & Flaitz, 2002). The researchers gave the participants a pre-test to determine if they had a good grasp of the vocabulary to be tested. Of the 151, only two were removed because they knew over 30% of the vocabulary to be taught, which happened to be a series of concrete verbs. The remaining 149 participants continued the treatment, which consisted of going to a computer lab to read a story. Once they finished reading, they answered comprehension questions and completed a survey on their impressions of the multimedia test. The participants also sequentially completed a test of word definitions, a picture recognition test and a word recognition test. After two weeks they completed delayed post-tests with the same content as the immediate post-tests, but in different order. The results showed that the picture and text group performed better than the text-only and picture-only groups; thus encouraging “the use of pictures as alternatives or as accompaniments to textual cues” (Yoshi & Flaitz, 2002 pp. 46). The delayed post-test results were similar to the immediate post-test, except that the differences between the groups were smaller. Although the combination group outperformed the others in the immediate post-test, the picture-only group showed more consistency in the retention rates during the delayed post-test. This study showed that the combination of text and pictures helps with incidental vocabulary learning and retention for learners at the beginner and intermediate levels of proficiency. The conclusions in this study lend credence to Paivio’s Dual-Coding theory which regard the verbal and non-verbal as equally important for learning (Clark & Paivio, 1991).

2.9 Pictures and Writing

Considering that using pictures may help in the acquisition of vocabulary, it is not far-fetched to think that pictures might also be useful in the assessment of writing skills in the ESL/EFL context. Brock-Utne and Desai (2010) conducted a study with South African and Tanzanian grade 4 and 7 students in which they assessed the linguistic proficiency of the participants through the use of picture stories and writing in English. The researchers chose writing because it is a skill that is often assessed with greater weight in the South African and Tanzanian contexts. The participants were given a set of six scenes which they had to arrange in a sequence. Their stories had to be written in isiXhosa, their L1, and then in English in order to contrast the participants' proficiency in both languages. Their findings show that the isiXhosa stories for grade 4 and grade 7 participants are far superior to the ones written in English because the participants did not have the linguistic tools in English to match their L1 proficiency. Other researchers used the same pictures with different groups of participants and showed the same results; mainly, the stories written in L1 were much better developed than those in English. Their L1 sentences were longer with more complex structures and interesting details, as well as with better command of grammatical rules (Brock-Utne & Desai, 2010). Apart from the discrepancy in linguistic proficiency, it was pointed out that the participants may not have been familiar with some of the places/scenes portrayed in the picture stories like the airport and the customs office, and this could have played a role in the quality of their writing in their L1 and L2. Another consideration to take into account when working with pictures and the writing process is whether the students are familiar with the style of narrative most prominent in the English language.

Lapkin, Swain and Smith (2002) conducted a study involving a jigsaw task that the participants used as a source to write a story using an eight-scene picture story. The other part of the study consisted of a dictogloss in which the participants took notes on a reading by the teacher. The participants worked together combining their notes to come up with a repetition of the story they had heard. The study was conducted with pairs of participants. They were taken to a room and shown a videotaped lesson on French pronominal verbs, and the participants were informed that they had to pay attention to

their use of pronominal verbs during the tasks at hand (Lapkin et al., 2002). Once the participants had written their stories, a French native speaker would reformulate their stories, fixing the grammar but keeping the meaning. A couple of days later, the participants were asked to notice and circle the differences between their narratives and the reformulated ones. A few days after this stage, the participants were shown the videotaped session of their discussion and they were asked to explain their thought process as they compared their own narratives to the reformulated versions. The fourth and final stage required the participants to rewrite their narratives (Lapkin et al, 2002). The results show that the participants with a higher skill level use more verbs than the weaker ones. They also show that the vocabulary of the group using the jigsaw was more extensive than that of the group using the dictogloss. Most importantly, the jigsaw group showed improvement from the first stage to the last. All in all, the authors conclude that having various stages of contact with the material may have aided the learning process of the participants.

A study conducted by Alidoost et al. (2014) tested the effect of picture stories on idea organization in written narratives. Writing a coherent narrative in English is difficult for native speakers, but for ELL the difficulty level increases (Nunan, 2001). The authors noticed that for Iranian students of English, writing accurately was easier than writing fluently because they were not able to organize their ideas coherently. For this reason, the authors decided to test if the picture stories had a positive influence in the organization of narratives. For the purposes of the study, 60 male and female university students were chosen as participants after scoring above 70% on writing tasks during their coursework and final exams. The participants were divided into two groups. The control group was asked to write 250 word narratives without the use of pictures while the experimental group was required to use pictures and write a narrative of the same length as the control group. The pictures used by the experimental group were of a sequential nature and the story line was connected by causal/temporal connectors. As the participants were performing the tasks, the researchers helped them with any questions they had because the treatment was concerned with the overall organization, not the minute detail of grammatical forms and vocabulary.

Once the data was collected, it was analyzed by counting the instances of causal/temporal relations, passive/active constructions and the number of noun phrases used. They calculated the mean and standard deviation and found that the experimental group generated more noun phrases and casual/temporal relations than the control group which meant that pictures had a positive effect on the participants' writing. Furthermore, the experimental group wrote narratives that were better organized since the stories served as "road signs" and helped to create smoother transitions from one scene to the next (Alidoost et al. 2014 pg. 4). The authors also noticed that the experimental group managed to express the beginning, middle and ending of the stories more effectively than the control group as stipulated by Mandler and Johnson (1989).

2.10 Verb Tense and Aspect

When speaking about verb tenses in the ESL/EFL context, most will think of the simple present, the simple past, the progressives and the variety of perfect tenses with their corresponding progressives, not to mention the future with all its conjugations totaling to the 12 tenses commonly found in grammar books. However, linguists have established that the English verb only has two tenses: the present and the past. It also has two aspects: the progressive and the perfect (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). The tense of a verb refers to the timing of the occurrence of an event, while the aspect refers to if the event happened earlier as in the case of the present perfect, or if it "is still in progress" (pg. 17). Grammar books contain a future tense for English verbs; however, English verbs are not inflected to express future time. Instead, English uses a modal "will," a phrasal modal like "going to" or adverbials of time to describe a future action instead of a tense in the strict sense of the word (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). The authors outline the most troublesome combinations of the tenses and aspects to help students learn the meaning and usage in an effective manner. This is best achieved at the sentence level. For example:

Q1: *What are you doing this holiday?*

Versus:

Q2: *What do you do on a holiday?*

Q1 uses the present progressive to refer to a specific day while Q2 refers to a general situation. There are other uses of these combinations that may prove problematic for ELL such as when describing temporary events and permanent situations. One can compare:

S1: "Mary is living alone"

To:

S2: "Mary lives alone."

In S1, Mary is living alone (temporary) until she finds a roommate, but in S2 Mary lives alone (permanently) because she does not like to live with roommates. There are many other combinations of tenses and aspects at the sentence level that serve to contrast the usage and meaning that learners must master in order to have a good working knowledge of verb tenses.

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) explain that working on the narrative level presents other challenges to ELLs. There are some tense and aspect combinations that occur frequently, and there are others that do not. For example:

Situation 1:

I have a splitting headache that I've had for two hours. I'm going to take some aspirin.

Situation 2:

I have a splitting headache that I had for two hours; I will take some aspirin. (pg. 161)

Situation 1 employs tenses oriented toward the present, but Situation 2 mixes the simple present with the simple past and the future with "will." This mixing leads to loss of coherence even though the meaning can be understood. Of course, the above examples are only at the sentence level. However, to teach verb forms effectively one must also teach the learners how to use the forms at the discourse/narrative level. In

order to do that, one must know about the different types of discourse or narrative analysis available.

