

THE ITALIAN AND ENGLISH PERSPECTIVES IN NARRATIONS:  
EVIDENCE FROM RETELLINGS OF NATIVE SPEAKERS AND L2  
LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at illustrating some peculiarities of the Italian and English narrative perspectives in semi-spontaneous retellings produced by native speakers of either language. The native narrations will then be compared to the ones produced by Italian learners of L2 English in order to identify the potential similarities and differences between the three groups. Our results have typological, acquisitional and cognitive implications. For the typological implications, we shall demonstrate that languages with similar tempo-aspectual markings can work very differently in the way information is ‘packaged’ and organised in narrations, due to reasons going beyond grammar. As to the Second Language Acquisition domain, we shall show that learners cannot capture some of the peculiarities of the L2: this triggers either a transfer from their L1 narrative perspective in the L2 or a “mixed” narrative perspective combining both elements of the L1 and the L2. As to cognitive implications, we shall suggest that perspective is shaped and moulded not only by grammatical facts but also by the way individuals of a specific community conceive and formulate interactions and textual genres.