
DISCOURSE STRUCTURES IN THE NARRATIVES OF GRADE 3 SWAZI LEARNERS

Nhleko Cynthia Nomagugu

University of Eswatini (UNESWA), Department of Academic Communication Skills, Private Bag 4, Kwaluseni,
M201, Eswatini

Kunene Nicolas Ramona

University of the Witwatersrand, School of Literature, Language and Media (SLLM), Jan Smuts Avenue,
Braamfontein 2000, Johannesburg, South Africa

<https://doi.org/10.54922/IJEHSS.2023.0543>

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to describe the discourse structures when Swazi English as Second Language (ESL) Grade 3 students produce English oral and written narratives. The third graders were typically developing children (TD) and were asked to perform two language tasks. They had to speak and write in English based on a less used wordless cartoon entitled “The boy who learned to fly, Usain Bolt”. ELAN software was used to transcribe and code samples of oral language. The findings were that, both oral and written narrative discourse production had similar narrative structures. However, the differences emanated from the linguistic structures. The written narrative discourse productions were compressed, laden with ungrammatical language and phonetic spelling while oral narrative discourse productions were long, used code-switching, direct speech, contractions, and repairs. Furthermore, the differences in the linguistic discourse structures have a great connection with the students’ varying achievement levels. The implications of these results are that language practitioners/instructors need to help language learners get acquainted with language used in the spoken and written modalities, particularly the middle and lower achievement categories. This could be achieved by focusing their teaching on language forms and provide the learners with proper contexts in which these modes can be used appropriately in English language for academic success.

Key Words: Narrative Structure, Linguistic Structure, Oral Narrative, Written Narrative.

1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers as well as clinical practitioners employ measures of both written and spoken language usage (covering syntax, lexicon, and pragmatics) to assess children’s language abilities [1]. Analyzing the language produced during such assessments is the best way to measure practically all the levels of performance in the language produced such as syntax, semantics, vocabulary, and pragmatics [2]. Despite this, research on the differences between spoken and written language has largely been conducted in older children and adults hence, to address this gap this study focused on the younger children (grade 3 learners). Using these two modalities at the same time is not commonly employed when assessing younger children’s (8-9 years) language proficiency yet this is the crucial point at which younger children could hone and use most of the grammatical structures in both modalities as they are developing their linguistic literacy [3] to improve their academic success. Moreover, oral language skills assist in acquiring the other three language skills, [4] and also known to facilitate the improvement of story writing skills [5]; [6].

[3] and [7] assert that the narrative genre elicited more complex language than any other language tasks. In addition, using narratives help in presenting a situation where lexical and grammatical improvement could easily be seen in children at preschool and at the beginning of school years [8]. Moreover, narratives provide a backdrop to help diagnose what inhibits language development, the cognitive load and other language related structures and problems [9]; [10].

It should be noted that a lot of researchers' attention has been on either oral or written language skills or tasks. Yet, an examination of the two language skills is inseparable in academic settings since ideas explained in spoken language have to be converted into written texts [11]. Also, the focus on one modality over the other deprives researchers the opportunity to completely measure language proficiency in children and our study seeks to address this gap. Moreover, in educational settings in the kingdom of Eswatini the two modalities (speaking and writing) are of great importance because they are assessed in the later years. In schools for instance, assignments and examinations are conducted to assess both the oral and written language. Similarly, at university level, assignments and examinations are assessed through writing and speaking. This therefore, makes spoken and written language necessary for all students to be skilled at to make successful adults academically and professionally [12].

A lot of research has been done on English speaking children but there has been very little done on English bilingual children more especially on both modalities which our study seeks to address. This study employed the use of an adapted narrative because it has a strong association to the style of written language [13]. Additionally, academic success goes hand in hand with the ability to use both oral and written language proficiently [14]. Moreover, [15] contend that speaking and writing are essential constituents for learners' L2 (Second Language) skills. Nonetheless, they do acknowledge the fact that there are differences between speaking and writing. Therefore, the aim of this study was to document the similarities and differences in the discourse structure between written and spoken language of Swazi ESL third graders. This was also, to provide a point of comparison for sequential bilinguals and a teaching point for second language practitioners in the schools.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study used the discourse analysis theory as its framework to analyze the oral and written narrative productions. This theory works best in all forms of discourse such as “spoken, interaction, written and textual discourse” [16] p. 48. We used [3]'s approach to narrative and linguistic structural analysis of discourse which uses narrative structures (macro-structure analysis) and the linguistic structures (syntactic depth and morphological analysis). In addition, narratives were transcribed and analyzed for narrative qualities and structural language based on [17] coding manual with guidelines on how to arrange texts for analysis. The discourse analysis theory provided a theoretical framework to investigate similarities and differences in the discourse structure of each modality.

The section below presents a literature review of studies relating to oral and written narrative discourse structure.

3. DISCOURSE STRUCTURES OF SPOKEN AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

There are numerous characteristics in oral and written language. This is due to processing influences in the production demands of each modality and they come into play irrespective of age [18]). Furthermore, [18] postulates that the younger children's (4th & 7th grades) written language is not too far different from their spoken language while from high school onwards there is a greater differentiation of the two modes of discourse. [19] state that as children's linguistic knowledge develop, they may have difficulty processing more complex information such as, using the suitable syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and phonological forms and this ultimately leads to the use of language disfluencies [20] which eventually give their spoken and written language its own characteristics.

A clear distinction between spoken language and written language is important to understand the nature of the two modalities. [21] assert that spoken language occurs in real time with an audience while the language used in writing is precise, formal and in the form of text. Therefore, based on what these researchers [18]; [21]; [19] say, written and oral discourse is highly likely to yield different characteristics in the language used since both require different cognitive processing.

In a study conducted by [22] of Indonesian ESL Grade 2 elementary students' written and oral narratives it was found that both discourse productions had the crucial story components or structures. On the contrary, the written narratives were more formal whereas the spoken narratives used discourse structures such as contraction, hedges, repair, and repetitions. These discourse structures were as a result of the children taking their time to increase their thought processes in order to come to grips with using the second language.