2.11 Narrative Models

One of the first narrative frameworks belongs to Bull (1960), a linguistics' professor who revolutionized the learning of the Spanish language. He researched the fundamentals of Spanish grammar trying to establish effective teaching methods for it, and this drove him to researching how verbs signal time relationships (Englekirk, Hule, & Stockwell, 2011). Bull's framework reorganized the English tense system along time zones or axes. If a person begins speaking in one axis, she has a choice of moving the action at the moment of speaking, at a time before that moment, or at a time after that moment. In this way the narrative maintains verb tense integrity (Haccius, 2007). The following is a sample of how the Bull Framework operates.

Table 1: The Bull Framework

Axis of Orientation	A time before the basic axis time	Basic axis time corresponding to the moment of reference	A time after the basic axis time.
Future	By 5:00, he will have finished all the chores. (Future Perfect)	He will/is going to eat dinner at 5:00. (Simple Future)	Upon completion of this work, he will/is going to watch TV. (Simple Future)
Present	He has played golf since 1960. (Present Perfect)	He plays golf. (Simple Present)	He is going to play golf next Sunday. (Future of the Present)
Past	When he left to play golf, he had finished all his chores. (Past Perfect)	He played golf on Saturday afternoon. (Simple Past)	Having finished his golf game, he went out to dinner with his golf buddies. (Simple Past)

Adapted from Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999)

The Bull Framework enables the user to avoid making tense/aspect mistakes by staying within an axis of orientation (future, present or past). This framework explains the relationship between tense and aspect at the sentence and narrative levels. However, it is not the only framework available. Chafe (1972) introduced another sequence to discourse which highlighted the use of generic tenses, one of Chafe's improvements on the Bull Framework.

Table 2: Chafe's Tense Analysis

Discourse Sequence	Chafe's Tense Analysis
a. I went to a concert last night.	a. Past
b. They played Beethoven's second.	b. Past
c. You don't hear that very often.	c. Generic
d. I enjoyed it.	d. Past
e. Next Friday I'm going to another concert.	e. Future
f. They're playing something by Stravinsky.	f. future

Adapted from Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999)

According to Chafe (1972), when people begin to tell a story they do not change from one tense to another unless there is a break in the narrative via the use of a generic tense, or a time marker is used. In the above chart, the first two sentences are expressed in the past tense. The third sentence is a generic comment that could allow for a change of tense. Instead, the story continues in the past. In sentence e, the narrative changes to the future because of the time marker "Next Friday". The use of time markers was the

second improvement on the Bull Framework because it allowed the speaker or writer to jump from one axis to another.

Another approach is Suh's (1992) Frame-Elaboration Hypothesis which states that:

English speakers often use one tense-aspect-modality form to very generally introduce (or sometimes close) a type of narrative or an episode, and then they switch for the remainder of the episode to another form to elaborate the episode and provide the details (Celce-Murcia & Larsen Freeman, 1999, p. 167).

Thus, if a narrative begins with the present perfect, the speaker switches to the simple present until the last sentence where the speaker goes back to the perfect tense in its progressive aspect to tie any loose ends. For example:

- a) We've had a lot of snow this winter.
- b) I wake up every day to shovel at least two feet of snow.
- c) We can't catch a break.
- d) The snow keeps coming, regardless of the forecast.
- e) I've been shoveling so much that my back has begun to hurt.

(Adapted from Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999 p. 167)

By the same token, if the story were being told in the past tense, the beginning and/or last sentence(s) would make use of the perfect tenses. For example:

- a) Last year we worked on the island for a week.
- b) We took provisions for the week.
- c) But we lost them to the bears and raccoons.
- d) We had been without food for two days when the boat finally came to pick us up.

(Adapted from Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999 p. 167)

In the above example, the story began in the past tense, but ended with a past perfect construction to enhance the dramatic impact of the ending of the narrative. There

are certainly a good variety of models to study and learn from. Most importantly, these narrative models provide instructors and learners with myriad opportunities to work on the challenging field of verb tenses. While it is difficult to align all languages along the lines of the Bull Framework, the framework at least provides a good starting point to teach tenses integrated into a narrative, instead of the usual individual order found in grammar books (Larsen-Freeman, Kuehn, & Haccius, 2002). By teaching verb tense usage through the models discussed above, the learners should quickly move from sentence to narrative level, which would provide them with a fuller sense of how to apply the tense/aspect system in their daily interactions. One important consideration to take into account when discussing verb usage is that when verbs are used incorrectly it may lead to a breakdown in communication (Hinkel, 2013). Furthermore, there are differences in the frequency of verb tense/aspect usage between academic and non-academic settings. In academic settings, the simple present and past tenses are the most commonly used while the perfect and progressive aspects are not as widely employed (Hinkel, 2013). The present study makes use of the perfect and progressive tenses during the experiments because the purpose is narrative fiction writing and not academic writing.

Since the study's participants engaged in the writing of fiction, they were given a narrative model also use touched upon by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999). The present study makes use of a narrative model with some similarities to the ones discussed above which was adapted from oral stories compiled by Labov and Waletzky (1967). This model was chosen because its various sections allowed for the combination of a variety of verb tenses, as well as for its perfect fit with the picture stories used for during the interventions.

2.12 Labov and Waletzky's Narrative Analysis

As Yi (2012) states, "the majority of everyday communication basically consists of engagement with an ongoing narrative: we are story-bound creatures." Since we are natural story-tellers, one would think that stories would be common practice in the second language classrooms. However, Jones (2001) points out that there is a lack of methods focusing on story-telling in second language courses for in-class tasks. More

than narrating facts, story-telling is an intricate weaving of various literary features and grammatical forms. Most of the stories people tell are under casual conversation conditions and refer to instances of embarrassing life events hoping to get a reaction out of the listener (Jones, 2001 p. 2). The key, for second language instructors, is to work with a model by which to instruct learners on narrating these types of events.

One such model is Labov and Waletzky's (1967) work on "the simplest and most fundamental narrative structures...found in oral versions of personal experience" (p. 12). Oral narratives, according to Labov and Waltzky's 1967 model, contain five main sections: abstract, orientation, remarkable event, reaction and coda. The abstract happens at the beginning of the story and it sets the topic and tone of the narrative to follow. The orientation section gives an introduction of the characters to create context. This is followed by the narration of a remarkable event in temporal order. The reaction section contains the result of the narrative and this is followed by the coda, which puts the narrated event back in touch with the real world in real time by referring to what the characters in the story are currently doing, for example (Jones, 2001).

2.13 Summary

Thanks to a number of advances, the teaching of languages has come a long way since the days when only the Grammar-Translation Method ruled over the classrooms. The Direct Method, along with the Audio-lingual Method, issued in a new age of discovery and progress in the field of SLA. The 1980's ushered in a productive decade for SLA. Task-Based Instruction provided the framework for innovative teaching strategies for classroom environments. Also, FFI made important contributions to the teaching of grammatical structures by separating implicit and explicit types of instruction, to mention one. This division has allowed for an environment that was more conducive to the contextualization of grammar structures depending on the learners' needs. This development in grammar instruction opened the door for other strategies such as the use of pictorial methods directly related to the teaching of grammar and vocabulary consequently leading to the combination of picture stories and narrative models as learner output.

Chapter 3

3 Methodology

This chapter describes the methods used to conduct the study, beginning with the participants and the study design. This is followed by a description of the pilot study undertaken to choose the appropriate picture stories to use and the multiple choice test used to determine the participants' level of awareness of verb forms in a narrative. This chapter continues with a discussion of the treatments performed, as well as the manner in which the data was scored.

