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**NARRATIVE LANGUAGE INTERVENTION
FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

by

Tanja Jensen

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

in

**Speech-Language Pathology
in the Department of
Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education**

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Author's Biography

Tanja Jensen was born and raised in a west Texas town called El Paso. After graduating from Franklin High School in 2003 she spent the next year abroad as a foreign exchange student in Holland, where she had the opportunity to travel and tour Europe. After living a year of fun and experience, she returned to reality and immediately began her college career at Utah State University in August 2004. Luckily, she knew what she wanted to study and delved right into the Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education Department with her eyes set on becoming a Speech-Language Pathologist. After two years of school, she decided to take another adventure and left for a year and a half to serve a church mission. Just like before, after eighteen wonderful months of learning and experience, she returned to Utah State University and completed her undergraduate degree, graduating in May 2009. While an Aggie, Tanja was able to participate in many research opportunities assisting Dr. Ronald Gillam, Dr. Sandi Gillam, Dr. Kim Corbin-Lewis, Professor Chad Bingham, and Doug Petersen in their respective study opportunities. With these amazing experiences, she was able to present her studies in narrative language intervention at the National Conference for Undergraduate Research in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and at Posters on Capitol Hill in Salt Lake City. During her college career, Tanja was nominated for the coveted Robin's Award, awarded a variety of scholarships, and was listed on the Dean's List numerous times.

Upon graduation, Tanja plans to stay at Utah State University and begin her graduate studies to become a legally certified Speech-Language Pathologist. When graduated, she hopes to take her knowledge and skills and work in a hospital setting.

Abstract

A preliminary study was designed to determine whether ELL children responded favorably to a revised version of the narrative intervention procedure previously utilized with children with language impairment. This study employed a pre-test, post-test design with 11 ELL children ranging in age from 8;8 (years;months) to 9;2 (years;months) who were at-risk for language and learning problems.

Children were administered the recalling sentences subtest of the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-4 in English and Spanish, Frog Stories requiring them to tell a story that paralleled to a wordless picture book about the adventures of a frog in English, and the Test of Narrative Language in English and Spanish before and after intervention.

Children were seen 30-45 minutes per day, 4 days per week for a total of 6 weeks in groups of three or four. An ELL teacher administered the intervention program using graphic organizers and icons to teach appropriate story grammar structure. Results concluded that after the intervention was administered scores in both English and Spanish language and narrative components increased.

Introduction

The number of school-age children (ages 5–17) who speak a language other than English at home increased from 9 to 20% between the years 1979 and 2005 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). 76.9% of these children were Spanish speakers resulting in 2,963,256 students. With this huge number, over 80% of schools were serving English Language Learner children who spoke Spanish as their first language (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2007). The proportion of language-minority children and youth in the United States who demonstrated significant difficulty with English rose from 3-6% over this same time period. The National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth reported that the nature of the relationship between English oral language proficiency and reading comprehension is of crucial concern for English Language Learning (ELL) children (August and Shanahan, 2006). One area of oral language ability that is particularly problematic for ELL children is narration (August, Carlo, Dressler, and Snow, 2005). According to Donna Boudreau, narrative is defined as “talking about the past or future and suggest that narratives serve as a natural and untrained way that children think and remember information” (Boudreau, 2008). She continues to state that narratives play a big role in a child’s academic success. Narrative abilities have been shown to predict difficulties in academic achievement as will be later discussed. Many studies have been conducted to determine if intervention targeting language narration does improve a child’s language development.

Narrative language proficiency is both related to and predictive of difficulties in academic achievement for monolingual children developing typically and those with language learning impairments (Bishop and Edmundson, 1987; Fazio, Naremore, and Connell, 1996). A study was

administered by Bishop and Edmundson (1987) to determine if persistent impairments that encompassed all language functions determined a more severe prognosis than selective impairments. They also wanted to know if the severity of impairment would be proportional to the number of areas of impairment with four-year-olds. Their study was designed to answer the following questions: 1-What range of severity of language problems is found in a sample of children referred for professional help because of concern about language development at 4 years, and how many of these children “recover” from their early difficulties? 2-Is outcome of preschool language impairment related to severity of impairment as reflected in language test scores? 3-Is there any regularity in the patterns of language impairment that are found in preschool children, and if so, is outcome related to pattern of impairment? The subjects were selected because they had been referred for professional help because of language development concerns. The subjects were subdivided based on language status. One group of children demonstrated language-impairment and the other did not (control group). All children were from northeast and northwest England. The language-impaired group was recruited by speech-language pathologist. A total of 88 children with language impairment participated in the study. There were 37 children who participated in the control group. The children were administered the British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS; Dunn, Dunn, Leota, Whetton, and Pintilie, 1982) and the Test for Reception of Grammar (TROG; Bishop, 1979). Additionally, language samples were obtained which yielded mean length of utterance (MLU) data and total number of utterances. These measures were analyzed in terms of four categories: 1-Phonology, 2-Syntax and morphology, 3-Semantics and, 4- Language comprehension. Analysis of each of these categories was based off the child’s scores in the two assessments, their mean length of utterance (MLU), and the percentage of consonants produced correctly. Results concluded that 37% of the

children had resolved their language-impairment by 5½ years of age. Outcome for individual children could be predicted to 90% accuracy on the test measures obtained when the child was 4 years old and the best predictor of future language impairment was the ability to retell a story with pictures. The phonological competence of the child did not relate to the outcome of the language measure. In conclusion, this study determined that language-impaired children, although they did have a language delay, did make progress and eventually caught up with their normally developing peers. This study shows that improvement is possible for children that may have a language delay due to specific language impairments or other outlying factors.