[23] in their study on children with specific language impairment (SLI) in oral narrative production found that, SLI children had very limited linguistic skills as a result they used more often pauses and repetitions in their narrative production which is because of planning and memory processes. Conversely, the normal-speaking children (NS) had more self-repairs in their narrative production due to their higher competence level in the language of production compared to the SLI children.

Furthermore, in another study [24] examined hesitations (unfilled pauses, filled pauses, non-lexical sounds, and prolongations) during a story-telling task taken from a corpus of 21 pairs of undergraduate students. The pairs comprised of 21 native English speakers and 21 native French speakers telling three lies within a story. For the purposes of their study, they used only eight recordings from the corpus, four made up of L1-L1 combinations and four L1-L2 combinations. The results of their study show that the hesitations produced in L1 and L2 were not significantly different. It is noteworthy, that bilingual learners used more hesitations in the L2 because of the challenges imposed to their memory working load [24]. However, it was found that L2 speakers appeared to need additional planning time when using the L2 compared to the L1 therefore, hesitations were mostly used for planning rather than having linguistic difficulty [24], [25]). They asserted that hesitations can be used to express "parts of the utterance, either by repeating, repairing or starting a new constituent" [24], p. 38.

In a study of repair usage in a community of Spanish/English bilinguals, [26] found that bilingual speakers' over simplifying, switching codes or code-switching, overgeneralization and transfer in language was a result of the heavy cognitive load that they had in comparison to monolinguals. Furthermore, other researchers, [27]; [28]) stated that switching codes was a tactic used by language learners to display the use of component parts of language or parsing in the

course of language handling and not a sign of incompetence. Switching codes was a device often utilized by young bilinguals “to fill in lexical gaps in their knowledge in either language” [29], p. 162. Therefore, code-switching was meticulously used as a mental processing strategy by people who speak dialects that are not similar or bilingual speakers [30].

Research [31]; [32]; [33] conducted in the Southern African context found that children’s narratives did not follow the canonical structure of narratives perceived in the academic environment. Instead, their narrations were like a performance which was linked to the nature of African oral tradition. The children’s narrative had both the traditional opening and closing and did not acknowledge the traditional story grammar elements (particularly internal response) as propagated by [34].

By virtue of the various ways in which the different modalities of language are processed there seems to be differences in the way they are produced. Therefore, it was imperative for this study to provide evidence for these variations in discourse structure between the oral and written narrative production of the young Swazi bilinguals.

4. THE CURRENT STUDY

This study seeks to provide empirical evidence of written and oral productions in narrative discourse of Swazi bilingual children. The study aims to enhance our understanding of the numerous processing demands presented by the spoken and written modalities to school-age young children. This study will uncover comparative information on bilingual narrative productions of siSwati-English young learners, a less studied population. Consequently, knowledge of siSwati-English bilingual productions of narratives can be used to assist in alleviating the challenges faced by students in demonstrating their knowledge and comprehension of English, a second language. The objective of the study was to characterise the structure of narratives produced by 3rd grade Swazi bilingual children.

5. METHODOLOGY

This section describes the design of the study, participants and the research method used to carry out this study.

5.1 The Design of the Study

This study employed a cross-sectional design, since the data used was part of a study done across three age groups and collected from the research participants during a single relatively brief time period. In this study, the data was collected from Swazi bilingual 3rd grade learners with different accomplishments and academic abilities (high, middle and low academic performances).

5.2 Participants

Once ethical clearance was obtained, 15 grade 3 students from a public school took part in the study and were between the ages eight and nine years old. We matched all the participants on performance, geographical area using well-established measures, and culturally appropriate tests. In this study we used quota sampling which is a nonprobability sampling method. When carrying out this research we made sure to impose a quota of 3 girls to 2 boys in the sample, according to the achievement levels of the class (the population) with the help of their teachers. The three broad

categories used were: the higher, middle and the lower achievement/performance groups. There were 9 females and 6 male students in this study. The 3rd graders were all Swazi and spoke SiSwati as their first language and English as their second language. In Eswatini the language of instruction is English from the fourth grade however, in reality the language of instruction is English from the very first grade in this urban public school. The sample matched the proportions that existed in the population of 3rd graders from the public school. This sampling technique helped in controlling for extraneous variables that were not part of the study such as the gender of the students.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) University of the Witwatersrand (Protocol Number H17/09/18), and relevant consent was granted. The data collection process used the spoken and written narratives elicited by using one narrative stimulus, a video/cartoon entitled “The Boy who Learned to Fly, Usain Bolt” [35] The length of the video was one minute thirty seconds. The synopsis of the video is attached as Appendix A. The video was chunked into a story grammar framework [36]; [34], consisting of five episodes (A-E) (see Appendix B) with one to eight propositions/micro-episodes each which are attached as Appendix C. The interviewer asked the participants to watch the wordless short cartoon in a quiet room at school. Then the interviewer asked the participant to tell the story they had just watched, the best way they could. Once the oral narration was completed the interviewer ushered the child to the next room where the narration of the cartoon in writing was done. The data collection process was recorded. Later, the oral tasks administered to the subjects were coded on ELAN, a linguistic annotation tool created by the Max Planck Institute (ELAN (Version 6.3) [37].

Furthermore, the validity of the data collection instruments was validated by the different studies, [38]; [39]; [34] that had used story grammars and macrostructure models. [34] story grammar model was more relevant for the oral narratives while the written narratives had been catered for by the [39] macrostructure model. Furthermore, a pragmatic and functional approach to text-linguistic (discourse) analysis developed by [17] was also used for this study. This approach was further elaborated by [31] where she used a video stimulus akin to this study to fit the Nguni languages. Therefore, this shows that the instrument we used to gather the data had construct validity based on previous studies.

