

ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVES OF PERSONAL EVENTS OF BRAZILIAN CHILDREN IN TYPICAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: One of the most important skills in developing communication is the ability to tell stories. Personal event narratives are stories built from memory about a previous experience. The objective of this study was to verify if there is interference of the requested theme in the personal narratives produced by 10-year-old Brazilian children, considering the macro and micro structural aspects. Twenty-one children participated in the research, 10 boys and 11 girls, aged between 10 years and 10 years and 11 months, from cities in the state of São Paulo and Minas Gerais. The protocol: *Global Tales* was used to obtain the narratives and the analysis of the narratives was performed using the protocol: *Monitoring Indicators of Schoolarly Language* (MILS). Children developed more complex narratives when they talked about a problem situation. The flat element was the least used in the narratives. The emotional aspects influenced the quality and structure of the narratives of personal events prepared by the subjects of this research. It was observed that children, even from different cities and states, often approached similar themes in their narratives.

Keywords: Personal narrative, children's language, discursive skills.

INTRODUCTION

Narrative discourse is composed of expressions that report events in a temporal order and can be used to share own experiences, describe facts or tell a fictional story. It involves pragmatic, linguistic, cognitive and world knowledge skills, and is a very complex and significant task for the development of communication.^{10, 1}

A coherent narrative discourse includes macrostructural and microstructural elements⁶. The macrostructure involves the organization of the basic plot of the narrative, through the following elements: characters,

configuration of time and space, initial problem - which motivates the characters' actions - action and ending of the narrative^{16, 17}. The microstructure encompasses semantic, syntactic and morphological aspects, such as the use of connective elements and different word classes^{6, 17}.

Personal event narratives can be defined as the retelling of previously lived events and experiences.¹⁶ They are stories built from autobiographical memory⁴. This type of narrative is directly associated with the child's socio-emotional state and the development of their identity. They are acquired earlier than fictional narratives and are more prevalently produced by young children, being of fundamental importance in the acquisition of conversation skills.¹³

The request for personal narratives is a simple way to obtain the speech sample, since the production of this type of discourse allows the analysis of the development of discursive functions, and indicates the semantic, syntactic and morphological demands.^{13, 14}

GOALS

Check for interference of the requested topic in the narratives of personal events produced by the children, considering macro and micro structural aspects.

METHODS

The present study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee under the number CAAE: 58932516.1.0000.0065.

SUBJECTS

Twenty-one ten-year-old children participated in the research - 10 boys and 11 girls - from different cities in the state of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, as shown in Table 1.

The subjects were captured through a network of indications made by the participants themselves. The criteria for

<i>State</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
<i>São Paulo</i>	Campos do Jordão	6
	Barueri	1
	São José dos Campos	1
	São Paulo	4
	Santo André	2
	Sorocaba	2
	Taboão da Serra	1
	Osasco	1
<i>Minas Gerais</i>	Brasópolis	3

Table 1 - Origin of Subjects.

inclusion in the study were: 1) being regularly enrolled in the school system; 2) present between 10 years of age and 10 years and 11 months; 3) not have any language, hearing or neurodevelopmental disorders.

All guardians filled out the informed consent form and all children filled out the consent form for inclusion in the research.

MATERIALS

The Global Tales protocol was used¹⁶ for the collection of narratives. The children answered six questions by telling stories about days when they were happy, worried, proud, had to solve a problem and a very important thing happened.

O protocolo Monitoring Indicators of Scholarly Language (MILS)⁶ was used to analyze the macrostructure of the discourse, considering the following elements: characters, configuration, initial problem, internal response, plan, action, consequence and conclusion. A score ranging from 0 to 3 is assigned to each element.

DATA ANALYSIS

The Global Tales protocol was applied individually with the children, each interview lasted an average of 15 minutes. Subsequently, the responses were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively with MILS.

To compare the themes of the narratives, word cloud graphs were created.

RESULTS

The average of the total number of words and utterances produced by the children was calculated, as illustrated in Table 2.

The results of the analysis of the structure of the narratives with the MILS protocol can be seen in the figure 1.

Children produced more complex narratives and used a greater number of elements when talking about a day when they were happy, worried, angry and when something important happened. Narrative 3 - One day I got angry - was the most elaborate.

The narrative about a day when they felt proud was the only one in which most children (54.54%) did not include any characters. In all themes there was an initial event that motivated one or more actions and/or responses by the narrator, these responses were expressed in a more complex way in the narratives happy, worried, angry, proud and when an important thing happened.

The plan was the least used element in all the narratives, more than 50% of the children did not include this element in their productions.

Regarding the themes of the narratives, the results can be seen in the figure 3.

Number of participants	Medium age	Average number of words	Average number of statements
21	10 years 5 months	491,23	23,04

Table 2 - General average of words and utterances.