Another study, conducted by Fazio et al. (1996), compared the language performance of children with a specific language impairment (SLI) and low-scoring normal children in the borderline area to address where normal language performance ends and abnormal language performance begins. Fazio et al. (1996) conducted a three-year longitudinal study focusing on language performance of children from poverty using an experimental approach (story-retelling, rote-memory ability, and invented-morpheme learning) and a traditional approach (standardized test discrepancy scores). Subjects were selected from 129 public school kindergarten children enrolled in eight classrooms in four public schools in Bloomington, Indiana. All participants were administered five subtests from the Test of Language Development- 2 Primary (TOLD-2P; Newcomer and Hammill, 1988) (to assess level of language development) and the Columbia Test of Mental Maturity (CMMS; Burgeister, Blurn, and Lorge, 1972) (to assess nonverbal cognitive levels) tests. The five subtests that were used in the TOLD-2P screening were the Picture Vocabulary subtest (asks the child to select a picture corresponding to a word presented orally by the examiner), the Oral Vocabulary subtest (asks the child to define words presented by the examiner), the Grammatic Completion subtest (asks the child to fill in the missing portion of a

sentence read by the examiner to test elements like plurals, verb tenses, and possessives), the Grammatical Understanding subtest (ask the child to point to an appropriate picture after a sentence is presented by the examiner), and the Sentence Imitation subtest (asks the child to repeat sentences that grow increasingly longer). These assessments were used to subdivide children into three groups. The first group consisted of 12 children who were labeled as the Language Risk group (LR) because they scored 1 or more standard deviations (SD) below the mean on two or more of the TOLD-2P subtests and had a CMMS score of 85 or greater. The second group was called the Language Cognitive Risk group (LCR). It consisted of 10 children who received the same scores on the TOLD-2P as the first group but received a lower CMMS score (between 70-84). A third group of 12 children was selected to match the same CMMS scores as the first group but demonstrated typical (higher) TOLD-2P scores. This group was called the Average Language group (AL).

All three groups were then administered standardized measures (TOLD-2P and CMMS) and three different experimental tasks each year over a three year period. The first measure required children to retell the story entitled "*Timothy and the Night Noises*" (Dinardo, 1990). For this task, children were asked to look at pictures and then retell a previously narrated story. The second task involved rote memory and tested the child's knowledge of counting without prompts. In this task, children were asked to count to fifty in order to wake a puppet. If the child counted without error to 29 they were considered "passing" for this task. In the third task, three steps were used. First, the children were asked to label 20 pictures of common objects. Once they could accurately name them all, 20 different pictures were presented (second step) to match with pictures from the first step. Each picture depicted part of an object with an extra morpheme (e.g., Here's a bug, and here's a bug-a). From there, the children were tested for the meaning of

the invented morpheme (bug vs. bug-a) by using the names of the objects presented in the first step. This task assessed whether the child had learned the meaning of the invented morpheme. There was a change in procedure in the second and third year where the stories were longer and they had to count backwards, give the next number in a sequence, and addition tasks. The results indicated that 6 of the 34 children followed appeared to have specific language impairments by the end of the study. These six children were either in the LR or LCR groups who, at the beginning of the study while they were in kindergarten, were believed to be at. The best kindergarten predictor for these 6 students was a combination of the Oral Vocabulary subtest of the TOLD-2P and the scores on a combination of the experimental tasks. These 6 children however were not as severely language-impaired as some children diagnosed with SLI. For example, none of these children were speaking in 2-3 word sentences or deleting morphemes which are both typical for children with specific language impairments. The symptoms of their language-impairment would probably not be observable. Their impairments emerged in their academic performance or in the contexts of standardized and experimental tests. Only when they were tested on their use of language systems did their limitations become evident. Both studies by Bishop and Edmundson (1987) and Fazio et al. (1996) revealed that language delays and impairments can pose restrictions or difficulties in academic achievements for both monolingual and bilingual students.

Recent research suggests that narrative language proficiency is also related to reading comprehension in Spanish-speaking bilingual students (Miller, Iglesias, Heilmann, Fabiano, Nockerts, and Francis, 2006). Miller et al., (2006) investigated 1,531 Hispanic/Latino ELL attending kindergarten through third grade in two performance sites located in Texas. The purpose of their research was to determine if “lexical, syntactic, fluency, and discourse measures

