

# What do narrative retelling reveal about bilingual children's knowledge of English as a second language?

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# Overview

- Role of Narratives in Language Acquisition
- The study
- L1 and L2 capabilities

*Story episodes*

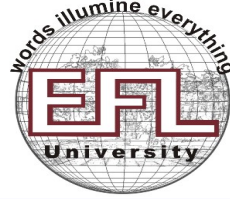
*Use of lexis*

*Use of structure*

- Pedagogical implications



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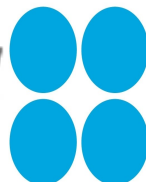


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# Multilingualism and Multiliteracy: Raising learning outcomes in challenging contexts in primary schools across India



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# INVESTIGATORS

- Professor Ianthi Tsimpli: Principal Investigator  
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- Other Co-Investigators:

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# Role of narratives in language acquisition



- Narratives are a part of oral language tradition and commonplace in Indian households (Krashen, 1982: impact of home environment on language development)
- Narrative telling, retelling – different task types
- Use of linguistic resources (story grammar, lexis, syntax,)
- Use of cognitive resources (logical connects between ideas, chronology of events, )



# The Study

## Subjects

- 72 learners (39 f, 34 m): aged 8-10 years
- Mother Tongue = Hindi & Telugu; L2 = English
- Place of schooling & residence: Hyderabad
- Enrolled in low aided government schools in non-slum areas.

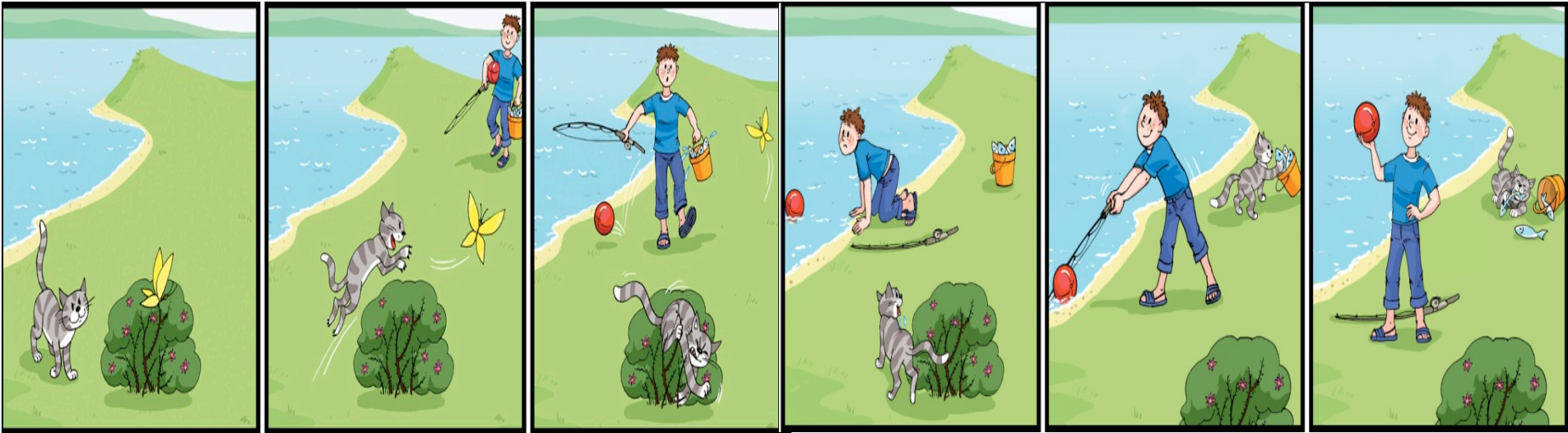
# Task

- Narrative retelling task: 'The CAT story'

(Multilingual Assessment Instrument for Narratives:  
MAIN, 2012)

# NARRATIVE TASK: THE CAT STORY

(VISUAL STIMULUS)



# Text (aural input)



One day there was a playful cat that saw a butterfly sitting on a bush. He jumped up because he wanted to catch it. A cheerful boy was coming back from fishing with a fish in a bucket and a ball in his hands. He saw that the cat was chasing the butterfly.