The reliability of the instrument was determined by testing the instruments beforehand by researchers and got similar scores.

6. RESULTS

This study’s main objective was to describe the quality of the discourse structure in how Swazi ESL grade 3 students produce English written and oral narratives. This section discusses our findings elicited from the analysis of the discourse structures of both modalities.

6.1 Similarities in Narrative Structures of Oral and Written Narrative Discourse

6.1.1 Macro-analysis

The results of our study indicate that there were several similarities in the narrative discourse structure of the oral and written production of the 9-year-old children. The children produced most components of the story grammar in their narrations in both modalities. The 3rd graders used the simple macro-structure or the basic narrative schema forms that have a focus on the setting, problem, and resolution of stories. Furthermore, macro episode ‘C’ entitled ‘running through the field’ according to our analyses (see Appendix B) is the narrative schema that shows the attempts

to respond to the initial problem in the story grammar and the most common macro episode in both oral and written narrative discourse production (see Table 1).

Table 1. Macro-Episode C ‘Running through the field’

Mode	Total No of Macro-Episodes	Macro-Episode “C” Mentioned
Oral	107	32 (29.9%)
Written	114	36 (31.6%)

The figures in Table 1 show that approximately one third of the total number of macro-episodes were made up of macro-episode ‘C’.

6.1.2 Story Termination Signal

It was observed in our findings that the oral and written narrative production of the children had various expressions to signal the end of the story such as; “that’s all I saw, it was finished, that’s all I can remember, the end, I am done, and there was the end, that is the end of the cartoon and that was the end of the story”.

Table 2. Number of Story Termination Signal

Mode	Total No of Story Termination Signal
Oral (15)	8
Written (15)	6

The figures in Table 2 show that approximately half of the oral and written narrative productions had indications of story termination signals.

Once the children’s stories covered the first two basic narrative schemas (setting and problem) and were recounting the third/fourth macro-structure, the resolution of the story, which indicated the story was coming to an end, they instinctively used the expressions signalling the end of the narrative discourse production.

6.1.3 Pragmatic Act Type of Clauses

Various pragmatic act types of clauses were observed in the findings of this study. It was found that the pragmatic act type of clauses consists of the speech act of narration, explanation, interpretation, and commentary. The narrative pragmatic act type of clauses was highest in both the children’s oral and written discourse production data. Conversely, the non-narrative pragmatic act type of clauses (which entails the explanation, interpretation, and commentary pragmatic type of clauses) were fewer on both modalities (see Table 3).

Table 3. Number of Pragmatic Act Type of Clauses

Mode	Total No Narrative Pragmatic Clauses	Narrative Clauses	Non-narrative Clauses
Oral (15)	142	107 (75.4%)	35 (24.6%)
Written (15)	147	114 (77.6%)	33 (22.4%)

The similarities in the oral and written narrative discourse productions were mainly found in the narrative structure elements of this study as discussed above. The following section discusses the differences in the results in the oral and written narrative discourse productions which were found mainly in the linguistic structure of the narratives.

6.2 Differences in Linguistic Structures of Oral and Written Narrative Discourse

6.2.1 Syntactic Depth

The data that we gathered also showed that the oral narratives (verbal narrative, VN hereafter) were longer and varied while the written texts (written narrative, WN hereafter) were compressed and formal. To establish the syntactic depth of narratives, the measure of the clause as a continuation of words including a verb/predicate was used to determine the length of narratives. The examples in oral narratives and written narratives in Table 4 illustrate the syntactic depth of the clauses (that is, the number and depth of embedding) in the same narrative event in the oral and written productions of the children. For instance, code E09F01 is an identification serial code that was given to one of the participants in this study. This code in particular, represents an English (E) production by a 9-year-old (09) produced by a female (F) who was number one (01) on the list of participants. Also, (VN) would be attached at the end of the code to indicate that it was an oral narrative or (WN) for a written narrative.

Table 4. Differences in Oral and Written Narrative Length

Student Serial Code	Oral Narratives	Student Serial Code	Written Narratives
E09F01VN	/and the ball came/and he kicked it/	E09F01WN	/he kicked the ball/
E09F01VN	/and came a dog running/	E09F01WN	/a dog came/
E09F11VN	/the boy running away from the dog/	E09F11WN	/the boy is running/

The observation in Table 4 is that, generally the narrative events that the young children recounted in their oral narrative production would also be present in their written narrative production but their depth would vary as shown.

6.2.2 Language Proficiency

In our results we found that there were more instances of ungrammatical language use in the written narrative production compared to the spoken narrative production. In addition, this study found that most of the ungrammatical language structures in written narratives were in subject verb agreement, over-generalisation (or addition of wrong past tense form), number agreement, auxiliary verbs, tense agreement, wrong word, and spelling. While the most prevalent ungrammatical language structures in the spoken production were in subject verb agreement and over-generalisation. The examples in Table 5 demonstrate the ungrammatical language structures in the oral and written narratives of the children.

Table 5. Ungrammatical Language Structures in Oral and Written Narratives

Student Serial Code	Oral Narratives	Student Serial Code	Written Narratives
E09M04VN	/and the dog was stucked /	E09F02WN	/he maked the papers to fall down/
E09M06VN	/there was a a people there/	E09F07WN	/the mother was caring a lanch /
E09M10VN	/he get into a playing ground/	E09F09WN	/I see a boy now is raining /
E09M12VN	/he seem to have left the dog/	E09M15WN	/nad the pleople is rening /

For instance, child E09M04’s oral narrative (VN) production and E09F02 written narrative (WN) production had the error in over-generalisation (or addition of wrong past tense form) in the words /stucked/ and /maked/ while child E09F07 and E09F09’s written narrative (WN) production had used the wrong words /caring/ and /raining/ which in turn distorted the meaning of the narratives to name a few.

