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TRANSFORMATION OF THE NOEMATIC ANCHOR OF EXPERIENCE IN CHILDREN'S NARRATIVE WRITING IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Narrative writing is a central component of literacy instruction in primary education; however, many students still encounter difficulty initiating and developing stories even when themes are provided. This condition indicates a limited understanding of how experiential content emerges and becomes narratively representable. To address this problem, the present study investigates the processes that characterize the transformation of the noematic anchor of experience into narrative representation in children's writing. A qualitative phenomenological–narrative single-case design was employed, involving a primary-school student who produced a personal-experience narrative as part of a classroom assignment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and contextual documentation. Phenomenological thematic analysis was used to identify experiential themes forming the noematic anchor, which were subsequently configured through narrative inquiry analysis to reconstruct the procedural structure of experiential transformation. The analytic process was supported by ATLAS.ti and validated through member checking. The findings reveal a sequential transformation process consisting of experiential salience, attentional fixation, episodic memory stabilization, narrative selection, and narrative representation. Based on these findings, the study proposes a conceptual model explaining the transformation of the noematic anchor of experience in children's narrative writing, offering a phenomenological–narrative explanation of experiential meaning transformation underlying literacy development in primary education.

KEYWORDS: Noematic anchor of experience; children's narrative writing; narrative inquiry; primary education; narrative transformation model.

1. INTRODUCTION

From a phenomenological perspective, every act of consciousness is directed toward an intentional object (noema), indicating that children's experiences do not appear as a random stream of events but are structured by experiential objects that become salient within awareness (Husserl, 2012; Rassi & Shahabi, 2015). Within this framework, narrative writing can be approached as a mode of consciousness through which experience becomes cognitively available for representation (Helmanto, Boeriswati, et al., 2025; Kind, 2022; Spaulding, 2015). This organization unfolds through cognitive mechanisms involving perception, memory, evaluation, and problem solving before experiences are transformed into narrative form through encoding, storage, and retrieval processes within memory systems (Miller, 1956; Piaget, 1976; Urcelay & Miller, 2008). In primary-school contexts, this sequence implies that only certain experiences—those that remain accessible within consciousness—emerge as narratively representable content.

At the same time, experiential content is shaped within social environments. Social learning theory conceptualizes skills as products of dynamic interactions among personal, environmental, and behavioral factors operating through observation, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 1977; Gibson, 2004), aligning with the view that children's imagination and cognitive development are mediated through social interaction and cultural environments (Vygotsky, 2004). Communal environments introduce material objects and patterned actions that enter children's field of attention during experience, as storytelling draws simultaneously on everyday experiences and socially observed patterns (Bruner, 1986; Cave, 2003). These accessible experiences are subsequently organized around a focal experiential object, conceptualized in this study as the noematic anchor, which stabilizes attention and channels narrative selection.

Narrative functions as a representational mode through which individuals organize events, emotions, and meanings into coherent story sequences (Bruner, 1986; Graesser et al., 1991). Narrative texts are more easily remembered than other textual forms because they rely on stable structural patterns (Mar et al., 2021), conventionally organized through abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda as cognitive frameworks for structuring experience (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). The durability of narrative memory is further reinforced by recurring motifs and

symbolic patterns across cultures, reflecting collective memory shaped by shared social experiences (Gultom & Mulyati, 2023; Idris et al., 2025; Wahyuni, 2019). At a broader level, the reproduction of popular culture, publishing practices, and media circulation contributes to the stabilization of recognizable narrative schemas within cultural environments (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1993; Coser, 1975; Strinati, 2004), situating children's narrative writing at the intersection of personal experience and culturally available narrative forms.

To address the unresolved question of how experiential content becomes narratively representable, the present study adopts a problem-solving approach grounded in Husserlian phenomenology to explain experiential transformation as an intentional process linking consciousness and meaning formation (Helmanto, Efendi, et al., 2025; Husserl, 2012; Rassi & Shahabi, 2015). To model how pre-narrative experience becomes narratively structured, the study employs a mimetic framework that conceptualizes narrative formation as the configuration of lived experience into temporal representation (Auerbach, 2003; Cave, 2003; Melberg, 2003). Narrative is further positioned as a cognitive mode of thought through the concept of the narrative mode of thinking, emphasizing storytelling as a meaning-making process that organizes experience into intelligible structures (Bruner, 1986, 1990). At the structural analytic level, narratology is used as a heuristic framework for examining the relational configuration of narrative elements through the fabula-story-text sequence (Andretta et al., 2023; Bal, 2017).

