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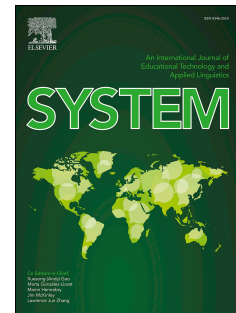
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**Photo-narrative frames: Using visuals with narrative research in
applied linguistics**

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The study has institutional ethics approval from the University of Aberdeen. We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Abstract

A narrative frame is a data collection instrument comprising a series of sentence prompts that facilitate the elicitation of participant narratives by scaffolding the writing process. Narrative frames allow multiple respondents to compose narratives that are comparable in length, form, and substance, thus allowing the researcher to focus on more precise research aims than are generally possible with more open-ended types of narrative data. In this article, we discuss the rationale for narrative frames and their use in recent research, revisiting their strengths and limitations as research instruments. Following this, we use data from a project investigating the professional identities of expatriate native-speaking English teachers to illustrate the use of photo-narrative frames, an innovation that supplements written stories with photographs from participants' professional experiences. As narratives provide a means of understanding the experiences of others, visual data, such as photographs, can amplify the context, further connecting participant narratives to insights about the complexity of their lives and behaviors. The study details the procedures, from designing and piloting the frames to data collection and analysis. We show how visual-textual layering and integration occurs in a participant's stories and how the images help the participant convey their professional narratives to others. We conclude by considering the ethical issues with collecting and disseminating photographs from participants before making suggestions for future research, focusing on further innovations that can blend visual methods with narrative research, for example, by taking advantage of social media platforms and on-line survey software.

Key words: Visual narratives, photo-elicitation techniques, narrative frames, English language teaching, career trajectory, Korea

1. Introduction

A narrative frame (NF) is a data collection instrument comprising a series of writing prompts that facilitate the elicitation of participant narratives. Since their introduction (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008), NFs have become increasingly popular with research on language learning and teaching, being used in a wide range of contexts to better understand the beliefs, experiences, and identity of language learners and teachers (Barkhuizen, 2014). The popularity of NFs is largely due to the fact that they allow multiple respondents to compose narratives that are comparable in length, form, and content, thus enabling researchers to focus on more precise research aims than are generally possible with more open-ended types of narrative research. While descriptive and engaging, narrative research tends to produce an extensive amount of data that is often time-consuming to analyze and difficult to effectively consolidate. Because of this, and because the discourse and genre of academic publication emerged from positivist research, it can be difficult to fit a narrative study within the confines of a standard-length journal article (Bell, 2011). Thus, NFs provide structure and focus to written narratives, helping to organize and condense accounts of a participant's experience while still maintaining the essence of narrative research.

In this article we reemphasize Barkhuizen's (2014) commentary of NF research before introducing a further innovation, that of photo-narrative frames (PNFs), and reinforcing the potential future uses of NFs for language learning and teaching research. The PNFs in this study are being used in a project to understand the career trajectories of expatriate English language teachers. It extends the traditional methods of narrative research by incorporating visual data that proposes to connect the participants' recollection of events and experiences to photographs that represent pivotal moments or phases in their teaching career. The imagery of participant photographs grants a visual layer to narrative passages (Harper, 2002), offering captivating insights of events and phenomenon and empowering participants to visually represent their experiences and personal histories (Olliffe and Bottorff, 2007; Harper, 2002, 2003). As Pink (2006) asserted, visual methods "can be especially pertinent in investigating embodied experiences" (p. 28), because rather than implicating concepts and constructs, they give visual context to the person and circumstance, and they are represented and owned subjectively, temporally, and meaningfully by the participant (Postma and Crawford, 2006).

2. Literature review

2.1. Narrative frames

After Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) introduced NFs, they have grown in popularity, evidenced by their applications in published research, which have been outlined by Barkhuizen (2014) and in Table 1 below. Considering the challenges that faced narrative research more generally, for instance, in adapting to the format and discourse of journal publications and the expectations of reviewers and editors (Bell, 2011), it is safe to say that NFs have been legitimized as acceptable research instruments in the areas of language teaching (e.g., Moodie, 2016; Wette & Barkhuizen, 2009; Xu, 2014) and learning (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2014; Hiratsuka, 2014; Macalister, 2012), whether used as the central data collection instrument (e.g., Macalister, 2012; Moodie, 2019), or as a means of data triangulation in qualitative research (e.g., Moodie & Feryok, 2015; Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019; Wette & Furneaux, 2018; Xu, 2014).

The popularity of NFs comes from their strengths as research instruments. As Barkhuizen (2014) noted, researchers have found NFs to be “useful, serving their research purposes by gathering easily accessible data and generating insights into the topic of their investigation” (p. 12). To be more specific, as has been discussed by Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) and Barkhuizen (2014), the strengths of NFs are that they:

1. Scaffold the writing process, streamlining the process for participants to express their stories.
2. Add coherence to research design, allowing a somewhat predictable consistency between research aims, questions, analysis, and findings.
3. Tap into narrative knowledge, stories of experience, and participant identity, but in a manner that is predictably structured.
4. Provide a comparably straightforward analysis to more open-ended narrative methods.
5. Provide a means for managing the quantity of narrative data obtained, for example, by limiting the length of responses permitted in a NF template.
6. Are suited for purpose-driven but exploratory research. Bygate (2012) criticized NF research by comparing it to casting a net rather than using a fishing rod; however, that is precisely why NFs are useful, for example, in cases where researchers intuit that there is something worthwhile investigating, just not precisely what it is.