3.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 36 female and male high advanced students at an EAP language program in Southwestern Ontario, Canada. Of the 36 participants, 6 were from Angola and the other 30 were from China; 18 were males and 18 were females between the ages of 18 to 20. The participants were divided into two classes for their regular coursework and they were kept in that setup for the study because it would have been disruptive to their schedule to make new groups according to L1, for example. This is especially true since this particular study was not concerned with comparing L2 proficiency in verb tense usage between language groups. There seemed to be a considerable investment in the part of the participants, and overall they were highly engaged students, suggesting a high level of motivation. They were in the final level of the program before entering into their undergrad university program and they had been studying together for 8 months when this study took place.

3.2 Study Design

This quasi-experimental, comparative study was conducted with two groups of adult learners taught by one teacher. The study included a pre-test, immediate test and delayed post-test to determine whether the picture stories could affect the participant's accuracy and use of verb tenses in a written narrative. The participants were already divided in two classes, so one of the groups was randomly chosen to be the EG. Thus, the CG

received the treatment with isolated and integrated instruction, but without the picture stories. Instead, the participants in the CG wrote stories that came from their own imagination and used first person narrative. The EG, in turn, received the same treatment as the CG but with the addition of picture stories on which the participants based their written narrative. In this manner, both groups got the benefit of the explicit instruction. The only variable throughout the study was the output task. Finally, the participants had the freedom to stop attending the sessions at any time because the tasks would not be reflected in their actual coursework.

3.3 Piloting of Picture Stories

Before starting the experiment a study was conducted to determine the comprehensibility of 15 different picture stories to be used. The pilot was conducted with students from the high intermediate level course to ensure that the situations depicted would be easily understood and explained by learners at a wide range of levels. The pilot also served to test the instructions and the allotted time. Five picture stories were chosen as the most appropriate for use during the experiment. The picture stories are the items in Appendix 1-5. Appendix 1 was used as the pre-test, Appendix 4 was used as the Immediate Test and Appendix 5 as the Delayed Post-Test. Appendices 2 and 3 were used as practice items.

3.4 Multiple Choice Test

In this study, a 13 question multiple choice test was used to determine if the participants could accurately identify which verb tense was the most appropriate in a short narrative. The test showed a picture story with the corresponding narrative. The participants were given the 13 question multiple choice quiz to ensure the group's homogeneity. The multiple choice questions were made in the form of a narrative alongside a 6 sequence picture story. Each scene had one or two corresponding sentences with one or two instances of verb usage per sentence. Each instance of verb usage contained a choice of four possible conjugated verbs per question. The participants had

to choose the best option of the verb tenses presented to accurately complete the sentence. They were given 20 minutes to answer to the questions. Regarding the scoring of the 13 question multiple choice quiz, 1 point was given for each correct answer, and zero for each incorrect one. All the correct answers were added up to determine the accuracy of the participants' choices.

3.5 Procedures

The first task for the participants to complete was the multiple-choice test. All 36 participants completed the test in the 20 minutes allotted. The results were used to identify the proficiency of each learner. Everyone but 2 participants scored lower than 50% on it, and there were no significant differences between the groups ($p < .05$).

3.6 Treatment

The treatments were designed to last 50 minutes per session, and all the sessions were carried out in a computer lab where each participant had their individual station. The beginning of the session consisted of a 10-minute mini-grammar lesson on a particular verb tense, 15 minutes of online exercises done individually, and 25 minutes to type up their narrative. They were encouraged to talk to each other and to look up vocabulary information online to help them come up with their story. At the end of their writing time, the participants printed their stories on the computer lab's printer. Each paper printed contained the participants' code, which identified them as part of the Control Group or the Experimental Group, as well as the narrative they had created. Their actual names were not revealed to protect their identities and avoid biasing the marking process. Furthermore, since both groups were already randomly divided into cohorts, they remained as such during the treatment sessions.

A week after completing the multiple-choice test, the participants began their treatment sessions with a Pre-Test. The purpose of the Pre-Test was to familiarize the CG participants with the writing process, and to familiarize the EG with writing by using the picture stories as a guide. More importantly, the results of the Pre-Test would also inform this study's final results. Up to this point the EG participants had not worked with

picture stories, and the participants in both groups had not written personal narratives during their classes because their program curriculum focuses more on academic writing. In order to prepare them before writing their stories, the participants in both groups were given a refresher mini-lesson on the use of the simple present, present progressive, simple past and past progressive, followed by individual work time on two short online exercises on those particular grammar points. At this point, whereas the CG wrote a short story about a personal memory of a special event that may have happened at school, or during their study time, the EG was shown a set of pictures depicting a story of a group of students in a library (Appendix 1). Both groups were encouraged to pay attention to their verb tense use to keep the story's unity, as well as grammatical accuracy. After the writing time was up, the participants in both groups were asked to print their stories, and leave them in a pile on a table close to the printer. Once all the students had finished printing, an appointed student enclosed the printed copies in an envelope and left them on the printer table. This last procedure was repeated in every session by both groups to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

The second session's mini-grammar lesson dealt with the present perfect and the present perfect progressive, and the online exercise completed contrasted the simple past with the present perfect. Once they had completed the online exercises, the participants in both groups were directed to write a short narrative, and they were also encouraged to pay special attention to their use of verbs and verb tenses in their written output. The CG's topic was to write about a memory of an event that may have happened to them during an English class. Meanwhile, the EG was shown a set of pictures of the experience of two students who had enrolled in an English class (Appendix 2). Once their 25 minutes of writing time had expired, the printing and collecting procedure remained the same as in the first session. The third session's mini-lesson contrasted the simple past with the past perfect and it also contained a short review of the past perfect progressive. The CG's writing task was to write a short narrative about a personal event that may have happened to them during a test or exam. The EG was shown a set of pictures depicting a student taking the written part of a driving test (Appendix 3). Once the groups completed their writing task in the allotted time, the printing and collecting of the output followed in the same manner as previously stated.

In the fourth session, the grammar mini-lesson consisted of an explanation on how to combine verb tenses in a narrative using Labov and Waletzky's model of Narrative Analysis. The participants were given a written sample of a short story which was divided into the sections suggested by Labov and Waletzky. In the absence of any online exercises for the participants to practice on this topic, both groups were led in a short discussion on how to use appropriate verb tenses on each of the sections outlined in the Narrative Analysis model. Both groups received a handout with a picture story and a model narrative outlining suggested verb tenses to use in each of the sections in Labov and Waletzky's narrative model (Figure 5). After the short in-class discussion, the CG went on to write a story about a summer experience or event they remembered, while the EG wrote a short narrative based on the picture story of some activities performed by a young man (Appendix 4). The handout outlining the application of Labov and Waletzky's Narrative Analysis was collected from the students along with their written output, as outlined above.

The fifth and final session consisted of a quick oral recap of Labov's Narrative Analysis without the use of the handout from the previous session. Afterwards, the CG wrote a story about a school field trip they had gone on, and the EG group wrote one about two couples going to a concert (Appendix 5). At the end of the allotted time, the participants printed their narratives and the collection procedure was followed one last time. For the purpose of data analysis (See Results), the first treatment session was used as the Pre-Test in order to have data to compare and contrast with the Immediate Test and the Delayed Post-Test. The 4th treatment session's narrative was used as the Immediate Test because it was the last of the treatments that contained any kind of instruction for the participants. Finally, the 5th session of the treatments was used as the Delayed Post-Test for two reasons. First, this session did not contain formal instruction. Second, it was scheduled two weeks after the 4th session. This distinction was used for the analysis of the data and had no influence of the scoring. All five sessions were scored exactly the same way.