It was observed from our analysis that most of the instances of ungrammatical linguistic structures came from the middle and low achievement performance categories in both modalities. The numbers attached to the extreme right hand after the gender in the serial codes denote the three levels of achievement performance categories (eg, M15). The numbers 01-05 denote the high achievement performance category, the number 06-10 denote the middle achievement performance category and the numbers 11-15 denote the lowest achievement performance category. Moreover, it was observed that in the written narrative production of the middle and low achievement performance levels there were multiple ungrammatical linguistic structures occurring in a single clause unlike their oral counterparts. For instance, E09M15’s written narrative (WN) (that is, E09M15WN) production shows a clause which had numerous grammatical errors such as, orthographic error, error in subject verb agreement, and phonological error which all obscured the meaning of the clause rendering it ungrammatical:

E09M15WN /nad the pleople is rening/

/nad > (**orthographical error**) the people is > (**subject verb agreement error**) rening/ > (**phonological error**)

Most importantly, it was observed in this study that the children’s written narratives in the high achievement performance category, who were generally good spellers made morphological errors while those in the middle and low achievement performance category who were poor at spelling made phonological errors. 6.28.3 **6.2.3 Phonological Spelling**

The results revealed the use of phonetic spelling in the written narrative production of the children. Phonetic spelling entails that the written spelling in each case represented the spoken sound or the way the letters sound such that some words were pronounced exactly as they looked. ‘Phoneticization’ of spelling was noted throughout the data of this study and this became more prevalent in the middle and low achievement performance categories. Table 6 shows the spoken sounds in the written narrative production.

Table 6. An Illustration of Spoken Sounds in the Written Narrative Discourse

Student serial code	Written Narratives
E09F02WN	/ the dog cheised him/
E09F07WN	/and the mother was caring a lanch /
E09F08WN	/the boy rani awayi /
E09M10WN	/he gow / push are nathar man/
E09F14WN	/and the paper fol down/
E09M15WN	/and is heriting ande father/

From the examples in Table 6, it can be noted that as the performance category changed to the low achievement performance level, the clauses were fraught with more than one phonological error which threatened to distort the meaning of the entire clause. Furthermore, words with more complex syllables were more difficult to write than monosyllabic words. For instance, there was more than one phonological /spelling error in the written narratives of E09F08WN (**/awayi/**) E09M10WN (**/are nathar/**) and E09M15WN (**/heriting ande/**) as shown in Table 6.

6.2.4 Contracted Language

The findings indicate that there were contractions in the children's narrative discourse production. Contractions are informal shortened language forms commonly used in speech because of the nature of rapid real-time language production [22]). There were many instances of contractions in the corpus of narrative productions, and all contractions were found in the narrations in speech compared to written narrations. Table 7 demonstrates the children's contracted language in their verbal narrative production.

Table 7. A demonstration of contracted language in oral narrative discourse

Student serial code	Oral Narratives
E09M05VN	/and that's what I saw/
E09F07VN	/when he's running/
E09F09VN	/who's running/
E09F09VN	/it's like a puppy/
E09F13VN	/ he's going to school/
E09M15VN	/ then he's hit a people/

It is worthy of note, that the contractions were produced mainly by the students in the middle and low achievement performance levels.

6.2.5 Repetition/Hesitation/Self-repairs

Our findings reveal that there were many lexical repetitions in the spoken narrative production of the children compared to their written narrations. [22] state that lexical repair or repetition entails the lexical changes done by a speaker during the narration while the syntactic repetitions/repairs are the changes done to the verb tense during the narration. There were a total of 37 lexical and syntactic repairs/repetitions in the oral narrative production of this corpus. While there were no syntactic repairs in writing but there were two instances of lexical repetition. There are fewer instances of lexical repetitions in the written narrative production because there was sufficient time to process the written narrative production compared to the real-time production of the spoken

narratives. The lexical and syntactic repairs/repetitions in the oral narrative production were predominantly in the middle and low achievement performance categories and this trend is also shared by the written narrative production. Table 8 demonstrates the lexical and syntactic repairs/repetitions in both modalities.

Table 8. Lexical and syntactic repairs in oral and written narratives

Student Serial Code	Oral Narratives	Student Serial Code	Written Narratives
E09M06VN	/the boy go// goes and goes/	E09M05WN	/There was a boy ran and ran and ran/
E09F07VN	/then the dog co/come came/	E09M10WN	/he gow/push are nathar man and gow and gow up and up/
E09M10VN	/then he run and run/		
E09F13VN	/I saw another dog/ tracing chasing the boy/		
E09F14VN	/then the bo/boy and then the boy run/		

What is of interest in the examples in Table 8 is the fact that, there were only two instances of syntactic repairs in the corpus of oral narratives and the rest were in the lexical structures in both oral and written narrative production. These lexical repairs were a sign of the active processing mechanisms (real-time processing) during speech production, selecting the most relevant vocabulary in the place of one that the speaker uttered at the first instance. However, the lexical repetitions in the written narrative production may be due to the nature of the recurring narration task.

6.2.6 Direct Speech

In the entire corpus there were only two instances of direct speech or dialogue usage in the spoken narratives. These results were of interest because it was unexpected from the story narrations because the video was wordless. For instance, participants E09F07VN and E09M15VN used direct speech/dialogue in their oral productions.

E09F07 /and then he say “sorry”/

E09M15 /people saying “hey you, hey you”/

At a closer analysis, it was observed that the use of direct speech was found in the middle and low achievement performance categories of the spoken narratives while none was found in the written narrative discourse production.

6.2.7 Code-switching

In our findings we found one instance of code-switching in the verbal narratives. Code-switching is ‘the alternating use of two languages in the same stretch of discourse by the same speaker’, [40], p xii. The type of code-switching found is called insertional code-switching. Insertional code-switching is when an item/s of the guest language (SiSwati in this case) is inserted into the matrix

language, [41]) (dominant language) which is English in this instance. In the example below, a SiSwati language item was inserted in the dominant English clause when the child spoke the following clause:

E09F08 /and it go to the pali/

In the example above there is a direct insertion of the child's L1 to the L2. The word "pali" is taken from the SiSwati word "lipali" which refers to a "goal post" in L2, which the 9-year-old was referring to in the example above. Noteworthy, is that it was used by a student in the middle achievement range in order to keep the narration going.