of oral language collected under narrative (storytelling) conditions predict reading achievement both within and across languages for bilingual children” (pg. 30). They documented the English and Spanish oral language proficiency of children in kindergarten through third grade to evaluate which features of oral language are associated with reading achievement. Four questions were presented: 1-Do measures of oral Spanish predict Spanish reading scores? 2-Do measures of oral English predict English reading scores? 3-Do measures of oral English predict Spanish reading scores? 4-Do measures of oral Spanish predict English reading scores? Oral language measures were acquired from narrative language samples using the picture book, “*Frog, Where are You?*” (Mayer, 1988). The examiner read a pre-scripted narrative in the selected language and then asked the child to retell the story using the pictures as aides. Children were tested first in Spanish to increase familiarity with the tasks and were then tested in English. To help children during English testing, the examiners were able to give instruction in Spanish if the child did not understand the instructions in English. There was a one to two week interval between sessions. Measures that were calculated from the speech samples were: MLU (average length of an utterance) which is a measure of syntactic complexity, NDW (number of different words) which provides a measure of vocabulary diversity, WPM (words per minute) which measures the verbal fluency, and NSS which measures the participant’s ability to produce a coherent narrative. The measure consisted of seven categories from story grammar categories. In answering their questions of interest, the results showed that the respective language tested in did predict reading scores in that same language. Also, there was cross-language prediction when presented in one language and comprehended in another. Miller et al., (2006) explains it by saying, “...there was clear evidence of cross-language prediction from oral language to both Passage Comprehension and Word Reading Efficiency when examining oral language in the children’s native language

and reading in their second language” (pg. 40). This is an extremely important result, especially with our study, because it shows that improvements in language expression and comprehension are possible across languages.

With this knowledge of possible crossover between languages, an important aspect of narrative capabilities arises. Do ELL children develop, plan, and present stories in ways that are similar to monolingual English speaking children? In response, there have been a limited number of studies that have examined narrative development in ELL children (Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2002; Muñoz, Gillam, Peña, and Gulley-Faehnle, 2003; Uccelli and Paez, 2007) and even fewer that have examined the impact of narrative language intervention in this population (Schoenbrodt, Kerins, and Gesell, 2003). In a representative study, Munoz et al. (2003) examined aspects of storytelling and their influence on cultural and linguistic experiences. The purpose of the study was to see “whether commonly used measures of language productivity, sentence organization, and story structure represented developmental differences in stories produced by Latino preschool children from a bilingual and low-SES community” (pg.332). Twenty-four predominantly English-speaking Latino children who were registered in a federally subsidized preschool for families with incomes near or below the poverty level were recruited for participation in the study. The participants were judged to be predominantly English speaking based on classroom observation, teacher report, parent report, and preschool testing. The children were grouped according to age into two groups with twelve children in the younger group (between 46 and 56 months old) and the 12 children in the older group (between 60 to 66 months old). Oral narratives were collected using the picture book, “*Frog, Where are You?*” (Mayer, 1988). Narratives were collected in English but code-switching, or transitioning from speaking in English to Spanish, was allowed. Language analysis of the narrative samples

focused on three aspects of development: productivity (total number of words and total number of different words), sentence organization (number of C units, mean length of C units, and percentage of C units that were grammatically correct), and story grammar (developmental differences bridging non-episodic and episodic structures). To clarify, a C unit is the abbreviation for “communication unit” which is an utterance that can stand alone and make a complete sentence or thought. The results for productivity between the two groups showed little difference resulting in the same average total of words in sentences with little variety. Concerning sentence organization, the children in the older group produced C units approximately one word longer, on average. Also, the older group produced a greater percentage of grammatically correct C units. These results prove that with age, knowledge and an average mean length of utterance increase in syntactic structure. With story grammar, the older children included more complete episodes per story but the two groups produced equal numbers of incomplete episodes. The older children also created more sophisticated stories. To summarize, 5-year-olds demonstrated better syntactic accuracy and increased production of completed episodes than the 4-year-old children. The basic English structure, or the basic components that scaffold and support English language, was expressed more frequently and accurately by the older group than the younger group. Syntactic errors were apparent in both group with a larger percentage in the younger group. Examples of syntactic errors included missing verb arguments, inappropriate word choice, word order errors, use of regular past tense on irregular verbs, and omissions of nouns, verbs, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, or prepositions.

This study showed that 4-year-olds were more likely to describe events whereas the older children were more likely to tell a goal-oriented sequence of events. The results from this study support the use of narrative assessment as a clinical tool for measuring language development in

Latino children from a low SES environment. This study supports the idea that a narrative assessment provides accurate and spontaneous results that correctly portray the level at which ELL children are performing at during language acquisition for a second language. It also portrays the significant difference of language learning according to the age of the child. With increased age, increased sentence length, increased intelligibility, decreased syntactical errors, and decreased code-switching are evident.

Spontaneous narrative opportunities could provide a great scaffold for ELL children to learn and improve a second language. Schoenbrodt et al. (2003) conducted a study to see if narrative language intervention would increase communicative competence in Spanish-speaking children. Twelve Spanish-speaking children between 6-11 years old participated in the study. All participants were natives of Central and South American countries and attended a public school in Baltimore City. The study took place at an after-school tutoring program at the school where these participants attended. To participate in this study, only children who were learning English as a second language (with Spanish as their primary language) were included. Also, Spanish was to be the main language spoken at home. The children were also included if they were between 6 to 11 years old and were not absent for more than one intervention session. After these criterion were established and met, the children were randomly assigned into two groups: experimental and control. Each group consisted of five males and one female. Children in each group were matched according to their chronological age and English proficiency. The control group received the intervention in English while the experimental group received the intervention in Spanish.

