



THE POTENTIAL OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PICTURE SEQUENCES FOR ASSESSMENT OF NARRATIVE ABILITIES OF CHILDREN

Zuzana Petrová

TRNAVA UNIVERSITY, SLOVAKIA

NARRATIVE ABILITIES OF CHILDREN

State of the Art

- Narrative = temporally organised sequence of events (Labov & Waletzky, 1967)
- 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
- 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)
- much work done in the field led to the development of norm-referenced tests of narrative language, mainly to distinguish between typically developing children and children with language impairment, e.g. *the Renfrew Bus Story* (Cowley & Glasgow, 1994), *the Edmonton Narrative Norms Instrument* (Schneider, Dubé & Hayward, 2004) and *the Test of Narrative Language* (Gillam, Pearson, 2004)

NARRATIVE ABILITIES OF CHILDREN

State of the Art

- story elicitation based on picture sequences demands a heightened co-authoring role that requires taking risks with the **imagination**, **activating intertextual** and **cultural knowledge** and trusting in the readers' ability to make sense of the story
- narrative abilities may not be readily accessible to children while storytelling and the capacity of children to construct complete and coherent stories also **depends on support** received through picture sequences used to elicit stories (see also Hudson et al, 1992; Shapiro & Hudson, 1991) - pictures can assist in the process of representation and mental retrieval of story components to construct complete and coherent stories (McConnell, 2015)
- while storytelling elicited through picture sequences T. Hoel (2015) children „overlook“ some of the elements in the graphic material and that there are also elements in the graphic material that may explain that **children go off-plotline** at certain point (Hoel, 2015).
- **different methods of story elicitation** (story production tasks and the use of pictures) affect the quality of stories children tell, therefore different tests **do not provide similar picture of children's narrative abilities.**

Purpose of the Study

- Where is the place of narrative abilities assessment in the context of instruction?
- In what sense is the assessment of narrative abilities based on elicitation of storytelling via picture sequences useful to provide children with appropriate support to stimulate their learning potential in early childhood settings?

The purpose of the study is to analyse **how children respond to the picture sequences with different narrative structure.**

- Study is a part of the assessment of early literacy skills and abilities of children before school entry supported by a grant from Slovak Ministry of Education VEGA 2/0134/18 *Pedagogical impacts and developmental achievements resulting from curricular changes in preschool education*

Participants of the Study

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)

All children attended preschool at least one year, spoke official language fluently and passed school readiness tests necessary for being able to start compulsory school attendance (primary school) before the data collection.

Elicitation instruments

- To elicit story production 2 wordless picture sequences were used:
 - one event-based („Balloon“ story) and;
 - one problem-based type („Horse and Rabbit“ story).

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		
N		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

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</i> = 1,92 (<i>SD</i> = 0,87)	<i>Mdn</i> = 1,98 (<i>SD</i> = 0,87)

- Difference in global structure of narratives elicited with both materials is **not 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

elicitation instrument and the story coherence

	BALLOON STORY Stories with off-plotline components	HORSE AND RABBIT STORY Stories with off-plotline components
Picture 1	14	9
Picture 2	14	10
Picture 3	11	13
Picture 4	25	13
<i>Total No. of stories with off-plotline components</i>	36	24

RESULTS

elicitation instrument and the story coherence

		Basic narrative components	Episodic components
BALLON STORY	Picture 1	orientation settings - 2 character descriptions - 1 actions - 13 dialogue - 1	goals - 5 internal responses - 1
	Picture 2	orientation settings - 7 actions - 1	goals - 3 internal responses - 3
	Picture 3	actions - 8	obstacles - 2 internal responses - 3
	Picture 4	actions - 3 orientation settings - 12 character descriptions - 1 dialogue - 2	goals - 3 internal responses - 8 repair - 1

RESULTS

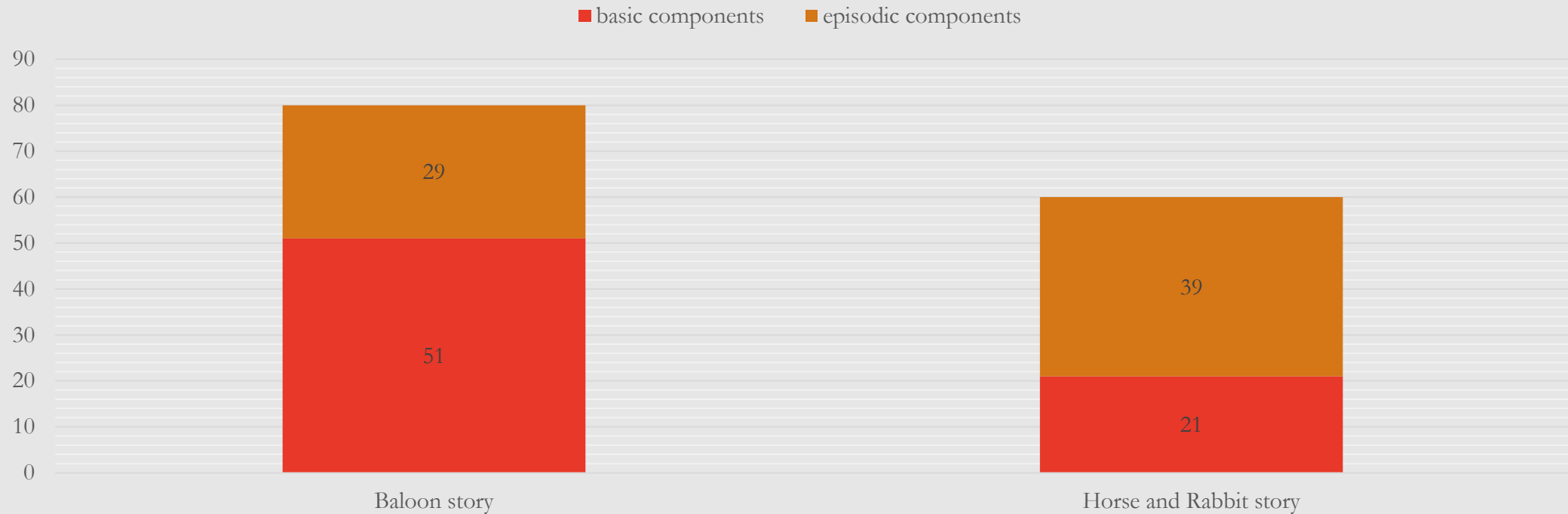
elicitation instrument and the story coherence

