Systematic Literature Review on The Use of Narrative Analysis in Language Education Research

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Abstracts: Sociologists and communication theorists have defined narrative analysis as a way to form a social identity as early as the 1980s Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2013). Besides, narrative analysis shares the concept of knowledge transmission, which is a theory that aims to communicate unquantifiable qualities of knowledge like experience and life stories. Nevertheless, it has not been specified how far the narrative analysis has gotten in language education studies due to varied understandings of the term. As a result, it is critical for researchers to conduct a more thorough literature assessment of narrative analysis in this discipline. This study examines the body of literature on narrative analysis in current language education studies. The method employed in this study is a systematic literature review, which includes pre-set criteria in selecting academic publications to be surveyed over a five-year period (1 January 2018 to 31 December 2022) and a qualitative synthesis of the findings. Based on a revised Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow, this study arrives at a holistic and systematic assessment of this approach over the last five years to guide future research in language education studies through description and analysis of the titles, abstracts, keywords, and full papers (when necessary) of the selected 10 academic articles out of 234. The main findings are as follows. 1）Narrative analysis is now used to investigate student identity creation and teacher professional development. 2）The majority of the current study's participants are non-English speaking teachers. 3) Typically, the sample size is no more than seven. 4) Text analysis and interviews are the two main research techniques. 5) Speaking and writing are the main topics of the current studies. 6)Due to its ability to elicit unique viewpoints, narrative analysis is used in language education research, but the amount is not high.

Keywords: Narrative Analysis, PRISMA, Systematic Literature Review, Language Education

1. INTRODUCTION

In the early 20th century, narrative analysis developed as a subfield of qualitative research. (Riessman, 1993) It investigates and comprehends the way people generate meaning in their lives using field texts such as stories, autobiographies, notebooks, field notes, letters, discussions, interviews, family stories, images and other artifacts, and life experience. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004)

Narrative inquiry is a significant instrument in the transfer or sharing of knowledge, and it is linked to cognitive concerns such as memory, constructed memory, and perceived memory. Jerome Bruner，in his book, Actions of Meaning, considers the narrative form as a non-neutral rhetorical account that aims at "illocutionary goals," or the desire to express meaning. (Bruner & Bruner, 1990). It's possible to classify this approach as "narrative" or to identify it as a subgenre of narrative. Bruner's method "assumes an experience of time" rather than only referring to past events.(Polkinghorne, 1988)

It is still uncertain whether narrative analysis has been given sufficient attention to language education research. This is mainly because of the interdisciplinary nature of the field, and it remains unclear how much narrative analysis has been incorporated into current language education research. Therefore, several questions have emerged, including "what is the present state of narrative analysis in language education research?", and "what are the trends of narrative analysis in this field?" These queries highlight the importance of reviewing all studies in this domain.

It is impossible to respond to these concerns by extrapolating from a smaller sample size or sampling that is influenced by the subjectivity of the researchers in a comprehensive, rigorous, and thorough study of the existing

studies. Because identifying or analyzing defining or classic literature is heavily reliant on the researcher's perception, literature reviews have typically involved selecting resources that are heavily reliant on subjectivity (Mengist, Soromessa, & Legese, 2020). To maintain objectivity in research, this study used a systematic literature review with pre-specified inclusion and exclusion criteria to fully evaluate narrative analysis in language education studies conducted within the last five years (from 2018 to 2022). It then analyzed these studies to draw conclusions about the two research questions raised below.

RQ1: What is the status of narrative analysis in language education research?

RQ2: What are the trends in narrative inquiry in language education research?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Narrative Analysis in Language Education

It is difficult to determine which references of narrative analysis in language education came initially because the appearance and growth of this field have been a rather slow process. This is why it is difficult to confirm which were the first references of narrative analysis in language education. It involves the cross-influence of a variety of different fields and areas of study. Nevertheless, there is some literature that addresses this topic. These materials investigate the function of narratives and narrative analysis in the process of language education as well as the formation of identities. The following paragraphs discuss a selection of works from the 1980s, 1990s, and the 21st century that is representative of the issue of narrative analysis in language teaching.