Narrative samples were obtained first as a pre-test before the intervention was administered and a second narrative sample, using identical procedures as the pre-test, were obtained as a

post-test after the intervention. For the narrative samples, the students were required to retell a story and create their own spontaneous story. For the story retell task, the examiner read a passage and had the child retell the story with as much detail as possible without any prompts provided. For the story generation task the child was presented with a “story stem” to help begin their story (e.g., ‘One day, there were two boys playing outside, and before they realized it, night had fallen and they were lost...’) (pg. 52). The stories were then transcribed and analyzed based on five measures: communication units, words, clauses, story grammar, and narrative style. Following the pre-test, narrative intervention was conducted once a week for eight weeks. The first three sessions were devoted to presenting a story. Strategies of presenting and defining vocabulary, using visual organizers, and using extensions (or using personal experiences to relate to how a character might feel in a situation) to prompt the students to think critically were used to help the students prepare and organize stories. During the next two sessions, a tangible and visible marker was used to teach appropriate story grammar and aid the student to prepare and generate narrative events and style in the story. In the last two sessions, a different story was presented and probes were included to encourage generalization of narrative skills and events previously taught. The results of this study showed that intervention presented in the native language yielded greater success compared to intervention given in English. Although use of narrative intervention increased communicative competence in both groups, the Spanish intervention was more productive. Another result of this study showed that narrative language interventions increased language skills in children with limited language proficiency independent of which group they were in. Intervention presented in English, although the results being not as high as when the intervention was presented in Spanish, still increased the child’s story grammar element abilities like including a setting, characters, and feelings and may be a good way to

improve language learning. This is especially important since most academic instruction is not given in Spanish (August and Hakuta, 1997).

Instruction in English has been shown to be an effective approach for the development of phonological awareness and decoding (Cardenas-Hagan, Carlson, and Pollard-Durodola, 2007) and preliminary evidence suggests that it may be effective in teaching narrative skills as well (Schoenbrodt, Kerins, and Gessell, 2003). However, more research in this area is necessary (Ochoa and Cadiero-Kaplan, 2004). The purpose of the current investigation was to determine whether ELL children responded favorably to a narrative intervention program provided in English. The questions we want to answer in this study are:

- 1) Do ELL children demonstrate improved performance in narrative comprehension in English after receiving narrative intervention in English?
- 2) Do ELL children demonstrate improved performance in narrative production in English after receiving narrative intervention in English?
- 3) Do ELL children demonstrate improved performance in narrative production in Spanish after receiving narrative intervention in English?

Method

This study employed a pre-test, post-test design with 11 ELL children ranging in age from 8;8 (years;months) to 9;2 (years;months) who were at-risk for language and learning problems. Three children were designated as “emergent English language users” and 8 children were judged as “intermediate English language users” based on the Utah Academic Language Proficiency Assessment (2008). We assessed narratives in English and in Spanish after the program was delivered in English.

Children were administered the recalling sentences subtest of the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals-4 (CELF-4; Semel, Wiig and Secord, 2003) in English and Spanish. The objective for this subtest is to evaluate the “student’s ability to (a) listen to spoken sentences of increasing length and complexity, and (b) to repeat the sentences without changing the words meanings, inflections, derivations or comparisons, or sentence structure” (Semel, Wiig, and Secord, p. 25). The inability to imitate sentences has been used to discriminate between normal and disordered language development. Repetitions of the sentences were not allowed and after five consecutive scores of zero, the subtest was discontinued.

The Test of Narrative Language (TNL; Gillam and Pearson, 2004) was also administered in English before and after intervention. This assessment focuses on a child’s ability to comprehend and produce stories that consist of grammatically structured episodes and sequences in three different formats: (a) with no picture cues (subtest 1), (b) with five sequenced pictures (subtests 2 and 3), and (c) with a single picture (subtests 4 and 5) (Gillam and Pearson, 2004). There are five different subtests used in this assessment.

The first subtest (McDonalds Story) included a story that was read aloud by the examiner about two children who go to McDonalds with their mom. Comprehensive questions were then asked to determine how well the child understood the story and had them rely on their auditory memory since there were not any picture cues. Following the comprehension questions, the child was asked to retell as much of the story as possible the same way the examiner told it.

At the beginning of the second subtest (The Shipwreck) the child was shown five sequenced pictures that show events that happen in the story. After reading the story, which is about a girl who builds a ship for a class and her reaction when it breaks, the examiner would ask



nine comprehension questions about the characters, what happened, and consequences in the story. This subtest focused mainly on the child's ability to comprehend a story with picture cues.

The third subtest (Late for School) was very similar to the second where five sequenced



pictures were presented. In this subtest the pictures illustrate a boy who is late for school. The child was then asked to create a spontaneous story that

parallels to the sequence of pictures. This subtest assessed the child's abilities of oral narration.

In the fourth subtest (The Dragon Story), a single picture was shown and the child was asked to listen to a story while looking at the picture.

The story is about a boy and a girl who find a dragon guarding a treasure chest and their attempt to take some treasure and how they escape. After the story



was read aloud, the child was asked ten comprehensive questions about the characters, problems, consequences, and events in the story which assessed the child's narrative comprehensive abilities again.

A single picture was also displayed in the fifth subtest (Aliens Story) of two children who see a spaceship in the park with aliens coming out.

The child was then asked to create another spontaneous story that corresponded to the picture. This subtest provided another opportunity for the child to produce a creative, structured story.



Children were also given a prototype of the Test of Narrative Language in Spanish. Each subtest on the TNL-Spanish was designed to be parallel to a subtest on the TNL- English;

therefore raw scores were used for comparison. For example, the McDonald's Story was the same as Vamos a la Tienda (We're going to the Store), the Late for School paralleled to El perro travieso (The Naughty Dog), and the Aliens Story was compared to El Unicornio (The Unicorn). Each subtest was scored the same way as the English TNL.