The cat wasn't quick enough and the butterfly escaped. The boy was surprised and the ball fell from his hands. He shouted: "Oh no! There goes my ball!" The boy was sad and wanted to get his ball back. Meanwhile, the cat noticed the ball in the boy's bucket and wanted to eat it. He thought that it is going to be delicious!"



# Text (aural input)



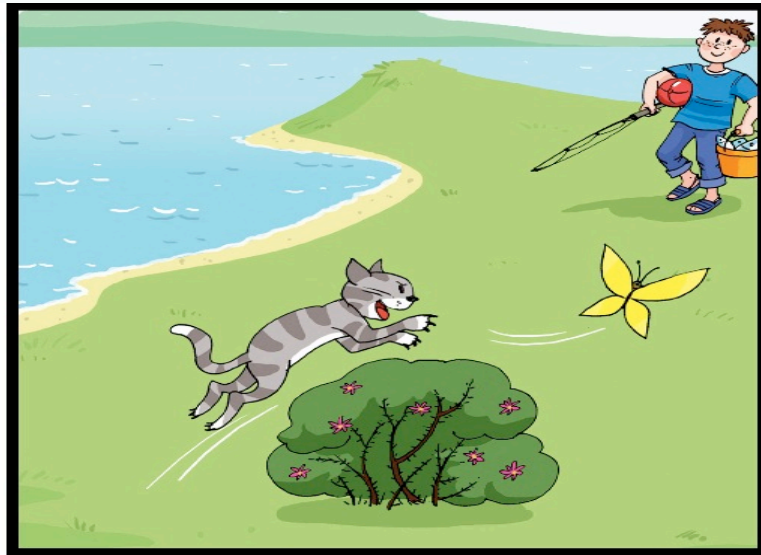
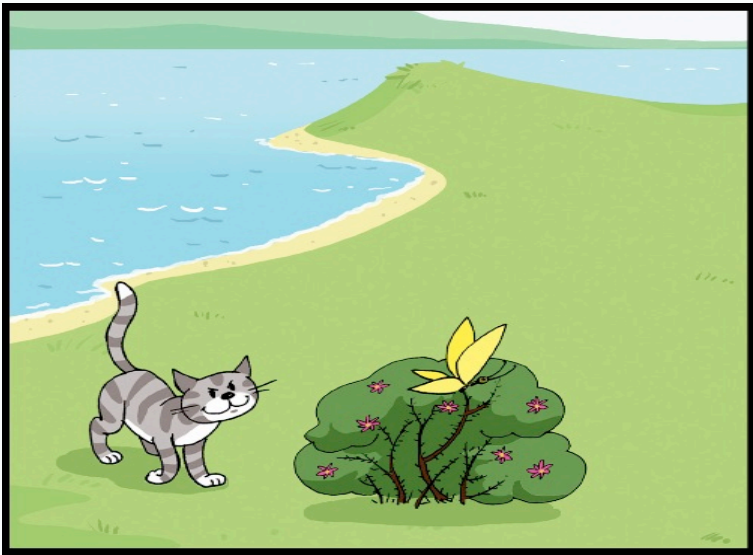
The cat grabbed the fish that the boy had left in the bucket. At the same time, the boy began pulling his ball out of the water. The boy was glad that he had his ball again. He did not notice that the cat was eating the delicious fish.

And that is the end of the story.

Two sets of episodes marked in two colours.



# STORY EPISODES: L1 & L2 capabilities



Setting:

One day there was a cat and a butterfly.

IST Initiating event: It was flying away then the cat saw it.

Goal: .... (The cat wanted to catch the butterfly)

Attempt: What it did after seeing, that butterfly flew then cat chased it.

Outcome: .... (The butterfly flew away./The cat fell into the bush/The cat was not quick enough)