7. DISCUSSION

The main aim of this study was to provide evidence when comparing written and oral narrative productions of 9-year-old Swazi bilinguals in order to expand our knowledge on the different demands presented by the two modalities. English oral and written narratives were analysed to describe the narrative discourse productions of the sequential bilinguals. The results of this study confirmed the findings obtained from other studies conducted in narrative discourse production. For clarity, the discussion will be organised in two folds: the similarities in the discourse structure of the oral and written production of the learners and the differences in the discourse structure of their oral and written productions.

7.1 Similarities in the Narrative Discourse Structure

The analysis of the discourse structures of the children's production across the two modalities indicates that there were similarities in the narrative discourse structure found in the macro-analysis, story termination signal and pragmatic act type of clauses. From the results of the macro-analysis of this study it can be said that most narrative productions had complete components of a story [42]; [43]). However, participants selected the most important event (Macro-episode C) of the story because the event had a stronger connection to the aim and consequence of the story [44]). This similarity confirms that both oral and written language draw from the same cognitive mechanisms [45]; [46]) and the universal nature of the notion of schemas in narratives. This finding is similar to [3] monolingual English-speaking children's written and spoken narratives and [47]'s finding of the Chinese EFL learners' written and oral narrative production. Both researchers found that the learners' spoken and written narrative production had similar narrative schemas.

Furthermore, there were also similarities in the children's story termination signals across written and spoken narrative productions. This finding is consistent with other studies [18]; [48]) that conducted research on young children's narrative productions. In a study conducted by ([18], p. 209 it was found that the 4th graders used similar "segment-taggers" to start or finish their narration.

Moreover, the narrative pragmatic act type of clauses was high in both narrative discourse productions of the 9-year-olds. However, it was found that both their narrative productions had lower non-narrative pragmatic act type of clauses (which are explanation, interpretation, and commentary pragmatic type of clauses). This finding is similar to other studies [49]; [50]; [51]) that investigated oral and written narratives in children and adults. The observation made was that the story narrations of children have not yet grasped the higher and complicated "meta-narrative and para-narrative" forms [17] p. 59; [31] p. 37 and they were still developing expressions and the proper organisation abilities needed to tell complete stories with a higher complexity [52]. The

discussion on the similarities in the narrative discourse structure is linked to the theoretical framework of the study as supported by the numerous studies cited.

7.2 Differences in the Linguistic Discourse Structure

Differences were found in the linguistic discourse structure of the children's oral and written narratives. There were differences in syntactic depth, language use, spelling, use of direct speech and code-switching in the children's narrative productions.

The syntactic depths of the narrative production varied. The oral narrative productions were longer while the written productions were shorter but portraying the same idea. This is consistent with the observation in other studies discussing children's written and oral narratives, that whatever narrative event that is covered in their oral narrative is also likely to be covered in their written narrative and vice versa [3]). However, the major difference was that the length of the clauses varied in each modality, with longer oral narrations [43] and compacted and formal written texts [53).

The analysis also indicated differences in the language proficiency of the children's narratives, with more ungrammatical constructions in the written productions than the oral productions. There were ungrammatical language structures such as subject verb agreement, over-generalisation, number agreement, auxiliary verbs, tense agreement, wrong word, and spelling in the written narratives. On the other hand, there were ungrammatical language structures in subject verb agreement and over-generalisation in the spoken productions. [45] had similar findings in their research on oral and written language. These ungrammatical language structures were also found in other studies [54]; [3]) similar to this study. Also, the students in the high achievement performance category made morphological errors while those in the middle and low achievement performance category made phonological errors and this is corroborated by findings by [55]) and [56] on their monolingual and bilingual students' writing.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed the use of phonological spelling (lexical and spelling errors) in the children's written narrative production, particularly in words with more than one syllable. This finding is in agreement with many studies [57]; 58]; [59]; [56]; [60] examining bilingual written and oral productions. However, it should be noted that the students' phonetic spelling also indicated that the students were familiar with the English language graphotactics [55].

There was also evidence of contracted language in the children's narrations in speech compared to written narrations. It is worth noting that the use of contractions by the children was a time-saving device during the oral narrations and evidently above the children's cognitive level to be used even in their written narrative productions.

Also, in the analysis of the children's narrative production there were many hesitations/self-repairs and repetitions in the spoken modality when compared to the written modality. This finding is shared by several researchers [20]; [61]; [22]; [32] who conducted studies in narrative production. However, it should be noted that most repetitions in this study were due to the speech planning processes and the nature of the task. The cartoon was about a young boy who learned to "fly" (metaphorically run fast) due to his tendency to run throughout the episodes depicted in the story. A Second Language learner in the early stages of language acquisition may not have developed sufficient vocabulary to describe a recurrent and continuous action such as "a boy running without stopping". Instead of the second language learner using the words "the boy

continued to run” the early second language learner would have the tendency to repeat the lexical item to emphasize the continuous act such as “the boy ran and ran and ran”.

The analysis further demonstrated that the young children’s spoken narrative production made use of dialogue when compared to the written narratives. This finding is consistent with findings from [18] and [32]. In their studies they found that the younger children failed to use rhetorical devices properly instead they used dialogue/direct speech to repeat informative content already mentioned. It should be noted however, that the use of direct speech in this study was the children’s device of trying to draw the listener’s attention while they were making their point clear.

Lastly, the analysis of the children’s narrative production brought to light that there was code-switching in their oral narrative production compared to the written narrative production. Code-switching to their first language was rare. There was only one instance of code-switching in the entire corpus. This is interesting because it is an indication that the children in this study were familiar with the use of English language (their L2) and barely struggled with the vocabulary in the second language since they were sequential bilinguals. Furthermore, inserting the SiSwati lexical item indicates the bilingual child’s strategy and effort to fulfil a communicative event.

