

Integration of narration and argumentation in the retelling of narrative texts

Integración de la narración y la argumentación en la renarración de textos narrativos

Mario-Fernando Gutiérrez

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3452-8658>
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Bogotá, Colombia)

Andrea Escobar-Altare

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7373-297X>
Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Bogotá, Colombia)

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Contact:
mariogutierrez@javeriana.edu.co

Abstract

The objective of this article is to analyse the presence of narrative structural elements of the history of a children's literary text in children's stories, analyse the argumentative schemes that they implement when they justify both the actions of the characters and their own positions on what happened in the story. Forty five students, 25 girls and 20 boys between 6 and 10 years old participated in this research ($M = 8.10$, $SD = 0.9$); from first to fifth grade of the elementary school of a school in the city of Bogotá (Colombia). The corpus used in this report was composed of 1152 statements in 655 speaking turns. The quantitative analyses through chi-square account for significant differences for the mean of narrative structural elements, narrative categories and argumentative schema by grade level. The results are discussed highlighting that the use of narration and argumentation converges gradually and that these types of discourse together favour the re-tellings of narrative texts.

Resumen

En este artículo se tiene como objetivos analizar la presencia de elementos estructurales narrativos de la historia de un texto literario infantil en los relatos de niños y niñas sobre dicha obra y analizar los esquemas argumentativos que implementan cuando justifican tanto las acciones de los personajes como sus propias posiciones en torno a lo sucedido en la historia. Participaron en esta investigación 45 estudiantes, 25 niñas y 20 niños con edades entre los 6 años y los 10 años de edad ($M = 8.10$; $DE = 0.9$); inscritos desde primer hasta quinto grado de educación básica primaria de un colegio de la ciudad de Bogotá (Colombia). El corpus utilizado en esta investigación estuvo conformado por 1152 enunciados en 655 turnos de palabra. Los análisis cuantitativos a través de Chi-cuadrado dan cuenta de diferencias significativas para la media de elementos estructurales narrativos, categorías narrativas y esquemas argumentales por grado. Se discuten los resultados resaltando que el uso de la narración y la argumentación convergen paulatinamente y que estos tipos de discurso en conjunto favorecen la renarración de textos narrativos.

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Introduction

If literature on types of discourse and reading is analysed, we find that research topics around these two types of discourse hardly converge with one another. Narrative discourse is conceived as a set of statements organised in a coherent way, which allude to a succession of facts and events related in a temporary and causal way; these events are characterised by some kind of complication -a knot, an unresolved problem- and are geared towards its resolution (Bassols & Torrent, 1997).

Narration proposes changes in situations and characters to the reader. From a Greimas perspective (Greimas, 1973), this allows for a semiotic link between the reader and the text, that leads to discover and to reinterpret an initial situation, an object of value, a narrative programme and a final resolution; the reader understands this convolute plot through inference based on his/her own knowledge and everyday experiences (Kintsch, 1998). Research on narrative and childhood, Correa (2013) suggests that proposing dialogic and interpretative experiences to infants through narrative and poetic texts allows them to build and rebuild subjectivity, intersubjectivity, which in turn thus allows to work around the recognition of states of mind and emotional states of oneself and others through reflexivity. From a more formal perspective of the text, Spinillo & Almeida (2014) stress the importance of studying the structural characteristics of those texts presented to children, given that these influence the nature of the inferences that children can make from what they read.

With regard to argumentation, it is conceived as a rational activity that attempts to provide a good reason that leads someone to admit a given conclusion (Plantin, 2014); it is a type of discourse that attempts to resolve or prevent a difference of opinion, revealing the acceptability of a specific point of view in a critical way (Van-Eemeren,

Houtlosser & Snoeck, 2007). The argument is conceived from two perspectives, the first as a product of oral or written discourse, susceptible to structural analysis, and the second perspective, which considers it a dialogic process containing different opinions, supported by various reasons, which are presented to an interlocutor with the aim of convincing or persuading him/her (Rapanta & Macagno, 2016).

Research on argumentative discourse and development took a series of paths that interpret the benefits of this type of discourse for children in a complementary way; it has been proposed that argumentation promotes learning in all years of education (Kuhn, Hemberger & Khait, 2016) and, especially, in the field of science (Erduran & Jiménez-Aleixandre, 2008), that disagreement promotes argument production in students as well as the resolution of intellectual conflicts (Berland & Lee, 2012) and scientific reasoning (García-Mila, Gilabert, Erduran & Felton, 2013), and that contexts of argument have an impact on narrative quality (Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono, 2010), *inter alia*. Despite all these research paths, consensus about children's argumentative capacities is far from being reached since the description of the skill level shall depend on the criteria followed to analyse their argumentative production (Schär, 2018).