In summary, advocates of the instrument claim that the format adequately constrains and organizes participant responses, provides support for completing a narrative reflection (as the practice may

be unfamiliar to some participants), and helps to target key elements of investigation, thus making it effective for initial exploration of the research topic (Barkhuizen, 2014; Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). However, it is important to keep the limitations of NFs in mind, including that:

1. Using prompts and sentence starters does not guarantee that a project fits with the essence of narrative research. While ostensibly narrative, some applications of NFs have generated data more akin to open-ended questionnaire research.
2. Researchers may try to include too many topics, which may threaten narrative cohesion.
3. The prompts may be misinterpreted by participants, leading to data that is not useful for the intended purpose.

Given that Barkhuizen (2014) reviewed NF research up to 2014, below we shall give attention to published work from 2015 onwards. As can be seen in Table 1, there have been at least ten NF studies recently published in journals indexed in Scopus and the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), supporting the fact that NF research has been increasingly recognized by journal editors and reviewers. It is useful to note, too, that NFs have continued to appear in doctoral theses (e.g., Askaribigdeli, 2021; Moodie, 2015; Rohmah, 2017), book chapters (e.g., Nguyen, 2016), and national journals (e.g., Hiratsuka, 2018; Mehrani, 2017).

(Place Table 1 about here)

What this recent work shows is that NFs continue to be most often used as a means of data triangulation, generally supported by interviews following up on themes arising in the narratives. These studies also indicate that NFs are being used in a wide range of countries and contexts, whether it be with language learners (Rabbidge, 2020; Ryan et al., 2019; Wette & Furneaux, 2018; Wicking, 2020), teachers (Bahrami et al., 2019; Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019; Moodie, 2016, 2019; Moodie & Feryok, 2015), or student teachers (Kartal & Demir, 2021). As can be seen, NFs are flexible research instruments and can be used to gather multiple narratives from a single participant (Feryok & Askaribigdeli, 2019) or a single narrative from hundreds of participants (Wicking, 2020).

As for the methods, general qualitative procedures have been clearly favored. Researchers have tended to analyze for content and themes rather than analyzing narratives holistically. As for

data collection, email has become the norm, showing that Barkhuizen's (2014) suggestion for web-based innovations has yet to be explored. With this in mind, although we have shown that NFs have become established as legitimate data collection instruments, there remains potential for further methodological innovations. One such innovation, that of adding a visual element to NF research, is the focus of the current article.

2.2 *Visual narratives and photo-elicitation techniques*

The design of our study draws from literature on visual narratives and photo-elicitation interviews. The term *visual narrative* indicates that there is a *story* connected to a visual representation of an experience or phenomenon, and that the story has a *narrative* inclination. In clarifying this distinction, Pimenta and Poovaiah (2010) define a visual narrative as

a visual that essentially and explicitly narrates a story; where – visual signifies – something that can be seen using the human eye. Story signifies – a series of events linked by causality, temporality or sequence or the order of occurrence. Narrative signifies – the act of telling a story or the story itself or the order of presentation. (p. 30)

The presence of a story is the fundamental element of a visual narrative, with the visual constructed or applied for the purpose of communicating the story to the audience. The use of visual representations in coordination with the verbal expression of a story allows the participant “to both ‘show’ and ‘narrate’ their experiences and lives” (Mannay, 2016, p. 64). Giving context and clarity to real-life narratives, photographs can act as conduits for producing more vivid accounts and can help the researcher better visualize and connect to the story. However, biographies, especially those supplemented with visual artefacts, can be difficult to succinctly package and fairly reconstruct given the vast amount of data they typically generate. Thus, one such way to bring focus to visual-narrative research is through photo-elicitation techniques, which use images as a medium for exploring participant experience.

Of photo-elicitation, Harrison (2004, p. 129) clarifies that

individuals will at any particular time occupy a certain kind of relationship ... to any image or set of images. Meanings to photographs will change, and the processes of memory, history making, narration, and self-actualisation, are ongoing features of personal and social relations with photographs (p. 25).

In this view photographs are neither static nor solitary in their representation and meaning but are instead simultaneously the culmination of a self-history and a ‘snapshot’ on a timeline (Mannay, 2016). The photograph becomes a mechanism for meaning making, but context, culture, and personal beliefs frame interpretations (Mannay, 2016; Rose 2016). Images can help participants articulate their story in a more complete illustration of their experiences and identity than with words alone (Harper, 2002).

Indeed, Rose (2016) offers four main benefits of using images in photo-elicitation interviews, all of which are explicitly relevant to the use of PNFs in this study. First, photos convey substantial information and can provoke varied discussion, including those that the researcher had not anticipated. Secondly, talking about photos stimulates greater emotional conversations about the topic and a more intense focus on the importance of lived experiences than interviews or text alone (Hunt, 2014). Third, images help participants consider aspects of daily life and personal experiences that are taken for granted, allowing them to reflect on and give substance to aspects of life that are often latent or overlooked. Finally, photos can empower participants, especially when they have responsibility in generating or selecting the images to be explored. By integrating images within a NF template, researchers can benefit from the additional modality of photographs within the structure offered by the frames.

2.3 The study

In this study we introduce *photo-narrative frames* (PNFs), which use participants’ personal photographs as a visual stimulus for reflecting on important events in their career along with sentence prompts that initiate their reflections. By asking participants to include photographs in the frames, we seek to evoke responses that express their experience by accessing sensory responses to the moments that the photographs capture (Marion and Crowder, 2013; Pink 2007). With that in mind, the study is designed around the following research questions:

1. What underlying themes are evident in the career trajectory of an expatriate English language teaching (ELT) professional as expressed through PNFs?
2. In what ways do the images contribute to the narratives and how do they help the participant reflect on and express their career trajectory in the text?

