

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN NARRATIVE ANALYSIS: EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUNDS OF PEOPLE AS INFLUENTIAL FACTORS IN THE PERSONAL NARRATIVES ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC¹

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Abstract

This article intends to provide a sociolinguistic framework for the analysis of personal experience narratives referring to Labovian story structure terminology. The study focuses on participants from two distinct groups; one with higher, the other with lower educational backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. In this study, oral narratives on COVID-19 pandemic reflecting the personal experiences of 20 people from different parts of Turkey, who are divided into two groups equally according to their education and socioeconomic levels, have been compared in relation to Labov's Personal Experience Narrative Analysis. Due to quarantine conditions the data were collected through phone calls and transcribed for coding and analysis. In this regard, snowball sampling method was used and Labovian parameters found in the narratives were presented in tables regarding their percentages and frequencies. In order to maintain the ethical considerations of the study, their approval was obtained before the meeting with the participants and they were included in the study in this way. The findings indicate that economically and educationally better-level participants have better narration skills in terms of the quality of expressions, word preferences, length of the narrative and sentence structures. In contrast, lower education group narratives lacked some categorisations offered by Labov which implies that education may have an effect on personal narratives. On the other hand, despite the effect of education on linguistic capacity, people are seen to be aware of the seriousness of a contagious disease. This finding denotes the importance of education and gives clues about social interaction and mass media effect on personal experiences.

Keywords: personal experience narratives, COVID-19 narratives, narrative structure, oral narrative

ANLATI ÇÖZÜMLEMESİNE TOPLUMDİL BİLİMSEL BİR YAKLAŞIM: COVID-19 KİŞİSEL ANLATILARINI ETKİLEYEN BİR UNSUR OLARAK EĞİTİM DÜZEYİ

Özet

Bu makale kişisel deneyim anlatı çözümlemesi konusuyla ilişkili olarak, Labov'un anlatı yapısı bağlamında sosyodilbilimsel bir çerçeve sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, biri yüksek, diğeri düşük sosyoekonomik düzeyi ve eğitim geçmişi olan iki farklı katılımcı grubuna odaklanmıştır. Çalışmada, sosyoekonomik ve eğitim düzeylerine göre eşit şekilde iki gruba ayrılan ve Türkiye'nin farklı yerlerinde yaşayan toplamda 20 kişinin COVID-19 salgını ile ilgili sözlü anlatıları Labov'un (1972) Kişisel Deneyim anlatı çözümlemesine göre karşılaştırılmıştır. Karantina koşulları nedeniyle veriler telefon görüşmeleri aracılığıyla toplanmış, kodlama ve analiz için yazıya dönüştürülmüştür. Bu bağlamda veriler, kartopu örneklem yöntemiyle toplanmış ve Labov'un önerdiği parametreler ışığında bulgular sıklık ve yüzdeler halinde tablolara dönüştürülmüştür. Çalışmanın bulguları sosyal ve eğitimsel açıdan daha iyi seviyede olan katılımcıların ifade kabiliyeti, sözcük seçimi ve cümle yapıları

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bağlamında daha iyi sözlü anlatı yetenekleri olduğunu göstermiştir. Öte yandan, eğitimin olumlu etkisine karşın katılımcıların yaşanan salgın hastalığın ciddiyetinin farkında oldukları görülmüştür. Bu bulgu eğitimin önemini ortaya koyarken kişisel deneyimler üzerinde sosyal etkileşim ve kitlesel medyanın etkileri konusunda da ipuçları sunmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: kişisel deneyim anlatıları, COVID-19 anlatıları, anlatı yapısı, sözlü anlatı

1. INTRODUCTION

This study aims at analyzing the sociolinguistic structure of the personal COVID-19 narratives of 20 participants in two groups comparatively. It focuses on the narrative skills of 20 Turkish adults who belong to a high education level and low education level in equal numbers. The article addresses the following research questions:

- 1) Do the personal narratives of people coming from educationally two different groups display any significant differences in terms of Labov's story structure?
- 2) If so, what are the items that distinguish high educated people from the low education group participants?

Language is a unique quality which differentiates human beings from other living beings on the planet. According to the studies there is a kind of communication between other species like bees or dolphins too. However, human language is much more different, detailed and has some peculiar qualifications like displacement, discreteness or duality. As Yule (2010) states "*displacement allows us to talk about things and places (e.g. angels, fairies, Santa Claus, Superman, heaven, hell) whose existence we cannot even be sure of.*" Unlike this aspect of human language, animals cannot relate events that are far removed in time and place. Bearing such aspects of human language in mind, one can suggest that human beings are storytellers. They invent stories, create new ideas, evaluate the items in a story and consider a cause-effect relationship among events. It can also be suggested that some people are more capable of storytelling than others. This is directly related to the capability in using the language. Leeming (1997) puts forward that *human beings are able to transfer their narrative experiences to their listeners during a communication process.* Although any human being without any physical or mental disorders can use his/her language for linguistic purposes, some of them are better at using it thanks to some elements like educational, economical or social background. In other words, language is a social fact and some sociological parameters affect it in a positive or negative way.