Serrano (2015) proposes that the coordinated combination of both discourses (narration and argumentation) is activated in particular situations of conflicts present in narrative texts. From the point of view of the pragmatic theory of argumentation, it has been suggested that conflicts are an articulated form of lack of unity with regard to a point of view, without any quick agreement in sight that would make possible an intellectual advance for both parties in dispute (Van-Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 2004). From this pragmatic-dialectic perspective it is suggested that while conflict is always present in human social interactions, resolving a difference implies making a decision based on the

merits of the case, taking into account the views, facts and arguments of all parties in an ideally reasonable dialogue (Greco, 2018).

This theory supports the proposal that, in order to understand conflictive situations in narrative texts, students should jointly implement both narration and argumentation; this would allow them to analyse the text globally. Furthermore, research on the use or joint appearance of narrative and argument is limited and essentially focuses on oral discourse (Alam & Rosemberg, 2014; Migdalek, Rosemberg & Yáñez, 2014). Therefore, this study focuses on the ability of children to implement discursive resources of a narrative and argumentative nature when they read a children's book.

The objectives of this research are the following:

- Analysing the presence of structural narrative elements in the renarration of a children's literary texts by children from year 1 to year 5.
- Analysing the argumentation schemes implemented by children from year 1 to year 5 when they justify both the actions of the characters and their own beliefs about what happened in the story.

Method

Study type

This research is defined by a descriptive transectional design (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2014) since it investigates the incidence of the school year in the use of structural narrative elements and of argumentation schemes in primary education. The proposal of dynamic systems poses a challenge to the use of designs where the time variable is not so obvious; however, descriptive designs have been successful in focusing on normative data that allow for the identification of global regularities in children's intelligent behaviour (Rose & Fischer,

2011). One advantage of this design is that it shows the specific time or year in which the stability of children's performance in specific tasks is achieved (Bornstein, Putnick & Esposito, 2017). Non-probability sampling, defined by Coolican (2017) as convenience sampling, was used because the sample was limited to the institution participating in this research.

Participants

Forty-five students, 25 girls and 20 boys aged between 6 and 10 years old ($M = 8.10$; $SD = 0.9$); from year 1 to year 5 of primary education in a school in the city of Bogotá (Colombia) participated in this study. All participants agreed to participate voluntarily and all of them were authorised to participate by their respective parents through informed consent in accordance with the provisions of Resolution No. 008430 of 1993 of the Ministry of Health of Colombia, which establishes the scientific, technical and administrative standards for health research. This project was ethically reviewed and approved by professionals from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Bogotá).

Instruments

The play read by the participants was *La peor señora del mundo* (The worst lady in the world), by Francisco Hinojosa (Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2016). This work was chosen because it allows us to rethink the way in which conflicts have historically been dealt with in Colombia, since its idea shows the power of social groups to transform the expressions of damage of an individual, which can bring well-being for him/her and for all, finding better ways to transform human interaction between people. Its structure is clear: a) a woman hurts the inhabitants of the village where she lives, b) the inhabitants are fed up of her mistreatment and finally leave the village, c) the worst lady in the world tricks them into returning, d) the inhabitants of the

village meet to find a strategy to face her, e) the inhabitants decide to trick her and f) the worst lady in the world ends up doing good things.

The activity was presented to the participants, who were invited to read a children’s text and it was mentioned that they would be asked a few questions about it immediately after reading such text; they were informed that that there were no right or wrong answers, but their opinion about the story only. Both researchers were present when the interview was held. After the text was read, the participants were interviewed through a text-guide that with the questions that had been previously designed for this study¹ and whose adequate adjustment had already been identified in the pilot test. The interviews had no time limit; the average interview time was 12 minutes and 38 seconds.

All the questions and answers were transcribed entirely and the corpus was analysed in stages. In a first stage and individually, four professional members of the team, duly trained, segmented the corpus into statements, these being the discrete units to be analysed. A statement is an oral or written production resulting from an act of enunciation, that is, an act produced by a stating individual within a given situation (Ducrot, 2004). In response to the question of how to segment statements, Ducrot (2004) suggest that, if there are two successive segments S1 and S2, they constitute a single statement if S1 only makes sense based on S2. In other words, if S1 refers to S2, then it is one single statement made up of two segments.

