

# Event Modification in EFL Learners' Narration: A Case Study on Retelling Alibaba Story

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## ABSTRAK

Pengalaman terhadap peristiwa, baik secara langsung maupun tidak langsung, dipersepsikan, diorganisir, diurutkan, dan direpresentasikan dalam teks naratif dengan struktur yang koheren. Sebuah peristiwa terdiri dari karakter, tindakan, dan latar. Representasi peristiwa dalam narasi diwujudkan dalam wacana naratif. Struktur teks yang koheren digunakan untuk menarasikan urutan peristiwa dalam berbagai strategi wacana. Struktur ini juga digunakan untuk memahami teks naratif. Narasi terdiri dari peristiwa konstituen dan peristiwa tambahan. Peristiwa konstituen bersifat kausal, dalam arti bahwa peristiwa sebelumnya berkontribusi pada terjadinya peristiwa berikutnya yang menjaga kelangsungan cerita. Peristiwa tambahan tidak bersifat kausal; mereka dapat dihapus tanpa mengganggu kelangsungan cerita. Peristiwa tambahan bertanggung jawab atas makna dan dampak cerita. Jika peristiwa tambahan dihapus, makna dan dampak cerita akan berkurang. Latar belakang ini membawa penelitian untuk menyelidiki modifikasi peristiwa dan menemukan wacana naratif yang digunakan untuk menyampaikan cerita. Untuk mengumpulkan data, para siswa ditugaskan untuk mendengarkan cerita Alibaba dan empat puluh pencuri, setelah mendengarkan cerita, mereka ditugaskan untuk memodifikasi cerita tersebut, dan menceritakan kembali cerita yang telah dimodifikasi dalam bentuk tulisan. Data dianalisis dengan membandingkan cerita asli dan cerita yang dimodifikasi berdasarkan setiap aspek struktur cerita. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa modifikasi cerita siswa terbatas pada modifikasi karakter dan peristiwa tambahan; peristiwa konstituen dan wacana naratif dipertahankan; tidak ada modifikasi yang dilakukan pada kedua aspek tersebut. Ini membawa kesimpulan bahwa urutan peristiwa diorganisir, dipahami, dan diproduksi dalam struktur yang koheren.

## Kata Kunci

Modifikasi, Peristiwa, Narasi, Bercerita, Konstituen, Tambahan, Wacana Naratif

## ABSTRACT

*Experiences of events of both direct and vicarious ones are perceived, organized, sequenced and represented in narrative text in coherent structure. An event consist of character, action and setting. The representation of the events in narration is realized in narrative discourse. The coherent text structure is used to narrate sequence of events in various discourse strategies. This structure is also used to understand a narrative texts. Narratives comprises of constituents and supplementary events. The constituent events are causal in the sense that earlier event contributes to the occurrence of the next event that keep the story moving forward. The supplementary events are not causal; they can be removed without disturbing continuance of the story. Supplementary events are responsible for the meaning and impact of the story. If the supplementary events are removed, the meaning and impact of the story decreases. This background leads the research to investigate event modification and find out narrative discourse used to convey the story. To collect the data, the students were assigned to listen to the story of Alibaba with forty thieves, having listened to the story, they are assigned to modify the story, and retold the modified story in written form. The data were analyzed by comparing the original and the modified story based on every aspect of story structure. The results show that the students' story modification is limited to the modification of characters and supplementary events; constituent events and narrative discourse are retained; no modification was done to the two aspects. This leads to the conclusion that sequences of events are organized, understood and produced in a coherent structure.*

## Key Words

*Modification, Events, Narrative, Story Telling, Constituent, Supplementary, Narrative Discourse.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, one comes across or undergoes various events. Such events are directly experienced. Reading text containing others' experiences or listening to someone telling his experiences can also become a source of events that we feel as if the events were directly experienced. Such experience is obtained in vicarious way and therefore it is called vicarious experience (Gardner, 2004). So, there are two ways of getting experiences: directly and vicariously. The events directly experienced can be told to others in narrative text in which the events are organized in series of events based on chronological order. How the events are organized or sequenced depends on the narrator's evaluation of the meanings he puts to the events. The events organization or sequences involved the narrator's cognitive or mental process of producing the narrative text. In others' experiences told to us narratively, the events have been organized and sequenced chronologically. The readers or the listeners get the event sequence or organization readily made by the narrator or the narrative text writer. As a reader or listener, one gets involved in comprehending the events and putting the meaning to the event sequences he reads or listen to. He does not get involved in mental production process. He gets involved in mental comprehension process. However, a listener or reader of a narrative text can also get involved in metal process of production because, as described above, he can store the events obtained vicariously in his mental storage and can tell the events or story to other people. This is known as a story retelling. This concept is in line with de Sa (2012) who asserted that retelling a story is a valuable tool in order to discover how people interpret and understand stories. The content of the retold story will depend much on how the storyteller extract the moral message of the story. (Manggala, 2023). In addition to this, Copeland, Larson, and Palena (2015) presented a term "narrative transportation" which is later said as the part of the vicarious experience of narrative comprehension. It emphasizes that a storyteller experiences empathy and imagery in order to understand a story and to retell it to other people. Thus, a retold version of story is not only derived from the extraction of moral message, but also the feeling (empathy), and imagery that occurred during the readers' mind.

