Narrative Quality and Elicitation Procedures: Is There a Relationship?
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\section*{Introduction}

Clinical practice for school-age students has recently focused on evaluating language skills in academic contexts such as narratives. Oral narrative skills have been correlated with later reading comprehension and writing abilities. Well-developed oral narratives include organizational skills (macrostructure) as well as more advanced sentence level skills (microstructure) than conversational language.

\section*{Methods for eliciting oral narratives:}
- Retell tasks – The student listens to a story and then retells the story.
- Visual prompts – The student utilizes pictures (e.g., wordless picture books, sequenced pictures, or a single-episode picture) to tell a story.
- Oral prompts – The student is asked to tell a story with no assistance visually (icons or pictures)

Factors known to impact the quality of oral narratives:
- Chronological age has been observed to be positively related to narrative quality. (Ukrainetz, Justice, Kaderavek, Eisenberg, Giliam, & Harm, 2005).
- Children with broader and deeper vocabularies, more sophisticated use of complex syntax and superior metalinguistic awareness produce stories that are evaluated as having a higher level of quality.
- Research indicates that narrative quality ratings for typically developing school-age children are positively correlated with microstructural language sample measures (Heilman et al., 2010; Koutsoftas & Gray, 2012).

\section*{Methods}

\subsection*{Participants}
- 87 typically developing children
- 5-14 years of age
- Participated in the standardization of the Test of Narrative Language – 2nd Edition (TNL-2)
- Two language samples from this process were further analyzed for this study.
- This resulted in a total of 174 narrative samples.

\subsection*{Task}
- Students completed the TNL-2. Two tasks were included in the present study.
- The Loehe for School Story (LFS) – The Alien Story (Aliens)

Students were asked to tell a novel story using pictures as a reference. The first task utilized a sequence of pictures that portrayed a small boy who is running late for school and encounters some obstacles. The second task involved the use of a single picture which portrayed an alien spacecraft with an alien family in a wooded area with two small children hiding behind a bush.

\subsection*{Transcription and Coding}

Transcripts and coders were blind to students’ age.

Transcripts were transcribed and checked for errors using the SALT transcription conventions. Discrepancies were discussed and agreement made.

Coding of the NSS utilized consensus coding as well for each sample. Discrepancies were discussed and agreement made.

\subsection*{Analysis}

All samples were analyzed using SALT Researcher (2018) for measures related to macrostructure and microstructure.

- Macrostructure
  - Narrative Scoring Scheme (NSS), Total T-Units, Number of Total Words
- Microstructure Elements
  - MLU in words, Number of Different Words, Subordination Index (SI), Percentage of Mazed Words

Data was examined using multiple regression models.

\section*{Results}

For all quality measures, age was significant (p < .05). This corroborates previous research that has found a correlation between age and narrative quality.

- Gender was insignificant (p > .05) for all quality measures except for the percentage of maze words (p < .05). Male participants had significantly less mazed words than female participants.
- Significant task differences were found in favor of the Aliens Task (Single Picture) even controlling for age and gender in the following measures:
  - Narrative Scoring Scheme (p < .05)
  - Number of T-Units (p < .01)
  - Total Number of Words (p < .01)
  - Number of Different Words (p < .01)

No task differences were found for the Subordination Index, MLU in words, or Percentage of Mazed Words.

\section*{Discussion}

- There are significant differences in the length of a narrative and the variety of vocabulary based on the type of visual support provided to the student.
- Students show higher mastery of narrative structures when given a single picture versus a series of sequenced pictures.
- Clausal density appears unaffected by task in this sample yet continues to reflect the growth we should expect due to age.
- These results have implications for accurate assessment of students’ narrative skills. If the elicitation task does not capture the highest quality narrative that a student can produce, there is the possibility of misdiagnosis.
- It is important for practitioners to consider the elicitation quality associated with different visual supports when selecting materials to use during narrative sampling.

\section*{Future Research}

- More studies are needed to compare other forms of support given to students in narrative assessment.
- This study looked at two very specific visual support formats. Future studies can look beyond the visual format and compare the differences between visual and auditory supports.

\section*{Selected References}