Within this emerging line of inquiry, and in response to the limited empirical attention to experiential transformation mechanisms, previous studies have examined imaginative consciousness in adult fiction writing (Helmanto, Boeriswati, et al., 2025), the transformation of digital experience into literacy practice among children (Helmanto, Efendi, et al., 2025), and pedagogical approaches to creative story writing in primary education (Fatma et al., 2025), establishing an initial trajectory for understanding the experiential dimensions of narrative production. At the same time, broader research on children's narrative writing has predominantly approached the phenomenon from linguistic, structural, and pedagogical perspectives. A number of studies have focused on textual quality indicators such as cohesion, coherence, punctuation use, and linguistic complexity (Burrell & Beard, 2022, 2023; Cheung, 2023; Hsiao et al., 2024), while others

have examined narrative structure, intrinsic narrative elements, and thematic variations in children's stories (Kushartanti et al., 2024; Lu'luah et al., 2022). Additional research has investigated cognitive-linguistic and contextual predictors of writing performance, including decoding ability, oral language competence, gender, language background, literacy environment, writing modality, and instructional interventions designed to improve narrative writing skills (Anggraeni et al., 2023; Johansson & Lindgren, 2021; Lillich et al., 2025; Spilling et al., 2021; Su et al., 2022; Wijayasir & Astuti, 2025; Yoon, 2024).

Although these studies have significantly advanced the understanding of children's narrative writing development, narrative production has largely been conceptualized as a linguistic product, instructional outcome, or performance variable. The mechanism through which experiential content becomes narratively representable—particularly how certain experiences emerge as focal narrative material—remains insufficiently examined. Addressing this limitation, the present study advances prior lines of research by positioning children's narrative writing as a cognitive-phenomenological process that examines how experiential content becomes narratively representable. This shift moves the analytical focus from textual performance and pedagogical effectiveness toward the experiential mechanism underlying narrative production and culminates in the formulation of a conceptual model explaining the transformation of the noematic anchor of experience into narrative representation.

2. METHOD

This study investigates the question: *What processes characterize the transformation of the noematic anchor of experience into narrative representation in children's narrative writing?* The research aims to identify the experiential and cognitive processes underlying this transformation, formulate the procedural syntax through which experiential anchors become narratively structured, and develop a conceptual model explaining the transformation of experiential meaning into narrative production in primary education. A qualitative phenomenological-narrative single-case design is employed, focusing on a primary-school student who produced a personal-experience narrative as part of a classroom writing assignment. The selected case is analytically significant because the narrative reflects a morally neutral interpretation of rule-violating behavior, enabling examination of how experiential salience

and value interpretation influence narrative construction.

Data consist of the written narrative text, contextual documentation, and in-depth phenomenological interviews exploring the experiential meanings underlying the narrative. Analysis proceeds sequentially: phenomenological thematic analysis is first conducted to identify experiential themes forming the noematic anchor of experience, followed by narrative inquiry analysis to reconstruct the procedural configuration through which experiential structures become narratively represented. Analytical procedures are supported by qualitative data-analysis software (Atlas.Ti) and validated through member checking to ensure interpretive credibility.

By positioning phenomenological analysis as the entry point for narrative reconstruction, the methodological design establishes a phenomenological-narrative analytical framework that explains narrative writing as a process of experiential transformation rather than solely as a linguistic or instructional outcome.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

The analysis generated an experiential network identifying the relational configuration of experiential objects, actions, and interpretive meanings underlying children's narrative production (Figure 1). The network demonstrates that narrative content emerges from specific experiential configurations rather than from experience in general, but from specific experiential configurations in which material objects, situational contexts, and intentional activities converge to form a focal experiential structure. Experiential objects such as the funeral stretcher, scrap metal materials, the neighborhood gate, and the night internet-café package appear as salient noematic contents that organize attention and orient subsequent actions. These objects become meaningful through children's engagement in concrete activities, including searching for scrap items, staying overnight at the internet café, and participating in collective peer actions. The relational structure shown in Figure 1 indicates that narrative-forming experiences arise from the intersection of material encounter, social engagement, and experiential interpretation. This finding indicates that narrativity depends on the condensation of experience into a focal structure, not on the chronological accumulation of events.

