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**THE EVALUATIVE COMPONENT IN CHILDREN’S NARRATIVE**

**Comparison of two Intervention Procedures**

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**Abstract**

Given that interaction among peers is proved to be useful in the development of cognitive and narrative skills, this study compares the effects of an intervention based on the interaction among peers (INTP) and one between child and adult focused on the causes of events (CosCau) (Veneziano, 2009), on the ability to tell coherent stories that take into account the causes of events and the internal states of the characters.

**INTRODUCTION**

Before 8-9 years old children express the evaluative component of narratives such as the explanation of events or the internal states of the characters of a story. However, when properly supported, they can reach higher performances (e.g., Veneriano & Hudelot, 2009; Strasser et al.). On the assumption that peer interaction can lead to a socio-cognitive conflict soliciting children to argue in favor of their position and to coordinate different points of view, thus enhancing higher-level cognitive skills (Bochs & Butera, 2003), our hypothesis was that an intervention based on interaction among peers (INTP) could strengthen children’s narrative skills, especially in discourse. To test this hypothesis, the study compares the INTP condition with an adult-child intervention that focuses children’s attention on the causes of the events of the story (e.g., Veneriano & Hudelot, 2009), which proved to be effective.

**METHOD**

**Material**

Children were asked to narrate the Stone Story (Purnari adapted by Veneriano & Hudelot, 2009) a story composed of 5 pictures based on a misunderstanding between two characters (see below).

**Procedure**

Two matched groups, constituted each by twelve 6-to-8-year-olds, were compared. One group participated in the procedure peer interaction (INTP) and the other in the procedure adult-child conversation on causes (CosCau). Below the different phases of the procedure in the two groups.

**INTRODUCTION**

**RESULTS**

**Figure 1: Score of Coherence**

Only the CosCau group has an improvement in the coherence score in the 2nd narrative. After one week no difference between groups is found.

**Figure 2: All Internal States (IS)**

The reference to IS (intentional, epistemic, evaluative, emotional, physical and perceptual) follows a similar trend as the score of coherence: the CosCau group produces more overall IS in the second narratives but no significant differences are found.

**Figure 3: Intentional and Epistemic States**

The difference in the improvements is in favor of the CosCau group for the third narrative ($\chi^2 (1,22)= 4.14, p<.05$) and presents a tendency in the same direction for the second narrative ($\chi^2 (1,22)= 2.75, p> .05$).

**Figure 4: Overall Explanations and Explanations of the Key Events**

Children in the CosCau condition give significantly more explanations in the 2nd narrative and in the bicycle story.

**Figure 5: False Beliefs and Rectification OF False Belief**

Mild improvements in False Belief and in Rectification of False Belief rise in CosCau group in the 2nd narrative, while a slight improvement in both False Belief and Rectification of False Belief appears in INTP group after one week.

**DISCUSSION**

Results show that our hypothesis was not confirmed and that focusing children on the causes of events solicits more coherent narratives in children then telling the story to a peer with a lower level of competence. Nonetheless, one week later, the two groups are similar, to the exception of the epistemic states that continue to increase in the CosCau group. This higher performance of the CosCau group in a key feature of the story one week later suggests that an internal process of cognitive and linguistic maturation might be in progress. It should however be noted that our results concern only one type of peer interaction (the one used in this experiment) and is limited by the small size of the sample.

Further analyses will need to investigate the first negative effect that seems to occur after the interaction with the hand puppet in the INTP condition, as well as the positive effects observed one week later.

**Data Analysis**

The entire interviews were transcribed and coded for overall coherence, internal states (IS) (including epistemic and intentional IS), explanations, false belief and rectification of false belief (e.g., Veneriano, in press). Scores in overall coherence, IS and explanations were submitted to a two-way ANOVA (with procedure and age) to verify 1. the difference between the first narrative and the following ones in both groups and 2. the difference between the two procedures. Epistemic IS, Intentional IS, False belief and rectification of false belief were submitted to a chi-square test.

**References**