The work that was done by Heath (1988) is considered a classic in the fields of narrative analysis and literacy studies. This study investigates many forms that literacy events might take or the ways in which literacy practices are influenced by the cultural and social environments in which they take place, as well as the ways in which literacy and oral tradition interact to form narrative practices. Later, the study by Bamberg (1997) makes the narrative analysis of language education more specific, which is an important contribution to the field of narrative analysis in language teaching. The concept of "positioning" in language use is examined in this study, as is how individuals use language to construct and express their identities as well as the role connections they occupy.

In the 21st century, the study written by Pavlenko (2007) is an important contribution to the field of applied linguistics which makes use of narrative analysis. In this work, the use of autobiographical narratives as data in applied linguistics research is investigated. Additionally, examples of how to analyze and evaluate autobiographical narratives in order to gain a better knowledge of identity construction and cultural transitions are presented. In

a similar vein, Dhungana (2022) conducted an analysis of narrative discourses in order to demonstrate the utility of dialogic storying as a method for conducting narrative research in English language instruction.

Despite the fact that these studies were carried out at different times and in diverse situations, they all contributed to the advancement of the area of narrative analysis in language and literacy studies. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in narrative analysis as a method for comprehending language use, identity building, and educational practices. Researchers have expanded on the ideas and methodologies used in previous studies to investigate new language and literacy issues and problems. Some research, for example, have focused on using digital storytelling as a tool for language learning, while others have used narrative analysis to explore multilingual individuals' experiences. Overall, the work of these earlier researchers have contributed to the acceptance of story analysis as an important technique for understanding language and literacy, and their contributions continue to influence research on these subjects today. In this study, narrative analysis is a research method to study language education.

2.2. Systematic Literature Review

Systematic literature reviews were first and foremost used in medical therapies (Morton, Berg, Levit, and Eden (2011). The approach tries to provide the findings in a synthesis and provides a complete review of recent literature relevant to particular research problems. Its beginnings can be seen in the latter half of the 20th century when Cochrane (1999) and Mulrow (1987) offered clear instructions for doing systematic literature reviews in medical research, as quoted in Durach, Kembro, and Wieland (2017). Recently, it has been used in areas like social work, business management, and biological and medical research Sahni and Sinha (2016). The acquisition, selection, and synthesis of pertinent data must be adjusted in the current systematic literature review procedure designed for medical and biological investigations due to the "idiosyncrasies" of each subject (Durach et al., 2017).

In order to conduct a systematic literature review, four steps need to be taken. It is necessary to first propose clear and detailed research topics. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for research questions, definitions or conceptualization, measures/key variables, research design, participants, time frame, and data (for meta-analysis) must be pre-specified, and the databases must be clearly defined under the guidance of well-structured questions (Sahni & Sinha, 2016). Third, a careful, impartial search for pertinent studies is required. Finally, each sample must be analyzed in accordance with the set standards to find information pertaining to the research themes (Eden et al., 2011). In order to provide an organized methodology for systematic literature reviews, two extensively utilized systems are Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses [PRISMA] (2015) and Quality of Reporting of Meta-analysis (QUOR). Samples are also taken from a sizable database to prevent bias. These samples should be screened by at least two abstractors to reduce subjectivity in evaluation. The review in this study was conducted using the PRISMA process. The QUOR Declaration, a standard for systematic literature reviews of medical therapies, gave rise to PRISMA in 1999. It also features a flowchart that illustrates the many phases of a systematic literature review, such as identification, screening, eligibility, and qualitative or quantitative syntheses (Liberati et al., 2009).

3. Methodology

In the methodology section, a systematic literature review has been taken on the trends, prevalence, and absence of narrative analysis in language education research, particularly focusing on the previous five years. Research objectives, subjects, methods, and types of each study have been reviewed and examined by the pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria by initially screening their titles, abstracts, and keywords; if the components were not specified clearly, the whole papers were then assessed (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). This study gives valuable insight into the application of narrative analysis in terms of language education research and indicates opportunities to further exploration and growth by systematically screening and analyzing many different kinds of studies. The thorough technique used assures the authenticity and dependability of the results, adding to our understanding of the discipline as a whole.