The interrelationship between the direct experience and narrative text, as presented above, can be theoretically proved to be true. Abbot (2008) stated that narrative text is partly resulted from entering the world of vision, applying ways of seeing the world and building virtual perception of the world. The ways applied to apprehend the virtual world determines the perception and this perception is realized in narration. The world we see, according to Abbott (2008), are events and the realization of the events in narration are narrative discourse. Narrative discourse represents the way how the events are organized or sequenced.

The interrelationship between vicarious experience and retelling a story, as depicted above, can be theoretically proved true. Sanford and Emmott (2012) said that in comprehending, memorizing and recalling a story, human beings tend to organize the sequenced events heard by listeners or read by a reader into coherent structure. The coherent structure of events in a story will be retold in line with the memorized events organization. This means that the events sequenced in a story experienced vicariously by listener or reader will be organized into coherent structure and based on such coherent organization the retelling of a story is made possible. Bal (2017:154) asserted that a story is constituted by stable and changeable elements and processes. Elements are understood as not only the actors but also the locations of the story, while processes refer to the changes that occur among the objects. For this reason, elements and processes are indispensable for the construction of a story. In reading narrative, a reader can be led by episodes of events to respond in ways suitable to the textual situation (Toolan, 2016). Such engagement, enable the readers to experience the events as if it were real, and this is an example of vicarious experience.

Lambrou (2014) claims that to understand a story is to find the prototypical story structure by which personal experiences are narrated. This theory is supported by the research conducted by Lambrou (2014) that story retold twice resulted in comparable structure of events; the only differences between the two retellings are the discourse strategies. Nahatame (2020) also asserted that global causal text relation affects the recall of the story. Dymok (2007) claims that one's awareness of text structure affect the students' ability to comprehend a story. His experiment shows significant difference in comprehension of a story between those treated with text structure of a story than those who received conventional teaching.

Based on this background, this study investigated the students' creativity in changing or modifying events of a story of *Alibaba and the forty thieves* after they had heard the story once. The objectives of this study is to find out what events they create or modify and what narrative discourse they use to tell the modified story. This study is different from that conducted by Lambrou (2014) in which the subject was assigned to listen to a story twice and asked them to retell the story every time after each listening and compare the two retelling. The present study, the students were asked to listen to *Alibaba* story and assigned the to retell the story after they had made any modification to the *Alibaba* story.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials, in this study, refer to theories which enable the researcher to answer the two research problems. While method refers to the research method including research design, data and data collection, data analysis and conclusion drawing. Each of the two parts are discussed below.

### 2.1 Theoretical Materials

Since the two research problems are centered to two different focuses: events and narrative discourse of a retold story and its event modification, theory of narration was elaborated here.

In narrative text, the key concept is *event*. If there is no event, there will be no narration. A single sentence, like *my dog was bitten by a flea* tells an event, that is *the bite of a flea*, while sentence like *my dog has fleas* does not tell any event; it is descriptive. What make a text a narrative or not depends on whether the text tells events (Abbott, 2008). In terms of number of events that a text should comprise is still controversial among the experts. Even a single sentence telling an event is a narrative. Many experts specify a text to be narrative only if the text fulfills three conditions, they are: (1) events are realized in text and the events can be inferred, (2) events are generally organized in chronological order and (3) the events coming earlier cause the following events to occur (Sanford and Emmott, 2012). These events are organized in generic structure and text coherence. This aspect of a narrative text is general and outstanding to most readers. Even students with language impairment are familiar with this generic structure. It is lexical and grammatical skills that the language impairment students have problems (Mortensen, L., Lock, K.S, and Nickels, L., 2009). So events are elementary in narrative text, but understanding the event sequences is enabled only when the events are organized in generic structure of a narrative.

Story and narrative discourse are two different things but interrelated. Story refers to an event or sequences of events while narrative discourse refers to the ways how the events are conveyed. Narrative may have the same story or the same events told by the story with different ways of conveying the events or with using different narrative discourse.

