

NARRATIVE ABILITIES OF PRESCHOOLERS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Zuzana Petrová

TRNAVA UNIVERSITY, SLOVAKIA

NARRATIVE ABILITIES and literacy practices

- narratives are source of higher-level language abilities, extending oral language discourses with deploying reasoning strategies and engagement in perspective-taking that is supportive for reading for meaning and comprehension
- narratives raise greater demand on semantic clarity, planning and linguistic self-monitoring as they lack of supportive framework of conversational interactions (implicit shared background knowledge and nonverbal cues) (Nicolopoulou et al., 2006) and challenge children with building up a picture of a world only with words (Wells, 1985)
- beneficial for understanding and producing type of conventions that are both typical for classroom interactions and instruction (Gillam, Pina & Miller, 1999) and supportive for language development.

NARRATIVE ABILITIES and low SES

- Children from low-income families are impoverished in sense of:
 - living in more isolation (access to child care, information, emotional support) (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2008)
 - reduced access to verbal interactions and literacy experiences that may result in lower language skills necessary for school (Zevenbergen, Whitehurst, 2003)
 - types of personal world experiences, including time spent with reading and story sharing (Hart, Risley, 1995)

Without adequate exposure to input and practice support, the child may not be able to learn adequate narrative skills for academic success.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

What is the profile of narrative abilities of children from low SES families in Slovakia before school entry?

In what aspects the narrative abilities of children from low SES families and children from middle and high SES families differ?

NARRATIVE ABILITIES

children from low SES families

- Definition of the family background as **economic disadvantage** (not fully covering HLE, but includes different socialisation paths)
- **Subjects:** 53 children (24 girls and 29 boys), mean age = 6 years, 4 months
(min = 65,3 months, max = 92,9 months, *Mdn* = 74,8, *SD* = 55,9 months)

43 children from monolingual families, 9 children from bilingual families (Romani language)
- **Reference group:** 100 children (59 girls and 41 boys), mean age = 6 years, 3 months (random sample)

MATERIALS

- To elicit story production 2 wordless picture books were used – one event-based (Balloon Story) and one problem-based type (Horse and Rabbit Story) of picture sequence.

RESULTS

story productivity

- Measured as total number of words (TNW) and the number of unique words (NUW) in a narrative

		BALLOON STORY			HORSE AND RABBIT STORY		
		Story length	mean	SD	Story length	mean	SD
TNW	53	10 – 101	24,4717	18,56548	12 – 109	33,2264	20,77502
NUW	53	6 – 57	17,6226	11,08052	8 – 68	21,8491	11,81166

- Difference between story length, both the total number of words ($t(52) = 5.25, p < 0.001$) and the number of unique words ($t(52) = 4.63, p < 0.001$) is **significant**

RESULTS

story productivity

- Story length and global structure of narratives (ANOVA)

		BALLON STORY		HORSE AND RABBIT STORY	
GŠ		TNW	NUW	TNW	NUW
1	N=20	18,3182	12,7727	21,1500	14,0500
2	N=14	21,3077	16,6923	30,7143	20,7143
3	N=19	34,2778	24,2222	47,7895	30,8947

- Children producing longer stories also produce **significantly** more complex stories.

RESULTS

global structure of narratives

- Representing the complexity of a plotline:
 - L1 – temporally organised events without using connectives to maintain story cohesion
 - L2 – temporally organised events with use of additive connectives (*and, and then*)
 - L3 – coherently organised story with use of linguistic devices enabling to maintain causal relationships of cause and effect (*because*) and contrasts (*but*) between story components

RESULTS

global structure of narratives

GŠ	BALLON STORY	HORSE AND RABBIT STORY
1	22	20
2	13	14
3	18	19
	<i>Mdn = 1,92 (SD = 0,87)</i>	<i>Mdn = 1,98 (SD = 0,87)</i>

- Difference in global structure of narratives elicited with both materials is **not significant**.
- But in the reference group (Balloon story – *Mdn = 1,9 (SD = 0,75)* and Horse and Rabbit story – *Mdn = 2,13 (SD = 0,72)* the difference is **significant**.
- Only 33% (Balloon story) and 35% (Horse and Rabbit story) achieved story complexity of L3 that is characteristic for the end of a preschool age (Kapalkova, 2002).

RESULTS

story components

- basic and **episodic*** story components:

	BALLOON STORY	HORSE AND RABBIT STORY
	Rate of the components included in stories	
1. Settings	21 (39,6%)	11 (20,8%)
2. Character description	51 (96,2%)	52 (98,1%)
3. Initiating event	52 (98,1%)	53 (100%)
4. Problem	50 (94,3%)	46 (86,8%)
5. Complication or Attempt at resolution*	4 (7,5%)	30 (56,6%)
6. Resolution	2 (3,8%)	24 (45,3%)
7. Motivation*	47 (88,7%)	24 (45,3%)
+ Evaluation*	25 (45,2%)	21 (39,6%)

- Also, story length (TNW) is a predictor of the most of the story components when Horse and Rabbit story is used (but not Balloon story).

RESULTS

story components, story length and economic disadvantage

- Children from low SES families overperformed children in the reference group:
 - in including episodic components in the story Balloon (1,46 : 1,8), when considering the TNW in the story above median,
 - in including the story component „motivation“, not depending on the TNW in the story Horse and Rabbit