3.7 Scoring

Once the last of the treatment sessions had finished, the written output of the two groups was scored by registering total usage of verbs in their corresponding verb tenses and their accuracy within the context in which they were used. In an ideal setting, there would have been a panel of evaluators coding and grading the data. However, due to budget and time constraints this was impossible. Since this was a classroom based research project, the instructor was the best and only option to assess the participants' narratives. A color-coding scheme was used to highlight the verbs in the tenses originally used.

Table 3: Scoring Color Scheme

Verb Tense	Color
Simple Present	Yellow
Present Continuous	Yellow Underline
Simple Past	Blue
Past Continuous	Blue Underline
Present Perfect	Green
Present Perfect Continuous	Green Underline
Past Perfect	Pink
Past Perfect Continuous	Pink Underline

Once the verbs had been coloured-coded and categorized in the tenses they were originally written in, the narratives were re-read to determine the accuracy of the verb usage. An example of the scoring can be examined using one of the participants in the CG.

We went to the Fanshawe history village yesterday.

Before the trip, I had been crazy at history and the old stuff.

At the beginning the stuff in the history village were dressed

in the old fashion and the customs seems like in the 19th Century.

The above example shows a good variety of verbs and verb tenses in use. The first verb is “*went*” and this would count as a point because it was used correctly, considering that the context uses the time marker “*yesterday*.” The second verb used is in the second sentence: “*had been*.” This verb is scored correct, as well. The usage of the past-perfect is consistent with the rule of using the simple past and the past perfect to describe two actions that happen one after the other. In this case the first action that occurred would take the simple past and the second action would take the past perfect. In this particular case, the simple past is implicit in the phrase “*Before the trip*.” The complete version of the sentence with the two verbs would be: “*Before I came on the trip I had been crazy...*” The following sentence offers a challenge to mark because of the use of the word “*stuff*,” which is simply a misspelling of “*staff*.” Once we take into consideration this spelling change, the sentence makes sense and the verb “*were*” can be deemed correct. The last verb used is “*seems*.” In spoken language this part of the sentence might be considered correct, but in this particular case Labov and Waletzky’s model had to be taken into consideration. This particular part of the narrative was part of the “*Complicating Action*” section of a narrative. In this section the narrator explains what happened in the story and the students had been directed to use the past tense. For that reason, the use of the verb “*were*” was scored wrong.

Another participant, this time from the EG, provided an interesting sample to analyze. The participant wrote:

*One day, Ben and Ivy were looking the newspapers,
and they found that the newspaper is promoting a new movie.
They thought it is interesting, and they used phone booking four piece of tickets
because they want to their friends went to movie with them.*

The author of this narrative did a good job with the past progressive use of “*were looking*,” although it would have been more appropriate to use “*reading*,” instead of “*looking*.” This was scored correct by virtue of the correct use of the past progressive with an understandable verb. However, the next time that the participant used a progressive form of the verb “*promote*” it was scored wrong because it was written in the present progressive, instead of the past. A similar case is seen in the following sentence where the writer mixes the simple past and the simple present: “*They thought it is interesting.*” In this case, the “*thought*” was scored correct, but the “*is*” was scored as wrong. The last sentence in the sample poses another challenge in the scoring because there are other mistakes that affect the comprehensibility of the sentence. For example, the use of the preposition “*to*” after the verb “*want*,” and missing words that would make the sentence grammatically correct. However, for the purposes of scoring, both verbs were deemed incorrect because the “*want*” was used in the wrong tense and the verb “*went*” should have been used as an infinitive since the sentence should have been written in the following manner: They *wanted* their friends *to go* to the movies with them. All the narratives typed by both groups were meticulously scored in this manner to arrive at the results that will be discussed in the following chapter.

3.8 Summary

This chapter was concerned with explaining the methodology of the study by including important information about the participants, the instrumentation used to determine the participants’ proficiency, the procedure of the treatments and the scoring of the narratives.

Chapter 4

4. Statistical Analysis and Results

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the results of the experiment conducted to determine whether picture stories had any effect on the written output of ELL in terms of the total verbs used, as well as their accuracy. After completing the writing task, the participants' data were analyzed and compared using quantitative data analysis by counting the number of accurate verb tenses in the narrative, as well as the total number of verb tenses used. The mean and standard deviation of these categories were calculated. To examine the hypothesis that picture stories positively affect the accuracy and usage of verb tenses in written narratives, the statistical procedure of matched t-test using SPSS version 21 was applied to determine whether or not the differences observed were meaningful. A mixed repeated measures ANOVA was conducted which showed that there was a main effect of test, $F(2,34) = 12.708$ ($p < .05$) and a main effect of Accuracy and Usage, $F(1,34) = 84.198$ ($P < .05$). No other main effects or interactions were significant.

4.1 Verb Tense Accuracy

The results for accuracy in verb tense usage are shown in Table 1.

Table 4: Accuracy of verbs used per group during 3 tests

Groups	Pre-Test	Immediate Test	Delayed Post-Test
Experimental	10.11 S.D (4.12)	14.44 S.D. (3.17)	12.51 S.D. (2.27)
Control	11.88 S.D. (2.88)	14.92 S. D. (5.26)	11.86 S.D. (2.77)

Table 4 shows the Mean scores of the EG and CG of the three tests in regards to how accurately the verbs were used in their written narratives. During the Delayed Post-Test, the EG was slightly more accurate than the CG even though during the Pre-Test and the Immediate Test, the CG was slightly more accurate than the EG. This result could be evidence of the effect of the picture stories. Figure 2 portrays the data in graphic form.

Figure 2: Accurate use of verbs in the EG and CG over 3 tests

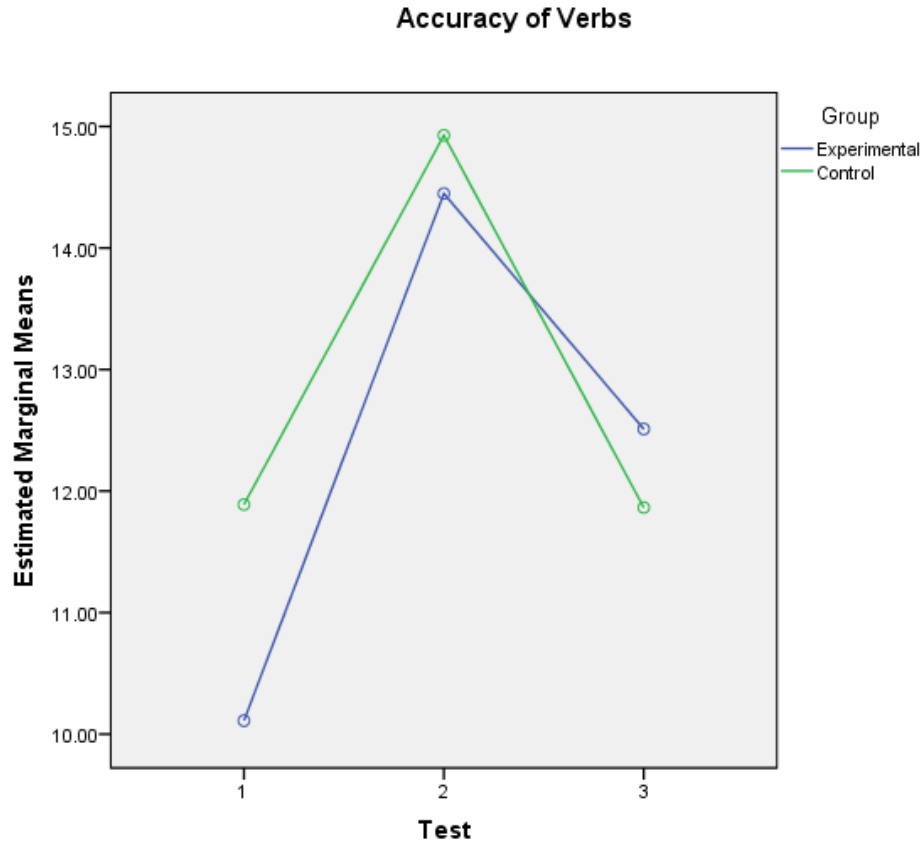


Figure 1 illustrates that in the Delayed Post-Test the EG was slightly more accurate than the CG; however, the CG had been more accurate in the Pre-Test. Both groups had similar results in their accuracy during the Immediate Test. The difference