1.1 What is a Narrative?

Narratives are among the most distinct aspects of human beings as they are created through the use of language. However, it is not that easy to define what a narrative is. As Herman and Vervaeck (2005) suggest "*whatever you say and think about a certain time or place becomes a narrative in its own right*". Özyıldırım (2009) states that narrative is "*a story contains a sequence of events, which means that narratives take place within or over, some kind of time period. This time period can be very short, as in a nursery tale, or very long, as in some novels and epics.*" Bearing these in mind, narratives are among the concerns of many different disciplines like history, literature, anthropology or psychology. For example, a historian describes the events by depicting some causes and effects of them in a narrative style or a patient narrates his/her story to a doctor for the sake of the treatment. Similarly, in literary works authors narrate some stories to express their feelings or make their readers understand their artistic manners. Therefore, the act of producing narratives with the aim of talking about experiences is a universal fact. From this respect a narrative is a

language product and it consists of linguistic features. In this sense, it can be said that narratives are valuable research fields in linguistics, too and the language, linguistic parameters like grammar, word preferences, phonological variations etc in a narrative are among the concerns of a narrative analysis.

Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 2-3) defines narrative... [as] "*a succession of events*" (pp. 2-3) while Cohan and Shires (1988: 52-53) underline the distinguishing feature of narrative as "*its linear organization of events*". For Toolan (1988:7) on the other hand, "*a minimalist definition of narrative might be: a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events*". When it comes to narrative analysis as a linguistic study William Labov is a leading figure in the related literature. He defines narrative (1972:359-360) as "*a method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred*". He investigates the nature of linguistic devices used to observe verbal skills while evaluating an experience through narrative. Labov developed a theoretical framework to analyze those experiences.

Schank (1990) classifies narratives into: 1) Official Stories: Stories we learn from official sources e.g. church and school. 2) Invented (Adapted) Stories: Stories created by people. 3) Firsthand Stories: People's own experiences. These are the stories we talk about the most. 4) Secondhand Stories: Firsthand stories of others that we have heard or remembered. 5) Culturally Common Stories: These are stories gotten from our environment.

Akinsanya and Bach (2014) highlighting the significance of narratives suggest that "*researchers have long since tapped into this wealth of knowledge understanding the importance of narratives in the constantly ongoing research of an individual's field of interests and the myriad issues that plague our world such as cancer, global warming, financial meltdown etc.*"

It can be claimed that in firsthand narratives, which are the main concern of this paper, informants talk about their real life experiences. Riessman (1993:2) defines these everyday experiences as Personal experience narratives. Engel (1995:85), on the other hand, suggests that personal experience narratives "are typically told in advance of the experience as a kind of summary reflection on the day's events. The organization of experience or the sequence of events in a narrative is significant to understand the mental framework of the narrator.

1.2. Covid-19 Pandemic

Corona virus pandemic or COVID-19, which is the scientific name of the disease, is an ongoing pandemic when this paper is written. According to the scientific researches on the disease, it is stated that the disease is caused by [severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2](#) (SARS-CoV-2). The outbreak was first identified in [Wuhan](#), China, in December 2019. It was called as a pandemic by WHO on 11 March 2020. As of mid-April 2020, [more than 2.17 million cases](#) of COVID-19 have been reported in [210 countries and territories](#), resulting in [more than 146,000 deaths](#). More than 554,000 people have recovered, although there may be a possibility of relapse or reinfection. The [deaths per diagnosed cases](#) varies significantly between countries. It should be noted that, these numbers will possibly change when this study is completed. The current official numbers are taken into account here.

As for the situation in Turkey, where this study is conducted, it will be useful to know some parameters as well. The first case in Turkey was announced on 10 March, 2020 by the Ministry of Health. The first death was announced on 15, March 2020 and Fahrettin Koca, the minister of health, declared that the pandemic had spread throughout the whole country on 1 April, 2020. The number of total infected people in

Turkey is nearly 78.000 as of mid-April and there has been nearly 1850 deaths which is also growing day by day and will probably be higher afterwards.³

As it can be understood, many of the world countries faced with a very vital problem due to this pandemic and thousands of people died for the same reason. China, the USA, Britain, Spain, France and Italy are among the countries where most of the cases were announced. According to the experts this pandemic is one of the biggest challenges of humanity. It is predicted that it will have greater effects on the social, economical or political order of the world than even those of the World War 2. Governments take some precautions to cope with these probable conclusions and millions of people are under quarantine. This quarantine process is something that modern people are not familiar with. It will inevitably affect their social interactions, financial capabilities and psychological moods. In such a case, it is plausible to focus on how people feel under such circumstances and how do they express these feelings through language. From this respect, this sociolinguistic study can put forward some clues about the society in Turkey and some sociological borders can be analysed through some sociolinguistic evidence.

1.3. Sociolinguistics and Social Class

With the rise of sociolinguistics in the second half of the twentieth century class differentiation gained primary importance (Romaine 2004). However, it is not so easy to define social class as it has been discussed ever since. As Milroy and Milroy (1992) states social class is fundamentally a concept designed to elucidate large-scale social, political, and economic structures and processes, whereas social network relates to the community and interpersonal level of social organization. Chambers (2015) suggests that social factors impinge upon and largely determine the linguistic realization of speech acts. Rickford (1986) also declares that social class, ethnicity or network should be taken into account for sociolinguistic purposes because such variables offer important insights into processes of linguistic variation and change. However, it is not easy to define social class concept. Jones (1999:125) mentions the difficulty in defining the concept by the following words: *'the question of defining what it is that differentiates members of one social class from those of another still remains'*. Still, it is believed that there is a strong relationship between the use of a particular speech variety and a social class membership. Socially accepted speech varieties are higher in people from high socio-economical conditions. On the contrary, the frequency of the standard forms of language is lower in low socio economic class language users. Labov's (1966) study is a leading one upon the relationship between language and social class. Minami (2002) states that since Labov hypothesized that fundamental narrative structures are to be found in oral versions of personal experience, conversational storytelling has received a great deal of attention. Labov and Waletzky (1967) collected personal narratives of ordinary people in their daily lives and suggested that a fundamental concept of experientiality could be found in conversational or spontaneous storytelling. Maynes *et al* (2012) assert that individuals and their actions are mostly viewed according to some categories like gender, age, race, social class or occupation. According to them actions, predispositions or motivations are explained by referring to such categories. In this sense, this study is dedicated to first hand oral narratives of participants from different social classes as it's main focus is on the educational backgrounds of the participants. It can be said that higher