The popular databases Web of Science and Scopus have been selected for the literature search to guarantee thorough coverage of the relevant research. The publications that study the application of narrative analysis in language education settings and were published within the previous five years fall under the purview of this systematic assessment of the literature on the topic. The review tries to analyse the status quo and trends in this field by examining diverse study subjects, objects, and objectives used in the chosen studies.

The approach taken in this paper will entail combining concepts associated with narrative analysis, relevant concepts and language instruction. The search strategy will be created to include items released within the designated time and will take language constraints into account. The obtained articles will go through a systematic screening procedure based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria after the database search. In order to find papers that fit the study objectives, titles, abstracts, and keywords will be evaluated in the first round. Those full-text articles that satisfy the basic screening standards will be examined. Discussion or, if required, the assistance of a third reviewer will be used to settle any differences or conflicts that arise throughout the screening process.

Paul and Barari (2022) notes data extraction should be used to gather pertinent information about the chosen papers, including study design, sample size, research aims, methodologies, and significant findings. The collected data will next be analysed and categorised to find common themes, patterns, and trends within the research, this process is known as data synthesis. This synthesis will make it possible to provide a thorough review of how narrative analysis is used in language education research

3.1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

A systematic literature review must include inclusion and exclusion criteria because they direct the choice of pertinent studies that fit the study's goals. These criteria support maintaining the rigour and authenticity of the review process while ensuring that the review concentrates on the most important articles. The inclusion criteria outline the qualities that publications need to have in order to be taken into consideration for the systematic literature review (Connelly, 2020). Based on the study topic and aims, these standards are chosen. The inclusion criteria for a systematic review of the literature on the use of narrative analysis in language education research in this paper are:

Publication Date: Articles that have been published within the previous five years (2018 to 2022) are preferred in order to include the most recent findings.

Study Focus: Articles examining or delving into the use of narrative analysis in language education.

Sample Population: Articles on language learners in settings including various age groups, skill levels, or educational contexts make up the sample population.

Language: Only articles that are written in English will be considered.

These inclusion requirements aid in locating publications that specifically respond to the research question and further the general goals of the systematic literature review (Patino & Ferreira, 2018).

In contrast, exclusion criteria are used to omit publications that don't adhere to strict guidelines or aren't relevant to the review. In order to maintain the emphasis on the most pertinent and acceptable studies, these criteria have been devised. For the systematic review of the literature on narrative analysis in language education research, some examples of exclusion criteria can be:

Irrelevant Topics: Articles on narrative analysis in subjects unrelated to language education are irrelevant. Articles on writing, speaking, listening or reading narratives just as data but not as a research method are also excluded.

Study Design: Articles such as editorials, opinion pieces, and commentaries that do not use a research design that can answer the research question (Patino & Ferreira, 2018).

Language: Articles written in languages other than English

Insufficient Data: Articles that do not include enough details about the methods, outcomes, or findings that are essential to the research question.

Studies that fail to meet the study objectives or the requirements will be omitted from the systematic literature review by using these exclusion criteria.

Setting up precise inclusion and exclusion criteria makes the review process more transparent and consistent (Connelly, 2020). It helps preserve the findings' integrity and minimizes any biases. For the review to be reproducible and for others to judge the suitability of the study selection, researchers must explain and support the criteria they utilised.