Tabel 1. The Same Story with Different Narrative Discourse

a	<i>When I woke up, I packed two loaded guns and a ski mask, drove to the bank, robbed it, and was back in time for dinner</i>
b	<i>I was back in time for dinner, having robbed the bank to which I had driven with a ski mask and two loaded guns just after my nap.</i>
c	<i>He loved that old familiar, yet always strangely new, sensation of being someone else inside his ski mask, a pistol in each hand, watching the frightened teller count out a cool million. Nothing like it to wake a guy up. Nothing like it to give him a good appetite.</i>

Quoted from Abbott (2008)

Narratives a, b, and c in table 1 are telling events about bank robbery with different narrative discourse. Narrative discourse can be modified for expansion of narrowing - therefore narrative discourse is called malleable – but still retain the same story as illustrated in table 1. This illustration conveys that narrative is the representations of events which contains story and narrative discourse. Events are experienced directly through virtual perception and through vicarious experience. The events can be sequenced or ordered, while narrative discourse realizes the events in discourse or text.

Events in narrative are divided into two main classifications, they are: constituent and supplementary events. Constituent events are the events that cause other events to happen and cause the story to move forward. The moving forward of a story depends on the causal relationship among the constituent events. Therefore, none of the constituent event can be removed if want the story to move forward. Unlike the supplementary events, they are not necessary for the continuance of the story. From this perspective, this type of event can be removed, but its removal can make the story less meaningful and decrease the overall impact of the story (Abbott, 2008).

### 2.2 Method

This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative design and the data used to answer the two research problems are students' writing *retelling the story of Alibaba and forty thieves*. To collect the data, elicitation technique was used. The source of the data was fourteen students' of college of languages: STBA-PIA Medan. The students were assigned to watch and listen to the story of Alibaba from video and then they are assigned to write the story making modification to the story. The data were analyzed by using Bogdan and Biklen's (2007) model. As the temporary predetermined category of data identification and classification, theory of narration by Abbott (2008), Sanford (2012) and Lambrou (2014).

### III. FINDINGS

Based on the data analysis it is found out that the constituent events are not modified or all of the students retained the constituent events. They also retain the narrative discourse of the original story. They just modified the characters, setting and the supplementary events. In the supplementary event modification, it was found out that modification were done by removing the supplementary events of the original story and by adding some supplementary events to the original story. These modifications are shown in data 1 – 6.

#### 3.1 Modification of Characters

The students change or modifies the character. In the students' retelling story, Alibaba was said to be with her sick mom; not with his wife, and with his clever servant. Alibaba as carpenter was modified into wood cutter, and gardener, as shown in data 1 and 2.

Tabel 2. Data 1 - Modification in Orientation

Alibaba Story	Students' Modification in Retelling Story	Source of Data
Once upon a time in a land far far away in the east lived a carpenter named Alibaba. He lived a poor life with his wife.	Once upon a time, there lives Ali Baba and his sick mom. His mother has a serious illness called "gold jewellery are my number 1 priority."	<b>FB</b>
	Once upon a time in a bustling city, there lived a poor woodcutter named Alibaba, his wife and his clever servant named Yasmin	<b>SP</b>
	Alibaba is a gardener who lives well with his small family.	<b>FE</b>

Tabel 3. Data 2 - Modification in Rising Complication 1

Alibaba Story	Students' Modification in Retelling Story	Source of Data
One day he went into the forest to cut wood. Suddenly he realized a group of horsemen coming towards him and they did not look friendly. They must be thieves. I must head at once", said Alibaba. Alibaba hid his donkey behind the bushes and he climbed up a tree.	One day, Ali Baba strolls around his town with his pet fox. Then he stepped on a puddle of mud so he squats as he tried to clean his shoes. When he's about to finish cleaning, he saw a group of thieves entering a mysterious cave.	<b>FB</b>
	One day while chopping the wood, Alibaba and Yasmin discoveries 40 thieves stole the treasure and they keep in cave and the cave can open only with magic words "Open sesame". Alibaba remember and learn the magic words.	<b>SP</b>
	One day he wanted to go gardening and found a group of thieves riding horses and each of them was carrying a sack containing diamonds in it. Alibaba looked scared when he saw the group of thieves, so he hid in the tall bushes near where he was gardening. Then he saw a group of thieves get off the horses that they were riding and enter a small hut.	<b>FE</b>

#### 3.2 Modification of Supplementary Events

Both the original story of Alibaba and the one modified and retelling the story retain the event telling that there was jewelry in the setting that the thieves hide. The two stories of the original and made by the students do not change the character of the thieves. What they modified is the supplementary events. In the original story, supplementary events tell the events how the thieves hide the jewelry in the cave, while the students retelling and modified story removed this and directly tell the event of stealing the jewelry hide by the thieves, as shown in data 3, 4 and 5.