³ When this study is completed on 17 June, 2020 there were 181,298 infected people 4,842 of whom were dead. The numbers were taken from the official website of the Ministry of Health. <https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>

education level is among the indicators of a higher social status in Turkey. The occupation, income or prestige of any individual is closely linked to the educational level of him/her. Due to these facts, higher education and lower education levels are used as a variable for the sake of this study and it is aimed to see the possible differences in oral personal narratives of people on COVID-19 pandemic.

2. THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVES

Labov and Waletzky's (1967) study is a pioneering study in the history of linguistics in which they aimed to elicit unselfconscious, 'vernacular' speech. Labov and Waletzky propose a 'formal' approach to personal experience narrative (PEN) which describes the invariable semantic deep structure of PEN, correlating surface differences with the 'social characteristics' of narrators (Özyıldırım, 2009). In this study, participants were supposed to tell stories about themselves and these stories were mostly about dangerous or embarrassing events in their daily lives. According to Labov (1972:354) in personal experience narratives *'the speaker becomes deeply involved in rehearsing or even reliving events of his past.'* In this sense, Labov puts forward a formal approach for the analysis of narrative and states that a narrative may include clauses or sets of clauses with the following functions, occurring roughly in this order:

- (i) Abstract: a brief summary of the narrative, containing signals such as 'Did I ever tell you about....' that mark the transition to the narrative.
- (ii) Orientation: part setting the time, place and characters, situations.
- (iii) Complicating Action: section informing the audience about what happened.
- (iv) Evaluation- part explaining why the narrative is worth telling. It is the emotional side of the narrative.., therefore the most important part of the narration.
- (v) Result or Resolution: section informing the audience about how the action was resolved. Consequently, the tension decreases suddenly (Labov 1972:370).
- (vi) Coda: a general observation concerning the effects of the events on the narrator, i.e. how he felt after living such an experience such as 'It was funny'. (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 1997:60)

3. THE STUDY

It is possible to find many studies on personal narratives in the related literature. However, most of these studies have not been carried out on the effect of social differences like parent's occupation, income level, education, living standards, etc. (Nicolopoulou 1997:179, Johnstone 2001:642, Feagans 1982:105 cited in Shiro 2003:178). Additionally, it can be suggested that studies on narratives aim to analyze the differences in producing narratives and therefore, they are age related developmental studies in the literature. In this sense, the effects of educational background on personal experience narratives on a specific issue need to be analysed in Turkish context. Thus, this current study aims at analyzing the sociolinguistic structure of the oral personal experience narratives of Turkish adults who are divided into two groups according to their educational backgrounds. Therefore, it should be kept in mind that educational levels of the participants was taken as a variable in the present study. Furthermore, Labov's framework to the structure of PEN is adopted for the sake of the analysis. A questionnaire was given to the participants before the interview in order to obtain some information about them. The questionnaire is presented in the appendix section of the article.

3.1. Data Collection

(i) Background information

The data were elicited during April, 2020 when the COVID-19 Pandemic was still being experienced in many countries including Turkey. Both the government took some precautions against the problem and the citizens themselves were also afraid of being infected. All mass and social media sources were full of warnings which turned out to be a kind of slogan all around the world as “Stay Home”. As the contagiousness rate of the illness was very high, it was inevitable for people to isolate themselves from other people. Therefore, social distancing was one of the most popular sayings of the process in those days. This information should be given in the first place to clarify the possible weaknesses of the study due to some unwilling reasons. Under such quarantine conditions the oral narratives of the participants were collected through phone calls. The interviews were recorded thanks to an application and then they were transcribed for the analysis procedures. Snowball sampling method was used to gather the data depending on the similar reasons. At the very beginning of the interview, the participants were informed about the aims of the study and they were asked to be volunteer for this study. Despite the information provided, the data of people who do not want to participate in the study were not included in the study in any way. Thanks to the sampling method of the study the researcher could reach people from different parts of the country but regional differences were ignored in this study.

(ii) Subjects

The subjects of the study were 20 adults from different cities in Turkey. As mentioned earlier, they were divided into two groups according to their educational levels. The first group was consisted of 10 people who were primary school graduates while the next group was consisted of people with equal number but they had at least bachelor's degree from different disciplines.

They were asked to narrate their personal experiences on COVID-19 before its outbreak till that day. They were supposed to talk about the pandemic including some official information about it as well as their own psychological states. When necessary, the researcher asked some additional questions to widen the scope of their narrative and these questions were also included into the questionnaire (Appendix 1). The structure of the groups was determined on the basis of the questionnaire and the educational level was the variable. The results of the questionnaire also showed that socio-economical levels of the primary school graduates were lower than the other group. Another study can be conveyed to see the effect of economy on PEN but it was also ignored in this study. The narrative construction strategies of the participants, their sentence structures, word choices and phonological characteristics were taken into account as well as their perceptions and ideas on the issue.