between the EG and the CG's Pre-Test and Post-Test results is worth noting. After peaking during the Immediate Test, the CG's Delayed Post-Test accuracy mean moved back to Pre-Test levels. However, the EG outperformed the CG in the Delayed Post-Test. Thus, when comparing the Pre-Test to the Delayed Post-Test results, the CG's results remain identical while the EG's results show a 4 point gain. If there had been more participants in the experiment, the results may have yielded statistically significant differences between groups (See Discussion). Not surprisingly, when we compare the results of Accuracy to those of Usage, a similar picture arises.

4.2 Verb Tense Usage

The results for the total number of verbs used by the participants are shown in Table 2. The pattern for total Usage of verb tenses is similar to the Accuracy results although the numbers are much closer between groups. The key finding is that during the Delayed Post-Test the EG over-took the CG, which reverses the pattern of the Pre-Test and the Immediate Test, where the CG used more verbs than the EG.

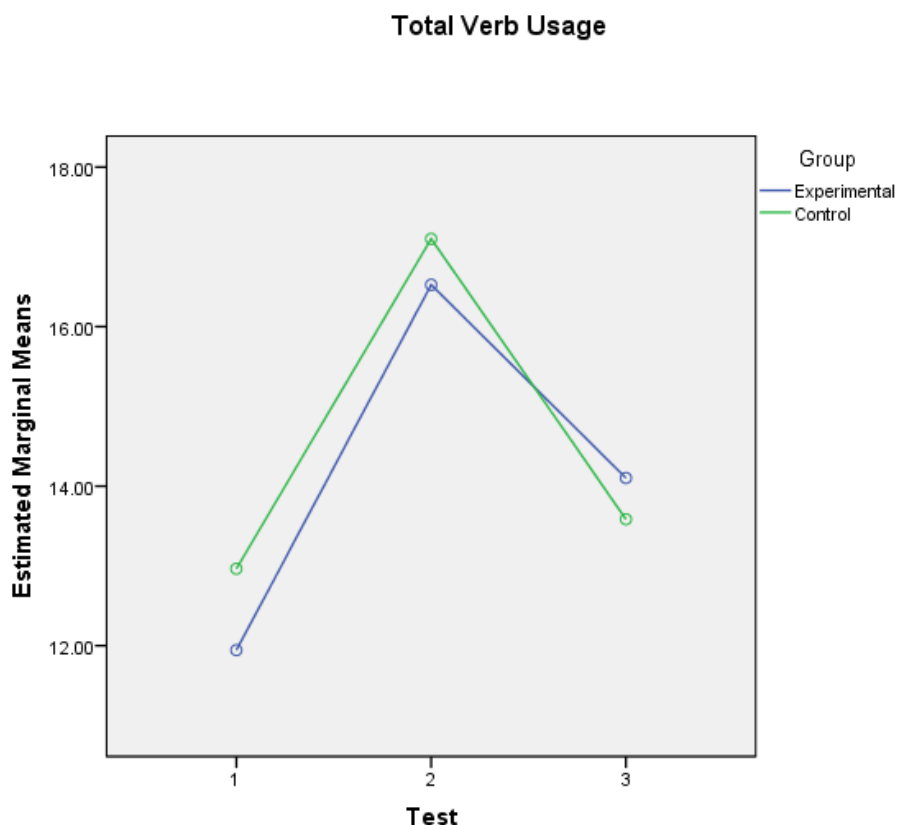
Table 5: Total verbs used for the EG and CG during 3 Tests

Groups	Pre-Test	Immediate Test	Delayed Post-Test
Experimental	11.94 S.D. (2.97)	16.52 S.D. (2.80)	14.10 S.D. (2.47)
Control	12.96 S.D. (2.54)	17.10 S.D. (5.07)	13.58 S.D. (3.16)

In Table 7 the pattern of the line graph is strikingly similar to Table 6. Similar to the Accuracy results, the total number of verbs used by the EG was slightly higher in the Delayed Post-Test than the total number used by the CG. In the Pre-Test the EG had started off lower than the CG, and this pattern continued only up to the Immediate Test. Despite the small sample size and small amount of output, it is important to speculate that

if the sample size were larger, the data would probably change to show more of an effect of the picture stories (See Discussion).

Figure 3: EG and CG total use of verb over 3 tests

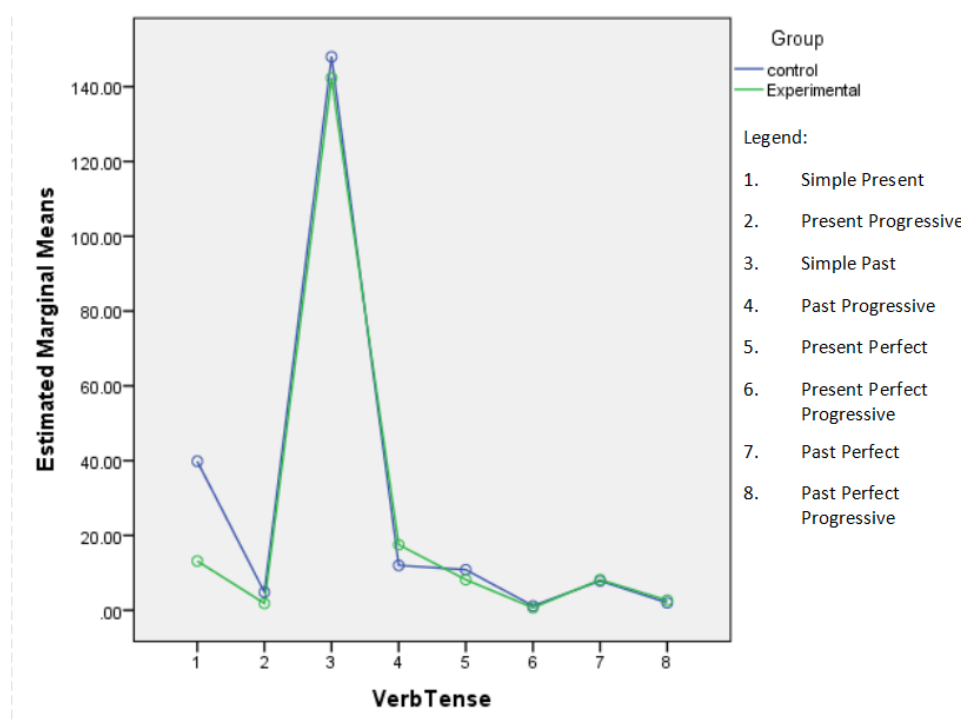


4.3 Overall Verb Use

The two previous sections dealt with the accuracy and usage of verb tenses. Another important finding in this study dealt with the most frequent tenses chosen by the participants during the tests as shown in Figure 8. The data revealed an important issue to consider for classroom implications since the participants in both groups chose to use the Simple Past overwhelmingly over any other verb tense. As mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, there were no set expectations about the amount of verbs participants were going to use, or about their choice of tenses and the participants were encouraged to be imaginative in their narratives. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the

use of verb forms by the CG and the EG. It is quite evident that the Simple Past is the overwhelming favourite form while the Perfect tense verbs are hardly employed. This is likely due to the unfamiliarity of the participants with the usage of this tense, and their need for a model to show them when to use it (See Discussion).