3. Methods

3.1. Research context

Below we discuss findings from one ELT professional from a project exploring the career trajectories and professional identities of expatriate EFL teachers in Korea. As with many other countries in Asia, Korea has widely recruited native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) from western countries to teach in public schools, universities, and private academies. Since the 1990s, tens of thousands of expatriates have taught English in Korea (Ministry of Justice, 2021), yet little attention has been given towards the career development of long-term and professionally minded ELT professionals. Despite the frequent criticisms of NESTs and the negative implications of native-speakerism associated with NEST programs in the literature, there is a growing number of expatriate ELT professionals who have made their guest countries their long-term homes (Copland et al., 2019), and thus there is a need to better understand the identities and professional growth of long-serving expatriate ELT professionals.

3.2 The participant

Kevin (pseudonym) is a 39-year-old male participant from the United States with 14 years of ELT experience, all in Korea. He has a BA degree in Political Science, an MA in English Studies, an EdS in Curriculum and Instruction, a PhD in Education, and a TESOL certificate. He first moved to Korea at age 25 to teach at a *hagwon* (private education institute), which he did for four years. Later, he became a co-teacher in a public school (for 4 years) and subsequently has been teaching English for 6 years as an Assistant Professor (non-tenure track) at a private university. In the findings we shall elaborate on Kevin's ELT career, showing how the PNFs helped him express his career trajectory and professional growth across the early, mid, and current phases of his career.

Kevin's case is a selective case from a larger project. We chose Kevin's case here because of the temporal and experiential symmetry across his early, mid, and current career as he transitioned from the private sector to public schools to teaching in a university and simultaneously progressed in his credentials and academic attainment. Exploring Kevin's career development gives us an opportunity to demonstrate how he used text and images in his narratives and to focus on how the prompts and images stimulated and scaffolded his reflections.

3.3. Instruments: Photo-narrative frames (PNFs)

This study uses three PNFs designed to elicit narratives about the career trajectory of ELT professionals: The first frame is focused on their early careers, the second on their mid-careers, and the third from the current phase of their careers, however they choose to define those phases. The frames are reproduced in the Appendix. In designing the frames, we partook in a rigorous planning and piloting process (see Figure 1 below), an important step in any NF study. The design of the photo narrative frames and the development and selection of sentence starters was informed by prior discussions of NF methods (Barkhuizen and Wette, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2011, 2014) and by the corresponding author's prior experience with NF research (Moodie, 2015, 2016, 2019).

First, we came up with the general concept: that we would focus on these three stages of professional development, a decision informed by literature from the fields of organizational psychology and education. Next, we brainstormed concepts (e.g., occupational commitment, professional development, identity, teaching practice, teacher cognition, reflection) and corresponding sentence starters to include in the frames. Concurrently, we tested formats and prompts for integrating photographs within the frames. Once we agreed on the wording and sequences of the initial frame (PNF1), we trialed the frame ourselves, noting what worked well and what did not. In order to ensure that the prompts were clear and that they elicited data related to the target concepts, they were again tested and refined multiple times. After troubleshooting the initial frame ourselves, we invited two experienced researchers to pilot the frame and provide feedback.

At this stage we could see how the prompts were being interpreted by others, which helped us revise the prompts with a tighter focus on our target concepts. As an example, writers responded to the prompt "My teaching at this time was ..." in different ways; therefore, we added a comment in parentheses after the prompt, requesting that respondents characterize their teaching practice and approach to teaching in that phase of their career. Once the sentence starters were agreed upon, we worked on building cohesion within the frame. To do so, we started the frame by prompting a description of the photograph and what the image signifies to the participant, followed by broader prompts regarding perspectives toward their experience as an ELT professional in the time period of which the photo represents before bringing focus back to the specific image and concluding reflections about the photograph to close the narrative. The design process was similar for the second and third frame but with additional attention given to ensuring cohesion between the three frames (e.g., "Compared to my early career, the biggest differences in my teaching practice were

...” in PNF2 or “When comparing the photos of my early, middle, and recent teaching career, what I realize is ...” in PNF3).

(Place Figure 1 about here)

3.4. Procedures and analysis

The first stage consisted of a semi-structured interview, focusing on Kevin’s work engagement, professional development, and commitment in his career as an ELT professional. Next, we emailed him the first PNF, where he was asked to choose a photograph from his early career and complete the frame. Once he returned the first frame, we sent him the second, and this process was repeated for the third frame. Following this, a concluding interview was conducted, which involved asking about his thought processes and reflections while completing the PNFs. After the collection period, his data was anonymized (with photo blurring and a pseudonym) and put in a folder on Google Drive of which only the researchers had access to.