(iii) Educational levels of the participants

As mentioned previously, the educational level of the participants was taken as a variable. The distribution of the participants in the study according to their educational levels can be observed in the following table:

Table 1: Educational level of the participants

			Education Level					Total
			I did not get any education	I am Primary School graduate	I am High School Educated	I am University graduate	I have Ma or Phd degree	
Group	Higher Education Group	Count	0	0	0	6	4	100
		% within participants	,0%	,0%	0%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	Lower Education Group	Count	2	8	0	0	0	100
		% within participants	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	2	8	0	6	4	20
		% within participants	10.0%	40.0%	0.0%	30.0%	20.0%	100.0%

Table 1 indicates that there is a significant difference between the educational levels of the two groups participated in the study. According to this Higher Education Group (HEG) is consisted of those who are university graduates (%60) and those with MA or PhD degrees (%40). On the contrary, the Lower Education Group (LEG) people who had no education before (%20) or primary school graduates (%80). As it can be seen in the table above there is nobody in the study who has secondary school or high school education. As the effect of education is aimed to investigate in this present study, a clear distinction between the two groups was seen necessary. The distribution of the participants shows that there is a significant difference between the HEG and LEG.

4. METHODOLOGY

To arrive at the sociolinguistic analysis of the study, the oral narratives collected through phone calls and recorded through an application called CALLX due to the strict quarantine conditions the data were transcribed into written documents for further analysis. During trascription process all of the expressions used by the participants were written with all probable spelling, pronunciation or phonological problems. In other words, sentences were transcribed with hesitates or stops of the narrators. Therefore, vernacular language items like regional dialect indicators such as interjections were all included into the texts. Then, sentences in the narratives were evaluated in terms of Labovian narrative units. Accordingly, Labov's six narrative units were identified as existent or non-existent within a quantitative analysis framework. The frequencies of these linguistic elements of the two groups of narratives were calculated and presented in tables respectively. In addition, 10 randomly chosen narratives equally taken from both groups (5 per each) and coded by two different researchers. Through the use of Kappa test inter-rater reliability was calculated. The analysis revealed that there is a significant agreement between two researcher's Abstract section ($\kappa=0.9$), Orientation section ($\kappa=0.6$), Complicating Action section ($\kappa=0.7$), Result section ($\kappa=0.5$), Coda section ($\kappa=0.8$) and Evaluation section ($\kappa=0.8$). After that, some normative discussions were made to decide the units of the narratives. The possible reasons of the distribution of the Labovian narrative units are discussed

in the conclusion section of the study. However, it should be stated the results of this study could have been different if the data had been collected in written form. As the narratives were collected orally some units might not have been preferred by the participants or some units might have replaced with one another. In addition, especially the participants in LEG might have felt uncomfortable while talking to someone on the phone which may also have distorted the structure of their narratives.

5. SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF DATA

Before explaining the results of the comparisons between the oral personal narratives of the high educated group and low education group it is plausible to give a representative example of the narratives in the sample. However, it should be kept in mind that these are oral narratives and therefore, they include lots of uncompleted sentences, ungrammatical sentences or pauses. While these narratives were being transcribed, the sentences were not corrected. In other words, in order not to violate the naturality of the data, the sentences were transcribed with the mistakes they included without any correction. The following example is a representative example from the high educated group:

<p>Abstract Covid-19 salgınından ilk olarak Çinde ortaya çıktığı zaman yani aralık ayının sonuna doğru haberim oldu. Salgını internetten duydum. Çinin Wuhan eyaletinde ortaya çıktığını biliyorum.</p>	<p>Abstract I firstly became aware of the COVID-19 pandemic when it broke out in China in late December. I heard about it on the internet. I knew that it appeared in Wuhan first.</p>
<p>Orientation Salgın bana ilk olarak belirsizlik hissettiriyor, ikincisi .. biraz da kaygı hissettiriyor çünkü her şeyin doğru yapılıp yapılmadığı ile ilgili kaygılarım var. Eee ve korku, üçüncüsü de korku hissettiriyor açıkçası. Çünkü tekrar etme olasılığı var. Malum dünyanın geldiği yer belli ve virüsün çıktığı şeylerin de nedeni belli. Gelecekte de benzer şeylerle karşılaşabileceğimizi hissediyorum ve bu yüzden de korku duyuyorum.</p>	<p>Orientation The pandemic makes me feel uncertainty at the first place, secondly anxiety because I have some concerns in my mind if everything is applied correctly or not. Erm and fear. I feel fear apparently. Because there is a possibility of relapse. As you know, the current position of the world is clear and the reasons of this pandemic is also clear. I think we may face with similar problems in the future and that's why I feel fear.</p>
<p>Evaluation Salgının bir defa doğal bir sonuç olduğunu düşünüyorum komplo olduğunu düşünmüyorum. Öncelikle çok paniğe kapıldığımı söyleyemem. Biraz daha nasıl söyleyeyim soğukkanlı karşıladım. Çok da fazla abartmadan, tırnak içinde söylüyorum gerekli alışverişleri, temel ihtiyaçlarımı aldım. Hijyen konusunda biraz duyarlı olduğumuz için hijyen malzemelerini aldık. Ve bununla ilgili de sokağa çıkma konusunda biraz titiz davrandık, çok fazla çıkmamaya gayret gösterdik. Temel ihtiyaçlarımızı karşılama noktasında... Bunun dışında da çok da fazla bir şey yapmadık açıkçası.</p>	<p>Evaluation Firstly, I think this pandemic is a natural one, not a conspiracy. To begin, I can't say that I got into panic. It was more.. let's say I was cold-blooded. Without overrating it, I mean, I bought some necessary needs. As we are sensitive about hygiene, we bought some hygiene equipments. And we were a little bit careful about going outside, we tried not to go out frequently. When it comes to supply our needs... Apart from this we didn't do anything at all.</p>

