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Story Grammar Analysis of Narratives in Typically Developing Tamil Speaking Children

Ms. Krupa Venkatraman
B.A. S.L. P, M.Sc. (Audiology and Speech Language Pathology), M.A. (Linguistics)
Ph.D. Scholar Department of CAS linguistics
Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu - 608002
krupa1288@gmail.com

Dr. V. Thiruvalluvan
M.A. (Ling.), M.A. (Tamil), M.Phil. (Ling,), Ph.D. (Ling.)
Professor in Linguistics
Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu – 608002
vtvalluvan@yahoo.co.in
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Abstract

Narrative has long been considered as one of the first and most skilled uses of language. The primary way in which human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form, 'this happened and so that happened' (Pipe et al. 1999). The present study profiled the development of story grammar components of 200 typically developing Tamil speaking children in a story retelling task, in the age range 3 years to 6 years 11 months. The analysis revealed a developmental trend in the acquisition and expression of the story grammar components. The cognitive language interplay in narrative context has been discussed. The patterns of presentation across age groups have been discussed in this paper. This study would provide normative data to evaluate narrative in Tamil speaking children. The pattern of acquisition of narrative would help plan intervention for children with language disorders.

Keywords: story grammar, macrostructures, narratives, story retelling, cognition, memory, Typically Developing Tamil Speaking Children

1. Introduction

Narratives are the earliest monologue discourse form to develop and are used to report, analyse, and regulate daily activities (Ukrainetz et al. 2005). Narratives in the form of storytelling are an inherent part of human culture that has been passed down from generations since ancient times.

Narrative is the first type of extended discourse in which children engage. They first listen to narratives and stories told by others and soon learn to actively participate and construct narratives reflecting their thoughts and musings as they grow older. Narratives also play a

significant role in the children's school education where it is used in interaction with teachers and peers, and between the children and written texts or graphic representations such as drawings, diagrams, and photos. Narratives are also used to evaluate children's ability to re-tell, summarize, or paraphrase stories and events (Kao M., 2015). The narrative abilities of young children are rooted in the knowledge derived from their mental interpretations of the events and their subsequent verbalization. The academic and language skills of a child are effectively predicted by his or her narrative skills before entering the school (Peterson and McCabe 1994).

Narratives have been analysed primarily in the personal context or using fictional stories. Traditionally, Fictional narratives have the potential for revealing a formal performance aspect lacking in informal personal conversational narratives. Therefore, they are more commonly used in narrative assessment and instruction of young children (Ukrainetz et al. 2005).

Story retelling involves the recall of a story where the topic, content and length of discourse differ across different speakers as they must draw from their lexicon and linguistic skills to retell the story. It is considered as the best predictor of language delays in young children as it reflects their ability to interpret and reconstruct a coherent narrative (Gazella and Stockman 2003). Story generation requires the narrator to invent a narrative using their own words. The narrator must be creative and original in constructing their narrative as generating a story for the first time requires cognitive and linguistic skills (Gazella and Stockman 2003). Owing to the simplicity and use of pre-modelling in elicitation, story retelling task was the choice of elicitation for the present study.

Every narrative has two common attributes: thematic coherence at the macro level of the overall structure of events, and linguistic cohesion at the micro-level of referents and clauses. Irrespective of the language, dialect, type of story structure and theme, every narrative is constructed to maintain the coherence and cohesion of the narrative (de Villiers 2004).

Narrative macrostructure analysis can be done using different approaches. The most commonly used approach was developed by Stein and Glenn (1979) to examine the story content, who proposed that the story consists of two main units: a setting statement and one or more episodes. The setting statement provides the social, physical, or temporal context of the story and introduces the characters. An episode consists of a behavioural sequence of story grammar units like initiating event, internal response, plan, attempt, consequence, and reaction that describe the character's inner thoughts and feelings (John, Lui, and Tannock 2003). Pre-school children often tell charming stories but there is considerable scope for growth concerning life experience, storytelling exposure, academic instruction, and linguistic development. Fictional narratives are also used in schools for instruction, as a context for the development of language and literacy skills, and as a tool for the transmission of knowledge. Thus, both personal and fictional narratives are important in the learning and development of young children (Ukrainetz et al., 2005).