The analysis was iterative, following general qualitative analysis procedures (Miles et al., 2014), but it was also informed by multimodal analysis principles (Liu, 2013). First, we began examining the data, highlighting key excerpts. We kept analytic memos as the analysis progressed, which helped us to consolidate the emerging findings with key points from relevant literature and also to consider the overarching themes by examining the photos and narratives holistically. This multimodal analysis involved interpreting how meaning was conveyed and intertwined between the images and the texts and also how the images and text conveyed career trajectory across the three PNFs. After reaching agreement on the underlying themes in Kevin’s career trajectory, we uploaded the data to a data analysis program (QDA Miner Lite), which we used to re-code and organize the relevant excerpts under their respective themes, which helped to organize the data for the write-up. For the reader’s reference, we have used italics to indicate Kevin’s written responses in the PNFs, bold italics to indicate the original prompts, and regular text for his interview excerpts.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Themes across the career of an expat ELT professional

The objective of the PNFs was to help our participants remember, visualize, and then succinctly express important moments from three stages in their careers and to articulate how they

believe these experiences impacted their development and commitment to language teaching and shaped their identities as language teachers. Using Kevin's PNFs and interview data as an example, we aim to illustrate how the frames facilitated and captured Kevin's identity construction and how his story is communicated textually and visually. In response to the first research question, we will show how the PNFs helped him express his career trajectory across three intertwining themes: 1) a progressive sense of identity as an ELT professional, 2) his increasing participation in communities of practice, and 3) a commitment to professional development. These themes, as we shall demonstrate, were evident in the text and were supported by the photographs that he used to represent the three phases of his career, from his first experiences at a private institute to his current career as a researcher and assistant professor at a university.

In PNF1, Kevin describes his early career based on his experience teaching children at a private institute, depicted in the photograph below.



Image 1. Kevin's early career.

With reference to the photo, Kevin explained that *“representative of this time was the joy of spending time with children, and the agony that accompanies it.”* Giving context to this excerpt, he characterized this teaching during that period thusly: *“I felt mostly ineffective and saw myself*

as a glorified babysitter who the management would not listen to or support in any meaningful way.” He continued, writing,

my teaching methods resembled that of a feckless teacher, unequipped with the proper scaffolding to understand how to organize a classroom and further hamstrung by an institution that had no concern with teacher professional development, or even learning

His frustrations about the educational and professional practices at his school are substantive, and through the prompts he conveys his sense of isolation, his outsider status as a foreign English teacher:

I felt more like a prop used for my white skin to attract students to the school under a devious scam where I was offered up as a teacher to the undiscerning parents.

At the time, Kevin thought he would only teach English “for a few years to finance my travels around the world.” However, despite the negativities encountered, his induction into English teaching was sustained somewhat by his engagement with students, but also by his working conditions, “averaging out to about 5 hours a day.” From this narrative we get a sense of Kevin’s novice identity and frustrations over the lack of institutional support, yet, in his reflections, there is also the presence of a responsibility to his job and how he and his work as a language teacher is conceived by others.

In PNF2, his mid-career narrative about his experience in Korean public schools, Kevin begins to give more conscious and immediate attention to his identity as an English teacher and a growing sense of professionalism. He also expresses his peripheral participation within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), the tenured local teachers at his school, something the photograph he selected makes more vivid.



Image 2. Kevin's mid-career.

In terms of professionalism, Kevin reflected that

When I think back to the time this photo was taken, the thing I remember most about my career is that these years represented a more professional approach to teaching than the beginning of my career. ... I was now teaching in a more professional environment where more was expected of me concerning lesson planning, student engagement & instruction, and designing after-school program classes.

As he went on to explain, despite the negativity encountered in the private sector, Kevin's initial teaching experience stimulated his interest in education, and he partook in self-directed development, completing an MA in English Studies and TESOL certification. Furthermore, the professionalism of his colleagues helped him envision teaching as a career rather than a short-term job:

... what was different from when I started teaching English was that now I had seen it done by professionals who had made teaching their careers and whom seemed satisfied and fulfilled with their jobs. ... I was beginning to see teaching as a profession rather than just a short term gig or side job that I would move on from.

He went on to say, “*At this point in time I could also see the importance in what I was doing.*” Kevin indicates a growing sense of professional satisfaction and responsibility, feels his work is valued and appreciated, and expresses his goal-directed commitment to doing research:

After the time period of this photo, I ... was accepted into an American PhD education program. This aligned with my goals of becoming an education researcher.



Image 3. Kevin’s current career.

In PNF3, Kevin describes his current career, working as an assistant professor at a university. Anchoring this story in an image of the graduating cohort from his doctoral program (Image 3), he writes,

Regarding my career in teaching English, this photo signifies ... a point in my career where I transitioned from being more than just a teacher to also being a researcher.

Of this experience he explained:

Compared to my early and mid-career, my teaching now is more organized and better informed ... I also felt an elevated sense of professional satisfaction, which impacted both my teaching and my life outside of education.

In the following excerpt we see the retrospective trajectory of his career expressed again:

As for my thoughts about teaching English as a career, what has changed since my early and mid-career is the long-term potential for teaching English as a career in South Korea. At first I saw it as a short term project, but after initially enjoying connecting with students and continually trying to advance and put myself in better and more rewarding educational institutions through both hard work and experience, I have become satisfied with my career and profession and see it as something I can do until I retire.

Through these PNFs we have examined Kevin's career progression, demonstrating how the prompts helped him express his growing identity as an ELT professional. While acknowledging the difficulty with defining the concept of language teacher identity (LTI), Barkhuizen (2016) offers that "LTIs are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical—they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material, and technological world" (p. 4). Identity encompasses what a teacher does, feels, believes, and imagines, and Barkhuizen uses the word *storying* to describe the social and discursive process of conveying one's identity to others. In Kevin's first PNF, the beginning of this storying is evident, as are the social and emotional dimensions, as he articulates his feelings about his lack of preparation and understanding about teaching and the lack of development and support he received from the school. In PNF2, it becomes evident that Kevin's induction into a more professional setting in Korean public schools helped him to see education as a viable career for the first time. PNF3 depicts he shares his current perspective on his career and how his retrospection about his earlier experience added context to his current identity as a teacher and education researcher.