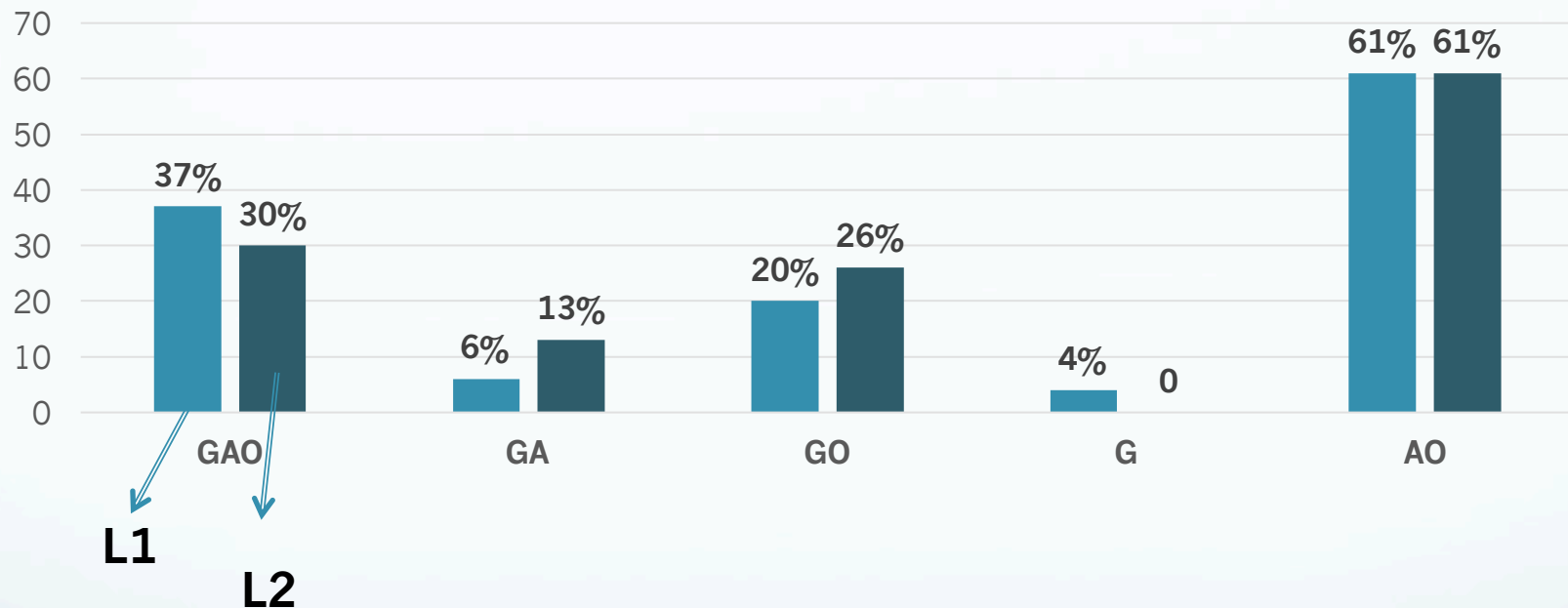
Reaction: .... (Cat was disappointed./Butterfly was happy)

# Story Structure

	Hindi (N=49)	English (N=23)
Overall episode score [mean, sd] (total count: <b>17</b> )	6.86 (2.22)	7.78 (2.28)
Episode One (5)	2.42 (1)	2.69 (0.97)
Episode Two (5)	2.20 (1.15)	2.26 (1.25)
Episode Three (5)	2.06 (1.06)	2.21 (0.79)

