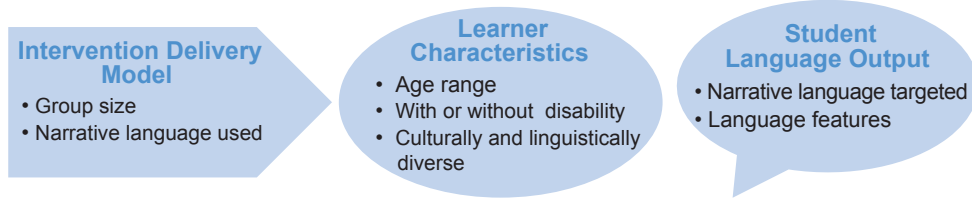


# Narrative Language Interventions in Early Childhood and Elementary Education: A Review of the Literature

Danielle H. Leuschen de Pico, University of Florida

**PURPOSE:** To examine and synthesize research on narrative language interventions implemented with children of preschool and elementary school age.



## PREVIOUS REVIEWS

- Gillam & Gillam, 2016
- Petersen, 2011
- Petersen & Spencer, 2016

## SEARCH

**Databases:** ERIC and Education Source  
**Key Terms:** narrative intervention, narrative language intervention, elementary, early childhood, preschool  
**Yield:** 32 articles

## REVIEW

### Inclusion criteria:

- Narrative language intervention
- Elementary or preschool age
- United States
- 2000+

**Remaining:** 17 studies

### RATIONALE

Researchers have found that young children’s narrative language skills are predictors of future reading comprehension and math achievement. Some disabilities are characterized by difficulties with expressive language, which can affect narrative language skills. The narrative language skills typically expected in schools may be difficult for culturally and linguistically diverse students accustomed to a different narrative style.

### KEY TERMS

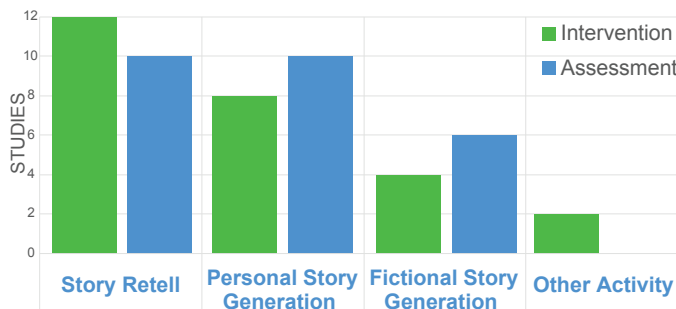
**Narrative language** – the ability to understand and tell stories.  
**Narrative language intervention** – intervention designed to improve students’ narrative language.  
**Macrostructures** – how a story is organized; the story grammar.  
**Microstructures** – language features at a sentence level that provide linguistic complexity, such as causal conjunctions and temporal adverbial phrases.

## INTERVENTION DELIVERY MODEL

### Narrative Language Used in Intervention and Assessment Outcomes

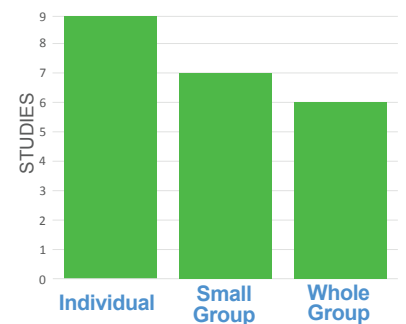
#### Types of Narrative Language

- Fictional Story Generation:**  
Create a new story
- Personal Story Generation:**  
Tell a story about something that has happened to you
- Story Retell:**  
Retell a previously heard story