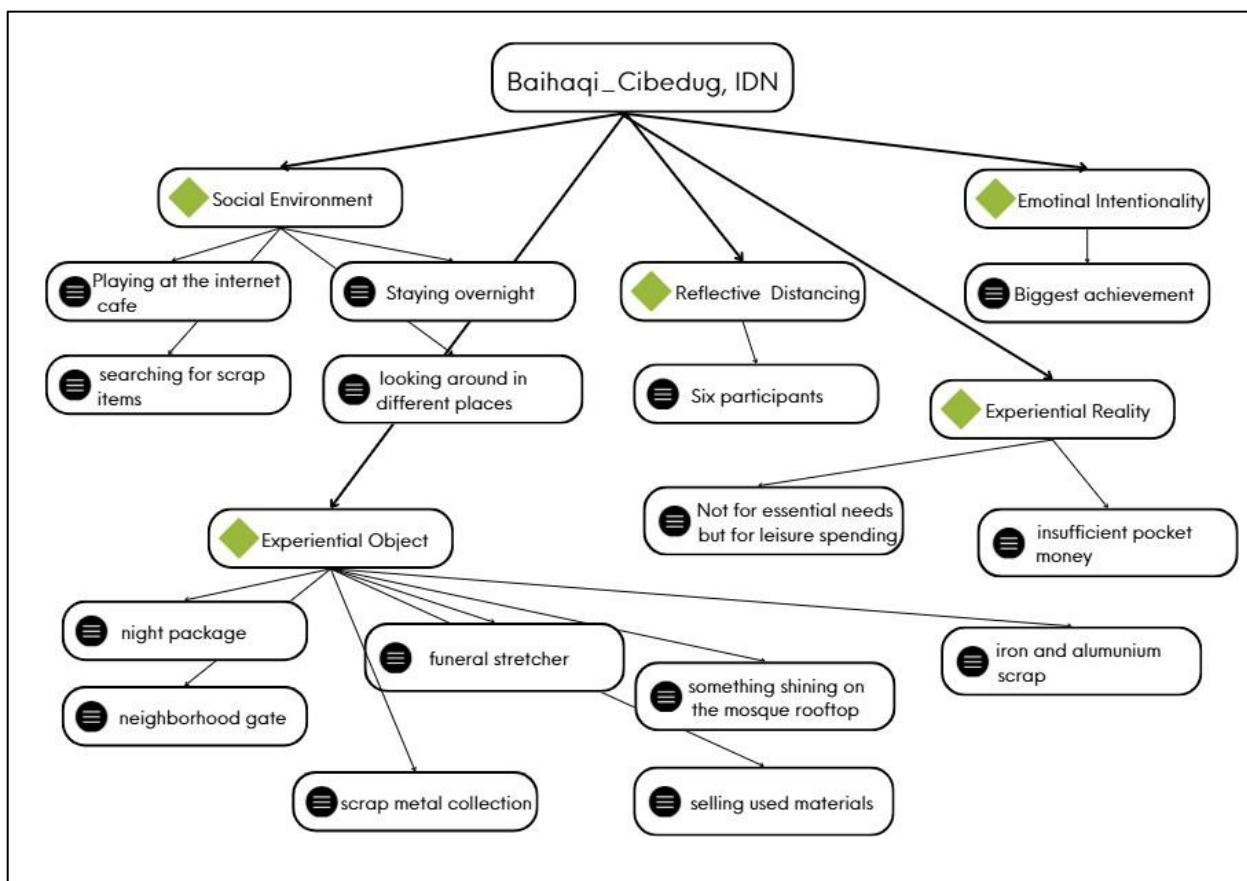


Figure 1 Experience Network Forming the Noematic Anchor

To clarify how these experiential elements operate within the transformation process, Table 1 maps the empirical nodes of the network into three sequential process stages: Encountering, Experiencing, and Narrativizing. The Encountering stage consists of materialized experiential objects that become the intentional content of consciousness and function as perceptual triggers directing children’s attention toward specific events. The Experiencing stage involves the actions through which children interact with these objects, including exploration, collective participation, and situational engagement, indicating that experiential engagement mediates the transition

from object perception to lived experience. The Narrativizing stage reflects the stabilization of meaning through cognitive–affective interpretation, where conditions such as limited pocket money, leisure-oriented motivation, and evaluative interpretation—expressed in the notion of the “biggest achievement”—transform the lived episode into a narratively meaningful theme. This staged mapping demonstrates that narrative formation is not a direct transcription of experience but a structured transformation in which experiential objects are enacted and subsequently interpreted before becoming narratively representable.

