

Narrative Language Intervention in Bilingual Children with Developmental Language Disorder

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Background

- Developmental language disorder (DLD) is estimated to affect 7.4% of the population in the Midwest region of the United States.
- Between 7% and 10% all elementary school-age children are at risk for a DLD; this includes dual language learners, of whom approximately 75% are Spanish speakers [2,3].
- Difficulties exhibited by individuals with DLD may include: less complex sentences, short utterances, restricted vocabulary, and lack cohesion in narratives [5]. Specifically, macro- and microstructural skills are impacted in narratives produced by individuals with DLD [5].
- Reading and writing have also been found to be an area of need for those with DLD.
- Limited research and resources available that examine the impacts of narrative intervention on the macro- and microstructural abilities of bilingual speakers with DLD. Such gap in research increases the difficulty of intervention planning for speech-language pathologists (SLP).

Clinical Scenario

- Monica is a bilingual SLP working at a public school that predominantly serves Latino students.
- Ollie, is a Spanish-English bilingual who presents with DLD and is in third grade.
- Ollie displays difficulties with vocabulary, complex syntax, and narrative content and organization.

Clinical Questions

1: What are evidence-based methods of delivering narrative intervention that she can utilize with her bilingual client?

2: Is there potential for the evidence-based narrative interventions to also benefit Ollie's written language abilities?

Literature Review

- Narrative intervention results in positive effects and improvements in macro- and microstructure [6].
- There are commercially available narrative interventions including *Story Champs* and *Supporting Knowledge in Language and Literacy* (SKILL).
- SKILL is intended to be used with children between 5 and 10 years of age and may be used with students who present with a DLD, autism, or who are English language learners [7].
 - It consists of three phases and a total of 50 lessons. SKILL was designed to target and improve macrostructure, microstructure, reading comprehension, and text generation [7].
- Research has shown that writing improves following oral narrative language intervention in the absence of text generation and explicit teaching [8,9].

Intervention Plan

- Follow a tentative timeline provided by the authors of SKILL for a duration of 14 weeks [4] and monitor the quality of the student's narrative writing without explicit writing instruction
- Language of intervention: English and Spanish
- 14-week Overview:
 - 2x weekly → Day one in small group and the second day push-in followed by 1:1
- SKILL Phase Overview:
 - During Phase 1:
 - Explicit instruction of basic story grammar elements using a wordless picture book
 - During Phase 2:
 - Introduce two new story grammar elements and teach literate language to improve the cohesiveness, coherence, and complexity of students' narratives
 - During Phase 3:
 - Promote independence in students when comprehending narrative texts and generating their own stories

Discussion

- Decision-making and intervention planning was guided by the three pillars of evidence-based practice as described by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA [10].
- Narrative intervention has resulted in improved narrative abilities in dual language learners. Similarly, commercially available interventions have also been effective [6].
- Narrative intervention has the potential to improve not only children's expressive and receptive language skills but also their writing skills.

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