In data 4, the original story of Alibaba told the event that Alibaba stole the jewelry hide by the thieves. These events are retained the same in the students modified retold story. What is modified is the way how the jewelry was stolen and the character who stole the jewelry. This means that the constituent events were retained, and the supplementary events were added, like: *He thought that if he could have this diamond then his family would live happily and he would no longer need to work hard as a gardener* (FE), while SP added supplementary events like: *Yasmin tried to distracted the thieves while Alibaba strolled around the cave. All the thieves drank.*

Tabel 4. Data 3 - Modification of Rising Complication 2

Alibaba Story	Students' Modification in Retelling Story	Source of Data
The men came and stopped right under the tree. Alibaba counted exactly 40 of them.	As his curiosity level is quite high, he decides to sneak in too. He then found out that the cave is filled with gold jewelries and steals some of them and as he about to leave the cave he meets his mother.	FB
The men took down some heavy bags from their horses. Alibaba realized that these men were the thieves. The head of the thieves went towards a big rock and started to yell. "Open sesame open", said the head of the thieves.	Alibaba and Yasmin devised a plan to trick the thieves. Using her wit, Yasmin disguised herself as a wealthy boss seeking to trade with the thieves. With the magical word, they gained entry into a cave. They look amaze with all the treasure.	SP
The thieves went in one by one carrying the heavy bags. After the last one went in, the gate automatically closed. Alibaba was speechless from what he saw.	Alibaba then became curious about what the group had done. He monitored it until the end and saw the group leave the area where he was gardening. Alibaba came out of the bushes and started walking towards the small hut. He saw that the door to the hut was unlocked and just open.	FE

Tabel 5. Data 4 - Modification of Rising Problem 3

Alibaba Story	Students' Modification in Retelling Story	Source of Data
Alibaba hesitantly went in. He was stunned with what he saw inside was full of gold, silver, valuable fabrics, diamonds, and treasure chests. He looked around picked up three bags and left.	"What are you doing here, Mom? he asks. "What are you doing here, son?" his mother replies. Since both of them don't have the answer to each of their question, then they decide to part ways. His mom steals 5 times more than Ali Baba. Each of them keeps the jewelries in their closet.	FB
He turned to the rock and repeated what he heard from the leader of thieves "Close sesame close" He put all the bags on his donkey and head home.	Yasmin tried to distracted the thieves while Alibaba strolled around the cave. All the thieves drank. Alibaba and Yasmin started their plan. They took as much treasure as they could carry.	SP
	He entered it out of curiosity and he found a lot of diamonds inside. He thought that if he could have this diamond then his family would live happily and he would no longer need to work hard as a gardener. Without thinking anymore, Alibaba took a sack of diamonds from the hut and took the diamonds home.	FE

Tabel 6. Data 5 - Modification of Rising Problem 4

Alibaba Story	Students' Modification in Retelling Story	Source of Data
After a short while the thieves came back to their cave. When they saw Kasim's donkeys they got suspicious and drew their swords. "Open sesame open" shouted the head of the thieves. When the gate opened the thieves caught Kasim right away and punished him right there and then. "So this was the thief stealing our gold", said the thieves' leader.	Without them knowing, the thieves saw all of their action and they are clenching their fists as hard as the wall and couldn't hold their anger any longer, so they barge in Ali Baba's house. "Tie them! Slap them! Kick them! Punch them! Make them regret of their actions!!!, the thieves' captain screams on top of their lungs. Both Ali Baba and his mom are panting and grimacing in pain. "Forgive us, please..." they begged.	FB
	Until a man came without bringing anything and he asked for help so that the Alibaba's family could help him by giving him some of the diamonds they had. The family, of course, agreed and gave him the few diamonds they had. This man also curious about how a simple Alibaba's family could open this pawn shop so he followed Alibaba wherever he went. Until one day he also entered the small hut, and was caught by thieves. This man was threatened and told him to say who was behind the disappearance of the diamonds they had been saving all the time. Then this man mentioned Alibaba and his family.	SP
	The leader of this thieves group immediately visited the pawn shop. This leader of thieves group was very angry and he decided to kill Alibaba and all his family.	FE