Children begin to narrate as early as when they are 2 years old and their first attempts at narration typically consist of two simple past events strung together (Kelly K. and Bailey A., 2012). Pre-school children generally describe isolated events instead of thematically arranged narratives. They lack the interactive and conversational skills needed to tell stories with structured

narratives. During story retelling, the older children recall more events and construct more inaccurate accounts and lengthen the stories as compared to younger children. Their narrative skills improve in tandem with their ability to read and write (John, Lui and Tannock, 2003). Mccabe and Peterson (1990) found that children across different age groups produced more goal-directed episodes in their narratives as compared to their fictional narratives (Terry et al. 2013) also found statistically significant differences in the microstructure and macrostructure of personal and fictional narratives. Thus, children's narrative skills vary across narrative genres.

Although stories and narratives are universal, they carry different styles of presentations, social value, and interactive functions across different cultures. Thus, the variations in languages must be analysed and recorded to understand the typical development (Kao 2015). Therefore, the typical development mentioned in the literature could not be extrapolated other languages until verified and tested. The insight on typical development helps to analyse the narratives in children with language disorders.

The narrative literature in the Tamil language notably reflects two studies, 1) the story grammar analysis in Tamil speaking children in five to eight-year-old children, done with 'Frog where are you?' story normed with English population (Priyadharshini 2017); 2) the profile of syntactic and semantic diversity in first and second grade Tamil speaking children using microstructural parameters of narratives in self-narratives and story retelling tasks (Ravichandran et al. 2020). There are no established normative data on the early development of narrative. The material used in the study was not normed for Tamil speaking population (e.g. Frog Where Are You?) used by Priyadharshini in 2017.

The present study aimed at evaluating the emerging narratives of Tamil speaking children in the age range three years to six years eleven months using story grammar analysis in a story retelling context.

1.1 Objectives

To identify the developmental trends in the expression of story grammar components in the story retelling of Tamil speaking preschool children.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Two hundred typically developing Tamil speaking children participated in this study. The children were in the age range of 3;1 to 6;11 years, who were divided into 4 groups (3;1 to 3;11, 4;1 to 4;11, 5;1to 5;11 and 6;1 to 6;11). The children were selected from eight mainstream schools and neighbourhood communities in and around Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India (Table, 1).

Table 1 Demographic data of participants on mean age and gender ratio

Age	3 to 3;11	4 to 4;11	5 to5;11	6 to 6;11
Number (n=200)	50	50	50	50
Males/Females (n)	25/25	25/25	25/25	25/25
Mean age (years)	3 yrs; 7 mon	4 yrs; 6 mon	5 yrs; 5 mon	6 yrs; 6 mon

2.2 Stimuli

The material for story retelling were three pictured stories, with a printed text description of the story in Tamil. The stories were selected from a forum called Storyweavers.com. These are available in a common medium however were not used as curriculum or rather the children were not exposed to them like the regular moral stories taught at school. Two eminent linguists evaluated the contents for the story retell. The contents were checked for meaning, spelling, and simplicity.

2.3 Pilot Data

There were eight stories selected for the story retell task initially, a pilot study was conducted to select the stories that are easier to relate and respond. The pilot data was conducted with 10 children in the lower age group 3 to 3;11 years and 4 to 4;11 years, 15 children in each age group. The pilot data involved story retell with the stimuli to check for “Familiarity" of the material to be presented. The data in the pilot study were analysed for macrostructure components for its presence or absence. The stories which obtained greater scores were analysed. Based on the responses a story named “My fish, no fish” (https://storyweaver.org.in/stories/7707-kulaththil-irundha-kurumbukaara-meengal), were selected as final presentation material for data collection.