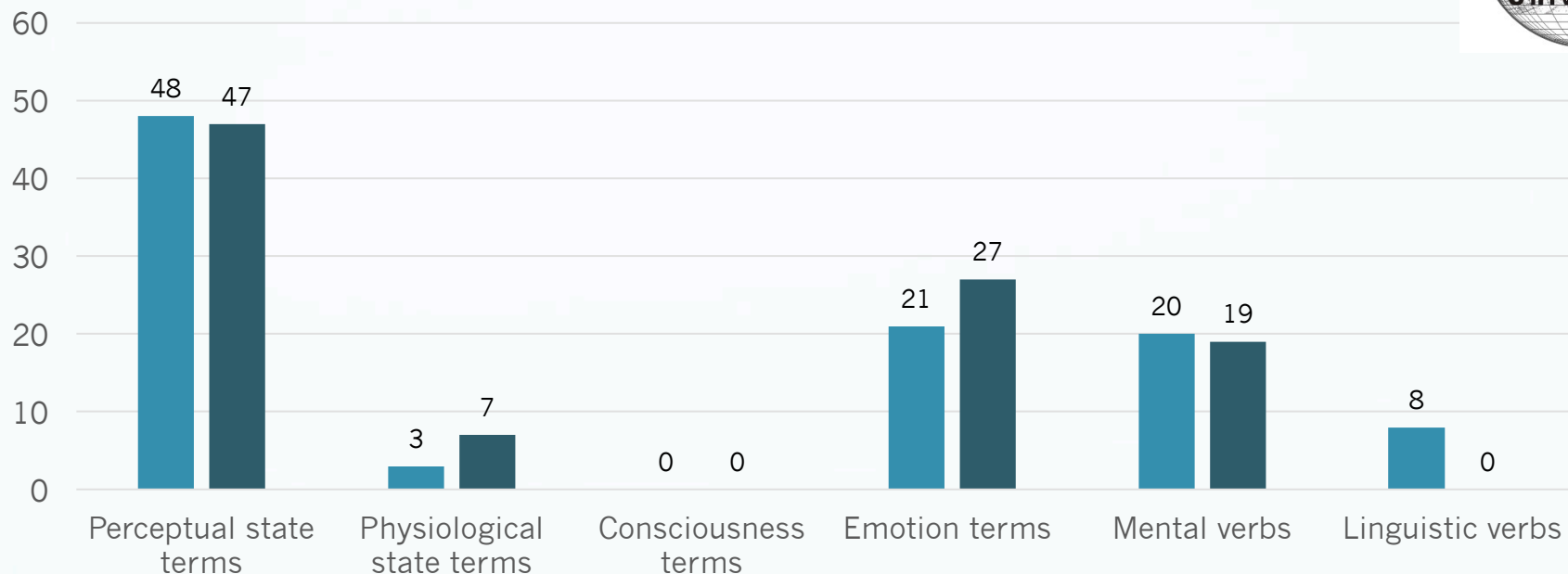
English retelling marginally better than Hindi.

# STRUCTURAL COMPLEXITY



GOAL, ACTION, OUTCOME higher in Hindi; better narrative retelling ability in L1 even though input is L2

# Internal State Terms & Verbs



PERCEPTUAL STATE TERMS- (**see, saw**) comparable in L1 and L2

PHYSIOLOGICAL STATE TERMS- (**hungry**) few occurrences

CONSCIOUSNESS TERMS- nil

EMOTION TERMS (**happy**) comparable in L1 and L2

MENTAL VERBS (**want**) comparable in L1 and L2

LINGUISTIC VERBS (**say, said**) few occurrences, only in L1

# Results & implications

- Since the input language was English, many students aped it and therefore, they used the exact phrases to retell the story.
- Across the two languages, students found it difficult to define the goal, but were able to describe the attempt and outcome of the story.
- The similarities in the structural complexity of the story across the two languages indicate that learners were at the same level of understanding both languages- i.e. They could describe sequences but not complete episodes.
- The ability to use story episodes across L1 & L2 indicate that the students were developing their ability to understand the goal directed behaviour of the principal characters of the story.

# The use of LEXIS: L1 & L2 capabilities

# Lexis

Learners knowledge *of* and *about* words and ability to *use* them is vocabulary knowledge or lexis.

## (1) Lexical variety:

Total number of new words in proportion to total number of words; knowledge of range of vocabulary

## (2) Lexical density:

Proportion of content words to grammatical words.

In discourse, both serve as measures of addition of new information.

# Types of NPs & role in discourse

1. **Lexical NPs** imply the use of new information.
2. **Pronominal NPs** function as referential markers
3. **Quantifying NPs** refer to quantifying concepts (one, many) and collective/distributive properties (All the boys know your name. All the boys were given chocolates)
4. **Expletive NPs** function as referential markers.

# Sample retelling text (L1 output)

No	Sentences (Instances of Pronominal NPs)
S1	<i>Butterfly jhaad pe rehte to billi usko khane ko dekhti.</i> As the butterfly sits on the bush, the cat sees <u>it</u> to eat.
S2	<i>Acchi dikhti butterfly usko.</i> <u>It</u> like to see the butterfly.
S3	<i>Khane ko jaati to une udte rehti, pakadne nahi aata usko.</i> As it goes to eat, <u>she</u> keeps flying and hence <u>it</u> cannot catch.
S4	<i>Udhar se bachha ball aur machli pakadne ka machla leke aate.</i> A boy came from <u>there</u> with a ball, fish and a fishing rod.
S5	<i>Leke aaye toh uska ball niche gir jaata.</i> As <u>he</u> got <u>it</u> , <u>his</u> ball fell down.
S6	<i>Girne ke baad mera ball niche gir gaya bolke rota.</i> <u>He</u> cries that ' <u>my</u> ball has got dropped' as the ball fell down.

