Productivity Indexes in Narratives of African American Children with Typical Reading and Reading Disabilities
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Productivity Indexes represent the total number of words, total number of different words, total number of T-units and mean length of T-units. Productivity scores in narratives have been related to reading comprehension skills. However, there has been little research done on the relationship between reading and narratives for African American (AA) school-age children. The purpose of this study was to examine narrative productivity indexes in AA children based on reading level and gender. The specific research questions posed were (a) Are there differences in narrative productivity in school-age children with typical reading (TR) and children with reading disabilities (RD)? and (b) Are there differences in narrative productivity of school-age children based on gender?

Participants: The participants were 55 fourth grade AA children with approximately equal representation of children with typical reading skills and children with reading problems. Participants were also comprised of equal approximations of boys and girls. Participants’ reading comprehension levels were determined from a reading screening, school records, and parent report.

Procedures: Participants formulated four stories from picture stimuli. All stories were audiotaped and later transcribed. The transcriptions were done using the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT). The data from the SALT was used to find Productivity.

Results: Preliminary findings indicate that (a) Productivity is a good indicator of AA children’s narrative abilities, (b) Significant main effects emerged for reading level: children with TR had a higher number of total number of words (TNW) [F(1)= 12.09, p=.003], total number of different words (TNDW) [F(1)= 10.93, p=.004], and a higher number of T-Units (F(1)=8.43, p=.010) and, (c) No significant differences emerged for gender for any productivity measures.

Conclusions: The results suggest that children with reading problems may benefit from instruction in formulating oral narratives and retelling stories as a technique to improve reading comprehension. Therapy should focus on improving the total number of different words and increasing the length of children’s narratives.

Selected References


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