<p>Complicating Action Walla kıyıda kalmış bir şey görmüyorum medyada yazılıp çizilenler belli, yapılacak şeyler belli herkes bunu biliyor. Ee ancak şöyle bir gözlemim oldu... Şöyle bir hikâye var bunun bir komplo olduğu veya bilerek yapıldığıyla ilgili... Tüm uzmanlar, bilim adamları bunun doğal bir süreç olduğunu ısrarla vurguluyorlarken hala büyük bir kesimin bunun niyeyse komplo olduğuna, kasıtlı bir şekilde laboratuvardan çıkarıldığına inanmakla meşgul. Açıkçası bu beni biraz tedirgin ediyor çünkü herhalde insanlar buna inanmak istiyorlar. Ama bu iş biraz doğal bir süreç ve şu an yaptıklarımızın biraz diyetini ödüyor gibiyiz. Eğer siyasi ve politik akıl... İkincisine gerçekten inanacaksan ben bunun daha da devam edeceğini düşünüyorum. Bunda tek kaygım ve korkum bu.</p>	<p>Complicating Action In truth I do not see anything unclear, the news on the media are very clear, what we have to do is clear too. Everyone knows that. But I have an observation... There's a story like this process is a kind of conspiracy or something intentional... All the experts and scientists underline the fact that it is a natural process but still a great amount of people believe that, I don't know why, it is a conspiracy and the virus is produced in a laboratory environment. Actually it makes me feel anxious because probably they want to believe in this. But this is clearly a natural result and we are like paying for what we did before. If political mind... If you believe in the second theory, I think all these problems will keep going. My only fear about this issue is this.</p>
<p>Result Dünyadaki gelişimini de günlük takip ediyorum onu da daha çok internetten ediyorum. Twitterdan takip ediyorum sosyal medyadan takip ediyorum.</p>	<p>Result I also follow the developments on the world, basically from the internet as well. I follow them on twitter, on social media.</p>
<p>Coda Çünkü güvenmiyorum televizyondaki medyaya... güvenmediğim için de internet ve sosyal medyadan takip ediyorum.</p>	<p>Coda Because I don't trust what is written in the mass media on TV. That's why I follow the process on social media and the internet.</p>

As can be observed from the sample narrative, the six categories of a fully formed narrative can be observed in this personal experience narrative. As it can be seen in the chart above, it begins with an abstract section where the narrator gives an overall information about the whole story. In other words, as Labov (1972) suggests, it is a kind of summary at the very beginning. Then the narrative continues with an orientation section that identifies the time, place and people involved in the event and the situation. Then, there is an evaluation part of the narrative where the emotional state of the narrator is implied and this part also gives clues about the reason why the narrator tells the story in a particular way. However, according to Labov (1972) this part is an optional part in the structure of the narrative and the narrator may present it anywhere in the narrative. After that, the fourth section of the narrative, complicating action, is available. In this section, the tension of the narrative rises and it reaches to the peak point. In other words, there is a climax in this section. Next, there is result section where the tension of the narrative decreases and the focus of the narrative turns to the final developments. Finally, there is a coda section where the observation concerning the effects of the event on the narrator is included.

In order to illustrate the comparison of High Education Group and Low Education Group narratives, the frequency and number of Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Result and coda sections employed by the participants should be considered.

(i) Abstract

Some examples of abstract section are as follows:

1. Corona virüs Çin’In Wuhan bölgesinde çıktığında o sıralar açıkçası ikinci Çocuk planımız vardı. Şu anki çocuğumuz 2 yaşına geldi bir kardeşi olsun istiyorduk. Mesela bu bizi bayağı etkiledi, acaba yapsak mı yapmasak mı gidip geldik. Ama diğer salgınlarda olduğu gibi dünyaya yayılmadan durdurulur sandık açıkçası.

[When corona virüs first appeared in Wuhan district in China we were in fact planning to have another baby. Our child is now 2 years old and we wanted him to have a sibling. For instance, it affected us in such a way that we hesitated in having a new child or not. But actually we thought that it would be taken under control as in other epidemics before.]

2. Corona virüs... İlk çinden çıktı yavrum. Bu salgın guzum tee 3-4 ay önce yayıldı buraya.

[Corona virus my dear, first broke out in China. This pandemic my dear was here even 3-4 months ago.]

3. Covid-19 salgınına walla ilk Çinde Huwanda çıktığında 11. Ayın ortalarıydı galiba ben öyle hatırlıyorum o zaman duydum. Corona virüs de Covid-19 diye geçiyor.

[When Covid-19 pandemic first appeared in Huwan honestly it was probably the mid 11th motnh of the year as far as I remember. It is corona virus but it is called as Covid-19.]

4. Corona virüs salgınından ne zaman haberim oldu..? Marttı galiba... hı ne zamandı? Mart gibi televizyondan duydum. Çin’de çıktı.

[When did I first become aware of Corona virus pandemic? It was March I suppose... Hmm when was it? It was in March when I heard it on Television. It broke out in China.]