# Sample retelling text (L2 output)

No	Sentences (Instances of Lexical NPs)
S1	The ball is fall down means that is going in water.
S2	Water going means the boy is crying.
S3	The ball go into water.
S4	Water go means the boy is crying.
S5	The cat eated the fishes.
S6	The boy is taking the ball means the cat go and eat <u>it</u> .
S7	The boy is very happy.
S8	The ball is caught.
S9	The boy is feeling very happy.
S10	The cat eating slowly slowly fishes.

Total no of new: Lexical NPs: 5 Pronominal NPs: 01; [**lexical variety & density: moderate**] Text length: 67;  
**Discourse binding hardly present; narration of events not clear; repetition of ideas.**

# Results

- Lexical variety higher in Hindi retelling than English.
- Lexical density comparable in Hindi and English
- NPs:

Lexical NPs more in Hindi retelling (more information added)

Pronominal NPs and Expletive NPs more in Hindi retelling (more discourse binding features)

Quantifying NPs not found

# The use of SYNTAX: L1 and L2 capabilities

# Word Order in Hindi & English



Hindi and English have different word order:

Hindi: 1a. Main-ne khana khaya [S O V]

I rice eat

English: 1b. I eat rice [S V O]

Other Examples, (Gambhir, 1981)

**Hindi:** Scrambling option available

2a. Ram-ne Mohan-ko kitab dii [S IO DO V]

Ram-nom Mohan-dat book give

**English:** 2b. Ram gave Mohan a book. [S V IO DO]

2c. Ram gave a book to Mohan. [S V DO IO]

More restrictive word order



- In attempting retelling narratives in English by these young learners we have been able to identify a host of errors which are very important findings and which are fruits for pedagogical implications.

## Findings

### 1. These learners have used the word order of their L1 counterpart while narrating events in L2

Example, U1: **The cat choose to try the butterfly catching.**

Here, the intention of the cat is to catch the butterfly. When we say in English, it sounds,'

*'the cat tries to catch the butterfly'* , but instead the child has used the construction where,

the main verb CATCH follows the object THE BUTTERFLY.

## 2. Shifting of objects in the sentence initial position which is not allc English.

Example, U 3:

*Ball and fishes catching that is taking coming means this cat catch to yellow butterfly.*

In Hindi, we have the option of shifting Objects to the initial position of the sentence, for instance,

*ball aur fish leke/ pakadke (catch) woh ledka titli ko pakda.*

While narrating this specific event, the child has literally transferred his L1 word order knowledge and thecausing error to the structure of the English sentence.

## 3. Putting the object in the medial position too.

Example, U 13: **I the ball is caught it.**

This is a typical example of SOV, which is the prototypical word order of Hindi language.

The child has used **(I – S, the ball- O, caught- V)** this construction in his/her spontaneous speech of English which is very much erroneous.

## **Some important revelations about L2 speech production found from bilingual learners' knowledge of L1 and L2 syntax:**

Learners use of L2 sentence structure is very much influenced by their L1 knowledge of word order, though both use of L1 and L2 structures are UG governed.

In both the languages, learners have mostly used simple structures like SVO in English narratives and SOV in Hindi narratives. Other than these very rare instances of DO and IO have been found in the narratives irrespective of Hindi and English.

Their ability of speaking in Hindi is much better than English as they have more option of shifting the positions of subjects and objects and thereby make it more convenient to speak freely.

# Benefits of using this task in class



- Narrative tasks help develop story grammar (plot, characters, episodes) and this ability is open for transfer from the stronger to the newly developing language.
- Lexis use across two languages may be comparable. But the language in which fluency is higher will show higher variety in use of lexis or new information and discourse binding features as use of pronominal NPs, expletive NPs.
- Awareness of knowledge of word order in learners' L1 and L2 should be given emphasis.
- Transfer from L1 to L2 (lexis and syntax) is a normal trend and is acceptable at lower grades as this helps in development of 'fluency' ( a widely documented trend in development of proficiency is that fluency precedes accuracy)



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*THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!*