Given the findings, it will be instructive to attend to the function of the frames and prompts that helped Kevin elucidate his career trajectory. As discussed, (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2014), NFs provide a structured way for dealing with narrative data so that researchers can design studies that have cohesion within the research aims, analysis, and findings, something that is more challenging with a more open-ended narrative approach. By embedding the target topics within the template (e.g., teacher commitment, beliefs, and identity), the prompts scaffolded

Kevin's narratives about his growth as an ELT professional, showing his responses to these topics and his reflections about his early, mid, and current career.

NFs work well because the composition of the stories involve *intratextual* engagement. Rather than responding to questions, an *intertextual* act, the sentence prompts already contain the topics and the relevant tenses and aspect, freeing the writer to focus more on content than form. The intratextual nature of the prompts *is* what streamlines the writing process. If designed successfully, the target concepts are expressed within the flow of the narrative, as was the case with Kevin above.

4.2. Making sense with and through photographs

Next, in response to the second research question, we will discuss how the visuals contributed to the narratives, helping Kevin reflect on and express his career trajectory.

The first way that the images help convey Kevin's trajectory is by contextualizing his written narratives. In the first frame the photograph provides imagery to his affective-cognitive state at that point in time—a sense of professional isolation and of being objectified, yet still enjoying time with students in his smaller classes. We can see and sense his isolation, especially in juxtaposition to the second and third images in which he is among colleagues. We can see and sense how he enjoyed spending time with his students, but also how he felt that he was a “prop.” Through the photos we can visually appreciate his increasing sentiment of collegiality and membership in communities of practice, from sitting casually with only students in the first image (with very little in the background), to being part of a large group of experienced professionals in a formal setting (i.e., the teachers who influenced his view of education) in the second photo, to posing with peers from his graduating PhD cohort, in the third picture. . In multimodal analysis, the written narrative and accompanying photo are not only complementary, but they also contribute layers of meaning integrated into a cohesive whole that paints a picture with more vibrancy and texture (Liu, 2013).

The numerous allusions to the photographs during the interviews also helped us formulate targeted follow-up questions about his experiences; thus, despite the inherent subjectivities related to interpreting images (Harper, 2002), the photos also permitted us, the researchers, to have a greater shared understanding of Kevin's story and life in that moment. The photos helped him extend the meaning of his experiences and the environments in which they occurred by grounding them in specific situations and perceptions (Petermans et al., 2014) and contextualizing the people

and circumstances, which aided in clarity and reduced assumptions (O’Connell, 2012; Rose, 2016). We concur with Harper (2002) that using photographs (such as in photo-elicitation interviews) allows a discussion about the participant’s world and experience to be “anchored in an image that is understood, at least in part by both parties” (p. 20), which helps construct a more complete understanding of participants’ perceptions and experiences than with words or text alone.

The second way that photos complement written narratives is by stimulating and providing a focus for reflections (Pink, 2006). Kevin affirms that he frequently went back to his photos when responding to the prompts:

At the beginning I didn’t think the photos were going to matter that much, but the photos, not just the photos, but the process of going back and looking through all the photos kind of set a baseline that really helped me remember that period of my life. I didn’t realize how the photos were going to help ground me back into that point in my life and then make me see myself, see what I was doing, see who I was working with. The photos in the beginning really helped me go back and think about that time in my life. (Final Interview)

As he explained, it was the process of re-examining his photographs that helped him express the phases of his career for this project, describing it as “going through this giant Facebook sprawl of memories” (Final Interview). He clarified that it was the images of his colleagues (not just the selected photos, but all those he viewed in the process) that brought about an unexpected awareness of sincere gratitude and directed him to a new and reimagined view of his experiences and professional existence (Harper, 2002; Rose 2016).

Beyond just stimulating reflection, photos are reported to evoke a more sensory and emotional connection to time and place (Olliffe and Bottorff, 2007; Petermans et al., 2015; Pink, 2007; Rose, 2016). The belief that photographs can provoke more insightful and impassioned responses from participants is well documented in the visual research literature (Harper, 2002; Hunt, 2014; Hodgetts et al., 2007; O’Connell, 2012; Pink, 2006) and is evident in Kevin’s responses. In his interview, he explains how the photos helped facilitate this emotional resonance, for example, in how he came to his conclusion in PNF3:

When comparing the photos of my early, middle, and recent teaching career, what I realize is that life is crazy. It’s crazy how when a person applies themselves

through hard work and grit, that they can create something for themselves they never could have imagined at the beginning.

The final way images help participants express themselves is by reifying how they want to be viewed by others—whether it be the researchers, readers, or an audience of their peers. The photos, and the context given to them in the frames and interviews, provides insight into how Kevin embraced different identities as he progressed through his career. This is evidenced in his interview where he explained his selection of the second photo (Image 2):

I chose the photo because I thought it symbolized that I was at an institution that took education more seriously ... I wrote a lot about how being around professionals influenced me to become more professional, so those were all of the professional teachers I was around that helped influence me. (Final Interview)

The photos were emblematic of Kevin's metaperception, or his beliefs about how others see him, and were offered not only as visual depictions of career development but as symbols of professional achievement. Harrison (2004) asserts that the meaning of photographs changes with time and with the personal and social relationship one has with a photograph at a given moment. In retrospect, Kevin realizes that he had undervalued certain experiences. By using photos in this process of 'storying', he was able to substantiate these reflections and better actualize them when articulating his career through the frames. To this end, it is evident that Kevin links the different representations on his visual timeline with an emerging professional identity and sense of self-actualization as an educator. When asked why he selected the photo for his recent career (Image 3), he responded:

I could have selected photos of me at the universities which were important, but I chose to go with a photo of the thing that made me feel that I was transitioning the most, or where I learned the most, or a moment that was the most impactful in my professional career, in the third stage. The people in that photo and the moment were the culmination of a process that has impacted me the most in the third trimester of the photo narratives. (Final Interview)

In the interview, Kevin affirms a realization that transitions throughout his trajectory were not merely about gaining further credentials or even about completing goals, but about the influence his colleagues had on his sense of personal achievement and ultimately his professional

identity. When asked why he chose certain pictures, he describes the second photos as a distinct shift in how he is being perceived by others and how he perceives himself:

The lack of pictures [taken while he was at this school] really steered me toward that one because it really embodied what I felt at that time; I'm looking more professional, I'm acting more professional, and I'm being taken more seriously as an educator. (Final Interview)

A key benefit for including photographs in interviews is the sense of empowerment they can grant participants (see Rose, 2016), and it is clear in Kevin's case that speaking through the frames, with the photos as a testament to his journey, gave him voice to affirm his identity as a language teaching professional and to reflect on and express what he has achieved.

5. Conclusion

In this study we demonstrated how photo-narrative frames (PNFs) were used to trace the emerging identity of an ELT professional, Kevin, through the early, middle, and current phases of his career. By examining Kevin's case we showed how the process of choosing photographs and completing the sentence prompts helped him to express key aspects in his career trajectory and identity as he transitioned from the private sector to public schools to becoming an assistant professor at a university. Centering the narratives around a representative photo of a period in his career was a relatively straightforward innovation, but the use of visuals is well worth considering for other narrative researchers investigating language learning and teaching. Photos provide an *extratextual* layer, contributing to participants' narratives in at least three ways: They 1) help contextualize stories by adding a visual element in support of experiences described in the text; 2) provide a medium for reflection and new insights, bringing focus and clarity to written texts; and 3) allow participants to determine how they wish to be seen by others, affording a sense of empowerment and accuracy in conveying their experiences and identity.

One possible limitation or drawback of including photographs, however, is that they can induce an observer effect; what could be called 'Hawthorne effect in still life'. For instance, Kevin's decisions about which photographs to use were influenced by the fact that he knew he was participating in a project examining professionalism in ELT. He opted for images that coincided with his assumptions about the research focus and how he wanted to be viewed at different transitions in his career. This effect could be considered an unavoidable consequence of including

photos, as simply a natural inclination when one represents their life, career, and social status, or as a visual complement of how one sees themselves and/or wishes to be seen by others and hence an empowering and meaningful manifestation of one's identity.

A second limitation is that participants are obviously limited to using photographs that they have. As an example, two participants in our project started teaching before digital cameras were readily available, so understandably they had a limited assortment of pictures from their early career. In addition, impromptu photographs capturing the essence of everyday life or working days can be hard to find. In our study, many of the participants' photographs comprised posed subjects in professional settings, such as with yearly staff pictures (see Image 2 above). Yet, despite a potentially inauthentic aspect to the images, they can still be useful for triggering memories of experiences and events corresponding to the times and places in the pictures, as we have shown above with Kevin's case.

One implication from this study regarding NF research design is the importance for careful planning and attention to detail when devising the prompts. The analysis for this study was relatively straightforward and less time consuming than some of our previous respective qualitative work. Much of the work was done in the design phase (see Figure 1 above). By testing the prompts and frames ourselves and by piloting it with two other researchers, we had a good idea of how to mitigate some of the challenges associated with using narratives for qualitative research.

A second implication involves the research ethics associated with using photographs, which due to their personal nature, require an extra level of consideration and care in data collection and management. Our procedures were approved by an institutional ethics board, and our methods necessitated assurance that any identifying information in the pictures be removed, that participants be informed about how their photos would be used in any potential publications, and that they would have the final say about how their photos appear if published. Therefore, participants need to be contacted for *member checking* during the analysis and before submissions to ensure that they are represented fairly and accurately. Further, all participants in the project were informed of the aims and processes of the research via emails, participant information sheets, and consent forms, and were given the opportunity to ask any questions or address any concerns, as is standard procedure in any research project.

A third implication concerns the potential for using PNFs as instruments for professional development. Although this study focuses on the research methods, it was clear from Kevin's

stories, interviews, and emails (and from our seven other participants in this project), that selecting the photos and writing the frames also served a professional development function, helping him see and contextualize his career trajectory and his growing identity as an ELT professional. As such, PNFs provide an easily adaptable medium for reflection (Farrell, 2008, 2015) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson & Golombek, 2002, 2011) with language teachers.

To summarize, NFs continue to be attractive instruments for narrative research because they provide a predictable structure to narratives, adding coherence to research design, making it easier to link research aims, topics, questions, analysis, and findings than with more open-ended narrative methods. By integrating photographs within NFs, researchers can benefit from the added modality of visual data while taking advantage of the structure offered by a NF template. NFs are flexible instruments that lend themselves well to different research contexts and topics, and to a range of further innovations, such as the suggestions put forth by Barkhuizen (2014), which have yet to be realized. These include web-based data collection techniques, such as those that make use of social media platforms, survey software, and storyboarding websites in addition to techniques that are more interactive, including audio-visual methods, photo-elicitation, and visual timelines. As Barkhuizen concluded, “the possibilities are almost endless” (p. 22).