8. LIMITATIONS

The study examined both spoken and written language however, its limitations was not accounting for the study of gestures to complete the analysis of the oral narrative production. [51] argue that leaving out gesture analysis in oral language processing is a downside when attempting to fully explain language processing in the human mind. Furthermore, the number of participants in this study was not large enough to draw some generalizations for a larger population. Hence, increasing the number of participants would be more representative of the target population. Future researchers could look into employing the use of probability sampling in order to get a more representative sample that reflects the target population. In that way, the results could be generalised to the population.

Furthermore, some of the children’s written narratives were difficult to read due to illegible handwriting and too much disfluency. Therefore, future research should consider taking audio/video recordings of the children reading their written narratives to circumvent the illegible handwriting.

9. CONCLUSION

The study described the narrative and linguistic discourse structures in the written and oral narrative productions of the Swazi bilinguals with the main intention of comparing the discourse qualities. The finding of this study was that the oral and written narrative productions were similar in narrative discourse structure on the global features of narratives. On the other hand, the Swazi bilinguals’ oral and written narrative productions had points of differences in their linguistic discourse structures. This study has advanced the knowledge on narrative discourse structures and added valuable information especially on the linguistic discourse structures of oral and written narrative production. The findings of this study have advanced the theory that the differences in the linguistic discourse structures have a strong association with the different academic achievement/performance levels of the students. The differences in language use are more pronounced in the middle and low academic achievement categories compared to the high academic achievement category of this study.

REFERENCES

- [1] N.V. Rakhlin, A. Aljughaiman, E.L. Grigorenko, "Assessing language development in Arabic: The Arabic language: Evaluation of function (ALEF)," *Applied Neuropsychology: Child*, 2, 10(1), pp. 37-52, 2021.
- [2] B.J. Leadholm, J. Miller, *Language Sample Analysis; the Wisconsin Guide*, Wisconsin Department of Public Health, Madison W, 1995.
- [3] J. Reilly, L. Polse, "Perspectives on spoken and written language: Evidence from English speaking children," in J. Perera, M. Aparici, E. Rosado, N. Salas (eds.), *Written and spoken language development across the lifespan Essays in honor of Liliana Tolchinsky*. Springer, Heidelberg, pp. 125–140, 2016.
- [4] M.S. Islam, M.B Stapa, "Students' low proficiency in spoken English in private universities in Bangladesh: reasons and remedies," *Lang Test Asia* 11(22), doi.org/10.1186/s40468-021-00139-0, 2021.
- [5] S.L. Gillam , S. Vaughn, G. Roberts, P. Capin, A.M. Fall, M. Israelsen-Augenstein, S. Holbrook, R. Wada, A. Hancock, C. Fox, J. Dille, B.M. Magimairaj, R.B. Gillam, "Improving oral and written narration and reading comprehension of children at-risk for language and literacy difficulties: Results of a randomized clinical trial," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 115(1), 99–117, doi.org/10.1037/edu0000766, 2023.
- [6] B.S. Nelson, D. B. Petersen, A. Rai, "The effects of a multi-tiered system of language support on oral narrative language, writing, and reading comprehension in India," *Language and Education*, 36(1), pp.74–94, DOI: 10.1080/09500782.2021.1898633, 2022.
- [7] H. Malvey, "Persuasive Language in High School Students: Differences in Syntactic Complexity in Spoken and Written Language," Honors dissertation, Texas Christian University Fort Worth, Texas, 2017.
- [8] M. Hickmann, *Children's discourse: Person, space and time across languages*. Cambridge Studies in Linguistics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.
- [9] J.R. Johnston, "Narratives: Twenty-five years later," *Topics in Language Disorders* 28(2), pp. 93–98, 2008.
- [10] H. Tyne, "Narratives and identity in study abroad research," *Methods in Study Abroad Research: Past, present, and future*, 4, pp. 135, 2023.
- [11] K.R. Harris, Y. S. Kim, S. Yim, A. Camping, S. Graham, "Yes, They Can: Developing Transcription Skills and Oral Language in Tandem with SRSD Instruction on Close Reading of Science Text to Write Informative Essays At Grades 1 and 2," *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 102150, 2023.
- [12] C.W. Jo, "Mapping adolescent literacy across L1 backgrounds: Linguistic and discourse features as predictors of persuasive essay quality," *System*, Volume 104, doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102698, 2022.
- [13] M. Silva, "The contribution of narrative to early reading comprehension," *Narratives in Early Childhood Education*, pp. 119-129, Routledge, 2017.
- [14] R.A. Berman, B. Nir-Sagiv, "Comparing narrative and expository text construction across adolescence: A developmental paradox", *Discourse Processes*, 43: pp.79–120, 2007.
- [15] P. Lintunen, M. Makila, "Measuring Syntactic Complexity in Spoken and Written Learner Language: Comparing the incomparable?," *Research in Language*, 12(4), pp. 377-399, 2014.