In a second phase, each of the statements was studied individually, identifying their narrative or argumentative nature. The characteristics of each statement were qualitatively analysed in order to assign them to a specific category (structural narrative elements - plot outline). Cohen’s Kappa index was used to establish a measure of reliability in the agreement of the four evaluators ; if the index amounts from 0.41 to 0.60,

the agreement is moderate; from 0.61 to 0.80 the agreement is good, and finally from 0.81 to 1.0 the agreement is very good (Landis & Koch, 1977). In the case of for *La peor señora del mundo*, the agreement reached 0.901.

Analysis categories

In order to identify the presence of structural narrative elements in children’s stories, we used Peña’s (2010) proposal for narrative analysis, the “narrative pentaphony”, which breaks down the works into “individual”, “purpose”, “relationship”, “perspective” and “media” (table 1). The “media” category was not taken into account in the analyses because it requires formal knowledge of narrative theory that does not belong to the curriculum content of Spanish language in primary education in Colombia.

The “perspective” category is the most complex and demanding category because it

Table 1
Categories for identifying the presence of structural narrative elements in stories

Category	Definition
Individual	Under “individual”, we included all the statements that explicitly refer to the individual(s) or author of the story, as well as to facts, circumstances, behaviours and moods related to them.
Purpose	Under “purpose”, we included all the statements that refer to the idea (abstract concept that gives meaning to history) or the topic (contextual factors, spatial, temporal and historical circumstances) which answer the question “What is history about?”
Relationship	Under “relationship”, we included all the statements that refer to the facts and circumstances that, organised in a certain way, evidence of narrative composition; statements where the story is narrated (again) in a logical and coherent way.
Perspective	Under “perspective”, we included all the statements that refer to the narrator’s point of view, his/her omniscience, but also those statements that consistently provided new information that clarified what was being narrated.

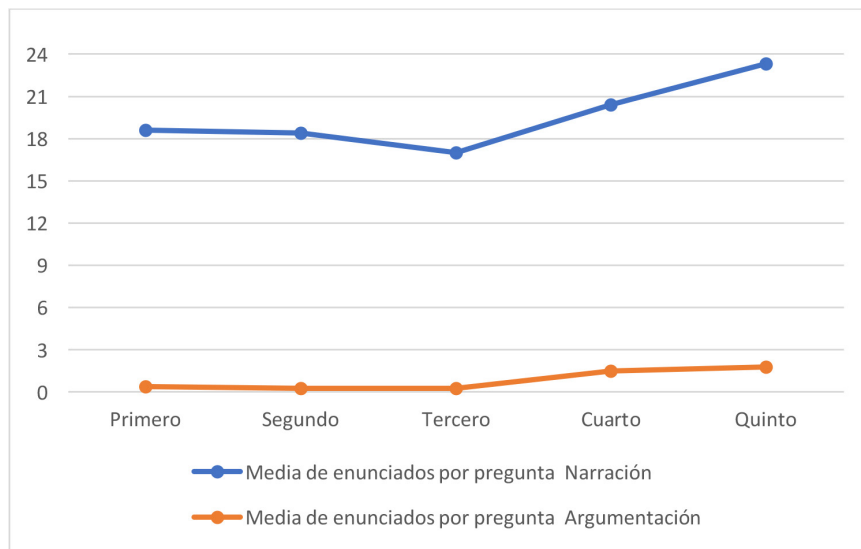


Figure 1. Average number of statements of narrative elements and argumentation schemes per question (narrative vs. argumentative) depending on the school grade.

involves generating coherent hypotheses about what happened and possibly arguing its *raison d'être*. Participants played the role of the narrator because only the narrator would know why the characters did or felt something in particular. It involves the inclusion of a point of view about the story that may or may not be argued.

This leads to an analysis of the arguments used by the participants. To this end, the main researcher and his assistants identified the argumentation schemes used by the participants, these being stereotypical patterns of reasoning (Walton & Macagno, 2016). The concept of argumentation scheme (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008) allows to think an argument from its form or inferential structure and to identify inductively the nature of its conclusion and thus locate it in the repertoire systematised by Macagno & Walton (2015). They were originally classified into three main categories: “practical reasoning arguments”, “source-based arguments” and “arguments that apply rules to cases”; the “discovery arguments” category (arguments that establish rules and arguments

that find entities) was subsequently added. These categories are subdivided until specific storylines are found; this allows coders to move from more general to more specific types (60 storylines) and to know when end points are reached and thus to stop identify the underlying storyline structure (Walton & Macagno, 2016, p. 24).