3.2. PRISMA Workflow

The PRISMA workflow has been utilized in this systematic literature study on the application of narrative analysis in language education research.
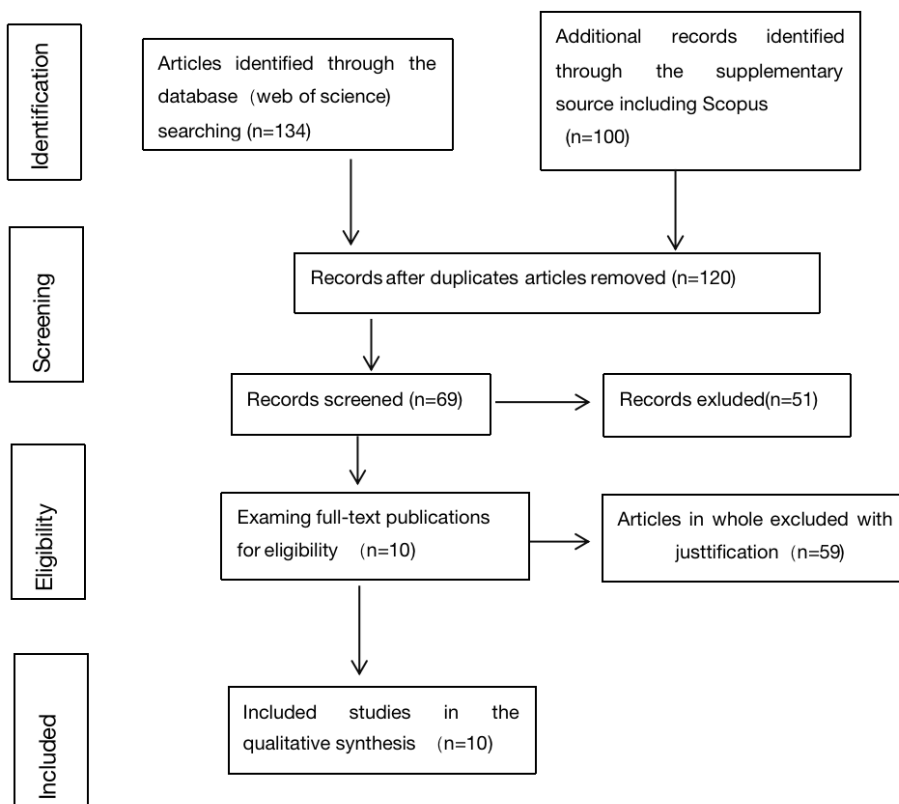

Figure 1: PRISMA flow chart for systematic literature review

The process started with exploring the Web of Science database that can generate 134 articles and 100 more papers were added to the collection from new sources by Scopus. Duplicate articles were removed, bringing the total number of records down to 120 in July, 10, 2023. After the screening, 51 items that did not fulfill the predefined inclusion criteria were removed Ten articles, four of which were from Scopus and 6 from Web of Science, were determined to be appropriate for inclusion in the qualitative synthesis after the remaining 69 records were evaluated for eligibility and the full-text publications were examined.

The PRISMA workflow made ensured that the literature review process was transparent and methodical. The review was able to carefully find, filter, and analyze pertinent articles by using the PRISMA standards (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). This led to a thorough grasp of the current state of research on the subject. The use of several databases and supplemental sources improved the review's thoroughness, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria made sure that only relevant and high-quality research was included in the analysis.

4. RESULTS

After gathering a sufficient number of samples, the data were examined and arranged by the various study components: research objects and research objectives. Inductive approaches were used to analyze the findings because there was no pre-existing supposition and hypothesis. The observations in Table 1 below are based on the studies.

Table 1: Distribution of research objects yearly (2018-2022)

Objects	Country	Level
4 teachers (Gómez-Vásquez & Guerrero Nieto, 2018)	Colombia	College and primary and secondary school English teachers
24 students (Sarasa & Porta, 2018)	Argentina	Undergraduates
1 teacher (Vlach, Taylor, & Wetzel, 2019)	USA	An elementary school teacher
teachers (Rocafort, 2019)	Spain	Pre-service teachers
2 students (Abrar, 2019)	Indonesia	Postgraduate students
Teachers (Macías Villegas, Hernández Varona, & Gutiérrez Sánchez, 2020)	Colombia	Pre-service teachers
3 teachers (Ljalikova, Meristo, Alas, & Jung, 2021)	Estonia	Content and language integrated learning teachers
7 articles that studied English education by narrative analysis (Dhungana, 2022)	Nepal	Teachers
6 teachers (Iversen, 2022)	Norway	Cadet teachers
1 teacher (Pereira, Carnin, & Mira, 2022)	Brazil	A Portuguese teacher

From Table 1, several conclusions can be made Firstly, most of the subjects are teachers, while only two of them are students, which shows that the previous studies use narrative analysis more with teachers and teachers play an essential role in language education. Secondly, most of the subjects are from non-English-Speaking countries, and only one is from an English-speaking country, which indicates that non-English-Speaking countries' researchers pay more attention to narrative analysis in language education. Third, most of the subjects are with a good educational background. Two of them are students who are at least undergraduates, while the others are teachers. Fourthly, the number of subjects in most of the studies are below 7, because narrative analysis focuses more on deep analysis and understanding of the rich experience of every single case. It does not focus on summarizing and reasoning the general laws, since it takes the researcher a lot of time and energy to code, analyze and explain every case. Therefore, the sample amount is usually relatively small.