- [16] N. Abd Rahim, "Discourse analysis theory: A new perspective in analysis," *Research Journal (IUKLRJ)*, 46, 2018.
- [17] J.M. Colletta, R. Kunene, A. Venouil, V. Kaufmann, J.P. Simon, "Multi-track annotation of child language and gestures," *Multimodal Corpora*, pp. 54-72, 2009.
- [18] R.A. Berman, "Linguistic Literacy and Later Language Development," in J. Perera, M. Aparici, E. Rosado, N. Salas (eds.), *Written and spoken language development across the lifespan Essays in honor of Liliana Tolchinsky*, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 181–200, 2016.
- [19] L.L. Lofranco, E.D. Peña, L.M. Bedore, "English language narratives of Filipino children," *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 37(1), pp. 28-38, 2006.
- [20] S. Fichman, C. Altman, "Disfluencies in the narratives of Russian-Hebrew bilingual children with and without Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)," *Clinical Linguistics & Phonetics*, DOI: 10.1080/02699206.2023.2204511, 2023.
- [21] R. Horowitz, S. Samuels, *Comprehending oral and written language*. Emerald Group, England, Bingley, 1987.
- [22] M.S. Nicolau, K. E. Sukanto, "Written vs Spoken Narratives by Indonesian ESL Young Learners: A Case Study," *Journal of Language and Literature* 18(2) pp. 125-136, 2018.
- [23] M.I. Navarro-Ruiz, L. Rallo-Fabra, "Characteristics of mazes produced by SLI children," *Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics*, 15 (1) pp. 63-66, 2001.
- [24] L. Kosmala, A. Morgenstern, "A preliminary study of hesitation phenomena in L1 and L2 productions: A multimodal approach," *Proceedings of DiSS 2017*, 18-19, August 2017, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden, pp. 37-40, 2017.
- [25] J. Liu, F. Yu, C. Feng, S. Li, "The Pausing Strategies in Chinese Preschool Children's Narratives," *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, pp. 1-13, 2023.
- [26] J. Dumont, "Testing the Cognitive Load Hypothesis: Repair Rates and Usage in a Bilingual Community," *Studies in Hispanic and Lusophone Linguistics*, 3(2), pp. 329-352, 2010.
- [27] M. Keller, "Compositionality: Evidence from Code-Switching," De Gruyter 2020.
- [28] K. Namba, *English-Japanese Code-Switching and Formulaic Language: A Structural Approach to Bilingual Children's Interactions*, Lambert Academic Publishing, Saarbrücken, 2012.
- [29] L. I. Méndez, J. Perry, Y. Holt, H. Bian, S. Fafulas, "Same or different: Narrative retells in bilingual Latino kindergarten children," *Bilingual Research Journal*, 41(2), pp. 150-166, 2018.
- [30] E. Bialystok, F.I.M. Craik, G. Luk, "Lexical access in bilinguals: Effects of vocabulary size and executive control," *Journal of Neurolinguistics*, 21(6), pp. 522–538, 2008.
- [31] R. Kunene, "A comparative study of the development of multimodal narratives in French and Zulu children and adults," PhD thesis, Université Stendhal, Grenoble, 2010.
- [32] H. Tappe, A. Hara, "Language specific narrative text structure elements in multilingual children," *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*, 42, pp. 297-331, 2013.
- [33] H. Tappe, "What about Southern African story grammar? Promoting language specific macrostructures in educational setting," in J. Kandybowicz, T.Major, H. Torrence, T.P. Duncan (eds.), *African linguistics on the prairie, Selected papers from the 45th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, pp. 50-64, 2018.
- [34] N.L. Stein, C.G. Glenn, "An analysis of story comprehension in elementary school children", *New Directions in Discourse Processing*, 1979.
- [35] F. Limbert, W. Jake (Directors), "The boy who learned to fly: Usain Bolt," [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://motionographer.com/2016/08/16/the-boy-who-learned-to-fly-usain-bolt/>, 2016.

- [36] N.L. Stein, C.G. Glenn, “*A Developmental Study of Children's Recall of Story Material*,” [Washington, D.C.]: Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED115386>, 1975.
- [37] ELAN (Version 6.3) [Computer software], Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, The Language Archive. Retrieved from <https://archive.mpi.nl/tla/elan>, 2022.
- [38] W. Labov, J. Waletzky, “Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience. In *Essays in the Verbal and Visual Arts*,” June Helm, (ed.) pp. 12-44, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1967.
- [39] W. Labov, *Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English vernacular*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1972.
- [40] B.E. Bullock, A.J. Toribio, *Cambridge handbook of linguistic code-switching*. Cambridge handbooks in linguistics, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- [41] P. Muysken, *Bilingual speech: A typology of code-mixing*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK; New York, 2000.
- [42] J. Xue, J. Zhuo, P. Li, J. Liu, J. Zhao, “Characterizing macro- and micro-structures of narrative skills for Mandarin-speaking school-age children with specific language impairment,” *Journal of Communication Disorders*, Vol 96, doi.org/10.1016/j.jcomdis.2022.106199, 2022.
- [43] P.C. Torng, W.H. Sah, “Narrative abilities of Mandarin-speaking children with and without specific language impairment: macrostructure and microstructure,” *Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics*, 34 (5), pp. 453-478, doi:10.1080/02699206.2019.1655097, 2020.
- [44] M.M. Pu, “Spoken and written narratives: A Comparative Study,” *Journal of Chinese Language and Computing*, 16(1), pp. 37-62, 2006.
- [45] J.E. Dockerell, V. Connelly, “The relationship between oral and written sentence generation in English speaking children: The role of language and literacy skills,” in J. Perera, M. Aparici, E. Rosado, N. Salas (eds.), *Written and spoken language development across the lifespan Essays in honor of Liliana Tolchinsky*, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 161–177. 2016.
- [46] T.D. Spencer, C. Pierce, “Classroom-based Oral Storytelling: Reading, Writing, and Social Benefits,” *The Reading Teacher*, 76 (5), pp. 525–534. doi:10.1002/trtr.2144, 2022.
- [47] Y. Sun, W.A. Yang, “Comparative analysis of discourse structures in EFL learners’ oral and written narratives,” *International Journal of Linguistics*, 3(1), pp. 1-23, 2011.
- [48] J.J. Motshwari, “Magic and its significance in Tswana folktales,” Unpublished MA dissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, 1998.
- [49] S. Ahmed, “Multimodal-bilingual oral narrative development of Zulu children and adults”, Master’s Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Republic of South Africa, 2015.
- [50] W. Ding, M. Wu, Z. Ye, W. He, “Narrative Development of Mandarin-Speaking Children in Grades 2–5 at a Mainland Chinese Primary School,” *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, DOI: 10.1080/10573569.2023.2165204, 2023.
- [51] R. N. Kunene, M. Guidetti, J. M. Colletta, “A cross-linguistic study of the development of gesture and speech in Zulu and French oral narratives,” *Journal of Child Language*, 44(1), pp. 36–62, 2017.
- [52] R.A. Berman, “On the ability to relate events in narrative,” *Discourse Processes*, 11(4): pp. 469-497, 1988.
- [53] C.N. Nhleko, “An Analysis of Oral and Written Narrative Discourse Production of Swazi Bilinguals,” (Unpublished) PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 2020.