Results

The corpus consisted of 1,152 statements; 977 narrative structural elements, 33 argumentation schemes and 142 descriptive statements to the reading situation itself. In order to properly interpret the participants' performance, it is noteworthy that 10 questions about characterisation and central events were asked, more related to the narrative, and 8 questions were aimed at reflection and creation of possibilities. Although there the difference between the number of questions is not significant, it may have an impact on the total number of answers; for this reason, Figure 1 shows the average

Table 2
Narrative structural elements by school grade

Degree	Statements		Narrative Component		
	N	Individual %	Purpose %	Relationship %	Perspective %
Year 1	186	6.55	0.41	11.16	0.92
Year 2	184	6.24	0.92	10.54	1.13
Year 3	170	2.66	1.02	9.83	3.89
Year 4	204	2.46	3.58	9.62	5.22
Year 5	233	1.94	4.61	10.03	7.27
N	977	194	103	500	180

number of statements per type of question (narrative versus argumentative).

A non-parametric test (Chi-square) was used to determine whether there were significant differences in average statements by category and year; this analysis was performed using JASP software - Version 0.9.0.1. It was found that there are significant differences in the total number of statements containing structural narrative elements ($X^2 = 150.1$; $p = 0.001$) and argumentative schemes ($X^2 = 21.09$; $p = 0.001$) increasing the average as the number of students increases. The distribution of the 977 statements that corresponded to the structural narrative elements is shown in table 2.

Chi-square was used to determine whether there are significant differences in the average number of narrative statements per category by year; significant differences were found in the “subject” ($X^2 = 49.04$; $p = 0.001$), “purpose” ($X^2 = 64.33$; $p = 0.001$) and “perspective” ($X^2 = 78$; $p = 0.001$) categories by increasing the average as the year increases, unlike as for the “relationship” category ($X^2 = 1.46$; $p = 0.834$).

With regard to the argumentation schemes, 33 statements were identified as explicitly justifying an opinion on the causes of a conflict in the story; these statements were grouped into two argumentative topics that would explain the behaviour of the worst lady in the world: the reiteration of the cycle of violence in child abuse victims and dialogue as a tool to change the aggressor’s beliefs and avoid reciprocal violence. The type of scheme that configures the arguments is shown in table 3.

Chi-square was used to determine whether there are significant differences in average statements by scheme and year. It was found that there are significant differences for the year variable in “emotional” category ($X^2 = 16$; $p = 0.003$) increasing the average as the year increases. No significant differences were found for the variable grade in the “example” ($X^2 = 3$; $p = 0.558$), “cause - effect” ($X^2 = 4$; $p = 0.406$), “popular opinion” ($X^2 = 3.5$; $p = 0.478$), “perception” ($X^2 = 4$; $p = 0.406$), “common practice” ($X^2 = 3$; $p = 0.558$), “values” ($X^2 = 3$; $p = 0.558$), “circumstantial” ($X^2 = 8$; $p = 0.092$) “bias” ($X^2 = 4$; $p = 0.406$), and “morality” ($X^2 = 4$; $p = 0.406$) categories.

Discussion

This article aims at analysing the presence of structural narrative elements of any children’s

Tabla 3
Esquemas argumentativos por grado escolar

Scheme	Statements	Year				
		Year 1 %	Year 2 %	Year 3 %	Year 4 %	Year 5%
Argument for the example	4	3.03	3.03	6.06		
Cause - effect argument	8	6.06			6.06	12.12
Argument by popular opinion	4		3.03		3.03	6.06
Perception argument	1				3.03	
Emotional argument	9				18.18	9.09
Common practice argument	1				3.03	
Argument for values	2				3.03	3.03
Circumstantial argument	1					6.06
Argument for the bias	1					3.03
Argument for morality	1					3.03
<i>N</i>	33	3	2	2	12	14

literary text in children’s books about that work and at analysing the argumentation schemes implemented by them when they justify both the characters’ actions and their own positions with regard to the story. When children are forced to retell a literary narrative text and answer questions about the story and their position on what they have read, both narrative and argumentation are implemented to analyse the facts that are present in the story. However, the ability to implement both types of discourse differs significantly by year, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The difference in the total number of classifiable statements in both types of discourse is significant (Figure 1) and very clear indeed, regardless of the school year.