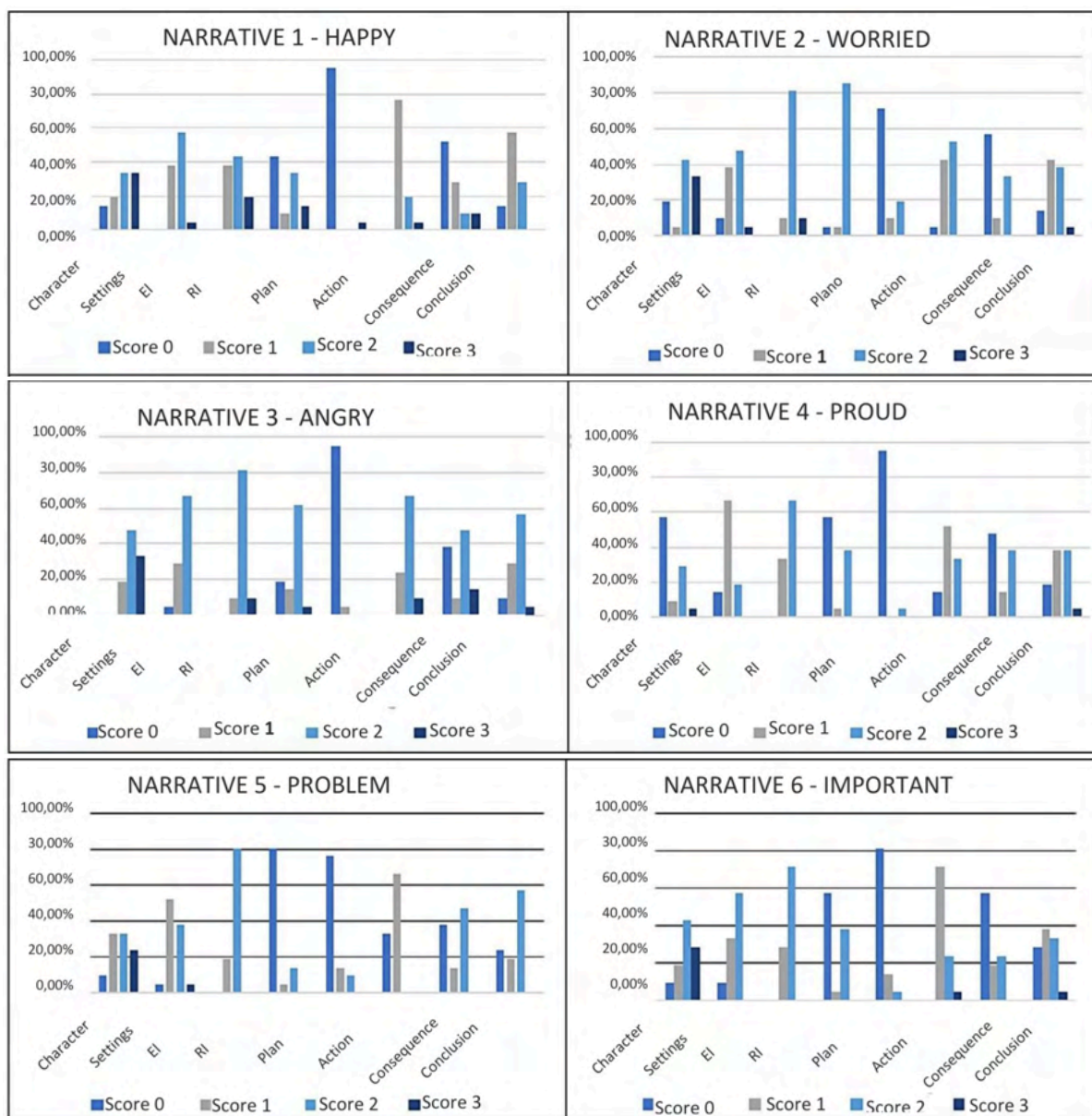


Figure 1 - Analysis of the structure of narratives – MILS.