To maintain newness and task originality such stories available in the market but not frequently used or heard were used. The picture stimuli were made into a separate booklet.

2.4 Narrative Elicitation Method

Two hundred children participated in the present study from various schools across Tamil Nadu. The narrator told the story two times to the child and asked to retell the story seeing the book with words printed in Tamil. Each child was assessed separately in a quiet room. All the sessions were audio-video recorded with an Olympus camera. Overall recording duration ranged from 20 minutes for each child. During the recording, social reinforcement was given to keep up the motivation of the child. After the recording was completed, each child was reinforced verbally and a few tangible reinforcements such as stickers, pens, and pencils were given.

2.5 Transcription and Coding

The video samples were orthographically transcribed manually. Transcribers could listen to an utterance up to three times to ensure that conditions for determining intelligibility were uniform across all narrative samples. Only complete and fully intelligible utterances were included in the analysis. The unit of analysis was an utterance (the number of utterances was fragmented to analyse the components of narratives.

2.6 Coding for Macrostructure Analysis

The macrostructure elements were analysed in terms of the story grammar (SG) components. The SG components include setting (S), characters (C), initiating event (IE), internal plan (IP), Attempt (A) and outcome (O), resolution (R) of the event (Stein and Glenn 1979). The narrative sample for three stories of story retell were organized into utterances to be analysed for the story grammar components in them. The scoring involved a rating procedure for the sample from 3-0 where for each component of story grammar, 3 denotes accomplished/detailed description of the component, 2 denotes main content of the component being described, 1 denotes only when a relevant attempt is to make to describe the component and 0 denotes the absence or no attempts to describe the component.

2.7 Reliability

The principal investigator watched and re-transcribed the narratives included in the study for reliability purposes. Agreement between each of the transcriptions and the original transcriptions done by the principal investigator exceeded 90%. The narrative samples of the participants were categorized based on the tasks used and the stimuli involved across the age groups. The data were coded numerically and typed out in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet according to the age range.

3. Results and Discussion

The present study aims to evaluate and report the narratives in typically developing Tamil speaking children in the age range 3;0 – 6;11 (years; months). A story grammar analysis was employed to analyse the narrative macrostructure. The constituents of the macrostructure include a setting and an episode. The episodic features analysed were the character, initiating event, internal response, Attempt, outcome, and resolution. The six parameters were assessed across four age groups (3;0-3;11; 4;0-4;11; 5;0-5;11, 6;0–6;11).

3.1 Developmental Trends

The story grammar components were analysed for developmental trends and gender differences across four age groups using Two-way ANOVA. The results of ANOVA obtained for each parameter have complied with two story retelling conditions.

