

Correlations Between Macrostructure Narrative Skills Exhibited by Pre-school Children

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Introduction

- Past research has identified a general tendency: Children’s narrative ability plays a critical role in cognitive and language development. However, relatively few studies explore the relationships among macrostructural elements.
- Macrostructure refers to the overall organization of narratives, including story-grammar elements such as characters, attempts, and consequences (Fey et al., 2004).
 - Character is the most used element, and there is more attempt than consequence element observed, suggesting that character-focused expression emerges early in developmental progression; also, integrating consequences may be a developmentally challenging skill for children(Schachter & Craig, 2006).
- This study aims to examine the correlational relationship between the macrostructure narrative skills exhibited by children aged 3-5 years.
 - We hypothesize that children are more likely to focus on macrostructure elements, such as attempt and consequence, as they frequently portray a cause-and-effect relationship.
- Understanding the correlation can help researchers and educators to understand how children comprehend and process information from their narrative performance.

Conclusion

- The correlation between macrostructure and children's narratives indicated that producing more of one story-grammar element was generally associated with producing more of others, suggesting that macrostructure skills tend to cluster rather than develop in isolation.
- The strongest links involved core components of causal structure (e.g., attempts and consequences) and character information, indicating that children who produce richer narratives in one area often produce richer narratives overall. This finding helps identify how children absorb and express information, providing educators with insights for future instructional design.
- A major strength of this study is the systematic coding of multiple story-grammar components, while its limitations include the cross-sectional design and restricted sample characteristics.
- As this is a longitudinal study, further investigation will be needed to better determine children’s narrative macrostructure and capture their developmental growth.

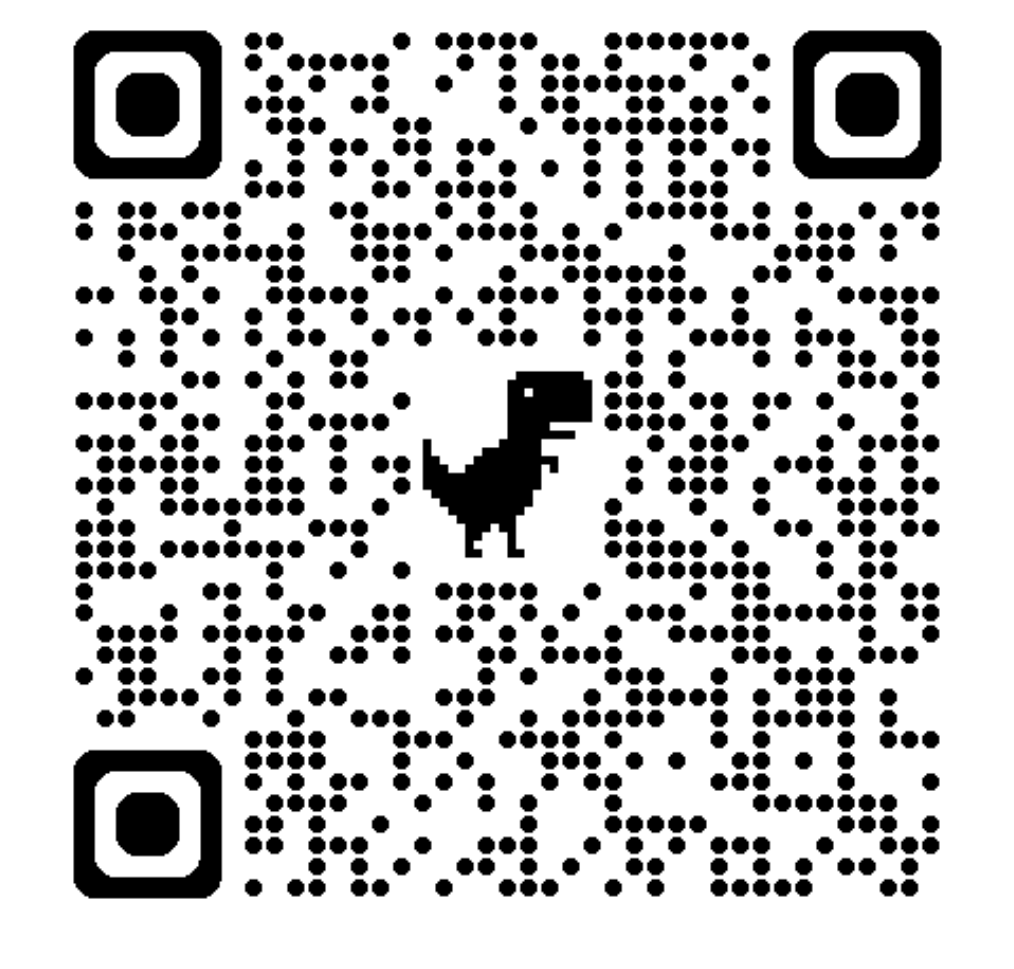
Methods

- Participants**
- There were 131 preschool children aged from 3-5 years old in this study.
- Coding Method**
- Narratives were coded following Diehm et al.’s (2020) coding scheme, which includes character, setting, plot, initiating events, reactions, attempts, consequences, and ending.
- Procedure**
- The database used in the present study comprises archived data from a larger multi-cohort study (Phillips et al., 2022).
 - Data were collected in the Southeastern United States. Preschool children aged 3-5 watched an animated video and were asked to retell the story. Children’s narratives were recorded and transcribed.
 - Each element was coded as 1 if it appeared at least once in an utterance, and 0 otherwise; all those variables have been mentioned.

Result

- The strongest correlation was between attempts and consequences ($r = .43, p < .001$).
- Character counts were moderately related to attempts ($r = .41$), plot ($r = .38$), and initiating events ($r = .35$; all $p < .001$).
- Plot was associated with initiating events ($r = .32$) and attempts ($r = .31$; all $p < .001$).
- Endings showed weak, mostly non-significant relations with other elements, except for a small association with consequences ($r = .21, p = .019$).

References



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Table 1. Relations between macrostructure narrative skills

Variables	n	M	SD	Character	Setting	Plot	Initiating	Reations	Attempt	Consequences	Ending
Character	131	1.52	1.59	-							
Setting	131	0.01	0.09	0.03	-						
Plot	131	0.46	0.89	0.38***	0.25**	-					
Initiating	131	0.25	0.56	0.35***	-0.04	0.32***	-				
Reactions	131	0.1	0.35	0.27**	0.23**	0.23*	0.23**	-			
Attempt	131	0.89	1.39	0.41***	-0.06	0.31***	0.35***	0.18*	-		
Consequences	131	0.93	1.61	0.23**	-0.05	0.06	0.27**	0.1	0.43***	-	
Ending	131	0.55	0.83	0.07	0.15	0.15	0.11	0.02	0.11	0.21*	-

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.