In data 5, the supplementary events in the original story of Alibaba were removed in the students' modified retold story. The supplementary event, in the original story of Alibaba, like: *when they saw Kasim's donkeys they got suspicious and drew their swords. "Open sesame open" shouted the head of the thieves. When the gate opened the thieves caught Kasim right away and punished him right there and then.* These events were not found in the students' story. The students just told the constituent event by telling like: *This leader of thieves group was very angry and he decided to kill Alibaba and all his family.*

### 3.2.1 Modification of Contents of Supplementary Events

The supplementary events in the original story were removed. Its supplementary events, like (1) : He disguised himself and started to walk around the marketplace. He finally found Alibaba and followed him home. Knocked on the door, Alibaba answered. "I came from a long way, I brought jugs full of olive oil. I heard that you are the richest merchant in the area. Maybe you would like to buy them" The thief carried 40 jugs of olive oil to Alibaba's house and like (2) : Kasim's wise wife went to look into the olive oil drugs, suddenly she heard some noises. "should we get out?" , "no no. it's not time yet". Then she came back and poured the boiling oil in each and every one of the jugs. And like: (3) At midnight when everyone was asleep, their leader came next to the jugs. "You can get out now." When there was no respond, he asked "are you guys sleeping?" When he asked again he could not get any response he opened one of the jugs he was terrified with what he saw and knowing that he was also going to get caught he ran away and never came back were removed in the students modified retold story. In data 6, FB removed the supplementary events and modified the story by telling that the Gardener's (a replacing character for Alibaba) family were burnt while FE also removed the supplementary events of the original story and told the events that Alibaba and his family were killed by the thieves. SP retained the supplementary events of the original story of Alibaba by telling the events that Yasmin – the servant of Alibaba – killed the thieves in the same way as it was told in the original story, that is by pouring hot oil to each of the jugs. What is modified in the SP retold story is only the character, as shown in data 6.

Tabel 7. Data 6 - Modification of Solution

Alibaba Story	Students' Modification in Retelling Story	Source of Data
<p>He disguised himself and started to walk around the marketplace.</p> <p>He finally found Alibaba and followed him home.</p> <p>Knocked on the door, Alibaba answered. "I came from a long way, I brought jugs full of olive oil. I heard that you are the richest merchant in the area. Maybe you would like to buy them"</p> <p>Alibaba invited the leader thief home for dinner that night thinking that he also was a merchant.</p> <p>The thief carried 40 jugs of olive oil to Alibaba's house.</p> <p>Kasim's wise wife went to look into the olive oil drugs, suddenly she heard some noises. "should we get out?" , "no no. it's not time yet".</p> <p>When she found out that there were thieves inside the jugs instead of olive oil she knew that this was a setup. She immediately went to the kitchen and boiled some oil. Then she came back and poured the boiling oil in each and every one of the jugs.</p> <p>Of course the thieves silently got fried. At midnight when everyone was asleep, their leader came next to the jugs. "You can get out now." When there was no respond, he asked "are you guys sleeping?"</p> <p>When he asked again he could not get any response he opened one of the jugs he was terrified with what he saw and knowing that he was also going to get caught he ran away and never came back. In the morning, Kasim's wife told Alibaba all that had happened. Now they knew that they didn't need to worry about the thieves anymore and so Alibaba and his family lived a happy and rich life.</p>	<p>The thieves don't give even one attention and they took all of their gold jewelries back and leave the house. "Burn the house!" ordered the captain of the thieves. All of the thieves pouring Ali Baba's house with fuel then throw a bunch of lighters with the flame that is still on. Ali Baba and his mom then screams for their life, running out of breath, and finally die with the rope that is still attached to their hands and legs. These are all the results of their greed.</p> <p>The thieves found out their house and they disguised as friends of Alibaba's wife who wanted to send a lot of oil jug. Yasmin caught all of the jug filled with the thieves and she started to boil the oil and filled the jug with hot oil to kill the thieves. The leader of the thieves know that his group had died. He run away and promised never come back again to Alibaba's house.</p> <p>From that day on, Alibaba and family lived wealthy and prosperously.</p> <p>The leader of this thieves group immediately visited the pawn shop. This leader of thieves group was very angry and he decided to kill Alibaba and all his family.</p>	<p>FB</p> <p>SP</p> <p>FE</p>

## IV. CONCLUSION

The finding showed that the subjects modified only the characters and supplementary events of the original story, while the constituent events are not modified. The modification occurs in every structure of the modified retold story. These findings lead to the conclusion that understanding events sequences in a story is only enabled by obtaining coherent structures of the events and this also enables a narrator to narrate his direct experiences as well as to retell the story they have ever listen to or read. This is proved by the findings of this research that even the students were assigned to modify the story they listen to or read they do not make any modification that ruin the coherent structure of the events.

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