- [54] B. Arfè, E. Pizzocaro, "Sentence generation in children with and without problems of written expression," in J. Perera, M. Aparici, E. Rosado, N. Salas (eds.), *Written and spoken language development across the lifespan Essays in honor of Liliana Tolchinsky*, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 327–344, 2016.
- [55] R. Treiman, B. Kessler, T.C. Pollo "Prephonological spelling and its connections with later word reading and spelling performance," *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 218, doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2021.105359, 2022.
- [56] R.M. Joshi, T. Hoiem, X. Feng, R. Chengappa, R. Boulware-Gooden, "Learning to spell by ear and by eye: A cross-linguistic comparison," in R.M. Joshi, P.G. Aaron (eds.), *Handbook of orthography and literacy*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ, pp. 569–577, 2006.
- [57] V. De Wilde, "Lexical characteristics of young L2 English learners' narrative writing at the start of formal instruction," *Journal of Second Language Writing*, pp.59, 100960. 2023.
- [58] C. Vander Stappen, M. Van Reybroeck "Relating Phonological Awareness and Rapid Automatized Naming to Phonological and Orthographic Processing of Written Words: Cross-sequential Evidence from French," *Reading Research Quarterly*, 57(3), pp. 1065-1083, 2022.
- [59] L.Q. Dixon, J. Zhao, R. M. Joshi, "Influence of L1 orthography on spelling English words by bilingual children: A natural experiment comparing syllabic, phonological, and morphosyllabic first languages," *Learning Disability Quarterly*, (33), pp. 211–221, 2010.
- [60] S. Yeon, H.S. Bae, M. Joshi, "Cross-language transfer of metalinguistic skills: Evidence from spelling English words by Korean students in grades 4, 5 and 6: Cross-language transfer of metalinguistic skills," *Dyslexia*, 23, pp. 428–448, 2017.
- [61] A. Kabani, "An Investigation of Speech Disfluencies of Bilingual Urdu-English," (Doctoral dissertation, University of Houston), 2020.

Appendix A

Synopsis of the video entitled “The Boy who Learned to Fly, Usain Bolt” (Limbert and Jake, 2016)

The story starts with a boy running out of a house into the street where he comes across a little dog that chases after him. He runs through two men seated playing a game and he passes into the forest. The boy runs across the field disturbing men playing football. He runs off the field and along the way collides with a man carrying a stack of papers. The papers scatter away, and the boy continues to run up some steps.

Appendix B

List of Macro-episodes and Story Structure of “The Boy who Learned to Fly, Usain Bolt” (Limbert and Jake, 2016)

Episode code	Episode description	Narrative schema
A	Coming out of the house	Setting
B	Boy runs with dog	Initiating event
C	Running through the field	Internal response and attempts
D	Collision with man	Consequences
E	Running up the steps	Ending/Reaction

Adapted from Stein & Glenn, (1975; 1979)

Appendix C

List of Micro-episodes of of “The Boy who Learned to Fly, Usain Bolt” in English and siSwati

	Code	Description of Micro-episode
1	A1	The boy comes out of house >Umfana uphuma ekhaya
2	A2	A woman appears at the door carrying paper bag>Make uvela emnyango uphetse iphephabheki
3	A3	Boy runs and slips>Umfana asagijima ashelele
4	A4	Boy continues to run>Umfana uyachubeka nekugijima
5	B1	Dog suddenly appears>Kuveleinja ngekuphatima kweliso
6	B2	Dog follows boy>Inja ilandzele umfana
7	B3	Boy speeds away from dog>Umfana ushiyainja ngelitubane
8	B4	Boy runs onto men playing cards> umfana uphatamisa emadvodza ladlala emakhadi
9	B5	Boy jumps on the rails>Umfana uzubela ebondzeni lwetingodvo
10	B6	Men stop game and look at boy>Emadvodza eyekela kudlala abuka umfana
11	B7	Boy jumps off and continues to run>Umfana wehla ebondzeni uchubeka nekugijima
12	B8	Dogs slams into the rail>Inja ishayisa lubondza lwetingodvo
13	B9	Boy looks back at the dog>Umfana usuluka ubukainja emuva
14	C1	Boy continues to run through the trees>Umfana uyachubeka ugijima ekhatsi emahlatsini

15	C2	Boy runs onto the field>Umfana ungena ngematubane enkhundleni yekudla
16	C3	Boy runs alongside the man on the soccer field>Umfana ugijimisana nendvodza enkhundleni yebhola
17	C4	The boy saw the moving soccerball>Umfana ubona ibhola iyagicika
18	C5	The boy kicks the ball into the goal post>Umfana ukhahlela ibhola icondza epalini-
19	C6	The boy scores a goal>Umfana ushaya ligoli
20	C7	The boy waves his arms>Umfana uyajayiva emva kwekushaya ligoli
21	C8	The boy runs off the field>Umfana uyagijima uphuma enkhundleni
22	D1	A man walks by carrying paper>Kwendlula indvodza lefundza/lephetse emaphepha
23	D2	The boy runs past the man>Umfana undlula indvodza uyagijima
24	D3	The papers scatter off the man's hands>Emaphepha ayasaphaka esandleni salendvodza
25	D4	The man watches the boy run past>Lendvodza iyambuka umfana nakendlula agijima
26	D5	The man smiles and nods>Indvodza iyamoyitela inikina inhloko
27	E1	The boy runs up the stairs>Umfana ugibela/ukhwela titebhisi uyagijima