



IMPROVING STORY NARRATIVES OF CHILDREN FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES

BILINGUISTICS

HOW IMPORTANT ARE NARRATIVES?

- We ask children to tell us about events, retell stories, write about events in their journals, and answer questions about stories.
- We analyze and judge the grammar and content of their stories, the order of events, the semantic complexity, and the narrative elements.

BILINGUISTICS

Expected in most Cultures	Culturally Specific
Initiating Event	Protagonist Identification
Attempt	Discourse Markers
Consequence	Embedded stories
Resolution	Causal Relations
Setting	Causal Chain
	Internal Response

BILINGUISTICS

CAN CULTURE AFFECT NARRATIVE PRODUCTION?

- A child's culture and life experiences have taught him a different narrative script.
- How do we decide if missing elements are due to an impairment or cultural difference?

BILINGUISTICS

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS THAT ARE **COMMON** TO MOST CULTURES



Narrative Element	Definition	Example (3 Billy Goats Gruff)
Initiating Event	The incident which introduces the central conflict in a story;	The goats were hungry and wanted to eat. The grassy knoll was on the other side of the bridge.
Attempt	The protagonist's attempt to solve the problem.	They went to cross the bridge.
Consequence	The results of the attempt (i.e. whether or not the goal was attained).	The troll threatened to eat them.
Resolution	Whether or not the super-ordinate problem was resolved.	Tricked the troll into waiting for a bigger feast.
Setting	The physical or temporal context of the story.	The grassy knoll and the bridge.

BILINGUISTICS

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS THAT ARE **SPECIFIC** TO SPANISH AND ENGLISH



Narrative Element	Definition	Example (3 Billy Goats Gruff)
Internal Response	An emotional response to the initiating event.	The goat was scared of the troll. The troll was mad and hungry.
Discourse Markers	A word or phrase that does not change the meaning of the sentence.	"well," "now," "then," "you know"
Embedded stories	Flashbacks and other editing cues that may impact the viewing experience.	If the goats parents had been eaten by the troll.
Causal Relations:	The relationship between an event (the cause) and a second event (the effect).	The troll allowed the smaller goat to pass because he was offered a bigger brother.
Causal Chain	A series of causal events that lead from beginning to end.	The troll became progressively more hungry and demanding.
Protagonist Identification	Identification of the main protagonist in the story within the first scene of the program.	Once upon a time there were 3 Billy Goats Gruff...

BILINGUISTICS

NARRATIVE DIFFERENCES

HOW NARRATIVES VARY ACROSS CULTURES



BILINGUISTICS

HOW DOES NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT CHANGE AS A CHILD GETS OLDER?

- Simple to Complex
- Egocentric to conscious of others' thoughts
- Present tense to past tense

BILINGUISTICS

HOW CAN DIFFERENCES IN NARRATIVE ABILITY AFFECT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE?

- When personal knowledge differs from mainstream expectations, discourse, story recounts, and story telling will not match mainstream standards.
- Children from Spanish-speaking cultures continue to perform worse than other children on national indicators of achievement.

Gutierrez-Ciellen, 2002

BILINGUISTICS

IS HOW WE ASK CHILDREN TO TELL A STORY DIFFERENT THAN HOW THEIR PARENTS ASK?

- Metz (2000) found differences in the way Spanish-speaking and English-speaking mothers elicited stories.
- Different aspects of narratives were emphasized by Spanish and English-speaking mothers
 - English-speaking mothers emphasized organizational aspects
 - Spanish-speaking mothers emphasized conversational aspects
- Narratives vary by cultural demands.

BILINGUISTICS

Narrative Differences Specific to Spanish and English

Ernesto Quiñonez: Dog Days of Spanish Harlem

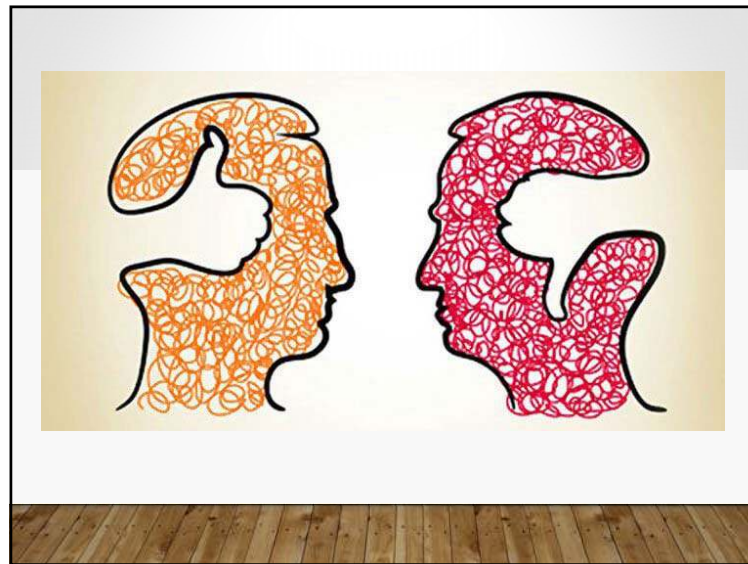
Tristan Jamison: A Dish Best Served Cold



