

Teaching Narratives: Practical Tips to Assess and Intervene

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Disclosures

Speakers – Financial

- I have no financial relationships related to the content of course to disclose.

Speakers – Nonfinancial

- I work at Kent State University as part of their Telepractice project.

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Learning Outcomes

The participant will be able to identify the research and evidence base supporting the use of narrative interventions.

The participant will be able to describe typical narrative development and identify common narrative structures.

The participant will be able list methods for eliciting and analyzing narrative samples.

The participant will be able to list instructional methods and supports for teaching story grammar and narrative structure.

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About Me

Graduate of Kent State University

Currently serve as a school-based speech language pathologist via teletherapy

Provide graduate supervision in teletherapy and on-site

Presenter on topics related to speech language pathology and telepractice

Adjunct Course Lecturer for Kent State University

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What are Narratives?

Essentially, narratives are stories.

- Personal
- Fictional

Major component of communication

- Occur in daily communication and occur early in development (children as young as two tell personal narratives) (McCabe, Bliss, Barra, & Bennett, 2008)
- Important for academic and social success

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What Is Narrative Intervention?

Peterson (2011, p. 208) defines narrative intervention as “as an intervention procedure that used oral narratives as a medium whereby language-related features were modeled by the clinician and practiced by the participant.”

Different but related to literacy-based interventions in which language activities are embedded in book reading an/or text discussion. (Gillam & Ukrainetz, 2006)

Typically involves the ongoing assessment of story structure and the teaching of story grammar.

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Why Choose Narrative Intervention?

Narrative interventions are consistently shown to improve oral language outcomes (Spencer and Peterson, 2020)

Narrative interventions are flexible.

Narratives are important for social competence and academic achievement (Peterson et al., 2022).

Improving oral language has direct implications for written language (Peterson et al., 2022).

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Educational Standards Related to Narration: Reading Standards for Literature

K	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text. 2. With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details. 3. With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
1st	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask and answer questions about key details and events in a text. 2. Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson. 3. Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.
2nd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask and answer such questions as <i>who</i>, <i>what</i>, <i>where</i>, <i>when</i>, <i>why</i>, and <i>how</i> to demonstrate understanding of key details and events in a text. 2. Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral. 3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges
3rd	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers. 2. Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text. 3. Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
4th	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. 2. Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text. 3. Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
5th	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. 2. Determine a theme of a story, drama or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text. 3. Compare and contrast two or more characters, events, or settings in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Adapted from (Ohio Department of Education, 2017).

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Understanding Narrative Development

Like all language skills, narrative follows a developmental sequence

- Less complex and loose structure → more complex and increased structure
- Pre-Episodic Organization (Ukrainetz, 2006)
 - Descriptive sequences
 - Action sequences
 - Reaction sequences
- Episodic Narratives
 - Episode = complication, an attempt to resolve the complication, a consequence
 - Multiple types of episodes with increasing complexity

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Episode Structure

Incomplete Episode – complication and an attempt

Abbreviated Episode – complication and a consequence

Complete Episode – complication and an attempt and a consequence

Complex Episode – multiple attempts to resolve the complication or multiple episodes.

Adapted from Ukrainetz (2006)
Based on Peterson and McCabe (1983)

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Recognizing Narrative Structure in Books

Thematic Sequences

- Brown Bear Brown Bear

Action Sequences:

- All by Myself (Mayer)

Complete Episode:

- Princess and the Pea

Complex Episodes:

- Room on the Broom
- The Gruffalo

Adapted from Ukrainetz (2006)

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What is Story Grammar ?

Mental organization or schema for organizing the major components of narratives (Fichman et al., 2021, Ukrainetz, 2006)

Typically includes:

- Characters and/or setting
- Initiating event
- Complications
- Motivations
- Plans and/or attempts
- Consequences
- Reactions

Adapted from Ukrainetz (2006)
Based on Peterson and McCabe (1983)

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Narrative Assessment

Vocabulary and grammar skills assessed in narratives are more predictive of later language difficulties than word and sentence level tasks (Ukrainetz, 2015).

Standardized:

- CUBED (Peterson & Spencer, 2012) – Free Resources
- TILLS: Test of Integrated Language and Literacy Skills– Story Retell Subtest and Delayed Retell Subtest (Nelson et al., 2016)
- TNL-2: Test of Narrative Language-Second Edition (Gillam & Pearson, 2017)

Informal:

- Wordless Picture Books
 - Mercer Mayer “Frog” stories
 - The Boy and the Book by David Michael Slater (2015)
 - Simple Story by David Sindrey <https://wow.boomlearning.com/deck/a-simple-story-and-2-more-4nGpCkduSFbSoN9k>
 - SLAM Materials (<https://www.leadersproject.org/disability-evaluation/school-age-language-assessment-measures-slam/>)

Assessment will vary based on the age of client.

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Assessing Fictional Narratives Using Wordless Stories

Provide a model and ask child to retell the story.

Record and/or transcribe the sample live.

Perform analysis

- Macrostructure
 - Story grammar elements
 - Organization
- Microstructure
 - Sentence types (simple, compound, complex)
 - Grammar
 - Semantics
 - Adjectives, specific word choice, relevant story vocabulary
 - Pragmatics
 - Does the child consider the listener’s perspective?
 - Are the character’s actions goal motivated or is there mention of internal states?