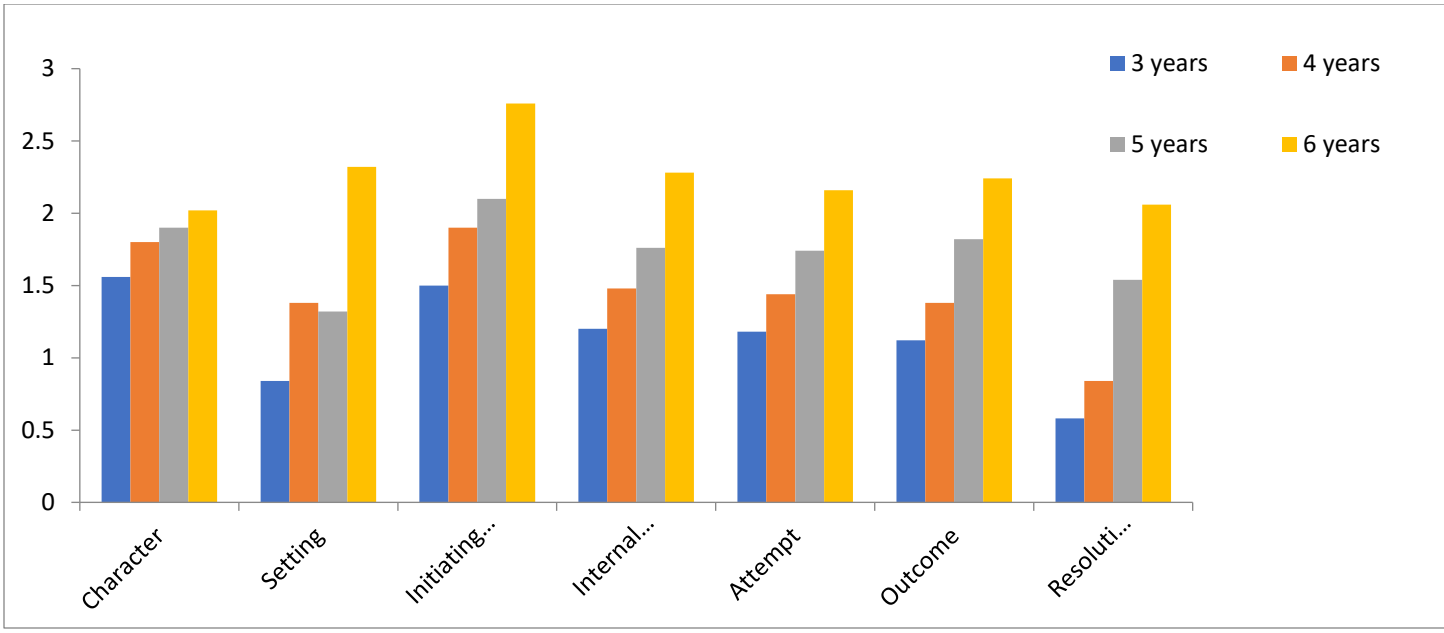
The Two-way Anova results revealed a significant difference in the expression of story grammar components in narratives of children across four age groups (Table 2). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, as Anova indicates significant variance. All six components in the first story showed a significant increase in the score with an increase in age. The Anova result for in the story

retelling condition revealed a significant difference in story grammar elements across the four age groups. There was an increasing trend in the expression of story grammar elements with an increase in age.

Table 2

Story grammar element	Mean and Standard Deviation across age groups and ANOVA results									
	3 years		4 years		5 years		6 years		F- value	p-Value
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Character	1.56	.64	1.80	.49	1.90	.416	2.02	.14	10.11	<.001
Setting	.84	.68	1.38	.75	1.32	.713	2.32	.68	46.21	<.001
Initiating event	1.50	.58	1.90	.58	2.10	.416	2.76	.43	59.55	<.001
Internal Plan/Response	1.20	.49	1.48	.71	1.76	.52	2.28	.70	28.89	<.001
Attempt	1.18	.52	1.44	.76	1.74	.60	2.16	.54	25.52	<.001
Outcome	1.12	.59	1.38	.73	1.82	.69	2.24	.47	32.28	<.001
Resolution	.58	.57	.84	1.04	1.54	.71	2.06	.79	35.95	<.001

Chart 1 - showing the mean of story grammar elements across four age groups in the first story retelling context.



3.2 Between Group Differences in Story Grammar Elements

3.2.1 Character

Table 3

Showing the Post Hoc Comparison for the Story grammar element Character between four age groups in Story Retelling context.

(I) Age Group	(J) Age Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
3 years	4 years	-.24*	.086	.036	-.47	-.01
	5 years	-.34*	.086	.001	-.57	-.11
	6 years	-.46*	.086	<.001	-.69	-.23
4 years	3 years	.24*	.086	.036	.01	.47
	5 years	-.10	.086	1.000	-.33	.13
	6 years	-.22	.086	.070	-.45	.01
5 years	3 years	.34*	.086	.001	.11	.57
	4 years	.10	.086	1.000	-.13	.33
	6 years	-.12	.086	.999	-.35	.11
6 years	3 years	.46*	.086	<.001	.23	.69
	4 years	.22	.086	.070	-.01	.45
	5 years	.12	.086	.999	-.11	.35

Interpretation

In the post hoc analysis, Bonferroni correction was applied owing to significant differences obtained in Two-way ANOVA (table, 3). There is a significant difference in the expression of characters in the narrative between the 3-year-old and 5-year-old children, 3-year-old and 6-years-old children and 4-years-old and 5-years-old children, 4-year-old children, and 6-year-old children.