The Moth Podcast: True Stories Told Live


BILINGUISTICS

	Spanish	English
Goal of most narratives	Moral themes. Spanish-speaking children may use an event to demonstrate a sense of themselves in relation to their community.	Individualistic/child-centered themes. English narratives focus on what is happening internally and externally to the main character
Reaction	A character's reaction to an event or element may be atypical.	A character's reaction to an event or atypical story element is predictive
Story Elicitation	Mothers emphasize the conversational aspects of the narrative. The Spanish-speaking children have greater responsibility in recalling the story as their mothers play a listening role in the conversation.	Mothers primarily focus on the organizational aspects of the narrative and English-speaking children may act as co-narrators with their parents.
Grammar – meaning	Spanish relies on the inflection of morphemes.	English relies on manipulation of word order.
Grammar – syntax	Spanish will employ verb forms not often used in English to show conditionality or actions that have continued from the past. Spanish also enjoys more flexibility in word order	
Acting as a listener or a participant	Spanish-speaking cultures often have the role of speaker or listener and may not simultaneously engage.	English-speaking cultures may tell a story together, ask questions, or interject during a story.



Ernesto Quiñonez

Associate Professor



Overview

Ernesto Quiñonez's first novel *Bodega Dreams*, has become a landmark in contemporary literature. It is required reading in many high schools and colleges around the country and in 2004, it was heralded as a "New Immigrant Classic" by the *New York Times*. He is first and foremost married to the novel, though he has been known to have flings with screenplays and other Hollywood literary floozies.

DEPARTMENTS/PROGRAMS	GRADUATE FIELDS	AFFILIATIONS
English	Creative Writing English Language and Literature	Latino Studies Program

Research

- Creative writing
- Latino/a fiction
- Protest literature
- Magic realism

Courses

ee25@cornell.edu
607-255-6805

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

The City College Of New York, MA
The City College Of New York, BA

BILINGUISTICS

	Spanish	English
Goal of most narratives	Moral themes. Spanish-speaking children may use an event to demonstrate a sense of themselves in relation to their community.	Individualistic/child-centered themes. English narratives focus on what is happening internally and externally to the main character
Reaction	A character's reaction to an event or element may be atypical.	A character's reaction to an event or atypical story element is predictive
Story Elicitation	Mothers emphasize the conversational aspects of the narrative. The Spanish-speaking children have greater responsibility in recalling the story as their mothers play a listening role in the conversation.	Mothers primarily focus on the organizational aspects of the narrative and English-speaking children may act as co-narrators with their parents.
Grammar – meaning	Spanish relies on the inflection of morphemes.	English relies on manipulation of word order.
Grammar – syntax	Spanish will employ verb forms not often used in English to show conditionality or actions that have continued from the past. Spanish also enjoys more flexibility in word order.	
Acting as a listener or a participant	Spanish-speaking cultures often have the role of speaker or listener and may not simultaneously engage.	English-speaking cultures may tell a story together, ask questions, or interject during a story.

BILINGUISTICS

NARRATIVE DIFFERENCES

NARRATIVES DO VARY ACROSS CULTURES!



BILINGUISTICS

	Narrative Element	Definition
Expected in most cultures	Initiating Event	The incident which introduces the central conflict in a story
	Attempt	The protagonist's attempt to solve the related goal.
	Consequence	The results of the attempt (i.e. whether or not the goal was attained).
	Resolution	Whether or not the superordinate goal was resolved.
	Setting	The physical or temporal context of the story.
Causality Specific	Internal Response	Emotional response to the initiating event is present.
	Discourse Markers	A word or phrase that does not change the meaning of the sentence.
	Embedded stories	Flashbacks and other editing cues that may impact the viewing experience.
	Causal Relations	The relationship between an event (the cause) and a second event (the effect).
	Causal Chain	Whether or not event is part of the chain that leads from beginning to end.
	Protagonist Identification	Whether or not the main protagonist in the story is identified within the first scene of the program.



The truth is that the number of languages a child speaks does not contribute to communication deficits. What is important is the complexity of the language that is being used.