Table 2: Frequency and number of occurrences of Abstract sections employed in HEG and LEG

			ABSTRACT		Total
			Non-existent	Existent	
Education Level	High	Count	0	10	10
	Education Level	Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Low	Count	0	10	10
	Education Level	Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	0	20	20
		Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%

As it can be seen in the table above, participants in both groups included abstract sections in their narratives. The rate of occurrences of Abstract sections in PEN’s is %100 (n=10) for each group. It can be suggested that participants used abstract section in their narratives and this is consistent with Labov’s structure of narratives. However, it should be remembered that these narratives were collected in oral form and they

might have needed such a unit to start their narratives in detail. In other words, some narratives could lack abstract section if the narratives had been in written form.

(ii) Orientation

Some related examples concerning the use of orientation section in the sample are as follows:

5. Yayıldı, nasıl oldu; onu fatmanın babasına geldi bu... ishal, baş ağrısı...

[It spread, how happened... It came to Fatma's father... diarrhea, headache...]

6. Gonca geldi işten bir gün dedi böyle böyle bi hastalık varmış ben de o zaman dedim izin al gel eve senelik iziniyn bulaşır sana oralarda getirirsin bize de...

[Gonca came back home from work one day and said there is an illness thus and so and then I said take a day off and stay home it may infect you and you bring it us]

7. Martta da işte tabi korktuk ama bizim burda olmadığı için o kadar etkilenmedik ama istanbula gelince tabi korkular sardı bizi.

[In March of course we were scared but as it wasn't here we weren't affected at all but when it appeared in İstanbul then fear surrounded us.]

The following table shows the distribution of Orientation unit in PENs of the participants.

Table 3 : Frequency and number of occurrences of Orientation sections employed in HEG and LEG

			ORIENTATION		Total
			Non-existent	Existent	
Education Level	High Education Level	Count	0	10	10
		Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Low Education Level	Count	3	7	10
		Percentage	30,0%	70,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	0	20	20
		Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Regarding the frequencies and numbers of occurrences of Orientation sections employed in HEG and LEG narratives, it can be said that in lower education group %30 of the participants did not employed an orientation section in their narartives (n=3). On the contrary, participants in HEG included an orientation section before giving details about their personal experience. This finding shows that education may have an effect on personal narratives. Still, it should be kept in mind that during the data collection process participants may have felt to finish their narratives as soon as possible. Because of this reason, they may have rushed to come to the point in a sense.

(iii) Complicating Action

Complicating Action sections are naturally the longest parts of the narratives. Therefore, it is not plausible to put the whole part here. In this sense, some short parts are included here as examples. Accordingly, some examples of the complicating action are as follows:

8. Açıkçası bu salgını ilk duyduğum zaman, çinde ortaya çıktığını ilk duyduğum zaman türkiyeye gelmeyeceğini, yani türkiyenin bundan etkilenmeyeceğini düşünüyordum. ...

[Actually, when I first heard about this epidemic in China I thought it wouldn't come to Turkey, I mean, Turkey would not be affected]

9. Sonrasında.. açıkçası endişeye kapıldım biraz eşim, çocuklarım, ailem, kardeşlerim yani insanın aklına ilk onlar geliyor, yakınların ve tabii ki ülken, ülkedeki insanlar diğer vatandaşlar..

[Then, I actually became a little anxious. My husband, children, family, siblings I mean they are the first thing that one remembers, your relatives and of course your country and other citizens.]

Table 4: Frequency and number of occurrences of Complicating action sections employed in HEG and LEG.

			COMPLICATING ACTION		Total
			Non-existent	Existent	
Education Level	High	Count	0	10	10
	Education Level	Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Low	Count	0	10	10
	Education Level		0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	0	20	20
		Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Complicating action part, as one of the vital units of a narrative, founded all of the narratives in both groups. This part is the core of a narrative. In other words, what the narrator really wants to tell is given in this part. The theme of the narration is given here. The tension rises to the peak point here which can also be named as the climax of the narrative. Therefore, it is intelligible to find this part in the sample narratives of the study. Although there are some differences between the related parts of the groups, it is available for both HEG and LEG. Still, it should be mentioned that complicating action parts of HEG are much longer and complicated than those of LEG. It can easily be noticed that participants in HEG were more eager to tell their story with many details to make themselves clear. Events are told in a logical order and thanks to signal words like “first, next, then etc” the cohesion of the narrative is created in order. Similarly, the physical and psychological moods are scrutinized by them.

“Daha sonra eve döndüğümde ki hasta olarak döndüm...”

[Then, when I turned back home, and I was already ill...]

“Daha sonraki süreçte de virüsle ilgili daha detaylı bilgiler öğrendik.”

[Afterwards, we learnt many things in detail about the virus.]

On the contrary, in LEG narratives complicating action parts are shorter and simpler than the other group. As in the whole narrative, there are incompleting sentences in this particular part. Similarly, these narratives lack sequencing words in the organization of the events. Instead, they reveal the fact that they think to remember the events and organize them in an order like “Erm.. Umm.. Well.. etc.” An example sentence is as follows:

“Ee.. dünyayı kombine sardı. Bayağı ölenler var. biraz ürkütücü.”

[Erm.. It infected the whole world. There are so many dead people. It is a little bit creeping.]

(iv) Evaluation

As it is stated earlier, evaluation part is a unit where the narrator tries to explain why the narrative is worth telling. In other words, it is the emotional part of the narrative and it is the most important unit of a narrative.