Frog stories, created by Mercer Mayer (1988), were also presented. This assessment required the child to tell a story that paralleled a wordless, picture book about the adventures of a frog. First, the clinician showed the child the pictures so that he/she could recognize actions and events and mentally begin to prepare a story. The book was then presented again and the child was asked to tell their story. All of these assessments were presented during the pre- and post-testing.

The narrative comprehension raw scores (which consisted of the McDonald's Story, Shipwreck, and Dragon) were determined by how many questions were answered correctly after the respective story was read aloud. The McDonald's Story allowed for fifteen possible correct responses, the Shipwreck Story allowed for eleven correct responses, and the Dragon Story presented fourteen opportunities to respond correctly. All of these scores added up equals to forty possible correct responses which determine the performance level of narrative comprehension these children demonstrated.

Transcription

While recording the stories the children created, a Sony digital voice recorder was used. This recorder was either placed on a table separating the examiner from the child or held by the child's mouth. These recordings were then downloaded onto the computer where they were listened to and transcribed into the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT) software (Miller and Iglesias, 2002) by undergraduate volunteers. Communication units (C-

units) were than segmented in each story. A C-unit is an utterance that can stand on its own or, more technically, an independent clause and its modifiers. A C-unit cannot be further divided without the essential meaning being lost in the process. From there, the stories were mazed to delete repetitive utterances (i.e., and, so, etc.) so as to not affect the mean length of utterance (MLU) analysis for the children and the symbol X was used when an utterance was unintelligible. After the stories were transcribed and mazed, the oral narrative raw scores (which included the McDonald's Retell, Late for School, Aliens and Frog Story) were measured based on different criterion. Correct grammar (i.e., uses same tense, uses grammatically correct sentences, etc.), story structure (i.e., makes sense, is complete, creativity, and organization), story elements (i.e., problem, conflicts, temporal vs. causal relationships, consequences, etc.), characters (i.e., makes general references to characters or gives them names, includes dialogue, etc.), and setting (i.e., states where and when the story occurs) were the main categories with three or more requirements or expectations listed below each category. A scale with points possible from zero to two was used, two being the highest possible, to determine the ability the child had to include correct story grammar elements and produce an episodic story. In the Late for School Story, a total of thirty points was possible based on the criterion discussed above. The Aliens Story contained a similar scoring sheet with a total of thirty-four points possible. This same scoring sheet was also used while analyzing the Frog Story content. These raw scores were than compared between the respective pre- and post-test assessments to determine if the intervention improved their narrative abilities.

Instructional Program

The narrative intervention program was designed to improve language skills in narration. Children were expected to learn and practice new concepts, words, sentence structure, and story

grammar elements. The program relied on four important strategies: (1) focus on print, (2) repetition, (3) direct instruction, and (4) graphic organizers. Focusing on print acts as a support for language and is a way that language and schema can be taught. Writing and drawing attention to words is highly encouraged and will improve language acquisition. The second strategy, repetition, exposes English language learners to the language effectively. Six or more repetitions of a target item or concept were recommended during a session. Research suggests that children with language learning problems or who are learning English require direct instruction to learn and generalize skills. Finally, graphic organizers have been shown to be a very effective way to teach vocabulary, story structure, and new concepts. This intervention consisted of graphic organizers, or icons, that represent eight story grammar elements (character, setting, take-off, feelings, action(s), complication, landing, wrap-up). An English Language Learner teaching administered this intervention program in English.



The icons (shown above) were individually presented and the children were told what each one meant. With each icon, there was a script presented for the ELL teacher to use. They first would introduce the icon, explain what it meant, explain how it is used in a story, ask questions to determine the child's comprehension, and then summarize. The first icon that was introduced was the "Character" icon. The script went as follows:

Character: Show each icon to the child, label it, and describe what each one stands for.

Start with the character icon.



Say: This is an “icon” or a “symbol” for the characters in our story. Remember, an icon or symbol is something that stands for something else. This will help us to remember to include characters in our story (**write** the word character on the board and have children write it on an index card). *The character can be a person, an animal, a toy like in the movie “Toy Story” or even an appliance or a car.* [Have children talk about this definition for character, person, animal, toy, appliance, car and whatever else they come up with]. *We can have as many characters in our story as we like and most characters have a name.*

Ask:

1. Can you think of some characters that are people [**Answer:** boy, girl, queen, Cinderella, Jose’, mom].
2. Can you think of some characters that are animals [**Answer:** bear, cat, mouse, moose]
3. Can you think of some characters that are toys [**Answer:** doll, rocking horse, teddy bear, soldier, or whatever they come up with].
4. Can you think of some characters that are appliances or cars [**Answer:** teapot (like in Beauty in the Beast), a car or truck (like in Cars), a toaster (like in the Brave Little Toaster), salt and pepper shakers (like in Blue’s Clues)].

Summarization review questions: (Note-when children don’t respond correctly, give them the answer, and ask the question again until they respond with the correct answer. Try to make sure that all children answer the question, even if they have to repeat it after each other)

1. Hold up the character icon and ask, “What is this icon called?” [a character]
2. Tell me who or what can be a character [a person, an animal, or a toy]
3. How many characters can a story have? [as many as we like]
4. Do most characters have a name? [yes]

Each icon was then individually presented and similar scenarios and questions were asked until comprehension of the symbol was accurate.