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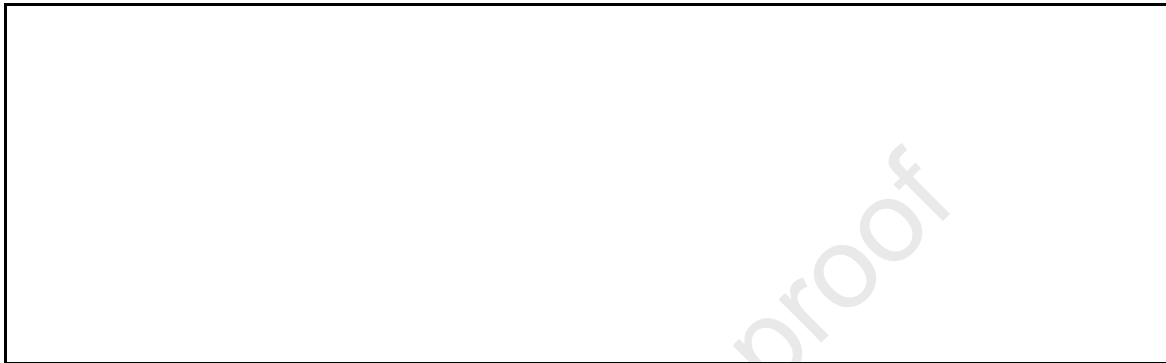
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Narrative 1: A Snapshot from My Early Career as an English Educator

Please insert a photo below which represents an important or memorable experience from your early career as an English language teacher. Before you choose a photo and start writing, it may be helpful to read through all the prompts first. Take as much space as you need to respond to the prompts.



This photograph shows ... *(please describe the photo for someone who is not able to see it)*

Regarding my career in teaching English, this photo represents ...

This is because ...

When I think back to the time this photo was taken, the thing I remember most is

This is because ...

My teaching at this time was *(please explain how you would characterize your teaching practice in your early career, i.e., your approach to teaching)*

Because of this, I ...

What I didn't know or understand about teaching at that time was ...

Because of this, I ...

When I think back to this time, what I thought about teaching English as a career was ...

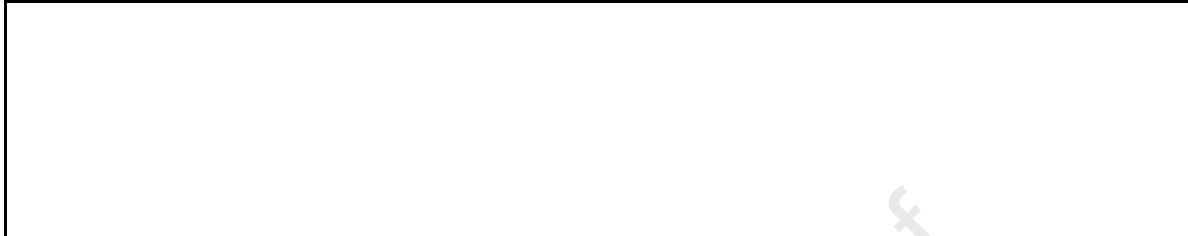
This is because ...

The biggest reasons that I continued to teach English since that time are ... *(please state three reasons and a brief explanation for each here)*

For the most part, what I feel most when I look at this picture is ...

Narrative 2: A Snapshot from My Mid-Career as an English Educator

Please insert a photo below which represents an important or memorable experience from the middle phase of your career, however defined, as an English language educator. Before you choose a photo and start writing, it may be helpful to read through all the prompts first. Take as much space as you need to respond to the prompts.



This photograph shows *(please describe the photo for someone who can't see it)*

Regarding my career in teaching English, this photo signifies or represents ...

This is because ...

When I think back to the time this photo was taken, the thing I remember most about my career is ...

This is because ...

Compared to my early career, the biggest differences in my teaching practice were...
(please explain three changes in your approach and practice of teaching English changed since you started)

Because of this, I ...

What I understood, or was beginning to understand, about teaching English was ...

Because of this, I ...

As for my thoughts about teaching English as a career, what was different from my when I started teaching English was ...

This is because ...

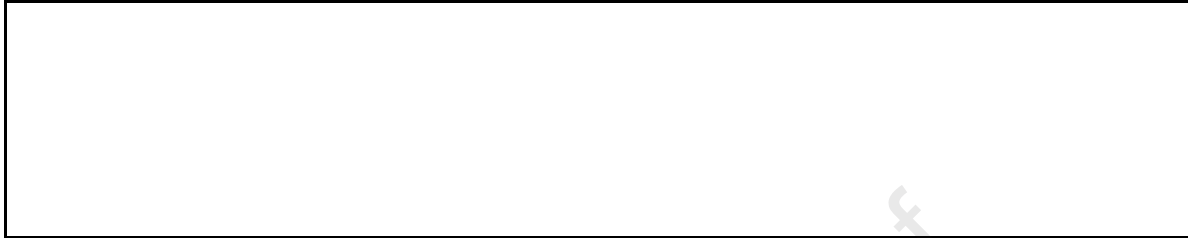
The biggest reasons that I continued to teach English since the time this photo was taken are *(please state three reasons and a brief explanation for each here)*

After the time period of this photo, I began to ...

For the most part, what I feel most when I look at this picture is ...

Narrative 3: A Snapshot from my Current Career as an English Educator

Please insert a photo below which represents a recent, memorable experience from the current phase of your career as an English language educator. Before you choose a photo and start writing, it may be helpful to read through all the prompts first. Take as much space as you need to respond to the prompts.



This photograph shows *(please describe the photo for someone who can't see it)...*

Regarding my career in teaching English, this photo signifies or represents ...

This is because ...