Some examples regarding this part are as follows:

10. “Ne bilim ben hala şimdi arkadaşım mesela acaba var mı yok mu diye ürperiyorum. yani ne nasıl tespit edilecek?”

[I don't know, I still feel chilly as I am not sure if my friend has the illness or not. How can it be detected?]

11. “Yani bi şekil toplum buna da yönlendiriliyor olabilir.”

[I mean the society might be directed to this in a sense.]

12. “Aşlında bir sürü şey yazılıyor herkes bir şey söylüyor ve bana da komplo gibi geliyor.”

[In fact, a lot is written on it, everybody tells something different and it seems as if it was a conspiracy to me.]

Table 5: Frequency and number of occurrences Evaluation sections employed in HEG and LEG.

			Evaluation		Total
			Non-existent	Existent	
Education Level	High	Count	0	10	10
		Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Low Education Level	Count	0	10	10
		Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	0	20	20
		Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Like in Complicating Action section, all sample narratives included Evaluation section as it can be seen in the table above. As can be understood from this finding, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken an important place in people's lives and they have stated this importance with the expressions they used in narratives in a period when the events have not been finalized yet.

Although there is not a difference in terms of existence of the section in narratives, the nature of the narrative has some differences in terms of quality. As in the previous section, the education level seems to be effective on the organisation of the narratives. For instance, participants in HEG are mainly interested in the scientific background of the pandemic, they are more sceptical and have some questions in their minds. For example:

“Yani bununla ilgili yazılan şeyler bir netlikte olmadığı için ben de zaman zaman kafa karışıklığı yaşayabiliyorum.”

[I mean as the things written about it are not clear at all I may sometimes have some confusion.]

“Hmmm arkasında insan etkisi olduğunu düşünüyorum. Savaş gibi bişey olduğunu düşünüyorum ben.”

[Well I think there is a human effect behind it. I think it is a kind of war.]

(v) Resolution

Some examples regarding the Resolution part in narratives are as follows;

13. “O yüzden şimdiki haberler pek inandırıcı gelmiyor bana. Belki de öyledir, ama inşallah da öyledir. Dedikleri gibidir yani.”

[That’s why news do not seem reliable to me these days. Maybe it’s like the way they suggest, but I hope they are right by the way. I mean I hope it is like how they say.]

14. “Yavrum ben geçirdim bu hastalığı, kız da geçirdi ama allah kimseye vermesin göstermesin çok zor bi olay, sıkıntılı bi olay.”

[I experienced this illness my son and so my daughter but god forbid everyone, it is very difficult, a troublesome process.]

Table 6: Frequency and number of occurrences Resolution sections employed in HEG and LEG

			Resolution		Total
			Non-existent	Existent	
Education Level	High	Count	0	10	10
		Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Education Level	Low	Count	5	5	10
		Percentage	50,0%	50,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	5	15	20
		Percentage	25,0%	75,0%	100,0%

As it can be seen in the table above, half of the participants of LEG employed a resolution section in their narratives while half of them did not. On the contrary, the related section could be found in HEG participants. In LEG narratives which lack this section the narrators preferred to evaluate the event or involved a coda section to end their narratives. Still, it should be remembered that in these oral narratives some sections may have replaced with one another or some sentences which can be considered as an element of a section may have been included into another section. Therefore, it is plausible to think that if the narratives had been collected in written form, each section could have been found in a more regular way.

(vi) Coda

The last section offered by Labov is Coda and some examples of this section are as follows;

15. “Dediğim gibi bir an önce eskiye dönme umudundayım. “

[As I said before I hope to turn back to our previous life.]

16. “eee doğaya verdiğimiz zararın artık farkına varmışızdır diye düşünüyorum açıkçası.”

[Erm actually I think we have already noticed the damage that we did to the nature.]

17. “Akrabamları, eşimden dostumdan, torunumdan torbammadan beraber birlik beraberlik içinde olmak istiyorum, onlara sarılıp koklamak istiyorum.”

[I want to be together with my relatives, my friends and my grandchildren, I want to hug and smell them.]

Table 7: Frequency and number of occurrences Coda sections employed in HEG and LEG

			Coda		Total
			Non-existent	Existent	
Education Level	High	Count	0	10	10
	Education Level	Percentage	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Low	Count	2	8	10
	Education Level		20,0%	80,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	2	18	20
		Percentage	10,0%	90,0%	100,0%

As can be seen in the table above, coda section is mostly available in these PEN's in general. Only 2 of the participants in LEG did not include this section (%20). However, all HEG narratives have this section in this study. It can be suggested that participants in HEG were eager to mention their observations in their narratives

especially after narrating their PEN. However, there is a tiny difference between the two groups which can be considered as an effect of education.

6. Conclusion

As for the complete evaluation of the narrative units offered by Labov, Table 8 below shows the difference between the two groups in this study.

Table 8: Overall discussion of Labov's narrative sections

Labov's Narrative Units	Higher Education Group	Lower Education Group
<i>Abstract</i>	%100	%100
<i>Orientation</i>	%100	%70
<i>Complicating Action</i>	%100	%100
<i>Evaluation</i>	%100	%100
<i>Resolution</i>	%100	%50
<i>Coda</i>	%100	%80

According to the table above, it can be seen that there are differences between two groups of participants in this study in terms of three elements of Labov's narrative sections. These sections are Orientation, Resolution and Coda.