Table 2: Distribution of research objectives within five years (2018-2022)

This table shows the objectives of the ten articles and their different objects.

Objects	Research objectives
4 teachers (Gómez-Vásquez & Guerrero Nieto, 2018)	By analyzing teachers' narratives, it shows how language policies mould their professional identities.
24 students (Sarasa & Porta, 2018)	It explores how students construct the process of English teacher identity by narratives.
1 teacher (Vlach, Taylor, & Wetzel, 2019)	It explores how a language teacher discuss the concepts of language, race and power and connects theory with practice
teachers (Rocafort, 2019)	It shows how pre-service teacher change their language education beliefs during the reflection.
2 students (Abrar, 2019)	Indonesia students' oral English learning experience and strategies in the UK

Teachers (Macías Villegas, Hernández Varona, & Gutiérrez Sánchez, 2020)	This study aims to reveal the process by which student teachers construct teacher identity in the English teacher education project and discover the conflicts and confusion that may arise in this process
3 teachers (Ljalikova, Meristo, Alas, & Jung, 2021)	The research goal is to reveal how teachers' meaningful experiences influence their ability to become Content and Language Integrated Learning（CLIL）teachers and to explore the factors that influence this process.
7 articles that studied English education by narrative analysis (Dhungana, 2022)	The main objective of this paper is to explore the application of narrative research in English language education, especially through the dialogue storytelling method, to explore the theory and practice of narrative research in English language education.
6 teachers (Iversen, 2022)	It explores teachers' understanding and positioning of multilingualism and their deficiency in vocabulary
1 teacher (Pereira, Carnin, & Mira, 2022)	This paper aims to analyze the oral account of this Portuguese teacher to understand how she (re) constructs a professional identity in emergency distance education and positions herself in an assessment context.

These publications primarily center their study objectives around two key elements. One objective is to investigate the process of professional development among educational participants using narrative analysis. For instance, researchers investigate the transformations in instructors' professional identity, their beliefs, teaching practices, and other related factors. Additionally, they assess the process by which learners develop their self-identity. This type of research explores the distinct experiences of individuals in order to comprehend how the exterior world interacts with the internal psyche and influences the development of educational participants.

Furthermore, the analysis of narratives allows for an exploration of the challenges and reactions experienced by individuals involved in particular educational methodologies. An illustration of this phenomenon can be observed in the professional perplexity experienced by educators when confronted with responsibilities, or the challenges encountered by students during the acquisition of a second language. This particular research methodology centers around the experiential process of individuals engaged in teaching and learning activities, with the aim of generating valuable insights to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

Both sorts of studies employ narrative analysis as a methodological approach, wherein the language and speech of specific cases are examined to obtain a more profound comprehension of their internal realm. The emphasis is placed on individual viewpoints and the unique aspects of each case.

The studies share common objectives. First, they emphasize the significance of individual growth within the educational process, while also acknowledging the importance of considering the individual's perspective. Second, the studies aim to illustrate the dynamic process of case creation by utilizing narratives. Third, it is also important to establish a link between the exterior environment and internal psyche. Fourth, they offer valuable perspectives on enhancing teaching methodologies.

Despite variations in study viewpoints, all of these studies are grounded in the narratives of educational participants. They aim to delve into the underlying mechanisms of individual growth and offer valuable insights for the advancement of educational development. These narratives are included within the same category of research that centers on the development of individuals.

