

## **Abstract**

Narrative abilities play a crucial role in how children express their personal experiences and understand the world around them. Bilinguals, have the ability to navigate between multiple languages, and it might influence the structure, content, and complexity of their storytelling. It is hypothesized that bilinguals may exhibit unique narrative patterns, highlighting the interplay between languages in shaping their storytelling. The purpose of a bilingual narrative intervention study, is to improve narrative skills can be which may also predict academic success in the future (Spencer & Petersen, 2020). The purpose of the current study is to examine how a bilingual narrative intervention, that includes a focus on narrative and vocabulary in direct instruction will affect the bilingual child's skills in both languages.

Sixteen English-Hebrew bilingual kindergarten children ages five-six studying in kindergartens where the majority language is Hebrew participated in the study. The intervention program included six sessions in each language, in which five story grammar elements were studied – character, problem, emotion, action and ending. In addition, 24 target words were taught through direct instruction. The study also included four progress monitoring sessions in English and Hebrew that were used as repeated measurements before and between the intervention sessions. The last progress monitoring session was held about four-six weeks after the last intervention session, to test for maintenance of gains (a total of 20-22 sessions per child) At each progress monitoring session, the children were told a short and long story, and then they were asked to retell the story. In addition, they completed a vocabulary definitions task. The sessions were recorded, transcribed and coded for macrostructure – retelling the story including the five elements and answering comprehension questions – and microstructure – vocabulary acquisition and use of complex syntax. Repeated measures analyses of variance revealed that the children made significant gains due to their participation in the intervention program in the same language, in both macrostructure and microstructure. In addition, children made crosslinguistic gains in Hebrew following the English intervention, but made no gains in English following the Hebrew intervention. With regard to the long story task, which was not taught during the intervention, no significant differences were found following intervention.

The conclusions emerging from the research indicate that direct vocabulary instruction is useful for acquiring new words. We also discovered that it is important to separate the intervention in each language. Since the heritage language (English) is the children's dominant language, it is important to start with intervention in English, since it will later support intervention in the

second language (Hebrew), the societal language. Delayed gains were observed for the vocabulary task, the short story retelling in English, at the final progress monitoring session, after a period without intervention, indicating that processing time led to increased gains. For the Hebrew short story retelling, the children retained the gains at the last progress monitoring session, a figure that points to the importance of the intervention for the purpose of improving narrative achievements.

Regarding the long retelling task, which was not practiced in the intervention sessions, we conclude that not all the story grammar elements included in the story long story, had a corresponding element taught in the short stories in intervention. Therefore, the children were not able to apply the skills they acquired in the short story task to the long story retelling task. That too emphasizes the importance of the intervention.

Making the intervention protocol used in this research accessible to educators can contribute to children in general and bilingual children in particular in the area of language, specifically, vocabulary and retelling stories with good story structure, and thus may enhance their academic achievements in the present and future.