3.2.2 Setting

Table 4

Showing the Post Hoc Comparison for the Story grammar element setting between four age groups in Story Retelling context.

(I) Age Group	(J) Age Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
3 years	4 years	-.54*	.129	<.001	-.88	-.20
	5 years	-.48*	.129	.002	-.82	-.14
	6 years	-1.48*	.129	<.001	-1.82	-1.14
4 years	3 years	.54*	.129	<.001	.20	.88
	5 years	.06	.129	1.000	-.28	.40
	6 years	-.94*	.129	<.001	-1.28	-.60
5 years	3 years	.48*	.129	.002	.14	.82
	4 years	-.06	.129	1.000	-.40	.28
	6 years	-1.00*	.129	<.001	-1.34	-.66
6 years	3 years	1.48*	.129	<.001	1.14	1.82
	4 years	.94*	.129	<.001	.60	1.28
	5 years	1.00*	.129	<.001	.66	1.34

Interpretation

In the post hoc analysis, Bonferroni correction was applied owing to significant differences obtained in Two-way ANOVA (Table,4). There is a significant difference between 3 years and 4-year-old children, 3-years-old and 5-years-old children, 3-years-old and 6-years-old children, 4-years-old and 6-years-old children, 5-years-old and 6-years-old children.

3.2.3 Initiating Event

Table 5

Showing the Post Hoc Comparison for the Story grammar element Initiating Event between four age groups in Story Retelling context.

(I) Age Group	(J) Age Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
3 years	4 years	-.40*	.096	<.001	-.66	-.14
	5 years	-.60*	.096	<.001	-.86	-.34
	6 years	-1.26*	.096	<.001	-1.52	-1.00
4 years	3 years	.40*	.096	<.001	.14	.66
	5 years	-.20	.096	.236	-.46	.06
	6 years	-.86*	.096	<.001	-1.12	-.60
5 years	3 years	.60*	.096	<.001	.34	.86
	4 years	.20	.096	.236	-.06	.46
	6 years	-.66*	.096	<.001	-.92	-.40
6 years	3 years	1.26*	.096	<.001	1.00	1.52
	4 years	.86*	.096	<.001	.60	1.12
	5 years	.66*	.096	<.001	.40	.92

Interpretation

In the post hoc analysis, Bonferroni correction was applied owing to significant differences obtained in Two-way ANOVA (Table,5). There are a significant difference 3-year-old and 4-year-old children, 3-year-old and 5-year-old children, 3-year-old and 6-year-old children, 4-year-old and 6-year-old children, 5-years-old and 6-year-old children. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and find a significant difference in the initiation of an event in the story across the four age groups. The results reveal an increasing trend in children's expression of initiating events in the story retelling task.

3.2.4 Internal Plan

Table 6

Showing the Post Hoc Comparison for the Story grammar element Internal Plan between four age groups in Story Retelling context

(I) Age Group	(J) Age Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound

3 years	4 years	-.28	.121	.131	-.60	.04
	5 years	-.56*	.121	<.001	-.88	-.24
	6 years	-1.08*	.121	<.001	-1.40	-.76
4 years	3 years	.28	.121	.131	-.04	.60
	5 years	-.28	.121	.131	-.60	.04
	6 years	-.80*	.121	<.001	-1.12	-.48
5 years	3 years	.56*	.121	<.001	.24	.88
	4 years	.28	.121	.131	-.04	.60
	6 years	-.52*	.121	<.001	-.84	-.20
6 years	3 years	1.08*	.121	<.001	.76	1.40
	4 years	.80*	.121	<.001	.48	1.12
	5 years	.52*	.121	<.001	.20	.84

Interpretation

In the post hoc analysis, Bonferroni correction was applied owing to significant differences obtained in Two-way ANOVA (Table, 6). There is a significant difference between 3 years and 5 years old children, 3-years-old and 6 years old children, 4-years-old and 6-years-old children, 5-years-old and 6-years-old children. However, there was no significant difference between 3-years-old and 4-years-old children, 4-years-old and 5-years old children.