After the icons were introduced they were taught in the context of a story. The children looked at a wordless picture book while the ELL teacher told them the story while pointing to the pictures as they went, using the icons. For example, the teacher begins the story saying, “The boy,” stopped and pointed to the icon *character*, “is a character” or “Sleeping by a stream,” stopped and pointed to the icon *setting*, “The stream is a setting in the story.” After the story was completed, questions were asked about the story to determine how much the children understood. Once the questions were answered, the children were then each given different icons and asked to build upon each others’ stories based on what icon they had in the correct order. More activities were included in this section like story bingo, where one child was asked to tell a story and the other children monitored their story by placing chips on bingo cards with the different icons used as squares, developing stories as a group using an icon grid, and finally telling a story without the use of icons. After this phase was completed, the second phase began where practice, elaboration, and refinement of the story grammar elements was focused on. For example, dialogue, details, names, emotions, cause and effect, and consequences. The same scenario where each icon was introduced and elaborated, listening to and answering questions to stories, creating their own stories based on the icon card they received, icon bingo, group stories, and stories without icons was used. Phase three consisted of Listening and Telling Complete,

Elaborate Stories with the same set-up being used to identify and teach each concept. Children were seen 30-45 minutes per day, 4 days per week for a total of 6 weeks in groups of three or four.

Results

Paired t-tests were conducted to evaluate changes in language and narration raw scores from pre- to post-testing. Means and standard deviations for raw scores on measures of narration and language in English and Spanish are shown in Table 1. Paired t-tests were conducted to evaluate changes in raw scores from pre- to post- testing. Cohen's *d* estimates were calculated and were interpreted as small (.20), moderate (.50), or large (.80) (Cohen, 1988; pp. 24-26).

At the beginning of this paper, we mentioned three research questions we wanted to answer. The first research question asked whether ELL children demonstrated improved performance in narrative comprehension in English after receiving narrative intervention in English. As shown in Table 1 (pg. 26), comprehension scores in English increased from an average of 18.8 points to 24.6 points. The total possible correct responses, if you recall, was forty. Their comprehension during pre-testing was below fifty percent and after the intervention increased to about sixty percent. This shows that the comprehension of these ELL children did improve showing the effectiveness of the intervention. These children were able to answer questions relating to story grammar elements with more accuracy after intervention than before. They could listen, think, and answer questions about the story details effectively.

The second question asked whether the ELL children would demonstrate improved performance in narrative production in English after receiving narrative intervention in English. Table 2 (pg. 27) illustrates scores obtained by children in English before and after intervention using Mercer Mayer's Frog Stories. Recall that children looked at the pictures in the wordless

picture book and then generated a story based on those pictures prior to and then after participating in the English narrative intervention program. At pre-test, the average score for children was 9.1. After the intervention, the average score was to 13.4 illustrating that children told more complex stories after intervention than before.

Pre-Test Frog Story

-0:10

The boy open the box. So the box was a little frog. And then the big mean frog didn't like the little frog. He had to kick him and do bad things to hurt him. The boy and the dog and the turtle didn't like the big frog. They like the little frog. The big frog wasn't happy. He throw him away. The turtle see. The turtle ask the boy. The boy didn't see the little frog. They found him. They found him. The little boy they found him. They couldn't find him. The boy was sad. He was crying about the little frog. The little frog can jump into the X. He was mean. The little frog was mean. The big frog was the same frog. The little frog was the X. The big frog X.

-2:36

Post-Test Frog Story

-0:15

The boy was happy because he his birthday was his. He was sleeping. He couldn't wait. His mother and his dad give him something. It was a frog. Then a turtle and the dog said, "What is it?" The frog was happy too and the boy said, "It's for me." It said for his mom and dad. They saw frog. The turtle and a dog and the frog was not happy. The boy was happy. They open it. The turtle and the dog was happy. Then they were playing. The frog wasn't happy so he go over. The boy said it match. The frog wasn't happy. The other frog was so happy. The dog and the turtle were so happy because they were like family. The boy said, "Here frog that's your family." The frog was not happy. He wanted to go. The other frog was happy to see him. The boy saw him. The frog said the frog was mean. He got the other turtle. He bite his feet. The dog and the turtle wasn't happy. The boy and the frog wasn't happy. He was angry. The turtle and the dog was not happy. They wanted to leave him alone. The turtle take the big one and the smaller one. The boy and the dog were attacking. They went. The turtle was slow. The frog push the other frog. The frog was not happy. Then the turtle was angry and the dog was angry. The boy says, "No." The frog cried. The other frog was so sad. The frog he didn't want him. The boy said, "No." The turtle and the dog was happy. The frog was happy too. The boy and the dog and the turtle were sleeping. The boy was looking. The frog came. He splash him. He was sad. The boy was sleeping. He points over there. The frog and the other frog were pushed him again. The turtle waked up. A turtle saw him. The boy was looking over there. The dog was over there. The frog teased him. The frog saw him. The other frog wasn't here. The turtle tells him. He looked. The dog looked at him too. The frog was happy. The boy saw him. The turtle was angry. Then the frog he was scared. Then the dog was sad. The frog didn't saw them. The boy tell his X. The turtle didn't see him the frog. The frog didn't see them. The dog neither. The boy wasn't happy. He was sad. The turtle wasn't happy neither. The dog was angry of him. The turtle was sad for the other frog. The boy was looking. The dog was looking too and the turtle. Frog come back.