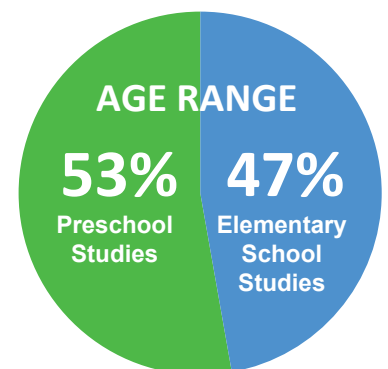
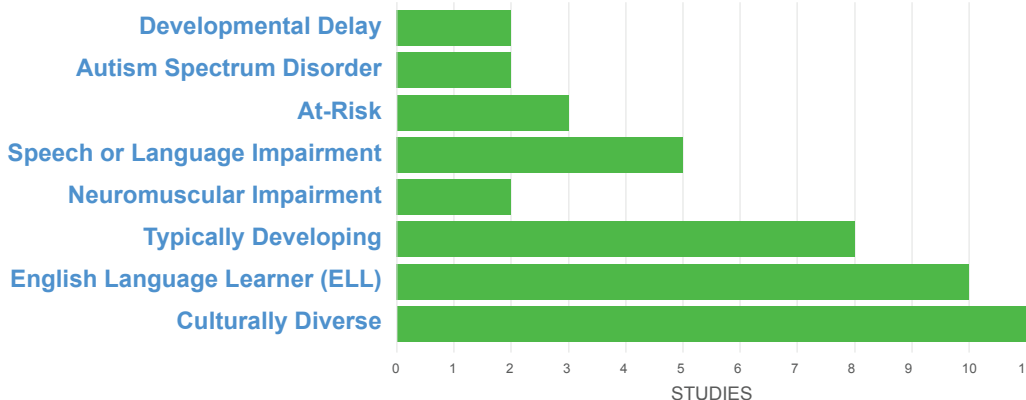
\*Some interventions used or targeted more than one type of narrative language

### Intervention Group Size\*

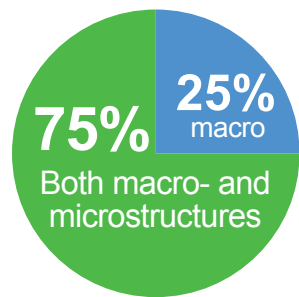


\*Some interventions used more than one group size

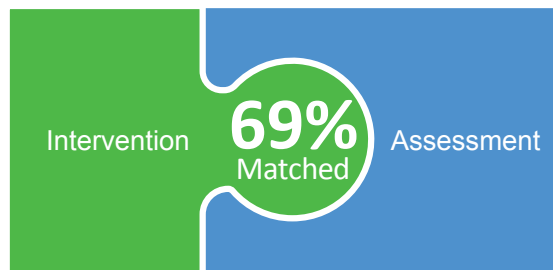
## LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS



## STUDENT LANGUAGE OUTPUT



Language Features Targeted in Assessment Outcomes



Match Between Narrative Language Used in Intervention and Targeted in Assessment Outcomes

## Research to practice:

- Narrative language interventions can be used in a variety of group sizes: whole group, small group, or one-on-one.
- Narrative language interventions can be beneficial for students with a variety of characteristics.
- Be aware of possible mismatch between the type of narrative language and language features targeted in instruction and in assessment.