Table 1 Network Nodes Mapped to the Experience Transformation Process

Network Nodes	Role in the Transformation Process	Process Stage
Selling used materials; Night package; Something shining on the mosque rooftop; Funeral stretcher; Neighborhood gate; Iron and aluminum scrap	Material objects and situational targets that become the intentional content of experience	Encountering
Playing at the internet café; Staying overnight; Searching for scrap items; Looking around in different places	Actions through which children engage with, explore, and interpret experiential objects	Experiencing
Insufficient pocket money; Not for essential needs but for leisure spending; Biggest achievement	Cognitive–affective interpretation that stabilizes meaning and shapes the thematic structure of the narrative	Narrativizing

Based on this empirical mapping, the conceptual model of the transformation of the noematic anchor of

experience is presented in Figure 2. The model synthesizes the findings by illustrating a linear process

in which materialized experiential encounters generate focal experiential anchoring, which is then enacted through experiential engagement and stabilized through narrativizing processes to produce narrative representation. The positioning of the noematic anchor at the center of the transformation process indicates that children's narrative writing is shaped not merely by linguistic competence or instructional input but by the phenomenological

constitution of experience in which certain experiential objects become stabilized as central reference points of storytelling. Consequently, narrative production can be understood as the outcome of an experiential transformation mechanism in which the salience of material encounters, the enactment of experiential engagement, and the stabilization of experiential meaning jointly determine how lived experience becomes narratively expressed.

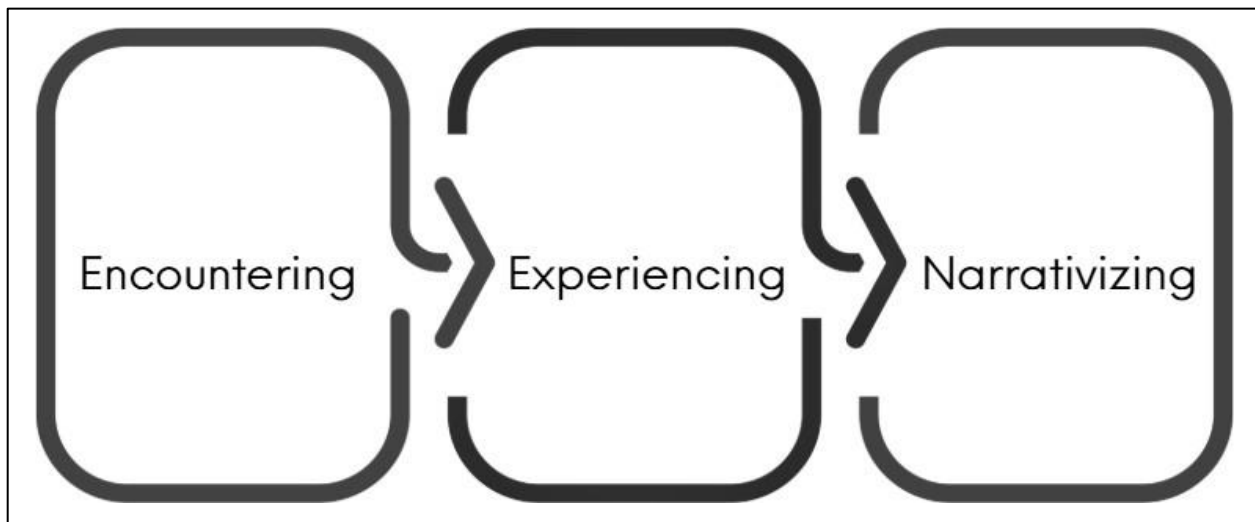


Figure 2 Conceptual Model of the Transformation of the Noematic Anchor of Experience

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Experiential origins of children's narrative writing

The findings of this study reinforce and extend recent interdisciplinary work demonstrating that narrative emerges through a process of experiential selection rather than exhaustive representation. Contemporary narratological research has emphasized that experience is not transferred wholesale into narrative form; rather, narrative arises from the organization of experience around focal points that structure meaning (Eiranen et al., 2022). The experiential network identified in this study concretely illustrates this process: children's narratives were not generated from generalized daily activity, but from tightly bounded experiential configurations in which material objects, situated actions, and evaluative interpretations converged. The recurrence of specific experiential nodes within the network indicates that narrativity emerges only after experience has been condensed into a limited set of salient anchors. This pattern aligns with empirical distinctions between imagined and autobiographical narratives, where autobiographical stories display stronger event centrality and narrative flow precisely because they are grounded in lived experience rather

than hypothetical construction (Sap et al., 2022).