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Collecting and Analyzing Personal Narratives

Gather after the retelling of a fictional narrative

Elicit after a clinician model

- Story about a time you were scared

Look at micro and macro level structures

The CUBED has a rubric for scoring personal narratives (Petersen & Spencer, 2016) or you can use a high point analysis (McCabe & Rollins, 1994).

- Series of YES/NO questions
 - 1. Does the story have at least 2 past events?
 - 2. Does the story have more than 2 past events?
 - 3. Do the events have a causal or temporal order to them?
 - 4. Did the participant tell the events in the order they must have occurred?
 - 5. Is there a conflict or cluster of evaluative comments?
 - 6. Is there a resolution?

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Narrative Intervention

Where to start?

- Start with teaching story grammar
- Spencer and Petersen (2020) suggest that children should first taught to retell a minimally complete episode.
 - Reduces linguistic load when working on other language targets in the future.
- Vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar targets can be incorporated later.

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How To Teach Story Grammar

Use multiple exemplars to highlight the targets

Choose multiple stories containing the same structure

Provide multiple and frequent opportunities for practice

Start in smaller chunks if needed and then blend together (Spencer & Petersen, 2020)

Use questioning to highlight story grammar

- Who is the character?
- What was Bill's plan?

Use prior reading activities to highlight story grammar (Ukrainetz, 2015)

- Who do you think the characters are?
- What problem might they have?

Use pictography to help students conceptualize the episodes (Ukrainetz, 2015)

- Quick rudimentary drawings that capture the essence of the story element
- These drawings can be done in whole or small group or individual therapy

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Supporting Story Grammar

Use systematic scaffolds and prompting to attach meaning

Use visual supports and strategies

- Pictography, visual charts, story retell ropes, five finger retell, etc.

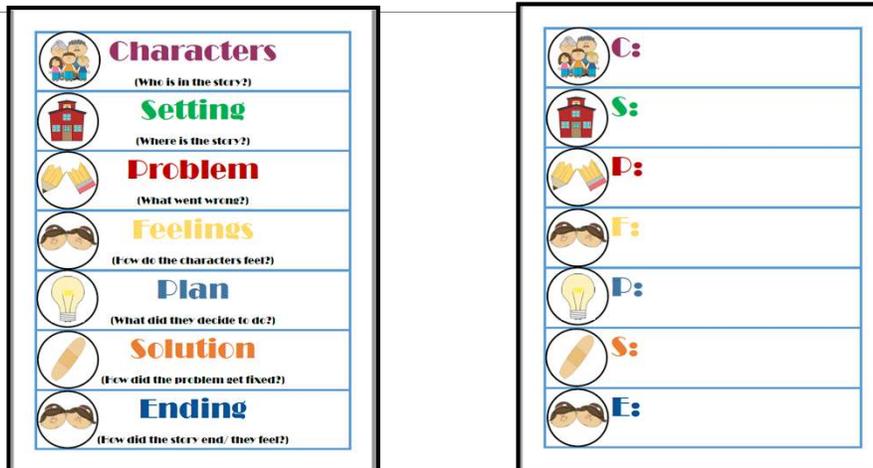
Deliver immediate feedback

Spencer and Petersen (2020) suggest modeling the response or providing a direct prompt/feedback

- Focus on what the child should do
- 2 step prompting (Spencer & Petersen, 2020)
 - Ask specific question? "What did the girl do to solve her problem?"
 - Provide direct model

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Visual story grammar chart example



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Embedding Narratives into Literacy Based Instruction

Several benefits to using literacy-based instruction

- Reduces planning time
- Activities used for several sessions, spanning several weeks.
- Provides continuity and a meaningful context
 - All activities share a context which facilitates learning and provides a familiar thread throughout all activities
- Provides structure for learning
 - Students know what to expect and are more prepared to learn
- Allows for a mix of activity types

(Gillam & Ukrainetz, 2006)

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Whole- Part- Whole

Whole-Part-Whole provides a framework for teaching discrete language skills within a more meaningful “whole”/context.

- First Whole = Initial Reading of the Story (including pre/post story discussion)
- Part = Focused Language Activities
- Second Whole = Create Parallel Story (with emphasis on using the targeted language skills)

(Gillam & Ukrainetz, 2006)

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Example Language Activities

Vocabulary

- Create a word wall
- Practice defining/using new words
- Pantomime or act out words
- Vocabulary journal
- Semantic relationship activities

Grammar and Syntax

- Focus on a syntactic pattern that repeats in the book (e.g., elaborated verb phrase)
- Focus on grammatical structure from book (e.g., possessive –s)
- Use game activities, sentence strips, pictography, writing activities, etc.

(Gillam & Ukrainetz, 2006)

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Example Language Activities

Narrative Structure

- Teach story grammar and practice retelling
- Use puppets/paper dolls, pictography, etc.
- Practice joint retellings

Pragmatics

- Discuss character emotions, motivational states, problem sizes, etc.
- Discuss the use of slang or figurative language within the story
- Provide graphic organizers and visuals to support comprehension

(Gillam & Ukrainetz, 2006)

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Parallel Stories and Personal Narratives

Creation of the parallel story (Gillam & Ukrainetz, 2006)

- Keep the core episodic elements and linguistic targets that have been practiced
- Change the character, setting, elements of the problem, etc.

Personal Narratives

- Clinician may be able to use story retell as a context for eliciting a personal narrative
 - Ex: "Kelsey didn't get the thing she wanted at the bakery. Tell me a story about a time when you went to a store, and they didn't have what you wanted."

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Examples

The Little Red Hen

Tacky the Penguin

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

The WeatherBot Warning

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Questions

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