Study	Methodology	Participants
Brown, J. A., Garzarek, J. E., & Donegan, K. L. (2014). Effects of a narrative intervention on story retelling in at-risk young children. <i>Topics in Early Childhood Special Education</i> , 34(3), 154-164.	Single-subject: Multiple baseline	9
Gillam, S. L., Hartzheim, D., Studenka, B., Simonsmeier, V., & Gillam, R. (2015). Narrative intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). <i>Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research</i> , 58(3), 920-933.	Single-subject: Multiple baseline	5
Gillam, S. L., Olszewski, A., Fargo, J., Gillama, R. B., Nippold, M., & Hoffman, L. (2014). Classroom-based narrative and vocabulary instruction: Results of an early-stage, nonrandomized comparison study. <i>Language, Speech and Hearing Services In Schools</i> , 45 (3), 204-219.	Quasi-experimental: Pre- and post-test with comparison group	19
Green, L. B., & Klecan-Aker, J. (2012). Teaching story grammar components to increase oral narrative ability: A group intervention study. <i>Child Language Teaching and Therapy</i> , 28(3), 263-276.	Quasi-experimental: Pre- and post-test without comparison group	24
Khan, K., Nelson, K., & Whyte, E. (2014). Children choose their own stories: The impact of choice on children's learning of new narrative skills. <i>Journal of Child Language</i> , 41(4), 949-962.	Quasi-experimental: Pre- and post-test with comparison group	14
McCabe, A., Boccia, J., Bennett, M. B., Lyman, N., & Hagen, R. (2009). Improving oral language and literacy skills in preschool children from disadvantaged backgrounds: Remembering, writing, reading (RWR). <i>Imagination, Cognition and Personality</i> , 29(4), 363-390.	Quasi-experimental: Pre- and post-test with comparison group	57
Petersen, D. B., Gillam, S. L., Spencer, T., & Gillam, R. B. (2010). <b>The effects of literate narrative intervention on children with neurologically based language impairments: An early stage study.</b> <i>Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research</i> , 53(4), 961-981	Single-subject: Multiple baseline	3
Petersen, D. B., Thompsen, B., Guiberson, M. M., & Spencer, T. D. (2016). <b>Cross-linguistic interactions from second language to first language as the result of individualized narrative language intervention with children with and without language impairment.</b> <i>Applied Psycholinguistics</i> , 37(3), 703-724.	Quasi-experimental: matched pairs random assignment and nonrandom block assignment	42
Petersen, D. B., Brown, C. L., Ukrainetz, T. A., Wise, C., Spencer, T. D., Zebrea, J., & ... Joffe, V. (2014). <b>Systematic individualized narrative language intervention on the personal narratives of children with autism.</b> <i>Language, Speech and Hearing Services In Schools</i> , 45(1), 67-86. doi:10.1044/2013_LSHSS-12-0099	Single-subject: Multiple baseline	3
Schoenbrodt, L., Kerins, M., & Gesell, J. (2003). Using narrative language intervention as a tool to increase communicative competence in Spanish-speaking children. <i>Language, Culture, and Curriculum</i> , 16(1), 48-59.	Quasi-experimental: Pre- and post-test without comparison group	12
Soto, G., Solomon-Rice, P., & Caputo, M. (2009). Enhancing the personal narrative skills of elementary school-aged students who use AAC: The effectiveness of personal narrative intervention. <i>Journal of Communication Disorders</i> , 42(1), 43-57.	Single-subject: Two phase multiple probe design with replication	3
Spencer, T. D., & Slocum, T. A. (2010). <b>The effect of a narrative intervention on story retelling and personal story generation skills of preschoolers with risk factors and narrative language delays.</b> <i>Journal of Early Intervention</i> , 32(3), 178-199.	Single-subject: Multiple baseline	5
Spencer, T. D., Kajjan, M., Petersen, D. B., & Bilyk, N. (2013). <b>Effects of an individualized narrative intervention on children's storytelling and comprehension skills.</b> <i>Journal of Early Intervention</i> , 35(3), 243-269.	Single-subject: Multiple baseline	5
Spencer, T. D., Petersen, D. B., Slocum, T. A., & Allen, M. M. (2015). <b>Large group narrative intervention in Head Start preschools: Implications for response to intervention.</b> <i>Journal of Early Childhood Research</i> , 13(2), 196-217.	Quasi-experimental: Pre- and post-test with comparison group	36
Spencer, T. D., Petersen, D. B., & Adams, J. L. (2015). <b>Tier 2 language intervention for diverse preschoolers: An early-stage randomized control group study following an analysis of response to intervention.</b> <i>American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology</i> , 24(4), 619-636. doi:10.1044/2015_AJSLP-14-0101	Dynamic assessment; Pre- and post-test randomized control group	41
Spencer, T. D., Weddle, S. A., Petersen, D. B., & Adams, J. A. (2018). <b>Multi-tiered narrative intervention for preschoolers: A Head Start implementation study.</b> <i>NHSA Dialog</i> , 20(1), 1-28.	Quasi-experimental control group design	105
Weddle, S. A., Spencer, T. D., Kajjan, M., & Petersen, D. B. (2016). <b>An examination of a multitiered system of language support for culturally and linguistically diverse preschoolers: Implications for early and accurate identification.</b> <i>School Psychology Review</i> , 45(1), 109-133.	Dynamic assessment; Single-subject: Multiple baseline	7

Studies highlighted in green used Story Champs® narrative language intervention (available at [LanguageDynamicsGroup.com](http://LanguageDynamicsGroup.com))