Recent cognitive and neuroscientific studies further clarify why only certain experiences become narratively productive. Research on narrative encoding shows that events do not need to be objectively central to become narratively dominant; rather, noncentral events may acquire narrative salience when they attract sustained attention and emotional engagement during experience, predicting later narrative originality (Wang et al., 2025). This mechanism is directly reflected in the present findings, where material objects such as scrap metal, architectural elements of communal space, and the funeral stretcher repeatedly functioned as experiential attractors despite their peripheral status in everyday routines. Their prominence within the experiential network indicates that attentional fixation and embodied interaction, rather than event magnitude, govern narrative selection. This observation resonates with cognitive-linguistic accounts of semantic salience, which show that embodied encounters with concrete, localized objects enhance memorability and narrative prominence by anchoring meaning in perceptual and motor experience (Hua & Lai, 2025). Accordingly, children's narrative writing in this study appears to be grounded in materially situated experience rather

than abstract thematic recall.

At the level of meaning-making, narrative emergence is shown to depend on evaluative interpretation rather than mere recollection. Philosophical and psychological studies of narrative selfhood argue that experiences become narratable only when they are integrated into evaluative frameworks that assign personal or affective significance to events (Dings & Newen, 2021; Ratcliffe & Byrne, 2022). The present findings substantiate this claim by demonstrating how experiential episodes were narratively stabilized through affective appraisal, most clearly expressed in the thematic framing of the episode as a “biggest achievement.” This evaluative designation did not merely label the experience but functioned as a cognitive mechanism that unified disparate actions and objects into a coherent narrative theme. Such a process is consistent with research on inner speech and narrative self-understanding, which shows that evaluative reflection mediates the transition from lived experience to narrative articulation by internally validating events as worth telling (Rovetta, 2023). Children’s narratives, therefore, emerge not as neutral recounting but as reflective constructions shaped by how experiences are internally assessed and emotionally resolved.

Importantly, these results contribute to ongoing debates in literacy and narrative education by reframing the locus of narrative competence. While instructional research often foregrounds technique, structure, or culturally embedded content as determinants of narrative quality (Jinhui *et al.*, 2025; Masri *et al.*, 2025), the present study demonstrates that narrativity is rooted more fundamentally in experiential mechanisms that precede textual organization. By empirically showing that children’s narratives originate from processes of experiential anchoring—where attention, material engagement, and evaluative interpretation converge—this study shifts the explanatory focus from narrative templates and pedagogical input toward the cognitive-phenomenological conditions that render experience narratively tellable. In doing so, it advances current scholarship by specifying *how* experience becomes narratively representable, positioning experiential salience and evaluative interpretation as the primary drivers of narrative emergence rather than secondary effects of instruction or form.

3.2.2 The role of materialized experiential objects in narrative formation

The findings demonstrate that children’s narrative writing is grounded in encounters with

materialized experiential objects that function as noematic anchors, as identified in the experiential network (Figure 1). Objects such as the funeral stretcher, scrap metal, and the neighborhood gate are not peripheral details but occupy structurally central positions within the network, indicating their role in organizing attention and experiential focus. Interpreted through the process model (Figure 3), these objects operate at the Encountering stage by stabilizing perceptual salience and constraining which elements of experience become cognitively available for narrative transformation. This finding reinforces recent interdisciplinary work emphasizing that narrative does not emerge from experience as a whole but from selective experiential focal points that structure meaning (Eiranen *et al.*, 2022).

At the Experiencing stage, the findings show that material objects acquire narrative relevance through situated actions—playing at the internet café, staying overnight, and searching for scrap items—which are mapped in Table 1 as noetic engagements rather than thematic abstractions. These actions mediate the transition from mere exposure to experiential involvement, aligning with embodied cognition research demonstrating that direct interaction with material environments intensifies experiential integration and strengthens narrative coherence (Wei, 2025). Rather than functioning as background context, materialized objects in this study acted as attentional attractors that organized experiential flow, a mechanism consistent with research on spatial narrative optimization in situated environments (Wang *et al.*, 2025).