This result is in addition to research showing that changes in syntactic complexity are generated by the age and type of situation in which children’s discourse is promoted -con-

versation, personal narrative, storytelling- (Frizelle, Thompson, McDonald & Bishop, 2018; Westerveld & Vidler, 2016). According to Drijbooms, Groen & Verhoeven (2017), children should be aware of the different types of discourse and learn to reflect on the linguistic coding of their narratives; coherent stories typically consist of essential elements such as main events, actions and characters of the story -referential aspects- and information about the thoughts, feelings, beliefs and motivations underlying these essential elements of the story -evaluative aspects. Therefore, integrating the argument would make it possible to meet the demands of the evaluative aspect of the narrative.

As for the qualitative analysis of narrative structural elements, it was found that there are clearly defined trends. The “relationship” category remains stable, which indicates that

children do not vary in the number of statements they need to retell the story because they are constrained by the length thereof; the facts that happened in the text were retrievable in the same order as they were read. Their performance confirms studies that state that recall without gaps in a narrative is possible at this age thanks to short-term memory (Prat, Seo & Yamasaki, 2016). The “subject” category tends to decrease gradually; that is, as the year increases, the characters themselves become less important in their story. Children begin to be more sensitive to discourse components that are more cognitively demanding and that illustrate the reason for the actions being narrated.

Therefore, the average of the “purpose” and “perspective” categories is gradually increasing, these being more complex since they refer to meta-textual elements such as identifying the plot that is derived from an inference made by the reader, or to complementing the story in line with the knowledge and experiences already acquired by the participants. This ability to enrich reading with their own knowledge evidences what semiotics proposes about how comprehension is generated within the link between readers and their knowledge and the story they are analysing. The evolution of the group of participants’ answers goes from focusing on the characters and their experiences to the underlying plot and the reasons behind the events narrated. In addition, grammatical complexity increases by gradually incorporating a greater number of structural elements of discourse.

As for the objective of analysing the argumentative schemes implemented when children justify the actions of the characters and their own positions regarding what happened in the story, it was found that the arguments emerge gradually. This fact is more obvious among year 4 and 5 students. Just as the number of arguments increases with degree, so does the range of argumentation schemes used by the participants. Given the wide range of schemes proposed by Walton, Reed, & Macagno (2008), it is possible to think that the number of schemes

found in this research -10- would not show great variability in how arguments are constructed in childhood. It should be noted, however, that argumentation is not a component of the basic quality standards of in place in primary education in Colombia. Therefore, implementing schemes that are cognitively complex it is an achievement, such as the cause-effect scheme or the scheme by moral reasoning in children without previous training in argument theory.

It was found that the argument was implemented to give meaning to the reason for the actions of the characters or the personal positions of each reader-participant in the situation; this was obvious among students from higher school years. The arguments found were temporarily linked to the questions that required some justification for why of what was happening in the story; moreover, these arguments arose combined with the narrative statements that were classified under the “perspective” category. The identification of the ability to argue about narrative elements of participating children has implications for the field of language education in primary education. With regard to the first characteristic, it can be said that, according to Macagno & Walton (2015), argumentation schemes have a speculative link with reasoning and inference when people analyse a situation.

Children actively seek to understand the causal structure of the world around them as part of a dynamic learning of observation, explanation and exploration within a physical and social environment with wide cultural differences (Legare, Sobel & Callanan, 2017). Understanding how children implement causal reasoning requires examining their beliefs about the world and studying the processes by which they reach valid conclusions; this is a contribution from research on the conjunction of different types of discourse, as it denotes the discursive mechanisms they implement to effectively achieve this. Causality is an inferential achievement, as the speaker actively analyses the situation until he or she reaches a conclusion based on facts that can support his or her

position on an issue. The role of argumentation is evidenced in this discursive achievement, since this type of discourse allows individuals to shape this inference with the aim of convincing the interlocutor.

Finally, some aspects should be considered in detail to analyse the generalisation of the results. The Basic Standards of Language Competences define the contents of Spanish language to be learned in the Colombian educational system; therefore, the performances found respond to the way whereby the participants acquired them and do not necessarily reflect the circumstances of other educational contexts. In addition, performance responds to a particular text and other trends in reader performance may be identified. Thus, in the future it would be necessary to conduct studies with multiple texts and in diverse educational systems in order to identify the replicability of the results of this research.

Notes

1. The pentaphony of *La peor señora del mundo* and the questions asked can be found at <http://hdl.handle.net/10554/45970>.

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