Figure 4: Frequency of Usage for 8 Verb Tenses



After examining the chart above, it is quite evident that both groups performed almost exactly alike, with some minor differences. The overwhelming choice of verb tense was the Simple Past (3). All other tenses lagged far behind in usage. These results could be explained by the amount of actual simple past events in the picture stories, or it could also be explained as unfamiliarity with verb form usage in the part of the participants (See Discussion).

4.4 Summary

This study tested the effects of picture stories on the written output of the participants. To test the significance of these findings, an ANOVA was conducted, and it showed no statistically significant findings. This may have been due to the small

sample size of participants and written output and the lack of time to provide more instruction and conduct more tests. Nevertheless, a comparison of the data shows slight gains in the Accuracy and Usage of the EG over the CG in the Delayed Post-Test. Also, a comparison of the Pre-Test and Post-Test results of the EG illustrates an improvement in accurate use of verbs and total verbs used. This could be attributed to the effect of the picture stories on the output by the EG. Furthermore, a comparison of the total number of verbs and verb tenses used showed that both groups preferred using the Simple Past more than any other tense. These and other matters will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the results of the study presented in the previous chapter. It begins by looking at the interpretations of the results and presents potential pedagogical implications for ESL/EFL instructors. The discussion is followed by an analysis of the limitations of the study and concludes with some suggestions for further research.

5.1 Results Interpretation

The aim of the study was to examine the effects of sequential picture stories in advanced learners' accuracy and usage of English verb tenses in their written output by testing a control and an experimental group. To do so, I set out to determine both groups' accuracy and usage of English verb tenses. The CG wrote stories using their personal experience as a guide, without the use of picture cues. The EG wrote their stories based on the depictions of the picture stories provided to them. For the most part, the results of the study revealed that there was very little difference in the written output of the CG and EG in terms of usage and accuracy. The CG was slightly more accurate and used more verbs in their written output than the EG in the Pre-Test and in the Immediate Test. However, the EG participants performed slightly better than the CG in the Delayed Post-Test. This result could be attributed to the combination of the picture stories and instruction, specifically Labov and Waletzky narrative analysis discussed in Chapter II. Working with picture stories was new to the EG and it must have taken them some time to get accustomed to the process; that is why there were five sessions in total. The first treatment was the first time that the EG used pictures to write a story and this may have influenced their scores compared to the CG, which may have been more comfortable writing from their own experience.

The next two sessions were used to acclimatize the participants in both groups with the writing process, while providing group feedback in regards to verb usage through mini grammar lessons. During these sessions the participants were encouraged to collaborate with each other and the instructor also provided immediate feedback when

asked. This acclimatization led to the fourth treatment session in which the participants in both groups were introduced to the narrative analysis model by Labov and Waletzky. Both groups outperformed their pre-test stories results. What is interesting to note is that even though the CG scored slightly higher than the EG, it was the EG that showed the biggest improvement. The CG went from 12.00 in the pre-test to 14.75, but the EG's results jumped from 10.00 to 14.25. Thus, it seems that the combination of the picture stories and Labov and Waletzky's model had an immediate impact on the quality of the EG's stories.

The results for the delayed post-test showed a reversal of the trend that had been constant in the first two tests. The EG finally overtook the CG in accuracy. Although the difference is very modest, under 1 point, it points to a possible new pattern that would require further testing to become established. It also worth comparing the initial points for both groups. The CG began close to 12.00 and peaked at roughly 14.75, ending again at just under 12.00. The EG, however, began at just above 10.00, peaked at 14.25 and ended at 12.25. Even though the EG's gain is of a modest 2 point differential, it is significantly better than the CG's result. This result could be due to the participants' use of the picture story's inherent coherence matching with Labov and Waletzky's narrative model. Each section of the model can be easily matched up with certain episodes of the picture story. This provides a map, of sorts, for the writer to follow and insert the correct grammatical form, the verbs, in this case. The research conducted by Alidoost et al. (2014) supports this idea since the use of picture stories in their study served to improve the coherence of the participants' writing. Thus, the modest results of the delayed post-test in the present study lend credence to the hypothesis that picture stories aid in the writing of narratives. The caveat here seems to be that the picture stories need to be paired with a narrative style conducive to coherent writing.

In terms of the total use of verbs (Figure 3), the pattern seems to be identical to the accurate use of verbs in Figure 2. The CG scores slightly higher than the EG in the first and second tests, but the pattern is reversed in the delayed post-test as the EG overtakes the CG. Again, just as in Figure 1, the EG is shown to have improved when comparing the pre-test (1) to the delayed post-test (3); a difference of 2 points. Although

modest, the differences could point to a larger pattern that requires more research. One important comparison between figures 1 and 2 is that the groups seem to have made few mistakes in their writing. The CG's total usage is just under 13.00 points while its accuracy is at just under 12.00; the difference being of just under 1.00. This result may indicate the comfort level of the participants of the CG as they wrote stories about their own experiences. Compared to the EG, which had a total usage of 12.00 and an accuracy score of 10.00 one can determine that, just as expressed above, the EG was not as familiar with writing using picture stories at the start of the study since they made more mistakes than the CG. It could be said that due to the familiarization with the process, the EG was able to flip the script and show higher usage than the CG in the delayed post-test. However, this familiarization could have been deceptive because the CG committed fewer mistakes than the EG. Thus, it could be argued that the EG took more chances because they were using the picture stories, or that they were unfamiliar with the necessary expressions to explain what they were seeing. This last point is consistent with what Brock-Utne and Desai (2003) noticed in their study of South African and Tanzanian students. In order to get a more accurate and fluent narrative, the learners must be very familiar with how to describe the events depicted in the picture stories in the target language. Otherwise, the written narratives may not make sense, or may contain many errors.

In my teaching experience, I have noticed that fluent learners of a language generally do not like making mistakes and often times will revert to using familiar language instead of taking chances with unfamiliar grammatical forms or vocabulary. The participants in this study exhibited this behaviour by using an overwhelming number of simple past tense verbs compared to all other combinations of tense and aspect. The simple past is probably the most commonly taught tense by teachers of English as a Second/Foreign language because of its saliency in every day speech. Whenever we tell stories about events, we often choose to tell them in the past, as evident in Chafe and Shu's models discussed in Chapter 2, respectively.

For Chafe, when people told stories, the simple past was commonly employed. Only when a generic tense (the simple present) was used, would the speaker/writer be

able to change the tense/aspect combination. The other way to switch tense/aspect combination would be to use a time marker such as “next Friday.” In this way, the narrative could go from the past to the future. Shu, as cited in Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), noticed that most narratives were told in the past tense. The only exception was the initial sentence in which narrators used the present perfect. These narrative models show a somewhat limited use for most of the other tense/aspect combinations.