3.2.5 Attempt

Table 7

Showing the Post Hoc Comparison for the Story grammar element Attempt Between four age groups in Story Retelling context.

(I) Age Group	(J) Age Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
3 years	4 years	-.26	.118	.170	-.57	.05
	5 years	-.56*	.118	<0.001	-.87	-.25
	6 years	-.98*	.118	<0.001	-1.29	-.67
4 years	3 years	.26	.118	.170	-.05	.57
	5 years	-.30	.118	.069	-.61	.01
	6 years	-.72*	.118	<0.001	-1.03	-.41

5 years	3 years	.56*	.118	<0.001	.25	.87
	4 years	.30	.118	.069	-.01	.61
	6 years	-.42*	.118	.003	-.73	-.11
6 years	3 years	.98*	.118	<0.001	.67	1.29
	4 years	.72*	.118	<0.001	.41	1.03
	5 years	.42*	.118	.003	.11	.73

Interpretation

In the post hoc analysis, Bonferroni correction was applied owing to significant differences obtained in Two-way ANOVA (Table,7). There is a significant difference between 3 years and 4 years old children, 3 years and 5 years old children, 3 years and 6 years old children, 4 years and 6 years old children, and 5years and 6 years old children. However, there were no significant differences between the age groups for 4 years and 5 years old children.

3.2.6 Outcome

Table 8

Showing the Post Hoc Comparison for the Story grammar element Outcome between four age groups in Story Retelling context.

(I) Age Group	(J) Age Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
3 years	4 years	-.26	.123	.212	-.59	.07
	5 years	-.70*	.123	<0.001	-1.03	-.37
	6 years	-1.12*	.123	<0.001	-1.45	-.79
4 years	3 years	.26	.123	.212	-.07	.59
	5 years	-.44*	.123	.003	-.77	-.11
	6 years	-.86*	.123	<0.001	-1.19	-.53
5 years	3 years	.70*	.123	<0.001	.37	1.03
	4 years	.44*	.123	.003	.11	.77
	6 years	-.42*	.123	.005	-.75	-.09
6 years	3 years	1.12*	.123	<0.001	.79	1.45
	4 years	.86*	.123	<0.001	.53	1.19

	5 years	.42*	.123	.005	.09	.75

Interpretation

In the post hoc analysis, Bonferroni correction was applied owing to significant differences obtained in Two-way ANOVA (Table, 8). There is a significant difference between 3 years and 5 years old children, 3 years and 6 years old children, 4 years and 5 years old children, 4 years and 6 years old children, and 5 years and 6 years old children. However, there were no significant differences between the age groups for 3 years and 4 years old children.

3.2.7 Resolution

Table 9

Showing the Post Hoc Comparison for the Story grammar element Resolution between four age groups in Story Retelling context.

(I) Age Group	(J) Age Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
3 years	4 years	-.26	.158	.614	-.68	.16
	5 years	-.96*	.158	<0.001	-1.38	-.54
	6 years	-1.48*	.158	<0.001	-1.90	-1.06
4 years	3 years	.26	.158	.614	-.16	.68
	5 years	-.70*	.158	<0.001	-1.12	-.28
	6 years	-1.22*	.158	<0.001	-1.64	-.80
5 years	3 years	.96*	.158	<0.001	.54	1.38
	4 years	.70*	.158	<0.001	.28	1.12
	6 years	-.52*	.158	.007	-.94	-.10
6 years	3 years	1.48*	.158	<0.001	1.06	1.90
	4 years	1.22*	.158	<0.001	.80	1.64
	5 years	.52*	.158	.007	.10	.94

Interpretation

In the post hoc analysis, Bonferroni correction was applied owing to significant differences obtained in Two-way ANOVA (Table, 9). There is a significant difference between 3 years and 5 years old children, 3 years and 6 years old children, 4 years and 5 years old children, 4 years and 6 years old children, and 5 years and 6 years old children. However, there were no significant differences between the age groups for 3 years and 4 years old children.