The Narrativizing stage further reveals that narrative emergence depends on evaluative interpretation rather than material encounter alone. As shown in Table 1, nodes such as insufficient pocket money and the framing of the episode as a “biggest achievement” indicate affective-cognitive appraisal through which experience becomes narratively meaningful. This supports philosophical and psychological accounts of narrative self-formation, which argue that experiences become narratable only when they are integrated into evaluative frameworks that assign personal significance to events (Dings & Newen, 2021; Ratcliffe & Byrne, 2022). In this case, the child’s interpretation does not moralize the experience but stabilizes it as an achievement, demonstrating how evaluative neutrality can still generate coherent narrative meaning.

Importantly, these findings extend current literacy research that tends to emphasize textual exposure, instructional design, or narrative

technique (Bunayyah et al., 2025; Song et al., 2025). By contrast, the present study shows that narrative competence is rooted in materially situated experience and its subsequent evaluative stabilization. The experiential network and process model together indicate that narrative writing is not primarily triggered by narrative templates or abstract themes but by how material objects, actions, and interpretations converge within consciousness. This positions materialized experiential objects as cognitive affordances that mediate between environment, action, and narrative meaning, contributing to emerging research that conceptualizes narrative production as an embodied, situated, and experiential process.

3.2.3 Noematic Anchoring as a Narrative Selection Mechanism

The findings indicate that not all experienced events entered the narrative space; instead, narrative production was governed by a selective mechanism through which certain experiential contents were prioritized while others were excluded. In the experiential network, material objects such as the funeral stretcher and scrap materials were not the most frequent or central elements of daily activity, yet they became narratively dominant. This pattern suggests that narrative emergence is driven less by experiential frequency than by noematic anchoring, whereby specific objects stabilize attention and segment experience into narratively salient units.

This selection process is consistent with recent cognitive findings showing that narrative memory and originality are shaped at event boundaries, where attention is reoriented and past information is selectively reactivated (Brich et al., 2024; Hahamy et al., 2023). In the present study, the noematic anchor functioned as such a boundary: once an experiential object acquired focal salience, subsequent actions and interpretations were organized around it, increasing its likelihood of narrative retention and representation. Rather than recalling experience holistically, the child reconstructed the narrative around these anchored moments.

Developmental research further supports this mechanism by demonstrating that attentional salience modulates memory prioritization in children, influencing which events are preserved and later narrativized (Lin et al., 2025; Pedale et al., 2022). The findings align with this evidence by showing that experiential objects linked to evaluative tension—such as limited pocket money or the framing of the episode as a “biggest achievement”—

were more likely to be selected as narrative cores. These evaluative dimensions transformed perceptual salience into narrative relevance.

From a phenomenological standpoint, this process reflects the operation of noesis–noema relations in narrative selection. The noematic anchor does not merely provide experiential content; it structures the field of attention and guides interpretive framing, determining what becomes tellable. This study specifies this selection as a noematic mechanism, in which attentional anchoring determines narrative inclusion. This reframes narrative production not as exhaustive experience reporting, but as a selective, meaning-driven process rooted in phenomenological anchoring.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that children’s narrative writing does not emerge from experience in a diffuse or accumulative manner, but through a selective transformation process anchored in specific experiential focal points. By examining a single-case narrative through a phenomenological–narrative framework, the findings show that only certain materialized experiences—those that stabilize attention, activate episodic memory, and invite evaluative interpretation—become narratively representable. These focal experiences function as noematic anchors, structuring how lived experience is segmented, prioritized, and ultimately configured into narrative form.

Conceptually. The proposed linear model—Encountering → Experiencing → Narrativizing—clarifies how material objects, situated actions, and affective–cognitive evaluations interact to regulate narrative selection. This model refines phenomenological accounts of noesis–noema relations by specifying their operation within narrative construction, positioning noematic anchoring as a concrete mechanism through which experience becomes tellable.

Methodologically, the study contributes by demonstrating the analytic value of positioning phenomenological analysis as an entry point for narrative inquiry. Rather than reconstructing stories independently of experience, the phenomenological–narrative design enables a systematic tracing of how experiential content is constituted, stabilized, and reconfigured into narrative representation. This approach offers a viable pathway for investigating narrative writing as a cognitive–phenomenological process without reducing it to linguistic performance measures or instructional outcomes.

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