The Bull Framework (Bull, 1971) tries to incorporate other less common tense/aspect combinations like the past perfect, or future modals in order to enrich a narrative, which is important to do when teaching verbs. In the present study, even though there were explicit mini-lessons on the ways to use the grammar tenses as explained in textbooks, and a model was given in which various combinations were used, the participants opted for the safest way to convey their ideas. In the narrative model by Labov and Waletzky (1967) there is room for the use of the present tense and the perfect and progressive aspects in the Abstract and Coda sections of the story. The participants should have used these combinations in the Abstract to introduce the story, but they may not have been aware of how to use them. This is something that needs to be explicitly taught because it is a culturally accepted manner of story-telling. An example of information in the Abstract would be: “Mary usually studies in the library in the evenings.” This sentence uses the present to introduce an episode involving Mary in the library. Another example is using perfect and progressive aspects: Mary has been very busy studying in the library the last few days.” This could also serve as an introduction, following Shu’s observation of the present perfect, to a description of events in the past tense. These types of Abstracts were not commonly used in the narratives by either group in this study. Another combination not often seen was that of the simple past and the past perfect, which could have been used often in the Remarkable events section as in: “The principal had been calling for days until finally Sue answered one of his messages.” The mini-grammar lessons covered this type of past perfect combination with the simple past to describe a cause-effect episode. Using this combination would have increased the use of the past perfect and its progressive, but it was not common in the participant output. A way to improve this aspect would have been to provide more

samples of how to incorporate the verb tense/aspect combinations into the stories via handouts or during the mini-grammar lessons.

5.2 Implications for Teaching Practice

The results from this study, although far from conclusive, point toward the direction that using picture stories and picture cues is an effective strategy that can be used in the grammar classroom to practice the isolated rules at the sentence level, and integrate the rules in context-rich task-based activities at the paragraph level. Even though this study was conducted with participants at the high-advanced level of proficiency, when looking at the written narratives, one important thing to consider is the types of mistakes that the participants were making in regards to verb tense usage. Even at this level, there is a lot of work to do regarding the appropriate use of verbs in narratives because participants were over-using the simple past tense and avoiding the use of the perfect tenses, specifically the present and the past perfect. This supported by Bardovi-Harlig's (2000) findings that second language learners' acquisition of the verb tense and aspect of a language is a slow and gradual process in which form takes precedence over function. This means that learners are able to recognize the combination of tenses and aspects, but lack the knowledge of when to use them accurately. More research is needed in verb tense-aspect acquisition with the aid of picture stories to gain a clearer picture on the subject.

5.3 Use of Narrative Analysis

Table 6: Labov and Waletzky's Narrative Analysis

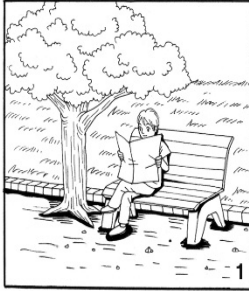



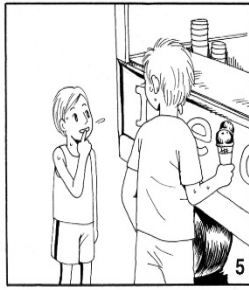
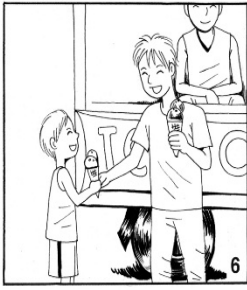
Narrative category	Narrative question	Narrative function	Linguistic form
ABSTRACT	What was this about?	Signals that the story is about to begin and draws attention from the listener.	A short summarising statement, provided before the narrative commences.
ORIENTATION	Who or what are involved in the story, and when and where did it take place?	Helps the listener to identify the time, place, persons, activity and situation of the story.	Characterised by past continuous verbs; and Adjuncts (see A3) of time, manner and place.
COMPLICATING ACTION	Then what happened?	The core narrative category providing the 'what happened' element of the story.	Temporally ordered narrative clauses with a verb in the simple past or present
RESOLUTION	What finally happened?	Recapitulates the final key event of a story.	Expressed as the last of the narrative clauses that began the Complicating Action.
EVALUATION	So what?	Functions to make the point of the story clear.	Includes: intensifiers; modal verbs; negatives; repetition; evaluative commentary; embedded speech; comparisons with unrealised events.
CODA	How does it all end?	Signals that a story has ended and brings listener back to the point at which s/he entered the narrative.	Often a generalised statement which is 'timeless' in feel.

Adapted from Simpson (2004)

Following Labov and Waletzky's oral story scheme outlined by Simpson (2004) would be an effective way for student to apply certain verb tenses to each of the sections through writing. As Simpson (2004) states, this model is appropriate for short stories of around 100 words. As seen on the table above, the model contains 6 sections and in the present study each category has been paired with certain English verb forms to aid students in using the model in their own stories. The Abstract section calls for the use of the present perfect to give the background information necessary to introduce characters. The Orientation section, while also providing background information, calls for a closer zoom of the action by using the simple present to illustrate a general truth about the character in the story. The Remarkable Event and the reaction sections mostly call for

the use of the simple past, past progressive and sometimes the past perfect when explaining the events that occurred in chronological order. Finally, the Coda makes use of the simple present to provide another general truth of the character in his/her current situation. One section missing in this study from the original model is the Evaluation. This section could be inserted anywhere in the narrative and can take many linguistic forms. Oftentimes, it is found as a question; for example: “What else could the man do but run after her?” Although the Evaluation is an important part in the narratives as told by native speakers, it was felt that this study was not long enough to explain and practice the many possible uses of the Evaluation in a written narrative. The remaining sections provide a solid framework for learners to gain valuable knowledge of how to weave various verb tenses into an interesting and cohesive narrative. An example of this model using a picture story can be seen below.

Figure 5: Sample Story Using Labov and Waletzky's Model

 	<p>Abstract:</p> <p>John <u>has always liked</u> reading the newspaper in the park.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use of present perfect</i>
 	<p>Orientation:</p> <p>He often <u>goes</u> to the park to sit on his favourite bench to read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use of simple present</i> <p>Remarkable Events:</p>
 	<p>One day <u>had been reading</u> the paper for a few minutes when an ice-cream truck <u>parked</u> in front of him. John <u>walked</u> over there and <u>bought</u> an ice cream cone. As he <u>was</u> about to leave his little brother <u>showed up</u> and <u>asked</u> for a cone.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use of simple past, past perfect progressive</i>
<p>Reaction:</p> <p>John <u>smiled</u> and <u>bought</u> him his favourite one.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use of simple past</i> 	
<p>Coda:</p> <p>Ever since that day every time John <u>goes</u> to the park, his little brother <u>follows</u> him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use of simple present</i> 	

This sample story shows one way in which verb tenses can conform to the categories of a narrative as outlined by Labov and Waletzky (1967). Of course, there could be variations to the information given in each section. The abstract could contain information about the main character that is not depicted in the picture story like age, hobbies, and profession, among other things. In such cases, the use of the simple present would suffice. For example: “*John is a 25 year old medical student.*” The orientation section would most likely remain the same as above simply because it has to set up the story according to the information depicted in the picture story. However, the Remarkable Events section could be told in different ways, and this would change the types of verbs and tenses used. For instance, the combination of past perfect and simple past could be made at different spots of the narrative during the Remarkable Events section depending on who is telling or writing the story. The events and depiction of the Reaction section, similar to the Orientation, are determined by the story. There may be room for creativity in choosing what to report, but the simple past would be the tense to use because this section is the last episode of the story and as such, it is tied to the Remarkable Events section. The last sentence of the above sample belongs to the Coda in Labov and Waletzky’s model. Just like the Abstract, the Coda makes use of present tenses such as the simple present, present progressive and their perfect counterparts. Another similarity it has with the Abstract is that the Coda is not limited by the picture stories, but goes beyond them to relay information about the character or the outcome that is not portrayed in the pictures. Through this narrative model one can implement an effective teaching method for the accurate use of verb tenses in a story.

As with any other type of task, working with picture stories has its advantages and disadvantages that one must be aware of in order to avoid any of a number of pitfalls. Rayo (2013) recommends the following list as a guideline for those teachers who are interested in using this type of resource for classroom activities.