Compared to my early and mid-career, my teaching now is ... *(please explain any changes in your approach and practice of teaching English since your early and mid-career)*

Because of this, I ...

As for my thoughts about teaching English as a career, what has changed since my early and mid-career is ...

This is because ...

The biggest reasons that I continue to teach English are ... *(please state three reasons and a brief explanation for each)*

In the near future, I think that my career as an English teacher will ...

This is because ...

For the most part, what I feel most when I look at this picture is ...

When comparing the photos of my early, middle, and recent teaching career, what I realize is ...

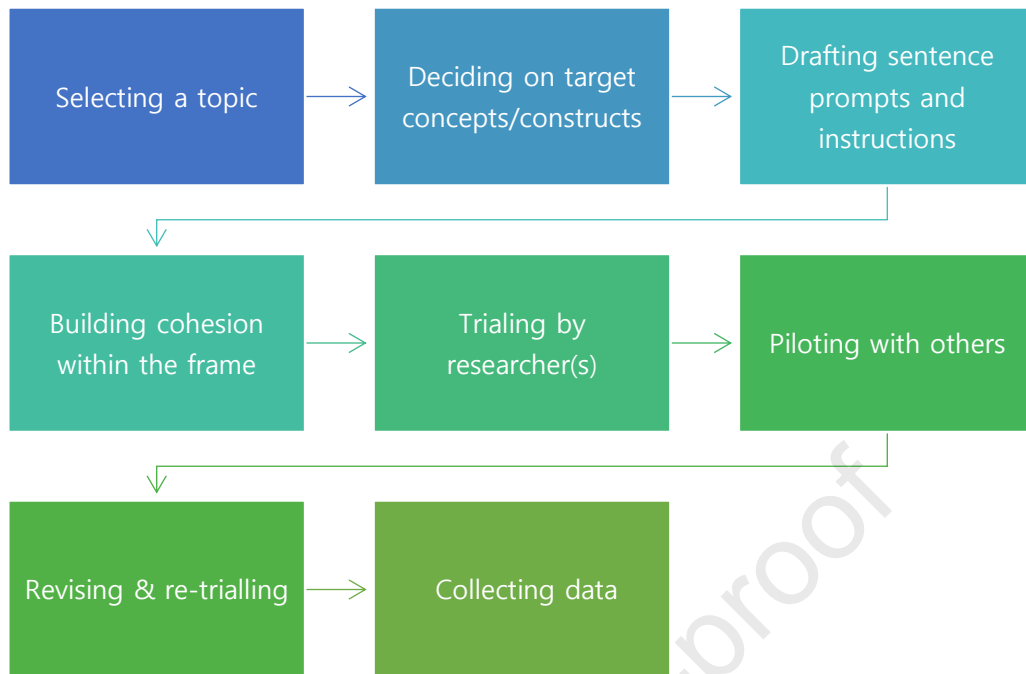


Figure 1. Design process for narrative frame research.

Table 1

Studies with narrative frames since 2015 in Scopus/SSCI journals.

Study	Research aim	Participants	Number of frames and prompts	Topic of frame(s)	Mode of collection	Other data used
Moodie & Feryok (2015)	To examine the nature and development of language teacher commitment	4 primary school teachers in South Korea	4-7 frames, 7-8 prompts	Motivations for teaching, prior education and language learning experience, and first-year ELT experience	Email and handwritten	Interviews, observations, and critical incident logs
Moodie (2016)	To investigate the influence of language learning experience on language teacher beliefs and practices	18 public school English teachers in South Korea	1 frame, 8 prompts	Language learning experience and its influence on teaching	Email and handwritten	Interviews
Wette & Furneaux (2018)	To understand international students' difficulties with academic discourse	31 graduate students from 20 countries	7 frames, 4-11 prompts	Various topics relating to academic experiences	Email	Interviews
Bahrami et al. (2019)	To understand the engagement of teachers with research on English for academic purposes (EAP)	97 teachers in Iran	1 frame, 9 prompts	Experience with EAP	Email	Interviews
Feryok & Askaribigdeli (2019)	To explain the development of professional identity with a teacher at a private institute	1 teacher in Iran	10 frames, 7-10 prompts	Language learning experience, reasons for becoming a language teacher, and feelings about teaching English	Email and Whatsapp	Interviews, observations, and teaching journals
Moodie (2019)	To investigate motivations for teaching and	20 primary school	1 frame, 7 prompts	Motivations for teaching and teaching English	Email and handwritten	None

Study	Research aim	Participants	Number of frames and prompts	Topic of frame(s)	Mode of collection	Other data used
	motivations for teaching English	teachers in South Korea				
Ryan et al. (2019)	To explore the satisfaction of international students at a vocational institute	108 international students in New Zealand	1 frame, unspecified number of prompts	Satisfaction and dissatisfaction as an international student	Email and handwritten	Interviews
Rabbidge (2020)	To understand the development of language learning identities of students at a vocational university	5 native English-speaking teachers and 59 students in South Korea	2 frames, 5-6 prompts	Teacher identity, teacher experience, and students' opinions about learning English	Email	Email interviews
Wicking (2020)	To investigate Japanese students' experiences and opinions about assessment	219 students from 3 universities in Japan wrote NFs, 552 did a survey	1 frame, 12 prompts	Experiences with and opinions about assessment	Handwritten	Survey
Kartal & Demir (2021)	To understand early-career professional development of student English teachers	20 student teachers at a university in Turkey	1 frame, 14 prompts	Connecting theory with practice	Unspecified	Interviews, group discussions, informal conversations