The turtle was mean again. The big one he was happy. The frog the big wasn't happy. The frog jumped on him. He was happy again. They were playing. The little turtle was tricking him again. The frog's lived together. The little frog was kind of mean. They were happy and happy. They didn't fight again. They got a family too. The frog and the turtle and the boy and the dog so they were playing and playing. They were happy was them. That's all.

-12:09

The third question asked whether ELL children would demonstrate improved performance in narrative production in Spanish after receiving narrative intervention in English. The Tienda retell subtest for the Spanish TNL asked the children to retell a story in Spanish while looking at a picture. Table 3 (pg. 28) portrays the results of the findings. Initially, the average score was 6.5. After the intervention, post-testing showed that the Spanish production increased to 10.6. This was a unique finding demonstrating that even though the intervention was administered in English, the results transferred over to the children's Spanish productivity as well.

Discussion

This pre-, post-test study compared the results of narrative intervention received by ELL elementary school students to determine if an English narrative intervention would be appropriate to administer. There were significant findings in this study. These children made great improvement in their abilities to understand and retell stories in English [narrative comprehension raw scores, Table/Chart 1 and frog stories raw scores, Table/Chart 2] and to retell stories in Spanish [Tienda retell raw scores, Table/Chart 3]. The questions researched in this study may seem intuitive-you teach a child to tell a better story and they tell a better story. But as discussed previously, for this population the ability to produce spontaneous stories in both Spanish, their native language, and English is a great milestone in improving their reading comprehension and literacy. With the increasing amount of school-age children attending public schools who speak another language in the home besides English and the link between academic

success to a child's ability to comprehend and express themselves, more opportunities and situations for this assistance is necessary. With this study, improvement in comprehension in English and abilities to improve in both English and Spanish expression were present. This opportunity not only increases their odds to do well in school but it also provides a scaffold for these children to learn English.

The fact that the intervention was administered in English also resolves concerns about when is it appropriate to begin training or teaching ELL children in English. This study came back with positive results indicating that an English intervention can be appropriate when done correctly and that a successful intervention in a second language is possible. One point to mention is that some of these kids were "emerging" while others were "intermediate" in their English language capabilities but both were shown to benefit from the intervention. Also, there probably is a "lower limit" in terms of the amount of English someone must know in order to benefit from English instruction but for the small sample here, emerging language learners were able to benefit greatly from the cognitive scaffold provided by the story grammar components. The results of this study provide support for an English language narrative intervention but further research is necessary to support these findings. The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether intervention provided in English would result in improved, grammatically structured, episodic stories both in English and Spanish. For one, a larger sample size would greatly improve the results as well as selecting children with different levels of English knowledge. It would be effective to use their knowledge of English as a "covariate" to see the extent to which their previous knowledge would mediate their ability to learn the story grammar components and their ability to learn language forms (vocabulary, syntax, morphology, etc.) The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether intervention provided in English would

result in improved, grammatically structured, episodic stories both in English and Spanish.

While these findings were successful, there are definite ways that this study could be improved.

A control group could be added to compare the similarities or differences that could occur over the length of time between the pre- and post-testing periods. It is possible that ELL children in the regular classroom environment would perform similarly to children who received intervention on measures of narration and language because of improved English skills, exposure to cultural “story-telling rules” and/or maturation. That is, children may become better story-tellers over time and with further academic instruction without the intervention of speech-language pathologists or adjunct ELL instruction.

Also, a comparison study could be performed with the intervention being administered in Spanish. It is possible that the results would be similar in the intervention delivered in Spanish may also elicit improvements in both English and Spanish narrative capabilities as well. Another suggestion to consider would be using the same examiner with the same child for the pre- and post- testing assessment. Familiarity could make a difference between the length of story, how comfortable the child is, and how open and willing they are to talk. Also, the scoring of the stories could be biased based on who was scoring and what they considered to be incorrect or correct in terms of grammatical, episodic, etc. Something effectively overseen was the inter-rater reliability. After stories were transcribed and scored initially they were checked by at least one other person to correctly identify and label what story grammar elements were present. In conclusion, this study and intervention was both encouraging and advantageous. There are not many studies focusing on a narrative-based intervention for English language learners. With the ability to create and express one’s opinion in a comfortable setting, a child is able to express what he feels and let his imagination take off. Then the possibilities are endless.

Appendices

Table 1.

TNL English Comprehension Raw Scores

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Mean	18.80	24.60
Standard Deviation	6.941	6.240

Chart 1.