Table 7: Pros and Cons of Picture Story Use

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picture stories tend to quickly engage students. • They are a fast way to create in-classroom experiences for students to work with. • They can be used for explicit or implicit grammar instruction. • They can cover various grammatical points. • Easier transfer of grammar knowledge to real-world contexts • Aid in the transfer of fictional stories to re-telling of personalized life experiences. • They can be used at varying degrees of difficulty/detail. • Can be useful for written or spoken tasks • Implicit practice in story-telling applicable to original stories • Very close to natural communicative activities for use in class • Gives students a voice to practice expressing their thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may tire of using them • Teachers need to have large number of picture cues available • Constant need of variety/innovation in stories • Students could get confused or distracted from explicit tasks • Teachers could end up over correcting • Students might worry too much about explicit tasks and may not engage in natural communication

From Rayo (2013)

5.4 Combination of Methods

Just as there are myriad methods to teach a language, so are there various learning styles. It would be difficult to teach a class full of individuals only through one method or approach and expect that they will all learn the same things. There are aspects of FFI, in their implicit or explicit forms that would be useful in teaching students how to accurately integrate the various tense/aspect combinations to their writing and speaking communication. In this study, the EG experienced FonFs instruction with the mini

grammar lessons at the beginning of each of the sessions coupled with contextualization tasks in the form of picture stories and narrative models more consistent with FonF concepts. However, even when combining FonFs and FonF instruction, it was evident that what may have been needed was more time, a luxury that teachers cannot afford in the classroom setting driven by results in the way of marks and curriculum progress. As Bardovi-Harlig (2000) states, acquiring the accurate use of tense/aspect combinations is a matter of time for learners because it is a slow process.

A possible way to speed up this process could be to start teaching the use of verb tense and aspect at the lower levels using picture stories as the major contextualizing tool. The explicit instruction of forms at the sentence level could be retained to either introduce or reinforce the rules, but the practice aspect of the instruction could be at the narrative level to develop an early understanding of the interplay among the tense/aspect combinations. This would increase the need for picture stories for classroom and assessment use. For those instructors who cannot make their own picture stories due to lack of time or skill, working with this type of material could prove challenging. Looking for pictures online can prove to be an unproductive use of one's time, not to mention time-consuming. However, the instructors could take the time to make a few sample picture story sequences, and once the students are familiar with the concept, they could easily make their own picture stories by taking pictures with their cell-phone cameras. The planning of the frames would provide an excellent opportunity to discuss the types of situations using authentic linguistic constructions while working on their fluency. Once they have settled on an order of sequence, the writing of the actual narrative could serve as a vehicle to work on their accuracy of verb tense use, or any other grammatical structure. A third stage of the task could include sharing their picture stories with their classmates to present them orally, or to compare their original story with others written by their peers. The oral presentation would add an extra dimension to the task by turning writing into story-telling. Furthermore, the sharing of written stories amongst the class would also work as a norming exercise to raise student awareness of how their peers use various grammatical structures to narrate the similar events.

5.5 Advantages of Multi-Modal Learning

Taking a page out of the Audio-lingual method, this study was conducted in a language lab. In this case, however, the language lab was not used for passive listening or reading skills work, as would have been used by Audio-lingual instructors (Cook, 2001). The participants engaged in dialogue with each other and with the artefact (the picture stories) to produce a written narrative. Since this study focused on participant written output, the use of the language lab had to be adapted to make room for output, not just input. It could be considered a multi-modal approach in the language lab since there was a speaking, writing and critical thinking component related to the task to go along with the visual stimulus provided by the picture stories.

5.6 Limitations of the Study

Since this was a classroom study, the limitations are obvious. First of all, even though all the participants remained in the study and completed the required tasks, the sample size is quite small for this type of study. With a larger sample size, the results could have revealed more significant differences hinted at by the numerical trends. Another limitation was the length of the treatment sessions. Each treatment session was 50 minutes long and that limited the amount of time allotted to direct instruction, isolated practice and integrated output. The mini-grammar lesson ranged from 10 to 15 minutes with little time for questions. The online practice exercises with immediate feedback usually took the learners another 10 to 15 minutes, leaving 15 to 20 minutes of time for actual writing. With longer treatment sessions, the participants may have benefited more and the data might have been different.

Another limitation to the study was related to feedback. After the participants typed their narratives the researcher identified the most common errors and included that feedback into the mini-grammar lessons at the beginning of each treatment. Individualized feedback may have had a more influential effect on each of the participants' output, but due to time and curriculum restrictions the feedback had to be

limited to class-wide, generalized remarks during the grammar interventions. A possible solution to this issue could be the use of specialized software that allows the instructor to collaborate with individual participants via remote access. In this way, the participant and the instructor could be working at their individual stations while connected to the same word-processing screen using <https://realtimeboard.com/> for example. Using this website provides a white board application which allows for the collaboration of multiple users on the same project providing the instructor a forum to give feedback to the learners as they write their stories. It also allows the learners to see and comment on what others are doing.

A further limitation to the study was the use of only two groups, the CG and EG, instead of three. Had there been a third group, the treatments could have been further divided to have a CG with explicit FonFs instruction only, an EG1 with picture story only and an EG2 with picture story and narrative model to have a wider scope of comparison/contrast. Although the two classes could have been divided into three groups, it would have created scheduling conflicts that would have proved difficult to manage since each group was an actual section of the language program in which the participants were enrolled. Furthermore, the treatments were part of the curriculum for these sections. They had to review their knowledge of the various tense/aspect combinations as part of their grammar objectives and the treatments served as such.

5.7 Suggestions for Further Research

The present study investigated one hypothesis with its contrary:

1. The use of picture stories positively affects the accuracy and usage of verb tenses in written output tasks.
2. The use of picture stories does not have any impact on the accuracy and usage of verb tenses in written output tasks.

The results hinted at the positive impact of picture cues on written narratives, but only during the Delayed Post-Test. It was thus suggested that further research be conducted with a larger sample size, and possibly with a second EG to get more robust and accurate results. Another option would be to conduct this study with emphasis on oral output to

gauge the speaking skills of the participants. This type of study could look into the differences between conversational ability and grammatical accuracy by concentrating on the speakers' utterances. Other research could tackle the use of other grammatical forms such noun and adjective clauses in oral or written narratives with the picture stories. These types of studies would shed light on how participants negotiate meaning using picture stories as input enhancement.

In conclusion, EFL/ESL learners would benefit from exposure to writing tasks involving picture stories in order to gain a better understanding of how to apply the verb tenses learned in isolated exercises to the composition of paragraphs. However, the picture stories should not be used in isolation, but with a framework such as Narrative Analysis by Labov and Waletzky (1967) so that students gain a better understanding of what types of verb tenses to use appropriately in their narratives.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Library Story



Appendix 2 English Class Story



Appendix 3 Driving Test Story



Appendix 4 Summer Routine Story



Appendix 5 Concert Ticket Story



Appendix 6 Ethics Approval



Western Research

Research Ethics

Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board
NMREB Annual Continuing Ethics Approval Notice

Date: March 01, 2015
Principal Investigator: [Redacted]
Department & Institution: Education, Western University

NMREB File Number: 105145
Study Title: Integrating Verb Tenses Through the Use of Picture Cues
Sponsor:

NMREB Renewal Due Date & NMREB Expiry Date:
Renewal Due -2016/03/31
Expiry Date -2016/04/10

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed the Continuing Ethics Review (CER) form and is re-issuing approval for the above noted study.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), Part 4 of the Natural Health Product Regulations, the Ontario Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA, 1990), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 0000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of [Redacted]

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
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This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

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