Although Orientation section is available in all HEG narratives, it has %70 rate in LEG. This finding suggests that some participants in LEG started to talk about the main issues in their PEN without giving some preceding information to ground their narrative. However, the method in data collection used for this study may also have had an effect on this. As the participants were supposed to talk to a stranger on the phone they may have wanted to talk about the main event, COVID-19, and finish the section as soon as possible. However, the same thing was not valid for HEG. In this sense, it can be suggested that, education level had a considerable effect on the narratives in this study.

Second difference between the two groups was related with the Resolution section in this study. Although HEG included a Resolution section in their narratives, half of the participants in LEG did not employ this section (%50). When the narratives of HEG were analysed, it was seen that they talked longer than the other group which may have caused them to include this section in their narratives. As they mentioned so many details and psychological features, the tension started to decrease at a certain point and this made it clear that they employed a resolution section. On the other hand, LEG in general tried to complete their narratives at once which caused some of them not to include such a section in their narratives. Still, it should be remembered that their narratives did not end after complicating action section. They included either an evaluation or a coda section to finish their narratives.

The final difference between the two groups was about the Coda section in which the narrators were supposed to talk about their observations and infer a new idea or a result. Again in this section some LEG participants (%20) did not employ this section in their narratives. In this vein, it can be said that the LEG participants were more undecided about the process of pandemic. They did not have a clear idea about what it was, why it happened or what would it bring into their lives. They mostly restricted themselves with what they heard about it on the news. On the other hand, HEG participants seemed to have inferred a new perspective after the pandemic process.

When it comes to the whole nature of the narratives, it can be said that there were some sociological differences between the two groups which may originate from their educational backgrounds as well as their ages and socio-economical conditions. Although this study ignored the effects of age, gender or socio-economic backgrounds, it can be stated that LEG participants used mostly the mass media and television to follow the process while HEG used internet and social media in general.

In the same vein, LEG participants mostly correlated the pandemic with conspiracy or biological wars while HEG considered that it was a natural event. For instance a LEG participant stated that “ İnanır mısın ben ona te ilk çıktığı zaman arkasında insanların biyolojik silah olarak.. eee... ortaya sürülmüş olduğunu dillendirdim” [Do you believe in me I said it was a biological weapon behind which there are humans when it first appeared.]. But on the contrary, a HEG participant stated that “Salgının bir defa doğal bir sonuç olduğunu düşünüyorum komplo olduğunu düşünmüyorum.” [Firstly, I donot think that the pandemic is a conspiracy but a natural conclusion.] Supporting this mood, some LEG participants tended to use some religious beliefs to explain the process. For instance, a LEG participant said that “Bunlar bütün Kuranımızda geçen işlerdir.” [All these things are mentioned in our book Holy Qor’an.]

On the other hand, naming the pandemic was another difference between the two groups. In LEG participants preferred to use Coronavirus for the illness while HEG used mostly COVID-19, the scientific description of the illness.

Apart from these differences, it can be said that HEG narratives were longer, detailed and included much more complete sentences or passive structures. The use of language in HEG was more relevant and to the point in terms of Turkish syntax. However, LEG narratives had so many stops, hesitations and incomplete sentences. In terms of vocabulary and pronunciation, LEG narratives were less effective and included so many vernacular language features like “tebdir /tedbir/ [precaution]”, “nayeti /nihayetinde/ [eventually]”, “hanki /hangi/ [which]” and so on.

All in all, it can be said that educational level seemed to have a significant effect on personal experience narratives of the participants in this study. This difference can be seen in both Labovian narrative sections’ existence and the language use as well as some sociological issues.

Appendix: Questionnaire delivered to the participants**ANKET****1. Cinsiyetiniz**

- a) Kadın b) Erkek c) Belirtmek istemiyorum

2. Medeni Durumunuz

- A) Evli B) Bekar

3. Doğum Tarihiniz:

.....

4. Mesleğiniz:

.....

5. (Evlisenez) Eşinizin Mesleği:

.....

6. Eğitim durumunuz:

- a) Hiç eğitim almadım.
b) İlkokul- ortaokul mezunuyum.
c) Lise mezunuyum.
d) Yüksekokul/Üniversite mezunuyum
e) Yüksek Lisans ve doktora mezunuyum.

7. Eğer üniversite mezunu iseniz eğitimi aldığınız alanı belirtiniz

.....

8. Eşinizin Eğitim durumu:

- a) Hiç eğitim almadı.
b) İlkokul- ortaokul mezunu.
c) Lise mezunuyum.
d) Yüksekokul/Üniversite mezunu
e) Yüksek Lisans ve doktora mezunuyum.

9. Eğer eşiniz üniversite mezunu ise eğitimi aldığı alanı belirtiniz.

.....

10. Ailenizin gelir durumunu belirtiniz.

a) 0- 2000 TL b) + 2001- 4000 TL c) + 4001-6000 TL d) +6001-8000 TL
e) + 8001- ...

11. Yaşanmakta olan salgının ismini biliyor musunuz?

12. Salgından ilk ne zaman haberiniz oldu?

13. Salgının ilk çıktığı yeri biliyor musunuz?

14. Salgının niçin çıktığını düşünüyorsunuz?

15. Salgın size ne hissettiriyor?

16. Salgının başlangıcından bugüne duygu dünyanızı nasıl anlatırsınız? (neler yapıyorsunuz, hangi tedbirleri alıyorsunuz, salgının doğal bir süreç mi, komplo mu olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz vb.)

17. Dünyadaki gelişimini takip ediyor musunuz? Nasıl?

18. Haber kaynaklarındaki verilerin güvenilir olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz?

19. Eklemek istediğiniz bir şey var mı?

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