3 .3 Discussion

The narrative plays a key role in our cognition in making sense of our everyday experiences. Anderson (2015) describes five core functions of narratives in human cognition. They are 1) sense-making by segmenting experiences into useful chunks, 2) causally linking events, 3) typifying phenomena to determine norms, 4) sequencing and planning actions, and 5) distributing intelligence across time, and space, including the function of communication.

Kao (2015) discusses children as early as three years possess seminal skills required for narratives such as a sense of self, memory about past, sense of temporal and spatial relations, and cause and effect relationships. Three-year-old children develop an understanding of how events are organized and described. John (2003) reports three-year-olds narratives as a description of picture frames and/or isolated events rather than thematically organized narratives. Four-year-old children can express causal relations and events. John (2003) report that cognitive linguistic functions develop at four years of age. Five-year-olds explain the motifs and goals of the events and present intentions and mental states. John (2003) reports five-year-olds to tell temporally organized narratives. The narrative structure knowledge emerges at this age. Six-year-olds narrate a complete story with background information, time, location, and characters including the complications and consequences.

As Anderson (2015) points out, the improvement and growing sophistication of these narratives most likely coincides with the accumulation of narrative structures like scripts and schema in semantic memory. The accumulation of experiences into episodic memory provides the basis for the narrative store with which narrative intelligence in children starts. The evidence of children's narratives improving with age indicates that the acquisition of scripts and schema and the semantic memory for the same grows with experience and influence human reconstruction of memories. Reese et al., (2012) argue the importance of children's vocabulary development to have elaborative narratives. To understand and retell a story, narrator needs to formulate a narrative structure that delineates context and characters. The individual story grammar elements and the developmental pattern obtained in the study are discussed below.

3.3.1 Story Grammar Elements in Story Retelling Condition

3.3.1.1 Character

The character that describes the protagonist seemed to be the most expressed of the six-story grammar element. All three stories had equal expression characters across the four age groups. The storytelling in the Tamil context is always centred on the animate or inanimate protagonist. Therefore, the retell reflects the typical narrative style in the Tamil Language. Character introduction is limited to a single point given for specific reference to each one of the story characters. Character introduction is restricted to two points, one where the main characters are mentioned and the other for mentioning supporting characters (Reese et al. 2012)

3.3.1.2 Setting

Settings refer to the locale, time in the story where the events take place. The mention of settings from the picture increased with an increase in age. Berman, (1995) describes that 3-year-

olds translate static visual pictures into dynamic. The young children tend to list places without references, while above 5 years who debriefed the routes through spaces performed the task significantly better. The lower age group tends to have limited experience with relative locations and spatial contiguity (Kao 2015). Peterson & McCabe, (1994) the orientations in terms of information about places, times, and characters did not only increase with age but also give more details in the relations between them. They also found that the story structures improved along with the children's presentation skills along with the growing up passage.

3.3.1.3 Initiating Event

The story grammar element initiating event pertains to an action, goal, and problem that the characters in the story undergo. There is a significant increase in the expression of initiating event with increase in age. The three-year-old children tend to provide actions predominantly while 4 and 5-year-old children tend to give more accounts on the initiating events. However, the six-year-old children could explain the motivations and problem explicitly. These observations were similar to a study done in Tamil, which examined story grammar elements in 5 to 8 year old Tamil speaking children (Priyadharshini 2017). Berman (1995) reports that three-year olds translate the static visual pictures into dynamic verbal expressions. They tend to produce isolated events.