5. DISCUSSIONS
The Status Quo Of Narrative Analysis in Language Education Research

Distribution by geographical regions

The nations involved in language education research using narrative analysis include those in South America (Colombia, Argentina, Brazil), North America (United States), Southeast Asia (Indonesia), Europe (Spain, Estonia, Norway, Portugal), and other regions, as can be seen from Table 1. This demonstrates the global application of

narrative analysis in language education research. Narrative analysis in language educations seems to be less used in Asia and more used in South America and Europe.

Participants classification

Participants in the study were primarily teachers of primary and secondary schools, graduate students, and undergraduates. There were specifically pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, graduate students, and undergraduate students. This shows that narrative analysis is frequently employed across all educational levels in language learning research. Especially there are more teachers working as participants. This may be because teachers are usually more experienced than students. Therefore, they have more experiences and life stories to share.

Teaching/learning

Narrative analysis is currently employed in the following teaching/learning areas: development of teachers' identities and their profession; language learning methodologies and experiences of learners; cultural variations in instruction and learning; examining instructional techniques; the motivation of educational participants' internal psychology; teaching conditions in online and remote learning settings and language proficiency. The two language abilities of speaking and writing are the main subjects of current narrative analysis research in the field of language education, whereas reading and listening are given less attention.

Research methodology

In terms of the research methodology, after going through the whole ten passages narrative analysis mostly relies on thematic analysis and classification of participants' writing samples, observations, and interviews. The importance of comprehending and interpreting personal experiences is emphasized in narrative analysis.

Because of its capacity to investigate individual viewpoints, narrative analysis has generally been used extensively in language education research both domestically and internationally. However, there is still room for its application, such as through the inclusion of additional teaching scenarios and the combination of the study of various language skills.

Trends of narrative analysis in language education research

The following analysis shows potential developments in the use of narrative analysis in language education research.

From the aspect of widening of study horizons, it shows the following trends. First, it may pay attention to teachers in various circumstances, such as those who do not speak English and those who teach a variety of subjects. Second, it is possible to emphasize narrative research on learners at various stages, such as elementary and secondary school pupils. Third, there will be in interactions between teachers and students, emphasizing both parties' stories and points of view. This is because, the variety of the education systems in the world requires us to study learners and teachers of different levels from different countries.

From the aspect of research scenario expansion, the following extensions can be further studied. 1) Narrative research in virtual worlds for remote learning. 2) Narrative study on sensitivity to and acculturation to cultural differences in language learning. 3) A research that tells the stories of teachers and students as they adopt language policies.

As for the new approaches to research methodology, 1) Using corpus linguistics in conjunction with big data language study. 2) Conduct cognitive research on the teaching process in conjunction with cognitive linguistics and neuroscience.3) Use in conjunction with online resources to carry out multimodal story analysis. This is because the development of internet is a trend which language education should also follow.

When it comes to the increase in research content, the following content may be considered more in the future. 1) Concentrating more on narrative studies on language abilities like listening and reading. 2) Narrative research that ties literary and cultural study to language learning. 3) Narrative research in language teaching and learning that emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, and cultural identity.

In general, there are many potential uses for narrative research in language education research that can be further developed by broadening study horizons, developing new research techniques, and enhancing research scenarios and contents.

Conclusion

In order to examine the application status and growth trend of narrative analysis in language education research over the last five years, this work uses the method of a systematic literature review. The paper outlines specific criteria for screening the literature, and after scanning the Web of Science and Scopus databases for pertinent material, 10 publications that satisfy the criteria are ultimately chosen for qualitative synthesis and analysis.

The study's findings indicate that the primary purposes of the current narrative analysis approach are to investigate teacher professional development and learner identity creation. The majority of the studies were from non-English speaking nations, and the research subjects were primarily instructors. The sample size is often limited to seven people. The two primary research methods are text analysis and interviews. The current study focuses on speaking and writing.

It is suggested that future studies can broaden the viewpoints, scenarios, and methodologies in relation to the development trend of narrative analysis by concentrating on teachers and students in various circumstances and utilizing digital resources. The capacity to examine several points of view makes narrative analysis attractive in the field of language education research in general, but more research is needed to determine how it can be used.

The current review serves as a guide and source of inspiration for further study in this area by examining the use of narrative analysis in language education research. This review can be used as a point of reference for developing and extending the use of narrative analysis in language education research.

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