		Basic components	Episodic components
HORSE AND RABBIT STORY	Picture 1	orientation setting – 4 actions – 1	internal responses – 1 goals – 2
	Picture 2	orientation setting – 3 actions – 2	obstacles – 3 internal responses – 4
	Picture 3	actions – 2 orientation settings – 1	goals – 5 internal responses - 5 obstacles - 1 repairs – 1
	Picture 4	orientation setting – 2 actions – 4 dialogue – 1 story endings – 1	obstacles - 1 repairs - 6 internal responses - 10

RESULTS

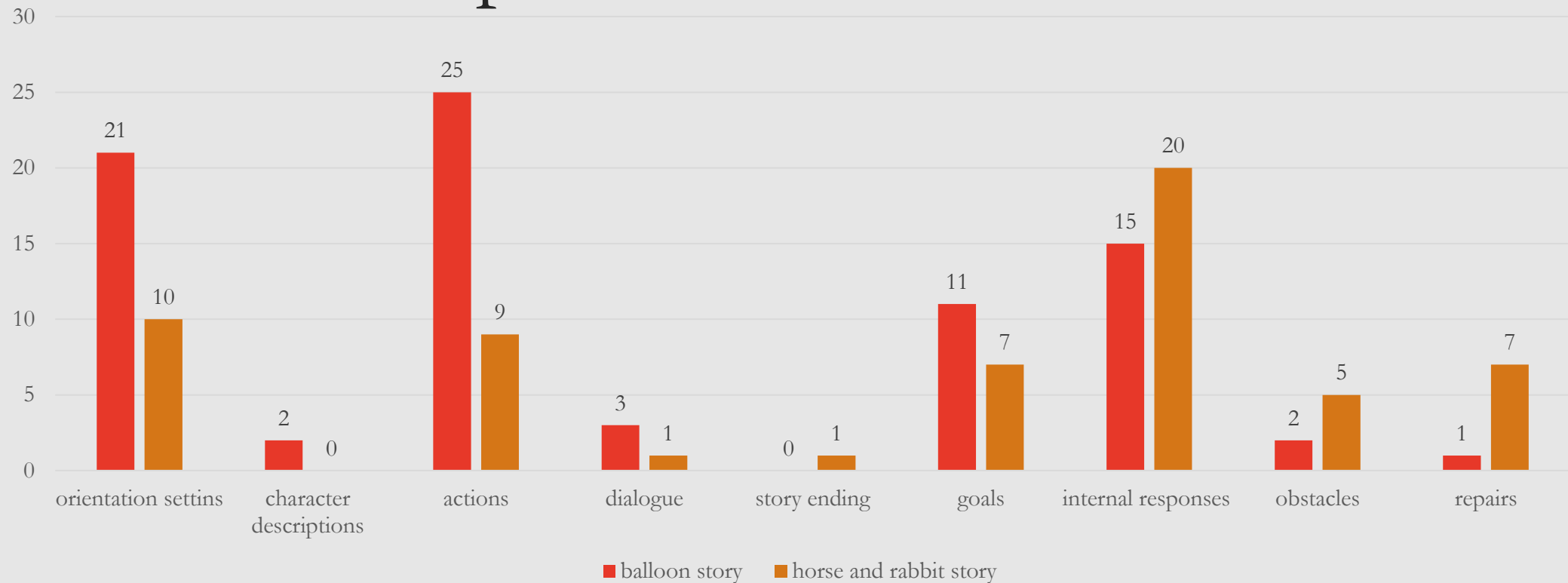
elicitation instrument and the story coherence

Basic and episodic components off-plotline narratives



RESULTS

elicitation instrument and off-plotline narrative components



DISCUSSION

- Children produced significantly longer stories when the story production was elicited with instrument representing problem-based type of a story
- Although using different instruments did not show significant difference in global structure of narratives, the structure of stories differed depending on the graphic material used for story production
- Comparing the off-plotline components in the stories there was a slight tendency to focus more on:
 - description of the setting and the action of the character when the event-based material was used
 - obstacles in the story and repairs if the problem-based material was used
- What is the most suitable material to evaluate the narrative abilities of children? To support the development of narrative abilities of children?