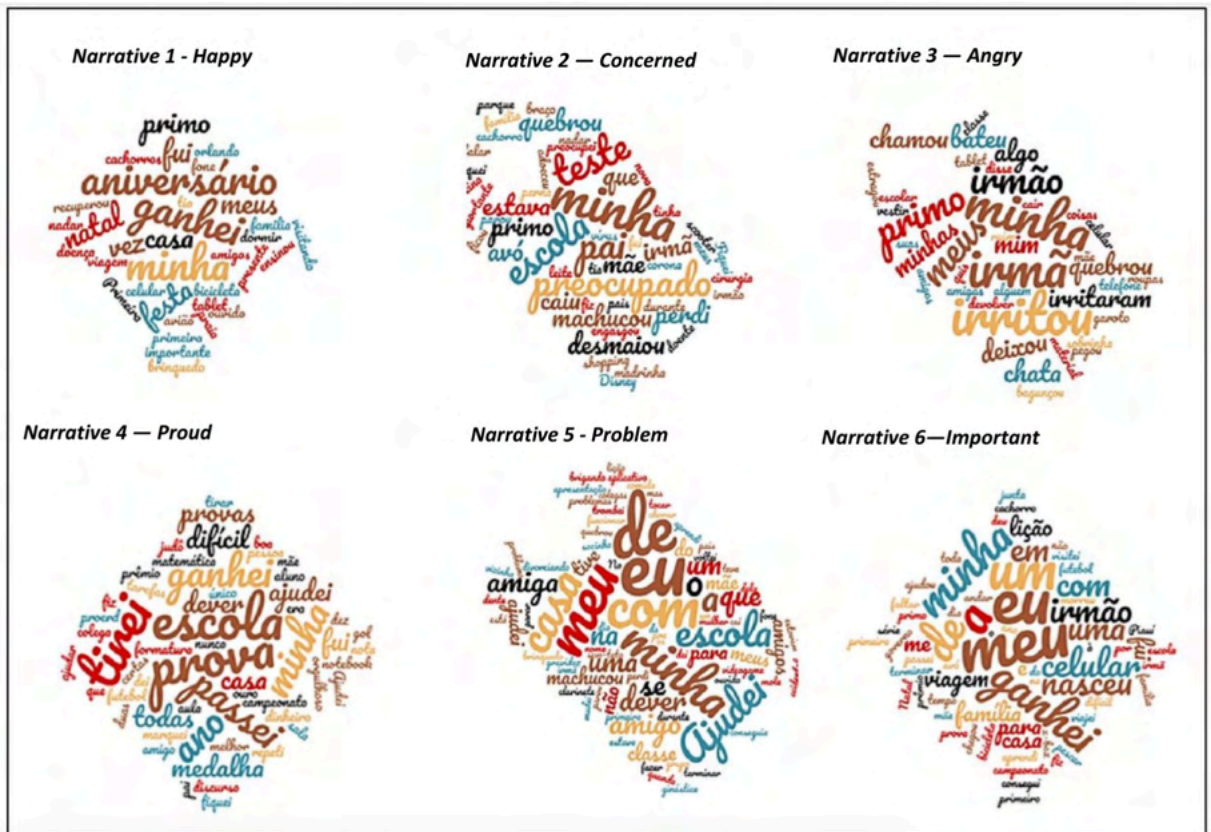


Figure 3 - Word cloud chart - theme of narratives.

When telling about a day when they were happy, the children referred to birthday parties, gifts and family moments. In narrative 2 - Worried, they talked about tests at school, about how they were worried when their family members got sick and about moments when they thought they had lost their families.

On a day when they felt proud, the kids shared about getting good grades in school, winning awards or competitions, giving speeches at their graduation, and helping a friend or family member. In the narrative “one day when I had a problem” they talked about problems at school, tests that they considered very difficult and moments when they helped a friend who was going through a difficult situation.

Finally, in the narrative about something important, the children talked about the birth of their siblings or cousins, the arrival of their

pets, when they got good grades in school and when they received gifts that were very important.

DISCUSSION

It is known that by the age of 8, typically developing children are able to produce complex narratives, with more than one initial event, actions and associated consequences.⁶ However, there is a tendency for personal event narratives to be produced with a less complex macrostructure, without the inclusion of an initiating event or a plan.¹³ This statement may explain the absence of the flat element in the results found in this research and the variation of the macrostructure within each theme, since the use of characters, configuration, internal response and action occurred in a heterogeneous way in the six narratives produced by each child.

According to the literature ^{4,11}, there is an emotional influence in the construction of personal narratives. When telling about something that was previously experienced, the narrator retrieves events in his memory based on their emotional value, this way the organization of the narrative is determined by emotional associations.

Polya⁸ carried out a study in which he related the temporal structure of the narrative with the emotional state of the narrator, his conclusion was that the temporal organization of the story brings important information about the affective state of the narrator.

A study published in 2002 suggests that children are more descriptive when narrating positive experiences and tend to include more thoughts and emotions in negative narratives.⁵ Vogindroukas¹² recently published a study on the personal narratives of Greek children aged 10 years using the Global Tales protocol. Among its findings, it was noticed that children included comments and emotions in both positive and negative narratives, but that there is a tendency for children to express themselves more in questions involving negative events, in line with the findings of the present research, in that the most elaborate narratives were carried out on topics involving problem situations, such as: a day when I was worried, irritated and had a problem.

One factor that must be taken into account when reviewing the different studies on the production of personal narratives is the culture in which the child is inserted. In Western cultures, caregivers stimulate children's autobiographical memory while in Eastern cultures this is an uncommon habit.¹¹ Children from Western cultures tend to produce more specific narratives, with references to themselves, while in Eastern cultures children produce more general narratives, with more descriptions.^{13,9}

The narratives collected in this research fit

the western pattern described in the literature. However, it is necessary to take into account that in Brazil there is a great cultural diversity, and for this reason such narratives do not represent all possible productions of personal events from other regions and cultures of the country.

CONCLUSION

The emotional aspects influenced the quality and structure of the narratives of personal events prepared by the subjects of this research, as described in the literature. It was observed that children, even from different cities and states, often approached similar themes in their narratives.

As narratives of personal events are widely used for language assessment in other countries as they allow the assessment of functional discourse and processes related to narration ⁷, it would be interesting to carry out further research on this topic involving other age groups, with a greater number of participants from different regions of Brazil.

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