3.3.1.4 Internal Plan

The story grammar element internal plan also reflects a developmental increase. The internal plan refers to the character's decision to overcome a problem. The lower age group tend to have a minimal expression of this element in the story. The lower age group 3-year-old tends to have a less frequent expression of the internal plan compared to all the age groups. The 4-year-old and 5-year-old also had differences in expressing this story grammar element. Out of the three retell conditions examined there was a marked difference in the expression of the internal plan between the age groups 3 years and 6 years. However, the first and second retell condition reflected a difference between 5 years and 6 years, but this was not observed in the third retell condition. The higher age group could therefore understand the motives of the characters and express the same. Children in the age range 6 years report the internal plan of the characters frequently (Kao 2015). Priyadharshini (2017) also reported that an internal plan was less frequent in 5-year-old children's narratives.

3.3.1.5 Attempt

Attempt refers to actions towards resolving a situation or achieving a goal. This story grammar element is also observed to increase in frequency with an increase in age. The lower age group 3 years and 4 years tend to express the attempts less frequently as compared to the 5- and 6-year-olds. There was a significant difference between 5- and 6-years old mention of attempts in the story, in that 6 years olds could use this element more frequently than the 5-year-olds. This could be due to the complexity involved in understanding this story grammar element. The results were consistent with the findings of Priyadharshini (2017). Owing to the higher experiential and

internalizing abilities the children above 5 years tend to use the attempts in narratives, however, the frequency of use is maximal in the 6 years and above age group.

3.3.1.6 Outcome

Outcome refers to the end states representing the character's attainment or non-attainment of a goal. Children were able to relate to the outcomes of the story narrated from 3 years. The expression of the outcome however varied across the four age groups. The frequency of this story grammar element is frequent in the age groups 5 and 6 years. There were no significant differences in the expression of 3 and 4 years in all the three retell conditions. These findings reiterate the fact that the major use of story grammar elements occurs in the children in the age range of 5 years (Muñoz et al., 2003). After 5 to 6 years of age, the structural complexity begins to reach the abbreviated and complete episode format (Klecan-Aker and Kelty 1990).

3.3.1.7 Resolution

Resolution refers to emotions and thoughts of the character at the end of the story. The results of the present study report a gradual increase in the expression of resolution in the children's narrative. There were significant differences between 3 years, 4 years and that of 5 years and 6 years. There was no significant difference between 3 years and 4 years and that of 5 years and 6 years of age, except in the first story retell context. These findings reiterate the findings in various studies that classic narrative is attained at 6 years of age. The frequency of resolution in the narrative is more in this age group, however, the complexity is not completely attained. Priyadharshini (2017) also reported that 6-year-olds used resolution less frequently used as compared to 7-year-olds. Kelly & Bailey (2013) finds that by 6 years of age children tell sequential narratives that build to a climax and bring the action to a resolution.

4. Conclusion

The present study is an attempt to profile the typical development of narrative in children in Tamil speaking context. Literature delineates cross-linguistic differences and similarities in the narrative development. The narrative literature in Tamil speaking children shows a dearth of established normative data for children under age 5 years. Narrative as a skill develops as early as 2 years of age. Narrative skills define the maturation of cognitive framework and its organisation in language expression. It is a self-initiated creative skill expressed by children or adult. The present study explored the developing narrative skill of Tamil speaking children, in the age range 3 years and 6 years 11 months. The story grammar components were assessed, using a rating procedure. The age-wise expression of the components is discussed. The results could describe the development of narrative pattern in the Tamil speaking children. These results would help us compare the deviance in language disorder and plan intervention for therapy. The data provides insights on order of acquisition of story grammar components and reflects the cognitive complexity the child imparts to connect events. This data would exemplify typical story grammar development for narratives in Tamil speaking children. The gradual increase in complexity of narrative seems to be aligned with the typical language and cognitive development. The narrative assessment therefore reflects the culmination of both the skills and its maturity with age.

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