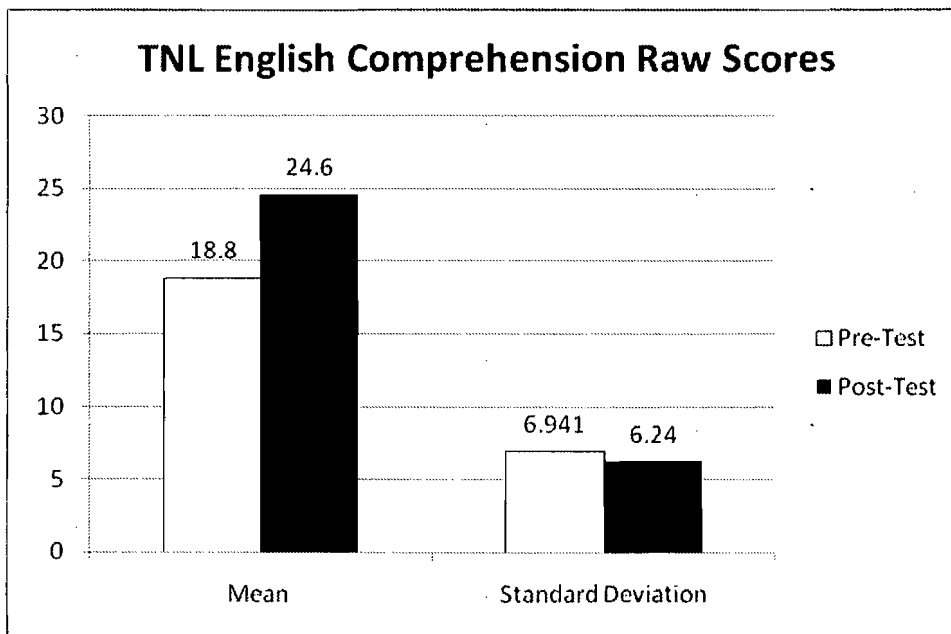


Table 2.

Frog Story Production Raw Scores

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Mean	9.10	3.873
Standard Deviation	13.40	4.427

Chart 2.

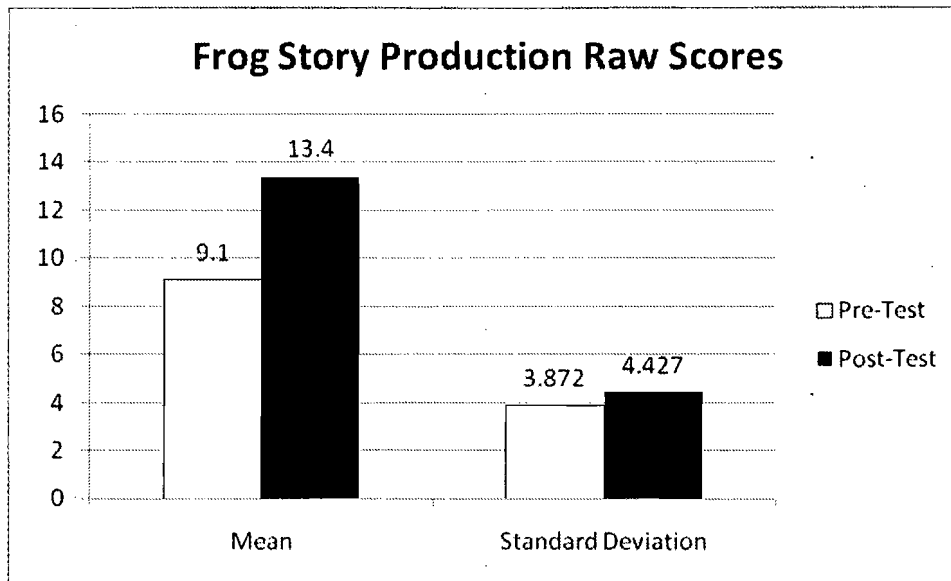
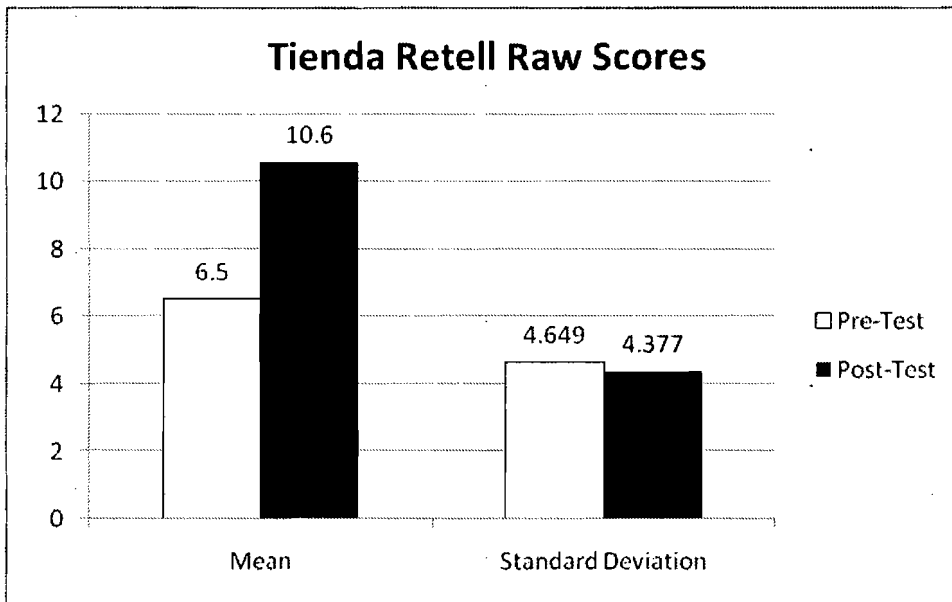


Table 3.

Tienda Retall Raw Scores

	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Mean	6.50	4.649
Standard Deviation	10.60	4.377

Chart 3.



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